

Telling the Untold: An Intertextual Reading of the Socio-Political Dynamics of Africa's Participation in World War II in Rotimi Babatunde's *Bombay's Republic*

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Abstract

*It is known that African soldiers who were conscripted by the imperialist rulers such as Britain and France contributed to the ending of World War II fought by the Axis countries across Europe, Africa and the East. However, very little literature exists on the contribution of these African soldiers and the experiences they gathered. Much literature does not also exist on the causes that eventually led to the reformation of their mind-set regarding their identity and position vis-à-vis the colonialists. Babatunde provides in his story, **Bombay's Republic**, a serious yet exciting and humorous insight into these untold stories of African soldiers. This paper uses the qualitative method of research and applies Julia Kristeva's intertextuality to the language and narrative techniques of the story. Through a literary analysis of the story, it is discovered that the social and political background of the text provides a depth of dialogic interplay. This dialogic interplay of texts informs the interpretations of the narrative in order to reveal possible meanings. And all these possible meanings speak to three pertinent issues: African identity, independence and the current state of leadership on the continent.*

Key words: Africa, Eurocentrism, identity, intertextuality, World War II.

Introduction

Various historical documents exist on how African countries contributed troops to participate in World War II. Countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Algeria were coerced by Britain and France, to contribute soldiers who fought and ended World War II. However, what has escaped these historical documentations is the social, cultural and psychological conditioning that these African soldiers underwent while fighting in the war. Very little literature also exists on the lessons they gathered which may have led to the transformation of their mind-set on their identity and position vis-a-vis the colonialists. Babatunde, in *Bombay's Republic*, provides a serious satire and a humorous insight into the untold psychological conditioning of African soldiers who fought in World War II.

This paper uses the qualitative methodology in which Kristeva's intertextuality is applied to the reading and analysis of both the primary text and secondary texts that echo the concerns raised by Babatunde in his narrative. By intertextuality, Kristeva refers to the intertextual connections between a text and another through 'citations, quotations, allusions, borrowings, adaptations, appropriations, parody, pastiche, imitation, and the like' (D'Angelo, 2010:33). The fusion could also be between a single text and other texts preceding it across time. The themes, language and narrative technique of the story constitute the focal point in this analysis. The relationship between the African socio-political reality and the themes raised in the story are also explained.

The paper addresses the preceding issues by providing an introduction, a literature review on intertextuality, a synopsis of the story, the analysis of the narrative and a conclusion. It is the position of this paper that the social and political backgrounds of the text provide a depth of dialogic interplay which informs both the diachronic (across time) and synchronic (within a specific time) interpretations of the text to reveal possibilities of meanings. All these possible meanings are related to the pertinent issues of African identity, independence and the current state of leadership on the continent

Literature Review

In the face of a rapidly developing research on literature and discourse analysis emerging from various disciplines of academia, it is not difficult expatiating the relatedness between the two terms. Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton (2015: 1) observe that many linguists define discourse broadly as ‘anything beyond the sentence’. Fasold (1990) also expands the study of discourse to include the study of language in totality. Observing many classes, patterns, ‘specific instances or spates of language’ use such as ‘discourses of power’, ‘discourses of racism’ inherent in the definitions given to the term ‘discourse’ by many critical theorists, Schiffrin et al (2015: 1) reveal in a broader light that discourse is a composite of ‘linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that together construct or reinforce...’ to a wider extent, possibilities of meanings that go beyond the limitations of a written text to include social, political, cultural, economic and possibly psychological contextual interpretations that may infiltrate the boundaries of a text. In other words, the meaning of a text does not emanate from the printed words alone. The context of the text, the allusions the text makes to other texts, situations and personalities all contribute to its meaning. Thus, every text is a continuation of a dialogue started by other authors at a particular time or across different times. The analysis, through which meaning is made from such dialogues present in every text or discourse, is what is then referred to as discourse analysis.

Literature, on the other hand, is a ‘criticism of life’ (Arnold, 1932: XVII). Agyekum (2007: 2) also agrees with Arnold by defining literature as ‘a representation of life experience ...linguistic creativity’. These life experiences and reality are expressed through language and since discourse analysis and intertextuality are both about language interpretation, it is natural to see the common denominator between these three terms as inherent in language itself. In the case of intertextuality, the similarity between it and literature is closer in that ‘literary texts attain their aesthetic qualities through their linkage to the past’ and ‘language is an accumulative structure’ (Assadi & Naamneh, 2018: 50). Just as intertextuality is interested in the connections and interconnections among texts, so is literature and it is appropriate to use such a theory to critique a literary text.

Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality has been largely inspired by ideas from Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin (1981) may have been the first author to have concretely expatiated his views on the dialogic relationships among texts in ‘Discourse in the Novel’. In identifying the simulations of dialogism that interplay among texts, Bakhtin proposes the terms monologism (a single and unified interpretation of a text), dialogism (the connections between a text and other texts and wording within a narrative), heteroglossia (the predominance of context over text), polyphony (multiplicity of voices brought together within the text) and intertextuality (the relation between utterances) (see Bakhtin 1981; 1984). In explaining the above terms, Bakhtin accounted for the differences between monologism and dialogism. To him, ‘a monologically understood world is ... a single and unified authorial consciousness’ (1984: 68). Thus, ‘a monologic discourse is a one in which only one point of view is represented, however diverse the

means of representation' (Hays, 2005: 7). On the contrary, dialogism, heteroglossia, polyphony and intertextuality represent, to a large extent, the accommodation of multiple voices and opinions which eventually lead to competition of voices with particular focus on 'the part language plays in putting the speakers in a diversity of social situations and word views which are present in any culture' (Nesari, 2015: 644).

Taking Bakhtin's ideas on dialogism as a prototype, Kristeva developed her own interpretations of Bakhtin's work. As Alfaro (1996) puts it, 'for Kristeva, Bakhtin represented the possibility of opening linguistics to society' (p.275). In Kristeva's own words, she states that 'Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them' (Bakhtin, 1980: 65). Kristeva's position on situating the text within society and history reveals the synchronic and diachronic approaches of interpretations as understood by readers.

To Kristeva, when intertextuality occurs along the horizontal axis, it means that it connects an author and a reader of a text. On the vertical axis, there is a connection between a text and other texts. What it means here is that every text is an independent and unified entity capable of making meaning and at the same time relying on a series of connections with other texts to make a meaning. The interpretation of these relationships along the vertical and horizontal axes need not be mutually exclusive. Both can be applied to the reading of a text.

In consideration of the fact that in recent times, the objects of literary criticisms have diversified extensively to include not only literary texts but also other wide ranging texts such as 'film, television, advertisement, music, visual images, the texts of popular culture, media texts and so forth', it has become necessary that a combination of theoretical approaches is adopted in a bid to secure the possibilities of meanings inherent in textual analysis (D'Angelo, 2010: 32). This is because pragmatically; 'there is no single method that can be used to analyse all rhetorical discourses'. (D'Angelo, 2010: 32) Theories from linguistics and stylistics can be used to analyse literary texts and vice versa. The same can be said of sociology and literature.

The gradual inclusion of innumerable approaches in the analysis of varying discourses has created a platform for a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of literary texts, and taking centre stage is intertextuality. Kristeva's definitions of intertextuality as 'the transposition of one (or many) sign system(s) into another' (Kisteva: 1984: 60) and as '...a constructed... mosaic of quotations and the absorption and transformation of any text into another' (Kisteva, 1986: 37) exemplifies, to a large extent, how texts are connected to other texts.

Situating this research within Kristeva's intertextuality, it is opined that Babatunde's *Bombay's Republic* incorporates elements of intertextuality to reveal some pertinent social, cultural and political issues (both past and contemporary) concerning the African continent. These issues include the metamorphosing ideology of African identity, the 'supposed' independence of African States and the state of leadership on the African continent.

Synopsis of the Narrative

Bombay's Republic is a mirror representation of the physical and psychological devastating effects of war on humanity. In the story, Bombay enlists in the British Frontier to fight the invading Armies of Hitler and the Axis powers in the hope of securing his beloved country's independence. Bombay ventures into the war front as a helpless novice who knows nothing of the colonialists' demeaning mentality concerning his position and identity as an African. He, however, emerges from the Burma War front a completely new person. He is now a changed person who neither accepts his inferior position nor tolerates the domination or superiority of the colonial overlords.

There is a cynical criticism of the psychological awakening experienced by most African countries such as Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, and Algeria in the middle of the twentieth century. It is also obvious that there is an indictment on the so-called independence and self-governance of most African countries. The past is synonymous with a complete lack of knowledge and awareness on the devastating consequences of colonialism on Africa and the present seems to question the certainty of the 'so-called' independence won by Africa. Are African countries truly independent in the face of neo-colonialism and all the conflicts and economic crises that have engulfed the continent as a result of the failure of its leadership 'to rise to the responsibility ... example'? (Achebe, 1983: 1).

African Identity from Eurocentric Lens

Bombay's contrasting exposure to innocence and experience before and after his engagement in the war as depicted in the story has its antecedence in Africa's past. His experience comes to represent the progressive changing phases of African mentality regarding the issue of identity. The European occupation of Africa brought in its wake the propagation of Eurocentrism. These Eurocentric ideas are geared towards fostering all forms of bondage, particularly the psychological, for Africans in general. Eurocentrism aims at imposing on Africans the denial of their own identity and in its stead, promulgating European heritage and cultural realities in the African. In their bid to entrench the perpetuity of Eurocentric ideals, nineteenth and twentieth century European scholars like Hugh Trevor-Roper (1965) and David Hume (1969) wrote extensively in a rather derogatory manner about everything African while lauding everything European. Believing that Africans have no history or heritage worthy of study or mention, Trevor-Roper (1965: 9) stated the following:

It is fashionable to speak today as if European History were devalued: as if historians in the past, have paid too much attention to it, and as if nowadays; we should pay less. Undergraduates ... history.

The comment by Trevor-Roper seeks to establish that Africans in general had neither culture nor history before their contact with the Europeans. Everything was a tabular rasa before the arrival of the Europeans and it is no wonder that writers like Conrad (2007) and others fictionally referred to Africa as *The Heart of Darkness*. However, both historical and cultural evidences in Alexandria in Egypt, in Egyptian hieroglyph and in other parts of Africa point to the fact that Africa had a culture and knew civilisation before the arrival of the Europeans. Trevor-Roper and others like him are quite aware of the inaccuracy of his comments but they are championing a Eurocentric ideology. They are doing their best to convince some clueless Africans and the rest of the world about the veracity of their stance.

Similarly, Hume's opinion of Africans is rather damning and debasing since he cites nature as his justification for the projection of his Eurocentric ideals. On this, he observes:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers among them, ... plainly (Hume, 1969: 208).

Hume's observation is clearly difficult to be admitted in its current state. For up to date, there is no scientific evidence that establishes that Blacks are biologically inept and incapable of

reasoning or that they are naturally born to be subservient to Europeans. Senghor of Senegal was a member of the Academie Française; and his area of specialisation was in French Grammar (Dathorne, 2001). French was not his mother tongue yet he mastered it better than some of the French themselves in order to deserve that honour in the Academie Française. The Mandelas, the Nkrumahs and the Ghandis have been described as ‘Great Men’, ‘Heroes of history’ or ‘Evil Men’ in different contexts (van Wyk, 2007:4). That they have not been labelled evil or incompetent in all contexts indicates that there is some good or competence in them. Such sweeping statements as the one coming from Hume have one objective in mind; to deny Africa’s achievement at the world stage and proffer illogical explanation for white supremacy over Blacks.

Interestingly, the kind of Eurocentrism promulgated by Europeans has largely been psychologically inclined and subtle, yet its influence on many Africans is rather immense and efficacious. This is because both the unconscious and conscious mind-set of many indigenous Africans have been tuned to wholly accept European superiority without question. Bombay’s innocence before his participation in the war exemplifies this:

Before Bombay’s departure, when everything in the world was locked in its individual box, he could not have believed such metamorphosis was possible. A man was still a man and a leopard a leopard while old jailhouse was a forsaken place not fit for human habitation. A white man was the District Officer ...possible. (Babatunde, 2012: 10)

Bombay’s mentality on the pre-eminence of the white man and the subservience of the African indicates his naivety and innocence. It is also a further indication of Africa’s distant colonial past when the role of leadership was deemed the natural inheritance of the colonialist. Thus, through ideas such as those reflected in Hume’s comments, Trevor-Roper and the early missionary activities in Africa, Africans were convinced about the ‘uncivilised’ nature of their culture, the need for them to turn the other cheek when one is slapped and the ‘fact’ that it is natural for the Blacks to be led by whites. After all, even in the church in *Houseboy* by Oyono (1990), Blacks are segregated from whites and the latter are made to take the front row seats while the former are seated at the back.

Bombay’s susceptibility to the Eurocentric influence on him may be deemed highly unconscious since he himself, to a large extent, appears unaware of it. The same, however, cannot be said of other characters in other texts (which inform the current text). These other characters’ holistic acceptance and practice of Eurocentric ideals reveal their conscious assimilation of European heritage and their diabolic rejection of their African identity leading to their unhomeliness; ‘to feel not at home even in your own home ...psychological refugee’ (Tyson, 2006: 421). Such texts also reveal the extent to which the complete assimilation of Eurocentric values impact negatively on African identity.

A careful study of the film *Heritage Africa* (1988) by Kwaw Ansah and its lead character, Kwesi Atta Bosomefi, reveal that the film’s content sheds light on the nature and constituents of Eurocentrism. Bosomefi’s portrait also sheds light on the character traits of Bombay. Thus the two characters’ Eurocentric perception of the supremacy of their European overlords is the same. The European’s assertion of their sense of superiority is exposed in the first scene of the film when viewers encounter a European priest who says the closing prayer of a mass in the presence of numerous African Christian converts; ‘Great and manifold are the blessings which Almighty God the father of all mercies has bestowed upon the people of England when first he sent his

Majesty's Royal persons to rule and reign over his subjects' (Ansah, 1988). Again, their denigration of the African culture and all it stands for is portrayed in their indoctrination of African school children. The children are ordered on a daily basis to renounce the culture which defines their identity; 'A Christian child must not watch any festival or anything of the earthly god. That is for pagans, and pagans are not children of God, they belong to Satan, and they will go to hell when they die' (Ansah, 1988). Like the school children, Bosomefi similarly, after years of indoctrination, becomes ashamed of his cultural heritage as an African.

Bosomefi, consequently changes his name to sound more European – Quincy Arthur Bosomfield. His dedication to the European occupation as well as his European education and his progress within the colonial administration result in his detachment from his African roots. His metamorphosis from his African self to a Eurocentric personality causes a total change in his identity such that he does not fit into the Ghanaian cultural space he finds himself in. This leads to an estrangement between himself and all who matter: his nuclear family, his extended family, and the Africans he serves as a colonial officer. The fact that Bosomfield lynches his son for attending an African festivity and neglects to take him to the hospital leading to the boy's death indicates that in order to please the European overloads, Eurocentric Africans would sacrifice anything including family. In much the same way, Bombay is presented as an obedient servant and a faithful believer of white supremacy over Blacks in the story up to the point where he fights side by side with some of the whites in the war. However, it is only after the war that our protagonist becomes a transformed person due to the conditions he undergoes at the war front.

Bosomfield only differs from Bombay in that Bosomfield's transformation and assimilation process is conscious and intentional whereas Bombay's acceptance of Eurocentric ideology is presented as based on naivety on his part. In his naivety, Bombay comes to accept the lordship of the Europeans and further claims that 'a white man [is] the District Officer who [goes] by in an impressive white jacket and a black [is] the Native police constable who salute[s] as the white man passed ... otherwise' (Babatunde, 2012: 10). In spite of this, the epiphany both Bombay and Bosomfield experience later in their lives sheds off the scales from their eyes to make them appreciate the deception that underpins the foundations of Eurocentrism. For Bombay, his epiphany becomes evident in his realisation that the Europeans are not better off than he is. They also share in the physiognomies and oddities common to all men regardless of their race or heritage. Better still, many Africans like him seem to have the deftness to handle the extremes of life-threatening shocks comparatively better than their European foils. A typical example is the newly arrived captain from Europe whose evident 'dismissive bossiness' and braggart are humorously exposed. The exposure is done to reveal his pathetic faint-heartedness on the event of the gruelling death of a colleague compatriot:

The captain's condition deteriorated. He stayed in bed all day, shivering and whimpering. Everything terrified him including daylight, and he kept his face shrouded with a blanket. The stench reeking ... darkness (Babatunde, 2012: 18).

This experience becomes the point of reverse; it becomes the abrupt epiphany and the stage of anagnorisis that changes Bombay's perception about the colonialist's superiority. He understands that their vulnerability could be as abject as that of any other person, and that they too are capable of exhibiting the basest of behaviours without any sense of moral superiority when expediency dictates the pace:

Bombay was deeply shocked by the captain's fate. He remembered the white-jacketed District Officer back home with his manicured nails and the imperious airs of one in absolute control of the cosmos, the white man oozing superiority over the Khaki-clad Native Police ... open (Babatunde, 2012: 19).

Bombay's newly acquired knowledge and discovery awakens in him a new sense of pride. The initial surprise he expresses upon his hearing of the entire racist and demeaning chants of the Europeans about the Africans (that the African soldiers are anthropophagi; that they possess tails) no longer becomes a shock to him. Ironically, however, he sarcastically employs the same tools of psychological oppression and uses them to assert his new-found superiority over the whites. In a conversation Bombay engages with his superior European officer, Bombay learns that the corpses of African soldiers are diced by the Japanese because of their belief that 'black soldiers resurrect' (Babatunde, 2012: 20). Upon this discovery, Bombay incredulously asks, '...Every one of us?... Just like Lazarus?... and like Jesus Christ, your saviour?' (Babatunde, 2012: 20) Bombay's comparison of himself and other African soldiers to Jesus Christ the 'saviour of the Whites' as he claims is simply humorous and sarcastic. It is intended to prove that the worth of the black man well exceeds the expectations and opinions of the whites because like their saviour, black people also assume the deific attribute of immortality accorded Christ. It comes as no surprise therefore that Bombay decides not to allow himself to be subjected to death or any inhuman treatment anymore. Bombay kills the Bombardier who goes on a killing and injuring spree in the barracks in search of vengeance for the plight of unrequited love he finds himself in.

In an allusion, Bombay recounts a similar experience his countryman, Okonkwo, encounters when he also kills an arrogant constable of the imperialists. This intertextual reference to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in which Okonkwo (Achebe, 1983) gladly murders himself to avoid placing himself at the mercies of the European imperialists proves that like Okonkwo, Bombay will stop at nothing in a bid to assert and defend his manhood, dignity and pride. He will not accept Eurocentrism especially when he has discovered the 'supposed' myth of European superiority. For him, 'things would never be locked in boxes again and that consciousness, the irreversible awareness handed out by charity..., was enough recompense from war...' (Babatunde, 2012: 23). Thus, Bombay has now unlocked the mystery about Eurocentrism and come to realise that it is not everything European that is superior to everything African. In much the same way, leadership over the Black race by the whites is not ordained by God. It is only a matter of politics. This is why he creates his own republic in which he will no longer be answerable to any white man.

Bombay's experience is similar to Kwesi Atta Bosomefi in *Heritage Africa* (1988) who learns through the hard way that a person is in no way better off assimilating other people's culture than remaining true to himself when his insistence on maintaining his Eurocentric ideals causes him to lose his son, his marriage, his family's most treasured heirloom and his own life. After encountering his moment of truth, he regrettably confesses his disgust at his own actions to his European overloads:

I think a man must know where he comes from to help him find his bearing... Your Excellency, when I was born I was named Kwasi Atta Bosomefi, and my name had meaning: Kwasi means Sunday born. Atta means a twin; Bosomefi means an ...heritage... (Ansah, 1988).

Political Leadership in Africa after Independence

Bosomfield's life may have ended after his sordid encounter with Eurocentrism but not Bombay's. Luckily for Bombay, he survives the war and returns home to tell his story but not without a tinge of magical realism. Refusing to satiate the curiosity of his adult compatriots about his experiences from World War II, Bombay turns to his very young audience as he appropriates the accounts of his war experiences interspersed with his exaggerated fantasies. Thus, Bombay employs magical realism as a narrative strategy to negotiate the spaces between his reality and his illusions, making his narratives 'stretch the boundaries of so-called normative reality' (McLaren, 2008: 151). He does this to paint a picturesque view of his heroic exploits and to assert his self-worth; in other words, his idealised self:

The children were pleased to hear him narrate his barehanded battles with crocodiles lurking beneath the muddy waters of Irrawaddy, the veteran whispering to them that the females had gold nuggets for eyes and the males stared coldly at the world with fist-sized diamonds which,...has to offer (Babatunde, 2012: 26).

This becomes his mark of rebirth and his self-reclamation. The passion that comes with the transformation and the renewal of his mind-set lead Bombay on to transform his psychological independence into a physical one when he finally occupies the jail house and declares 'his person and his house thenceforth independent from the British Empire'. (Babatunde, 2012: 26). Bombay's declaration of independence and his political awareness of self-rule is reminiscent of a similar undertaking by Fela Anikulapo Kuti who declared his Kalakuta Republic independent of the Federal State of Nigeria in 1975 after he had been arrested and beaten by the Nigerian Military for smoking Marijuana (Awuni, 2014). A look into the history of India reveals that Fela's 'Kalakuta Republic' is a parody of the historical Black Hole of Calcutta. This was a prison in India which housed a number of European defenders of Calcutta after the capture of the city. It was Nawab Siraj al-Dawlah of Bengal who spearheaded the capture and the surrender of the East India Company's garrison under the self-proclaimed governor of Bengal John Z. Holwell on June 20, 1756 (Augustyn, Bauer, & Duignan 2018).

According to Awuni (2014: 33), 'Fela decided to name his communal enclave Kalakuta Republic as defiance against established state authority'. Veal (2000) also asserts that 'Fela named his communal compound "Kalakuta Republic", proclaiming it as autonomous zone free from the laws and jurisdiction of Nigeria, opened to people of African descent worldwide, especially to the persecuted Africans' (p.143). Fela himself does not shy away from giving his real intent for setting up his independent enclave:

It was when I was at the police cell at the C.I.D (Central Intelligence Division) Headquarters in Lagos; the cell I was in was named 'The Kalakuta Republic' by the prisoners. I found out when I went to East Africa that 'Kalakuta' is a Swahili word that ... with them (Collins, 1985: 120).

In that regard, whereas the old Calcutta represents bondage, the parodied version symbolises freedom and defiance even in the midst of suppression. As observed from the above quotation, it is Fela's radicalism and his disgust for the absurd complexities that had become of post independent Nigeria and Africa, and his desire to see and experience 'the supposedly glorious and ideal nature of African pre-colonial past' in post-colonial Nigeria that lead him to establish his Kalakuta Republic (Awuni, 2014: 34).

Fela harboured a lot of anger and contempt for the Nigerian central government and for African governments in general because try as he may, he could not fathom why 'in spite of the availability of resources both natural and human', the leaders could not develop the continent especially when colonialism had effectively ended (Awuni, 2014: 35). As such, Fela not only attacked the central government's administration of Nigeria but all other institutions such as the military. Similarly, in Bombay's case, he attacks both the colonial administration and their African stooges who consciously aid the European occupation. His attack riddled with a tinge of sarcasm and humour on the District Commissioner in his reference to him as a 'clown', a 'goat' and 'white witch' for rearing lots of cats and the disrespectful treatment he gives the African tax collectors by urinating on them indicates Bombay's refusal to revere the colonial administration. Fela Anikulapo Kuti's anger may be expressed towards the post-colonial administration of Nigeria. Bombay, however, directs his against the colonial administration and the story at this point then serves as a parody of the biography of F. A. Kuti.

Besides the historical antecedence *Bombay's Republic* shares with F. A. Kuti's biography, the story again bears a resemblance to Biyi Bandele's (2007) *Burma Boy* which depicts the life and experiences of Ali Banana in the Burma war. Not only does *Bombay's Republic* parody *Burma Boy*, it further offers itself to a symbolic interpretation as regards the idea of independence and statehood as practised in Africa. The problem is that though most African nations are independent on paper, they are still under the yoke of neo-colonialism due to the greed and leadership style of some African leaders.

It is common knowledge that very few African presidents willingly leave office when their term is due. Many of them invariably prolong their stay in power, and in due course, turn out to be dictatorial. Bombay's abundant titles lampoon such African dictators. In the story, Bombay heaps upon himself titles such as '...Lord of all Flora and Fauna. Scourge of the British Empire. Celestial Guardian of the Sun. Moon and Stars... Father of the Internet'(Babatunde, 2012:32).

Naturally, history uncovers many past and present African leaders who also allowed their egos and their sentiments to override their judgements and turned them into the worst versions of themselves. Ohene (2015) gives a list of a series of African presidents who, drunken with power, appropriated several titles for themselves in their bid to prove their superiority and sustain their ambition of perpetuating themselves in power. The former Gambian president was to be called 'His Excellency Sheik Professor Alhaji Dr Yahya AJJ Jammeh Bibili Mansa'. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, similarly, was addressed as 'Osagyefo (a chief's title said to mean Redeemer) Dr Kwame Nkrumah-Life President of the Republic of Ghana' after independence. Again, 'the sergeant-major-turned-president of Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo, Joseph Mobutu', took the trend a scale higher to become 'Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Waza Banga' ...Zimbabwe Defence Forces' at different functions in his country (Ohene, 2015). Most of the presidents mentioned here are synonymous with corruption and bad leadership. They invariably left their people poorer than when they took over the helm of affairs in their various countries.

Babatunde parodies these names and titles with an intent of ridiculing the greed that underlies their agenda. Such presidents under the guise of alleviating the challenges of their people from external pressures rather appropriate to themselves unrivalled authority and power. Consequently, the genuineness of the independence such autocratic leaders declare from their persecutors remain a sham because they themselves practise vice while they hypocritically preach peace and perpetuate themselves in power. Though this attitude of obsession with power in most African leaders does not constitute neo-colonialism, it nonetheless questions the true

meaning of independence and also facilitates the festering of neo-colonialist tendencies (Sanka, Gustafson-Asamoah & Issaka, 2018).

Conclusion

Through a literary analysis of the narrative, it is concluded that Babatunde's story echoes other texts and continues a dialogue that has been started by other African authors and activists. An intertextual interpretation of the story reveals that it speaks to the themes of African identity, African independence and the state of leadership on the continent. These three issues are given expression in the narrative through Bombay's impression about the whites before the war, and his experience with the whites during and after the war. Criticism is therefore directed not only at Eurocentric ideology which seeks to deny African identity and achievement at the world stage but also at the many African leaders who do not use the independence of their countries to seek prosperity for all but rather impoverish the continent through greed, corruption and mismanagement.

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