PERFORMING THE GRUELLING JOURNEY OF UHURU: A DIACHRONIC EXAMINATION OF POSTCOLONIAL POLITICS IN FRANCIS IMBUGA'S *BETRAYAL IN THE CITY* (1976), *THE RETURN OF MGOFU* (2011) AND *THE GREEN CROSS OF KAFIRA* (2013)

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis closely examines postcolonial politics in Francis Imbuga's *Betrayal in the City* (1976), *The Return of Mgofu* (2011) and *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013). The study critically uses the postcolonial perspective to assess the three plays diachronically. The postcolonial stance situates the plays within the Kenyan post-independence landscape thus establishing a strong discursive connection between theatre and the postcolonial society.

The central inquiry in this research tries to construct a postcolonial dramaturgical viewpoint. This viewpoint comparatively examines how these plays converse with major historical and political events in the Kenyan postcolony. The time and place which the plays inhabit is used to illustrate how the discourse of *uhuru* (liberation) in the post-independence society can be augmented through theatre in understanding fundamental postcolonial dynamics like national identity, ethnicity and politics. Theatre as a vibrant socio-cultural discourse occupies a paramount position in postcolonial literacies. Focusing on the selected plays by Francis Imbuga, this research depicts how drama maps out the socio-political experience in an attempt to advance alternative ways for navigating some pressing challenges that face the Kenyan postcolony.

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INTRODUCTION

The direction of this study is greatly informed by the central postulation of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga in his autobiographical account entitled *Not Yet Uhuru* (1967). Oginga maintains that Kenya's independence is rather an on-going struggle and that actual freedom is yet to be achieved. He reminds the postcolonial Kenyan society that "Our independence struggle was not meant to enrich a minority. It was to cast off the yoke of colonialism and of poverty. It is not a question of individuals enriching themselves but of achieving national effort."(310) Oginga seeks to build a consciousness that is grounded in national cohesion with an aim to stave off debilitative neo-colonial attitudes, habits and forces standing in the way of full actualisation of freedom. He argues that within a Kenyan national discourse, "we don't want the cries of *wapi uhuru* (*where is uhuru*) to drown the cheers" (310). '*Uhuru*' is a Swahili word which means freedom and has been conceptualised within the postcolonial scholarship in Kenya to connote 'liberation', 'search for independence' and 'attainment of an informed postcolonial consciousness'.

This thesis will examine how the notion of *uhuru* is explored in theatre, specifically, how the selected plays by Francis Imbuga perform the on-going postcolonial socio-political struggles when comparatively examined in relation to historical and political events. This inquiry conceptualises how time and place in a theatrical form instrumentally frame the postcolonial dramaturgical perspective in showing how theatre can be a resourceful avenue in building and promoting a national discourse. At the end of the thesis is an index outlining major historical and political events. These events are immensely relevant for dramaturgical arguments that support the central propositions of this research.

About Francis Imbuga and His Contribution to Kenyan Postcolonial Theatre.

Francis Imbuga is the most prolific playwright in Kenya. Some of his major dramatic works include; *The Married Bachelor* (1972), *Betrayal in the City* (1976), *Game of Silence* (1977), *The Successor* (1978), *Man of Kafira* (1984), *Aminata* (1988), *The Return of Mgofu* (2011) and *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013). His plays have been known to be immensely relevant in advancing a number of pressing issues concerning the Kenyan postcolonial struggles. What makes Imbuga's stage drama key to Kenyan society is how the playwright inserts the nation's experience in the plays. He has been influential in shaping how playwrights who came after him approach drama as a social and political device due to his dedication to craft a form of theatre that appeals to the Kenyan audience. On this accord, each of Imbuga's plays can be seen to be in conversation with political and social phenomena in the country. For instance, *The Return of Mgofu* enables the Kenyan audience to reflect on the deleterious nature of ethnic politics. Following the abolishment of the one party system in Kenya in 1991, the entire nation is made to subscribe into a dark nightmare that in the course of fifteen years translates to a gory genocide. The play becomes a fertile ground to discuss the peril of ethnicization of politics in cultures that are ethnically diverse. Incorporating this discussion in theatre thus enables the Kenyan audience to reflect on ways to foster unity, cohesion and true nationalism.

Imbuga was born on 2nd February 1947 and passed on in 18th November 2012. He was educated in the prestigious Alliance High School (the same school Ngugi wa Thiongó (widely renowned writer and scholar), Mwai Kibaki (Third president of Kenya) and Mbiyu Koinange (the first Kenyan African to hold a degree) attended) from 1964 to1969 after which he joined Nairobi University in 1970 as an Honours Student in Literature. His recognition as an artist started off in this period following his engagement with Voice of Kenya's (V.O.K) television where he wrote short radio plays that earned him money for his upkeep while in the

university. He was an outstanding student and after his undergraduate studies he did his master's degree in the Literature Department at Nairobi University graduating in 1975. His thesis was entitled *Techniques of Improvised Drama.* Later in the late 1980s to early 1990s he successfully pursued his PhD in English at the University of Iowa.

His contribution to Kenyan drama is immense and his plays have been staged in Kenyan schools, at the Kenya National Theatre, and in drama festivals, universities, and other institutions of higher learning. Imbuga has also authored two famous novels. One of them is *A Shrine of Tears* (1993) which Dr Roger Kurtz in the forward to *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013) terms as a "roman à clef" since it delves into the turmoil that surrounded the Kenyan National Theatre in 1970s and 1980s at a time when there was much tension between the state and theatre. The other novel entitled *The Miracle of Rimera* (2004) revisits the debilitating scourge of HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Additionally, Imbuga worked as an actor and actively wrote for television and radio drama. As noted by John Ruganda in a comprehensive biographical account of Imbuga's journey as an artist

> [He has featured in] T.V. series including *Peter, Paul, Mary and Jane,* written in Kiswahili language and televised in 1973; *Day of the Tree,* commissioned by the Kenyan Department of Forestry and sponsored by several diplomatic missions in Kenya (1982); the thirteen episode series, *Men of Office* (1983); *Fear Within,* and *Home with Bananas* (1986). Imbuga has also written educational radio drama, with fellow lecturer Chris Wang'ombe of the department of Communication and Technology, Kenyatta University. The most memorable are *You and Your Health,* and *Food and Nutrition.*
>
> (xii)

His diverse experience set him as a prominent figure in Kenyan theatre and in the course of time earned him respect and vast recognition in East Africa. Some of his plays travel and transverse beyond Kenya because the issues/questions they raise relate across the East Africa region mapping shared political and social experiences. For example, *The Return of Mgofu* (2011) portrays the recurrent problem of politically ignited societal divisions. This agenda is

relevant to the Kenyan, Rwandan and South Sudan's audience because all these three regions have experienced civil war as a result of ethnic divisions brought about by corrupt, ambitious and incompetent politicians. Moreover, Imbuga is also an accomplished theatre educator who has taught in the Literature Department at Kenyatta University as senior lecturer and later as Professor.

Imbuga's works have played a significant role in the development of Kenyan postcolonial drama. In days when the government of President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi (the second president of Kenya ruling from 1978 to 2002) censored and oppressed artists, Imbuga's work was able to be staged since his political discussions were presented in a way that was not overtly bashing the ruling regime. In my opinion, Imbuga can be said to have opened up the Kenyan stage. He employs a theatricality that depicts metaphorically the political challenges in a postcolonial state and raises salient questions about the nature of power. He has done so by bringing in a number of perspectives that make the Kenyan postcolonial experience much more understandable within the performance space. Imbuga's thematic and stylistic approaches are able to push the debate among his spectators further into vital interrogation on the postcolonial slants and experiences.

Imbuga as a Political Postcolonial Dramatist.

The political nature of Imbuga's plays can be approached based on the issues they address and how they present them. Imbuga employs socio-political metaphors in his drama devising instrumental means through which the audience is able to identify his political commentary. Imbuga's stagecraft invites an intellectual engagement because his take on the prevailing national discourse is interwoven in intricate stage metaphors rife with humour. Some of Imbuga's plays like The Kafiran Trilogy (*Betrayal in the City, Man of Kafira and The Green Cross of Kafira*) overtly embody political debates which push for a number of ways to review and reconsider prevalent political events in Kenyan history. There is a

dominant political message that portrays the Kenyan postcolonial experience from the late twentieth century to the early twenty-first century. However, despite the fact that the Kafiran plays are considered highly political, they are written in highly metaphorical ways that open them to a number of interpretations. For instance, *The Man of Kafira* begins with a wedding scene which entails the brides butchering their grooms in a meta-theatrical frame. The opening scene of the play presents an image of betrayal of the husbands by the wives. The scene is based on a play being rehearsed by Grabio, Taget, Helina and Desi as Osman plays the director. The characters in the play take on roles that add a different meta-theatrical dimension on the meaning of the play. Beginning the play with a meta-theatrical frame depicts layered metaphors of power within a struggling state. A substantial amount of the play takes place in exile in a nation called Abiara where Boss (the previous ruler of Kafira) has been exiled after a revolutionary civil revolt overthrew him at the end of *Betrayal in the City*.

In comparison to other Kenyan playwrights like Ngugi wa Thiongó who overly advance politically based discussions harshly, Imbuga, mingles his stagecraft with layered metaphors and humour. John Ruganda claims that Imbuga "*tells the truth laughingly"* (iii) through dramatic strategies that stage the Kenyan experience without excoriating the dominant power structures. His plays raise discussions on matters concerning political power without exposing Imbuga to friction with the state. Ruganda portrays how Imbuga uses alienation by the use of the figure of the African traditional elder as an alienated figure of authority alongside many other tools of 'transparent concealment' (1). The transparent concealments entail dramatic choices that highlight prevailing political challenges in an indirect manner. For instance, in *The Successor* (1979), Imbuga uses comic figures as "marginal characters […] burdened with the function of articulating unpalatable truths" (9).

In the play, Segasega (Emperor Chonda's food-taster and joker) who in the eyes of the community is considered mentally impaired, is fully aware of all the problems facing Masero.

An examination of Imbuga's political approaches in his plays calls for an understanding of the techniques which set him aside as a unique postcolonial dramatist. On a comparative basis, looking at *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977) which Ngugi wa Thiongó co-wrote with Ngugi wa Mirii, shows the uniqueness of Imbuga's political drama. *I Will Marry When I Want* adopts a realistic approach that utilises historical figures like the Mau Mau freedom fighters, mentions known places like Mombasa, Nairobi and employs well-known political terms like '*uhuru*' in order to paint an identifiable plight to its audience. The stage here acts as a critical site to examine the conditions of the working class in the period following independence. The Kenyan audience would have recognized the brutality of the owners, the institutions and personalities discussed in the play. For instance; the sense of characterisation and setting in the play magnified the protracted exploitation that had become the commonplace for ordinary middle-class and lower-class Kenyans. Wa Thiongó and wa Mirii cast the less privileged rural peasant Kigúúnda against the powerful elite Ahab Kíoi to sensitize the audience on the betrayal that followed Kenya's independence.

On the other hand, Imbuga's drama predominantly employs witticism, as well as absurd events (events not governed by the logic of causality or logically negated like the death of grooms in a wedding as seen in *The Man of Kafira*) and syntactically wrong utterances (Mulili in *Betrayal in the City* speaks a 'broken English') to succinctly point at the stark difference between educated elites and poor ordinary men, in order to deliver the strong intent of his plays that entails a critical exploration of postcolonial relations. Imbuga considers the stage as a place of negotiation not just outright criticism on what/who needs to be corrected in the society. Ruganda quotes Imbuga defending his dramatic techniques at the Second National Workshop for Writers and Illustrators by noting that back in the day, the

crafters of oral narratives found ways to criticize evil doers in a manner that left them "feeling secure with the knowledge that if they reformed, they would be accepted back into the society." (*Telling* xxi) As an artist, Imbuga considers theatre as instrumental in mending society. He advocates for a theatre that does not just excoriate wrongdoers but rather provides a possibility to rehabilitate them back into the community. In this sense, Imbuga's plays are optimistic despite the seriousness of the concerns they address.

So, what makes Politics central in Kenyan Postcolonial Theatre?

The political nature of Kenyan postcolonial theatre stems from a long tradition of pre-colonial communal practices with the society. Theatre or theatre-like performances, then, were grounded on the use of platforms that brought the community together to interrogate and promote certain practices that were meant to promote the cohesion of the society as a whole. Wa Thiongó refers to drama in pre-colonial Kenya as "part and parcel of the rhythm of daily and seasonal life of the community" (*Decolonising* 37). This vital contact of drama with the life of the community became an integral part of the postcolonial drama in that it took on the role of questioning the postcolonial condition. Post-independence politics becomes a major drive for playwrights, novelists and scholars as they attempt to build a national identity alongside fostering nationalism and cultural development. At this critical time, theatre turns into a forum for activism, nationalism and education. The state for that reason becomes closely affiliated with theatre. The issues that inform postcolonial dramaturgical perspectives affect the society's relationship with the state. For that reason, theatre and the state have had recurrent contentions since the artist's position in a politically challenged state is seen as a threat and an antagonist.

Theatre and the state in the postcolony challenge each other. By definition, the state is a political entity that wa Thiongó notes "performs power" (*Enactment* 12) while theatre is an imaginative and artistic device that through performance invites theatre-goers to initiate the

ways in which certain events (like post-independence relationships and systems) can be examined and understood. Wa Thiongó maintains that "the war between art (theatre) and the state is really a struggle between the power of performance in the arts and the performance of power by the state—in short the enactment of power"(*Enactment* 12). Wa Thiongó goes on and clarifies this proposition by pointing out that the artist (the playwright) and the state contend for a "common target" (*Enactment* 12) which is the audience. With the performance (theatre) relying on "place, content, audience, time and goal (purpose)" (*Enactment* 12) as Wa Thiongó insists, we can then arrive at a conclusion that the very nature that informs and sustains what we call theatre as an artistic discipline places it at a prominent position in society. This position inevitably produces an effect within the political domain. In a number of ways the state in an oppressive polity reacts by censoring or attacking the artist. Therefore, the artist wields immense power based on what he/she produces for the audience to consume. From this stance, we can cogently state that political affairs prevailing in the time a certain dramatic piece is composed inform its dramaturgical standpoints. However, what inherently makes theatre political is not only the contention with the state but also what we understand by the term 'political'. In Margot Morgan's words: "Politics is intersubjectivity, communication, and the commitment to some form of community. It involves taking responsibility for the effects of one's actions, and a rejection of determinism in all its guises, whether religious, scientific, or deriving from some other source…" (5) From the observation, the depiction of political stances in artistic creations is grounded on the ways that art interrogates, criticizes, promotes and challenges certain social dynamics. In theatre, the subjectivity that emanates from the engagement of the audience with the stage (re)presentation pushes one to (re)consider epistemological and experiential boundaries (like nationalism, colonialism). There is something powerful about theatrical (re)presentation that investigates the relationship between spaces and bodies framed by a particular time. Theatre

perpetuates a continuous inquiry on social relationships, structures and events. From a dramaturgical standpoint, the way theatre is tied to a society forms a particular dynamic that makes it an instrumental social device. Theatre can be used to create a consciousness that both in the long-term and short-terms transforms a particular take in the society. In one way or another, a theatrical experience is a transforming experience. Bertolt Brecht points out that for an effective theatrical experience, "human behaviour is shown as alterable; man himself as dependent on certain political and economic factors and at the same time as capable of altering them" (86) Politics shape the daily lives of human beings because the policies and structures regulate how people exist in social spaces. The theatrical platform thus becomes a springboard that is accessible and can be used to ignite, catalyse and produce various forces that shape the functioning of the society.

This Study: Towards an African Postcolonial Dramaturgy.

My main argument in this study is that the stage is a crucial place where time, place, content and form interact to bring us closer to our socio-cultural realities. A theatrical engagement inevitably ends up challenging us to (re)evaluate the complexities of our socio-cultural position. Drama explores sociological, economic and political situations through theatrical notions like characterization, contextualisation and themes. It is thus overt that each individual who experiences a play might walk out of the theatre incited, challenged, awakened and cognisant of the political, sociological and economic content that informs a given production. Theatre dwells at the heart of cultural appreciation, entertainment, education, building a political consciousness, religion and exploration of social realities. It is meant to raise questions among the audience members. The dialogue between theatre and society becomes a pathway that can be used to comprehend ideological and discursive paradigms of a specific historical period.

This study aims to build a postcolonial dramaturgical viewpoint that can be used to examine Imbuga's plays in relation to their commentary on the Kenyan national discourse. In the postcolonial Kenyan theatre, dramatists have embraced the political, economic and historical experience as the foundation of their plays. The realities experienced in the postcolony cannot be extricated from the historical basis upon which the society is established. Therefore, part and parcel of the attempt to convey the intricate nature of the post-independence society is by paying homage to the continued interplay between colonialism and the legacy of colonialism in the postcolony. Wa Thiongó and Micere Mugo revive the widely echoed and revered Mau Mau freedom fighter, General Dedan Kimathi, in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) to remind the society that the decolonisation process is yet to be successful. Wahome Mutahi and Titi Wainaina in *Jomo Kenyatta the Man* (2000) resurrect Kenyatta within the contemporary twenty-first Kenyan audience to show the dismay that has befallen Kenya as a nation. *Jomo* shines a light on the political aspect of Kenyatta figure rather than the personal dimension thus creating a pedestal to examine crucial political concerns in Kenya at the time.

Ali Mazrui in *Kilio cha Haki* (*A Cry for Justice*) (1981) uses Delamoni to depict the collusion of the bourgeoisie with the government to exploit the working class in the post-independence period. Imbuga debunks the ethnic politics within the Kenyan political scene by portraying ethnic affiliations as impediments towards the realisation of *uhuru*. He dramatizes ethnicity within the African political scene as a deceptive manoeuvre by the ruling elites in *The Return of Mgofu* (2011) insisting that the roots of true nationalism are in the love of one's nation through tolerance of all forms of national diversity. Imbuga specifically builds a composite image of an African postcolonial state (Mdinka) that has deteriorated socially, economically and politically because of the choice that was made by the forefathers of the current generation. The playwright calls the choice to give in to political incitement as

'madness' because it made the residents of Mdinka lose their humanity over political ambitions. This play is a capstone of Imbuga's voice as a respected native intellectual in the twenty-first Kenyan society. Julius Sigei a blogger for *The Daily Nation* terms *The Return of Mgofu* as "a compelling play that brings to the fore the recurrent ethnic animosity and intolerance which continues to ravage many African countries." Reporting on the recognition the play garnered, Sigei places the play at the forefront in the Kenyan national discourse in a period when ethnicization of politics has become a relevant discussion. Historical experience has been an instrumental part of Kenyan postcolonial political theatre.

Therefore, political theatre in the postcolonial society can be viewed as an avenue that enables its audience to focus on certain political agendas and be informed. Theatre has been used by the postcolonial dramatist to challenge figures of authority alongside launching a campaign that promotes reflection on ways to revive the deferred dream of independence. Playwrights often encourage their audience on a possible way forward by promoting criticism, meaningful discussions, and a safe space to seek solutions. For instance; at the end of *I Will Marry When I Want,* Gicaamba leads a political vow propounding that; "Our nation took the wrong turn/When some of us forgot these vows. /They forgot all about the people's movement […]/They turned into sucking, grabbing and taking away/…" (113). The stage proposes viewpoints that are meant to expose the audience members to what is at stake. In the case of *I Will Marry When I Want,* the playwrights insist on making the society aware that the African coloniser needs to be deracinated for the society to be able to move forward.

The stage in postcolonial cultures thus is charged with the responsibility to draw in the spectators and empower them to see the possibilities for reform. Morgan observes that, "theatre can serve as a window into the life-world of a specific time and place, providing a glimpse of a culture's value systems, underlying ideologies, and understandings of human nature and the human condition." (16) This paramount annotation points to the very

observation I made earlier on the parameters that activate the political dimension of theatre. The discussions that a particular play ignites bring us closer to understanding the socio-political state of a particular society.

Peter Brooks insists that the stage can be a "very special place" by the way it functions as a "magnifying glass, and also as a reducing lens" (111). For that matter, the very nature of drama that galvanises political concerns is grounded on the intimacy that is established with the audience. This close relationship facilitates the ability of theatre to comment on political issues in a discursive way. As a vital instrument in the postcolonial society, political theatre advances critical views and conditions that move the audience to respond. Dealing with politics allows theatre to dwell in a given social space and influence the political sphere. Wa Thiongó maintains that the performance space contains within it "memories and longings" that permit it to be "a site of physical, social, and psychic forces in the society." (*Enactment* 13) Since theatre projects various human experiences voiced by the artists (playwright, dramaturge, actor or performer) through text and performance, the stage is rendered political and thus powerful. While advancing a discussion on African theatre, wa Thiong'o points out that "[From the Kamiriithu Educational and Cultural Centre] there was a move towards the people and the gradual growing confidence in people..." (*Decolonising* 60) Centrally, theatre is always meant to empower people by making them aware of certain factors that dictate the functioning and state of the society.

In his examination of Imbuga's plays, Ruganda argues that Imbuga engages profoundly with the political climate of Kenya. He deems Imbuga responsible for politically awakening the audience through various dramatic devices. Ruganda discusses how Imbuga employs alienation through the deployment of impactful stage metaphors that capacitates the discussion of postcolonial conditions. The metaphors of the 'postcolony,' which Achille Mbembe qualifies as the postcolonial African subject in his/her present world (17), enables us

to view Imbuga's plays as instrumental in promoting indispensable socio-political discussions among postcolonial audiences. Theatre as an important social discourse proposes ways on how to move forward after interacting with fictionalised realities in a given 'place in time' that are inevitably bound to invite a continued contemplation based on the challenges in leadership, economy and identity. Imbuga's strategy to distance his plays from the polity through the creation of metaphors and allegories sparks important debates. For instance, examining the Kafiran trilogy that extends from 1976 (*Betrayal in the City*) to 2013 (*The Green Cross of Kafira*) allows us to see the on-going struggles of a postcolonial state with its dictatorship, poverty, neo-colonialism and oppression. The time frame is a dramaturgical ground that enables us understand how theatre underscores the discourse of *uhuru.* The place and time are accentuated as powerful avenues in performing the postcolonial political conditions.

The depiction of time as an important facet in postcolonial drama takes a centre stage in this inquiry. Theatre's relationship with time is founded on the attempt to paint a picture of the postcolony that can be actualised in the transaction/interaction between theatre and history to help in building a tenable socio-political voice. History informs the political nature of postcolonial theatre in that it can be viewed as a fundamental aspect that strengthens the dramaturgical standpoint. Therefore, at the centre of theorising the political nature of postcolonial African drama, it is crucial to highlight that the conversation and collaboration between theatre and history becomes a basis of calling postcolonial theatre political. Michael Etherton opines that; "All history is seen, therefore, as a progression and people are constantly transcending the limitations of their societies by means of oppositions, which are resolved into new oppositions. This is a dialectical view of history. Drama can help us explore this dialectical historical process." (292) Within the African theatrical scene, history is interrogated and examined for the sole reason of giving the postcolonial subject a sense of

agency. If we are to work towards the establishment of an African postcolonial dramaturgy, it is fundamental to rethink the process through which the postcolonial subject has come to embrace the position and perspective he/she possess. Etherton sees drama as instrumental in examining the postcolonial condition because from his viewpoint, "Our characters and our consciousness are formed by our social circumstances. Viewed dialectically, the search for identity cannot be divorced from the social context in which it is being formulated." (293) Therefore, postcolonial drama draws us closer to the conditions that characterise our lives by factoring in all the socio-cultural aspects that inform the postcolonial dramaturgical perspective. My research brings in the historical aspect in Imbuga's postcolonial dramaturgy by comparatively looking at plays he wrote in different periods. The dialectics of the selected plays situates time and place as critical frames that are immensely instrumental in tracing the basis of performing the postcolonial struggle for *uhuru*. '*Uhuru*' within the Kenyan perspective is a journey that is haunted by various postcolonial struggles. This study situates the postcolonial dramaturgical perspective of the three plays by Imbuga plays within the political and public sphere by interrogating how these plays contribute to the creation of a national consciousness. The dramatist is thus a teller of a tale that lies beneath the progression of time in relation to place shaped by certain sociological, political and economic forces that present and interrogate the postcolonial condition.

This thesis considers how Imbuga's drama maps the various political transitions which Kenya has undergone from the late twentieth century to early twenty first century. In this sense, it is a historical and political reading of *Betrayal in the City* (1976)*, The Return of Mgofu* (2011) and *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013). The diachronic examination of postcolonial politics entails an in-depth examination of how the three plays converse with three political periods in Kenya. Each play inhabits a unique political condition thus says something that relates to the period of its staging. Therefore, these three plays will be the

framework I intend to use in mapping the progression of postcolonial Kenya from the late twentieth century to early twenty-first century. The three plays will be tied together in the main argument that they perform the journey of *uhuru* for the Kenyan audience. It is thus instrumental to ask where a play is staged and for what purpose it is staged in a given period. As argued earlier, postcolonial theatre is an important facet of a cultural discourse in the present day postcolony out of its ability to magnify human experience within a particular place and time. In short, theatre in the postcolonial Kenyan society is a crucial tool for social awareness because it sheds light on the forces that have robbed people of their dream of independence.

The 'situatedness' of these three plays enables us to comprehend their dramaturgical standpoints. A postcolonial reading of *Betrayal in the City, The Return of Mgofu* and *The Green Cross of Kafira* is necessary because there is no scholarly investigation that ties these works together within this theoretical frame. Diachronically, the plays move from early postcolonial dictatorial Kenya to an early twenty-first century ethnically divided Kenya drowning in negative political rhetoric. The plays point out that the nation is hoodwinked in the illusion of democratic transformation and maturity, depicting a path from early post-independence to a contemporary postcolonial Kenya. Wa Thiong'o avers that performance spaces are "tied to time, that is history, and that therefore they are sites of physical, social, and psychic forces in a postcolonial society" (*Enactment* 14). Imbuga's plays exist and claim certain postcolonial spaces thus presenting an artistic perspective that is meant to stir the spectator's viewpoint/stance. The three plays examine, criticize and advance possibilities, thus making them crucial in the discussing the political events outlined by the dates on which the plays were staged or written.

PART ONE: REPRESENTING THE POSTCOLONY.

The Postcolonial viewpoint.

The role theatre plays as a vital channel in advancing a cultural discourse that challenges, invites and sensitizes the society is crucial and thus calls for a closer examination. The postcolonial perspective has vibrantly and recurrently been expanded, criticised and strengthened in theatre through various metaphors/figurations, counterpoints and socio-cultural overtures that permit the audience as a microcosm of the society to actively probe the postcolonial condition further. However, it is important to unpack what the postcolonial approach concerns itself with if one is to understand how theatre can help describe and critique the postcolonial condition. Achille Mbembe reminds us that, in order to get a clearer understanding of the postcolonial experience, we should go beyond the binary categorizations used to standardize domination in postcolonial societies because the categorizations "cloud our understanding of the postcolonial relations. [And thus there is the] need to examine how the world of meanings thus produced is ordered; the types of institutions, the knowledges, norms, and practices. (103) Mbembe doesn't downplay the systemic oppositional forces that have come to shape the postcolonial viewpoint but insists that it is immensely important to go beyond the surface image of the postcolonial experience(s). The postcolonial perspective is variegated due to the discursive socio-cultural specificities that inform it. Geography, time and cultural standpoints have shaped the way that postcolonial theory has come to be understood and validated in societies that continue to be shaped by the colonial experience.

Homi Bhabha insists that "Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority" (171) thus denoting the attempt of postcolonial thinking to challenge colonial legacies within the postcolonial society. The postcolonial condition has been interrogated by various cultural discourses in promoting a forum where dominant constructs (like

postcolonial subjects), relations (hegemonies) and ideologies (modernity) can be revisited for a better understanding of postcolonial societies. For instance, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin remind us that modernity is closely associated with the colonial conquest. They maintain that modernity is "fundamentally about conquest [and as philosophical stance has] enabled the large-scale regulation of human identity both within Europe and its colonies" (161). Thence, among other things, the notions of identity and place are integral in conceptualising the postcolonial perspective in light of the cultural and systemic disruption that significantly dismantled the pre-colonial cultures due to European invasion.

The colonial conquest marked a cultural erasure in the societies that, then, were deemed 'pre-modern' since the colonial powers pronounced them as "locked in the past" (161) as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out. At the crux of the European dominance realised through the acquisition and occupation of colonies, we can identify the inherent misconception that the non-European cultures somehow needed to be brought up to speed. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin propound that basically "The emergence of modernity is conterminous with the emergence of Eurocentrism and the European dominance of the world effected through imperial expansion" (161). When the European powers acquired colonies in Africa, they enforced significant social, political and economic transformation in the societies they colonised. Bhabha points out that, postcolonial perspectives "emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of 'minorities'" [formulating] critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the 'rationalisations' of modernity." (171) This proposition enables us contemplate on the colonial notion of 'an empire and its extensions'. As a central tenet of what the colonial conquest stood for, the notion proves that the acquisition of territories was central to colonial control and domination. Postcolonial societies in Africa have been redefined by the colonial experience

through creation of territorial boundaries during the partition of Africa introducing colonies that later became nation states. These territories did not exist before the colonialism invasion. There was no Kenya, Tanzania or Uganda (among many other nation states) before the colonization. Additionally, foreign languages were introduced and in the course of time, some parts of Africa have come to be defined within sociolinguistic terms. Now we have Francophone Africa, Portuguese speaking Africa and Anglophone Africa among others. Although the end of colonialism in Africa marked the vacation of European control, the postcolonial state/territory retained indelible marks of the colonial experience. On top of that, the introduction and implantation of a European understanding of modernity has had a significant impact.

The colonial invasion caused the disruption of traditional practices and social organisations. To comprehend the effect, we ought to put the colonial conquest to the spotlight. Colonialism inherently stood for the establishment of dominance and control by European powers in their colonies. The way colonialists established their occupation in the colonies was through the institution of strategies (direct rule, assimilation and indirect rule) that were bound to temper greatly with the sociological and political organisation of indigenous societies. In the case of the British occupation of East Africa their main interest was the Buganda region which housed the source of River Nile. John Lonsdale notes that, "Once the Sultan had been pushed aside in the European scramble for Africa, the scarcely more substantial Imperial British East Africa Company was chartered to occupy the British sphere of influence." (8) The company took control over the region but due to financial challenges and the founding of Uganda Protectorate in 1894, the British government took charge. The British preyed on land conflicts among indigenous communities. In the long run, through the indirect rule method that entailed the control of the societies by controlling the local leaders, the British took control over significant parts of the present day Kenya and

ended up grounding their rule. White settlers were brought from Britain to settle in the agriculturally productive highlands. Natives were displaced and forced to provide labour to the settlers. The displacement of natives (who would be settled in settlements) and preying into inter-communal land squabbles done by the colonialists among other factors has been the basis of African colonial subjects defining themselves within 'ethnic pockets' (by then seen as 'tribal affiliations') on socio-political terms that have become antagonistic. Anita Chepkoech reporting for the Daily Nation on 6th September 2017 in a span of 132 years since the invasion of British into East Africa and 54 years since the declaration of independence notes that, "Indigenous communities displaced by colonialists a century ago have stepped up the fight for compensation after it emerged that leases of tea firms that took over their land have been renewed for another 99 years." (10) In understanding some of the prevalent challenges facing postcolonial societies, the issue of land keeps resurfacing. What began as an imperial expansion causing economic, social and political disruption in pre-colonial societies continues to the present. The postcolonial inquiry attempts to encourage a reflection on the ways the colonial contact produces heterogeneous subject positions within the post-independence period distending into socio-cultural forces that present a convoluted state of the postcolony. Therefore, the postcolony as a place and concept is vital in understanding the intersection and collaboration between theatre and postcolonial theory. As Mbembe tells us, in the postcolony, "to postulate the existence of a "before" and an "after" of colonization could not exhaust the problem of the relationship between temporality and subjectivity" (15) and thus there is a need to use all possible channels (cultural discourses) to understand the postcolony more.

Performing the Postcolonial Experience.

A postcolonial approach provides artists with a number of critical tools to evaluate, expand, and problematize the on-going legacy of colonialism in the postcolonial era.

Language, land, identity and power have been central subjects in performing postcolonial experiences in Kenya. Ngugi wa Thiongó and Micere Mugo employ Kiswahili in order to build a more nationalistic tone in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) that epitomises decolonisation in the wake of Kenya's independence. Commenting on the production of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* in 1976, Apollo Obonyo Amoko notes that, "the play also provoked important debates in the Kenyan public sphere regarding the nature and legacy of the Mau Mau Rebellion" (109). Amoko's observation highlights how the attempt to understand the postcolonial condition through performance bleeds into related discourses like decolonisation, nationalism and national culture and identity.

Wa Thiongó and Ngugi wa Mirii contrasts Kiguunda (who is a poor farm labourer) and Ahab Kioi wa Kanoru (a wealthy farmer and businessman) in *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977) in order to emphasize the issue of land ownership in post-independence Kenya. Land grabbing takes a centre stage in the play and it is particularly impactful because it is the new Kenyan elites who practice it in pretty much the same way that British colonisers had done in the past. Wole Soyinka conflates and confounds conflicting identities in *The Swamp Dwellers* (1964) by positioning city dwellers and peasants in a family drama that portrays the impact of urbanisation in an African society that is still estranged from modernity. Postcolonialism is thus a multifaceted methodology that entails the critical analysis of how different sociological, political and economic factors have contributed to the formation of a certain image of the postcolony over the course of time.

Bhabha maintains that, "The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation. It forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often-opposed political spheres." (173) A more nuanced approach is thus required when approaching the postcolonial perspective. Artistic and literary devices like theatre tap into attitudes, viewpoints and experiences of postcolonial

subjects thus (re)presenting the nuances of the postcolonial perspective. Wa Thiong'o notes that in the development of *I Will Marry When I Want,*

> The participants were most particular about the representation of history, their history. […] They would compare notes from their own actual experience, whether it was making guns in the forest, stealing arms from the British enemy, in carrying bullets through the enemy lines, or in the various strategies for survival. Land and freedom. Economic and political independence. Those were the aims of their struggle and they did not want *Ngaahika Ndeenda* [*I Will Marry When I Want*] to distort them.
>
> (*Decolonising* 54/55)

Although wa Thiong'o addresses the dramaturgical process as a way to discuss the experience of fighting for freedom, the play speaks to the Kenyan society in light of independence. *Ngaahika Ndeenda* stresses the need for Kenyans to remember how they attained freedom in the first place. The dramaturgical basis of the play tackles what Mau Mau stood for during the liberation war in the 1950s, a time when there was bloodshed and a prolonged armed struggle that drew on guerrilla tactics. Dramaturgically, *Ngaahika Ndeenda* juxtaposes the disappointing actualisation of Kenyan independence (marked by abuse of power, corruption, and land grabbing) with what Mau Mau freedom fighters dreamt, fought and died for, which is a just government serving all Kenyans. The way this play was developed and staged proposes a postcolonial dramaturgical perspective that relies on colonial history to challenge the present socio-political relations.

Bhabha further elucidates that "the postcolonial perspective forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive 'liberal' sense of cultural community. It insists that cultural and political identities are constructed in a process of alterity". (175) Therefore, there needs to be a continued inquiry on how postcolonial identity is realised differently in separate social fields experiencing different socio-cultural forces through time. In performing the postcolonial condition, artists maintain a close proximity with the ever

varying contours of cultural identity. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reminds us that, "It is hard to plot the lines by which a people (metonymically that group within it that is self-consciously the custodian of culture) construct the explanations that establish its so-called cultural identity." (8) Within the performance space, questions and concerns reiterate vital specificities alongside common denominators that situate the experience of the postcolonial subject. For instance, the difficulty of finding good leadership is a prevalent postcolonial topic, popularized in plays by Francis Imbuga and wa Thiongó. Theatre spaces consequentially become sites of investigation, experimentations and (re)evaluation in an attempt to devise various ways of acknowledging the inability to surmise the postcolonial perspective from one single point of view.

In Kenya, theatre has been a resourceful avenue for postcolonial discussions by facilitating ways of understanding, interrogating and expanding the role of urban and rural cultural spaces. A meaningful way to engage with postcolonial theatre and performance is by considering the dramatist as a producer of resourceful knowledge on the constantly changing postcolonial condition(s). Wa Thiong'o maintains that, "The arts (plays) are a form of knowledge about reality acquired through a pile of images. But these images are not neutral. The images given to us by the arts try to make us not only see and understand the world of man […] in a certain way, or from a given angle of vision of the artist." (*Barrel* 57) As wa Thiong'o points out, theatre as an artistic practice has immensely opened up ways of approaching and comprehending the postcolonial perspective in different socio-cultural landscapes. For instance, sprouting scholarships like indigenous methodologies, orature (the idea of an 'oral text'—coined by Pio Zirimu and Austin Bukenya) and performance studies have constantly challenged ways of viewing the world and acknowledging the cultural diversity that informs the experience of the postcolonial subject. Bhabha maintains that from a critical standpoint, when examining cultural relations within postcolonial societies, the

discourse on cultural community needs to be rethought. He insists that culture in this context is an "uncomfortable, disturbing practice of survival and supplementarity—between art and politics, past and present, the public and the private—as its resplendent being is a moment of pleasure, enlightenment or liberation." (171) Thence, Bhabha sees the existence of vital cultural interstices that require "narrative positions that the postcolonial prerogative [should acknowledge and thus] extend a new collaborative dimension, both within the margins of the nation–space and across boundaries between nations and peoples." (175) Theatre is a socio-cultural phenomenon that is highly instrumental in creating a conversation on people, spaces and what it means to inhabit various spaces at given times. Therefore, Bhabha's notes in relation to cultural communities nudges us to realise the need to interrogate how the various theatrical representations can be used to both depict and question different cultural standpoints in order to advance cogent reflections of the postcolonial condition embracing the interaction between people and spaces. From a postcolonial ontological standpoint, it is crucial to focus on the ways drama constructs relevant interpersonal relationships in certain spaces thus challenging the audience members to evaluate a given position of the postcolonial subject. When the spectator is invited to reflect on some defining aspects of the postcolonial experience like the presentation of identities and ideologies, the discussion is bound (in most cases) to be perpetuated in the society in which the spectators belong.

The polemic questions that emerge from the attempt to reconfigure socio-political systems in the post-independence period can be brought close to clarity through what Bhabha terms as "narrative positions that the postcolonial prerogative seeks to affirm and extend" (175). Art (such as theatre) asks relevant questions that illuminate how the African postcolonial subject sets out to deal with certain ideologies introduced by colonial power while re-inscribing upon themselves an identity that supposedly reflects a post-independence cultural, political and economic liberation. Through art, the society can be encouraged to

embrace informed position that can push the discussion further. For instance, Wole Soyinka in *The Swamp Dwellers* (1963) portrays the dilemma that emerges out of structures of modernity like industrialization and traditional African communal life. Soyinka depicts the crude industrial lifestyle as debilitative against the African traditional way of life. In light of all that, the big questions are centred on what postcolonial theatre is, what it does, and how it connects to socio-cultural dynamics that keep changing? This inquiry seeks to find out if there is a possibility of crafting a postcolonial dramaturgical practice that might help us better understand the postcolonial condition(s). If so, can this provide the audience with the tools to deal with prevalent challenges facing postcolonial societies?

Postcolonial Theatre and Performance.

Jacqueline Lo and Helen Gilbert propound that "Postcolonial theatre is a geopolitical category designating both a historical and a discursive relation to imperialism, whether that phenomenon is treated critically or ambivalently." (*Topography* 7) Theatrical performances deemed postcolonial provide to a great extent a substantiated view of how imperialism has shaped specific societies through time as well as critical perspectives to discuss societal changes. Postcolonial dramaturgy inscribes the postcolonial subject geographically, culturally and politically because "the politics of postcolonial performance space is a complex interplay of the entire field of internal and external relations of these forces in the context of geography, time, and history" (*Penpoints* 41), as wa Thiong'o reminds us.

The performance space becomes a platform used to explore what wa Thiongó terms as "questions of access and contact" (*Penpoints* 41). Wa Thiongó theorises the connections that emanate from the performance spaces upon the realisation that "these spaces are tied to time, that is, history, and that therefore they are sites of physical, social, and psychic forces in a postcolonial society". (*Enactment* 14) Therefore, theatrical representations can be charged with the responsibility to validate, deconstruct and challenge postcolonial notions like

nationalism. The end of colonialism terminated racial discrimination but retained economic impediments that have made it difficult to fully integrate the postcolonial societies into a state of economic and political autonomy. For that reason, theatre can be used to advocate for full extrication from colonialism. For instance, wa Thiong'o's Kamirithu Theatre project was used as an avenue for decolonising peasants and middle-class Kenyans by showing neo-colonial, systemic exploitation and the political complicities of the ruling class.

In the postcolonial dramaturgical perspective, time and space combine strategically to frame the postcolonial viewpoint. Wa Thiong'o contends that performance space(s) are sites of intense power. He points out that the performance space, "in its relationship to time, in terms, that is, of what has gone before—history—and what could follow—the future." Wa Thiong'o insists that within these sites there are memories carried and thus bound to generate "longings" thus binding them relevant in framing the socio-political basis of a given performance. (*Penpoints* 41) Theatre claims, owns, opens, and challenges spaces. The word 'memory,' as wa Thiongó explains, ties time and place together in forming contexts and historicity that ascribe meaning to certain sites understood to embody particularised experiences for the postcolonial subject. Spatiality combines with temporality to frame and inform the postcolonial dramaturgical viewpoint. There is a vital dramaturgical relevance of having certain plays/performances taking place in certain stipulated locations because bodies are read differently depending on where they exist.

Joanne Tompkins and Helen Gilbert characterise postcolonial performance as a form of performance that exhibits a number of features:

> Post-colonial performance [comprises] the following features:
> • Acts that respond to the experience of imperialism, whether directly or indirectly;
> • Acts performed for the continuation and/or regeneration of the colonised (and sometimes pre-contact) communities;

> • Acts performed with the awareness of, and sometimes the incorporation of, post-contact forms; and
> • Acts that interrogate the hegemony that underlies imperial representation […]
>
> (*Post-Colonial Drama,* 11)

For Gilbert and Tompkins, postcolonial dramaturgy is shaped by acts performed in conversation with the various ways in which imperialism and its after-effects can be viewed through power relationships (hegemonies) and post-contact forms (neo-colonial) within postcolonial societies. In performing the postcolony, time and space are used to avail what Bhabha (as noted earlier) terms as "colonial testimony" (171) which situates the postcolonial performance within the experience of the postcolonial subject. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin remind us that in colonised cultures "a sense of displacement, of the lack of fit between language and place, [is prevalently realised in that] there appears to be a lack of fit between the place described in English and the place actually experienced by the colonised subject." (198) Consequently, one of the ways postcolonial Kenyan dramatists respond and express an awareness of the traumas of imperialism and colonisation is by constructing a representational spatiality that questions the colonised place in order to heighten the protracted mixing of the colonised and coloniser as well as the hybridity produced by colonial encounters.

The testimonies of the postcolonial subject can be told or depicted from many angles. Drama forges ways to deliver these testimonies from the perspective of the native informant in order to situate theatre at the heart of postcolonial experience. From an anthropological standpoint, Spivak postulates that the native informant in postcolonial literacies requires a rostrum in order to present a particular sense of legitimacy in building "narratives and counter-narratives" because he/she possess a "self-present voice-consciousness." (6) Therefore, the native informant becomes a channel used to interrogate the intricacies of postcolonial societies by questioning both colonial history and postcolonial relations.

Postcolonial literacies have been used to question the postcolonial condition in a number of ways. Franz Fanon proposes that in colonial and postcolonial societies, "The native intellectual decides to make an inventory of the bad habits drawn from the colonial world, and hastens to remind everyone of the good old customs of the people, that people which he has decided contains all truth and goodness." (101) A dramatist can be seen as a native intellectual in his/her attempt to create a postcolonial consciousness through theatre when performing the experiences of postcolonial subjects.

Wa Thiong'o situates the importance of acknowledging the relationship between a native intellectual and informant in his take on the language of African theatre. He argues that the native intellectual should consider employing African languages as a decolonising technique in theatre and literature. Wa Thiong'o is in favour of a linguistic reclamation as necessary condition for a successful emancipation from the colonial powers. He reiterates that, "Language, any language has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (13) thus insists that language is one of the ways that we get to obtain a glimpse of a given cultural experience. Wa Thiong'o asserts that people inhabiting a given place in time possess a certain linguistic identity that strengthens them. He avers that reclaiming the role and place of indigenous languages is essential for decolonisation to succeed among postcolonial subjects. Language as an important medium in theatre has thus been used by Kenyan dramatists like wa Thiong'o (Kikuyu), Imbuga (code-mixing Luhya with English) and Ali Mzrui (Swahili) to perform the experience of the postcolonial subject in Kenya. Through language, the experience of the postcolonial subject is strongly defined showing a complex temporal experience that touches on pre-contact, post-contact and colonial times.

Theatre continues to be an avenue that dramatists use to comment on certain concerns and heighten the postcolonial consciousness in light of political challenges. Leadership and

politics have predominantly been compounded in Imbuga's stage drama to show what society can do to move forward in spite of all the post-independence impediments (political and economic poverty). In *The Successor* (1979), Imbuga challenges his audience to reflect on ethnic divisions that were bound to happen upon Kenyatta's demise. The play was written and staged at a period when Kenya was experiencing national anxieties over ethnic polarity. Pal Ahluwalia notes that "As Kenyatta rule tightened, he relied upon an inner circle of political associates, who benefited both economically and politically." (81) In *The Successor,* Imbuga constructs a fictional empire called Masero ruled by an Emperor called Chonda whose leadership is dependent on the information fed to him by three trusted chiefs namely; Oriomra, Sasia and Jandi. Oriomra gets duplicitous by plotting to destroy Chief Jandi because he is the suitable ruler. The play emblematically points to the problem of succession in post-independent Kenya by building a distant relationship between the subjects and ruler. The people in Masero are connected to their leader under mediation of chiefs who control the political climate of the entire nation. While speaking to Sasia, Orioma argues that Jandi, also an advisor, is an outsider who shouldn't be accepted as the successor. He calls Jandi "a stranger who was washed here by chance" (24). This exchange between the characters illustrates the concern of many Kenyans who feared that strategic political manoeuvring might compromise the integrity of the democratic process. Ahluwalia reminds us that when Kenyatta was aging, "an alliance of Kenyatta's family and the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association (GEMA), orchestrated the "change-the-constitution" movement in order to prevent Moi's succession." (25) Constitutionally, Moi who was the vice-president was supposed to be the president if anything were to happen to Jomo Kenyatta. The problem was that Moi was not from the same community as Kenyatta. He was Kalenjin while Kenyatta was a Kikuyu. Kikuyu's wanted to maintain their control of the Kenyan nation. In *The Successor*, Oriomra's xenophobic scheming becomes a metaphor of the postcolonial ethnic

alliances that aimed at maintaining power on a particular side following the death of Kenya's first president in 1978.

In performing the experiences of the postcolony, Imbuga's drama utilises certain metaphors that portray postcolonial Kenya in light of the sociological, political and economic forces that were shaping it. This chapter explores the metaphor(s) that Imbuga uses to paint the experience of the early postcolony using *Betrayal in the City* in 1960s to 1980s comparing it with the present postcolony (ranging from 2000 to the present) which would be seen in *The Green Cross of Kafira.* Both plays are staged in a fictional African postcolonial state called Kafira with an interval of thirty seven years (1976 to 2013). In the periods that these two plays were written, Imbuga engaged with the socio-political conditions of postcolonial Kenya from different positions. In many ways, the Kafira in *Betrayal in the City* is not the same Kafira in *The Green Cross of Kafira.* Fundamentally, the two plays differ in how they choose to stage postcolonial subjects.

Betrayal in the City is built around the metaphors of deferred dreams. These metaphors portray the postcolonial subject as disappointed by the reality that doesn't match the ideal aspirational dream of independence. *The Green Cross of Kafira* on the other hand is founded on the metaphor of reclamation and actualisation of dreams whereby the postcolonial subject is embracing change against the post-independence dictatorship that has gone on for a long time.

(Re)Presenting the Early Postcolony: The Metaphor of Deferred Dreams in *Betrayal in the City* (1976).

As a widely known play in Kenya, *Betrayal in the City* shows how theatre can maintain a meaningful conversation about the political discourse of the nation. Imbuga draws on the imaginary state of Kafira to discuss the despair of Kenya's deferred dreams of independence. The play helps us understand the predicament of Kenyans in the process of actualisation of

self-rule by constructing interpersonal relationships that enable us to see what Kenyans expected in the transition to the new independent state. The image of a post-independent Kafira becomes an avenue through which the transition of Kenya from a colony to an independent republic can be examined. Imbuga's intent in staging a play that exists in a fictional African state of Kafira finds its relevance through the time in which it is written. Time as a performative aspect establishes a connection with the socio-political climate of Kenya. The play was selected to be performed in Lagos during the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977. On a postcolonial dramaturgical basis, since *Betrayal in the City* was meant to depict something about Kenyan theatre at the time, it can be said to have exemplified the socio-political status of the nation. Mugambi Karanja (a columnist) considered the play's possession of "a Pan-African theme with wit, well-calculated sarcasm and an occasional rubbing of the salt" (14) very important. John Ruganda saw this potential as a very relevant stylistic and thematic dimension that gave the play a relatable facet "both home and abroad" (xiv) In an interview, wa Thiong'o reminds us that; "There is no writer who is apolitical. [Thus it all boils down to] Whose politics is a writer espousing in his works? In connection with political activity, the people who are involved in practice seem to produce more works." (195) From wa Thiong'o's standpoint, we can opine that postcolonial literacies are like socio-cultural barometers because they both analyse and challenge the socio-political climate. Imbuga as a vital postcolonial dramatist had a very important socio-political intent staging this play at the time.

Among other things, the dream of independence is deferred by the regime's oppression of innocent citizens**.** Oppression marks the very opening image which conveys a sense of loss, disappointment, dismay and despondency that ultimately colour the mood of the entire play. The play starts with grieving parents (Nina—mother and Doga—father) who have just buried their son Adika who is shot dead by the police for participating in a protest against the ruling

regime. Doga and Nina had placed much hope in Adika thus his death depletes them greatly. The grief of the couple is palpable as they stand at the graveyard of their son. Apparently, someone invaded the graveyard of their late son and cracked the cemented grave pouring petroleum with the aim of scorching the dead body to destroy the spirit of the dead. Adika is still hunted in death. Even without an informed opinion of who Adika is and what he stands for, we are directly compelled to think of his death as a sacrificial offering of a patriot who is seen as a threat by the Boss's regime:

NINA	But where is he now? Doga, my heart fails me. This is not our day. Let us get away from this place. We shall return when we know where Jusper is. Look, it seems there was a struggle here.
DOGA	Jusper is alright where he is.
NINA	He is our only hope. If they should harm him, I will hang myself and raise a curse upon the whole clan.
DOGA	Hope? I am surprised that you will still talk of hope. Nina, we buried our hope the day Adika was gunned down. Come, let us not waste any more time. Get me soil.

(8)

Doga has completely loss hope although Nina sees Jusper, their younger son, as the only reason to continue living. Doga informs us that his son was assassinated rather than caught in the crossfire in a protest. He points out that "People say there were many of them, all marching in the same manner. Suddenly, the shooting broke out. People fled in all directions, but my son's lonely body lay in the middle of the street. Only four bullets were fired that day. Adika had four bullet wounds in his chest" (10) Adika's murder illustrates that practicing one's democratic right in Kafira is not something the government of Boss respects. The peculiarity of the death directly shows that Adika was very key to the protest thus he was susceptible to violence. Kafira is airtight dictatorial and the possibilities for change are scarce. The hope that the new African democratic leadership after independence would be better politically is deferred causing dejection.

Doga points out that "It is now clear that the man at whose hands my son died lives among us even now. This is proof enough." (7) Everyone is aware that the problem is among them. The family therefore is portrayed to be in an impossible position where they have to grapple both with their loss and the awareness that the murderer of their son lives among them. Their hope is taken away from them because there is no justice and no peace after death. The situation is dire and dreary. Jusper, Adika's remaining brother, feigns inanity and announces that the odds under which the current Kafira operates on. He talks to the audience informing them that "I know the difference between the sun, Jupiter and Jusper. Hey, come to think of it! You and I have never seen Jupiter, except…? Except on paper. *Jupiter!—Absent sir. Jusper!—Present sir. Justice—Absent sir.*" (11) If 'justice' and 'Jupiter' possess the same attributes of absence and only are visible on paper, it means that the current Kafira is in utter need for redemption from overt injustice that is eating up the strength left. The play kicks off in the aftermath of a political protest that caused the demise of Adika. The way Imbuga chose to commence this play seems to stem from the intent to depict the image of an independent Kafira in its initial stages of self-rule.

Deprivation of liberties is depicted as the other form of deferred dreams. As Jusper goes on with his derailed revelations, he terms his current educational status as "almost B.A Kafira University" (11) pointing to the fact that he has been deprived of his dream of attaining his degree from a state owned university. Thwarting education is portrayed as a state tool used to ensure that the masses never obtain the critical tools to challenge the government. Accounting for the same period *Betrayal in the City* was addressing, wa Thiongó informs us that,

> University lecturers Al Amin Mazrui, Maina wa Kinyatti, Edward Oyugi, Willy Mutunga, Kamoji Wachira and Makaru Ngángá were arrested and later detained without trial or sent to prison under dubious legal circumstances. Journalists such as Wahongondu Kariuki were imprisoned or harassed by

> constant police questioning. The regime later announced that it would directly control the books taught in schools and colleges
>
> (*Barrel* 2)

The state in the postcolony regulates all social and political systems and thus has a firm grasp on the voice of the people. Mbembe reminds us that "[…] the general practice of power has followed directly from the colonial political culture and has perpetuated the most despotic aspects…" (42) Tyranny is a corollary of the colonial culture of oppression which was tightly entrenched in the colonial system of governance. What prevents or slows down the development of postcolonial societies is the structure of colonial government which in some cases was essentially passed on to the new African leaders after independence. Oginga Odinga warns us to question post-independence liberation by stating that, "Neo-colonialism, after all, is not centred in a vacuum. It is built on to the previous colonial history of the country in which it operates, from the foundations that the colonial regime lays before its ostensible departure." (256) Primarily, in the long-run, the postcolonial subjects have to realise the difficulty in extricating themselves from colonialism. Yolamu Barogo points out that neo-colonialism is "a concept that was formed to describe the metamorphosis of colonialism and as such by definition it is a post-independence phenomenon" (8) From a philosophical stance, neo-colonialism can be seen as a systemic flaw in postcolonial societies due to the fact that these societies were not fully prepared to redefine themselves in systems and ideologies that were inherently foreign. This is the reason why violence and other forms of oppression have been prevalent in the public and political sphere. Consequently, Mbembe questions how the implementation of various means of control in the postcolony reflect the "institutional and unbridled use of violence and coercion [that are instituted] as a means of punishment, [and are brought into place to] crush rebellions, stifle challenges, or simply to seize power." (43) Doga recounts of his son's murder illustrating how violence is a mechanism of control in the postcolonial state. Adika was the target and in no time the state

eradicated him alongside his voice. As a tool of the powerful, political violence is understood as a constant reminder of what has been taken from the postcolonial subject in the wake of independence.

Mulili arrives with Jere to deter Doga and Nina from having the final ceremony for their son. Mulili who is a policeman and presumably a cousin to Boss (who is the present president of Kafira) states that, "Repeat to them Jere, repeat. Tell them this grave no longer belong to them" (14) The state despot, Boss, through his incompetent sycophants, imparts the rule of law without considerations of decency, humanity and respect. The president's name sustains a connotation of the control imparted by his position and ambition. He is 'the boss' and things have to concur with his standpoint. Kafirans are deprived of their religious freedom like having the funeral rites performed. Adika is dead but in his death he still poses a threat to the tyrannical government. In a jail scene in act one, the police officer who represents the government, qualifies the act of questioning government's operations as "a contribution to the national headache" (22) thus prohibiting the citizens from holding the government accountable. Imbuga uses distinctive language to describe the socio–political destitution that accompanies deprived postcolonial subjects dismayed by bad leadership. Ruganda further points out that the language that Mulili speaks reflects

> [The] product of marginality of literacy or minimal education, it is the language of oppression. Of more significance, however, is that the language of [Mulili as a marginal metaphor] both condemns and indirectly attacks snobbery of the deracinated Africans who gloat over their mastery of its dialects: the very men in the audience who find the [marginality] ungrammatical use of the language funny, if not farcical.
>
> (16)

The term marginality, as conceptualized by Ruganda in connection to Imbuga's political drama, speaks to the counter-censorial choices employed by Imbuga in dramatizing the inaccessibility of truth in the oppressive postcolonial regimes. Marginality in this play is

evident in how Mulili is incapable of clearly articulating himself in the language of the coloniser, the dominant language in this postcolonial society. Mulili insists that, "I don't want to lost that farm. Boss promise many acre farm and grade cattles. I don't want to lost it because for primitive ceremony" (18) Mulili's marginality is an entry point that shows the real rot that threatens to wrought the dream of actual freedom. He represents the worst quality of the postcolony because he functions as an execution machine thus depicting the violent means that the government uses to obviate opposition.

In response to the decree of getting students ready to entertain the guest who is scheduled to come to Kafira, Mulili posits that, "We give them all necessary, who are they? We should can force them to acting." (59) Mulili's utterance points to the nature of relationship that the citizens have with the government. Beneath Mulili's grammatical errors, is the realisation that the tyrannical regime is determined to craft up a system of puppets that follow orders without questioning them. The government agents embody systems of subjugation and suppression thus contravening the entire quest of self-rule.

Displacement is used thematically to foreground the metaphor of deferred dreams in the play. The postcolonial subjects cannot change their reality because they are imprisoned both metaphorically and literally. Jere and Mosese are detained for being outspoken nature against the government. A conversation between Jere and Askari highlights the power of the state to trump all dissenting voices in Kafira, and it is reminiscent of early postcolonial Kenya when the Moi was considered to be mighty powerful and unquestionable. Joyce Nyairo notes that,

> Hon Oloo Aringo, the minister of Education, proved his prowess as the master of platitudes. He referred to the president as "The Prince of Peace." Moi, fearing hubris, chided him immediately reminding him that the prince of peace was Jesus Christ. Overzealous sycophants crowded the gates of State House daily. But in this cohabitation with power, there were some whose accolades

> often sounded like mischievous subversions of the president's larger than life image of himself and his power.
>
> (614)

In Boss, we see Moi in a number of ways. In Mulili, we see Moi's political puppets praising his glory and spreading his political views. Imbuga performs the conditions of the Kenyan postcolony by depicting what has shaped the state of the nation and by juxtaposing Kafira to Kenya's own political hailstorms. Boss is the owner of Kafira and Jere is reminded of this fact upon his arrival at the jail.

> JERE A lot of things don't make sense to me, you included.
> ASKARI My God, this is the wrong place for you. The place for lunatics is three doors down the corridor.
> JERE You mean three doors up the corridor?
> ASKARI That could land you into more trouble. Three doors up the corridor is the office of the head of this institution.
> JERE Is he in or out?
> ASKARI In, and he won't be much use to you when I start educating you.
> JERE Has it ever occurred to you that the outside of this cell may be the inside of another?
>
> (21)

The spatiality implemented to construct the image and experiences of the postcolony entail detention centres where patriots are silenced and forced to confess. A concern about systemic dysfunction is brought up when Jere suggests that lunacy dwells at the office of head of the detention facility in which he is being detained. Jere is detained for his support of Doga and Nina as he urges Mulili to allow them to perform the burial rights for their son. Because Mulili obeys Boss's orders without questioning them, he denounces Jere thus landing him in jail with Mosese.

The moment we see Mosese on stage, he has his back to the audience. When Askari commands him to turn, he responds that "I have no front" (23) to insist that he doesn't have hope. Kafirans don't have hope. The nation is trapped in the hands of despots and greedy men

whose agendas are nowhere closer to developing national unity. Askari tells Mosese that his liberties are nothing and all that is expected from him is total compliance:

> ASKARI Perhaps you were right when you said silence is the best ship home, only you realised it too late. It is now common knowledge that you are a great talker. If you decide to be silent, you will have to explain what it is you are keeping quiet about. This is how prisons work. You have to show a kind of consistency of character at the same time as you show a marked improvement.
>
> (24)

Within the constraints enforced by the oppressive 'postcolonial potentates' as Mbembe terms them, it is however important to note that independence marked a transition into a political system that was meant to be transparent, fair and respectful of its citizens' rights. Adversely, the attainment of self-rule in Kafira marked a transition into another neo-colonial system of oppression.

The dysfunctional postcolonial political system in Kafira prevents the development of a national spirit. Kafira's national struggle can be articulated in Marjorie Macgoye's terms, that is as a process of 'coming to birth' in the face of challenges that followed independence. Her (Macgoye) famous novel, *Coming to Birth* (1986) limns the feminist and nationalist journey that postcolonial subjects undergo while attempting to re-inscribe and re-assert their position in a struggling postcolonial state. To a certain extent, the nation is depicted to be in a dire need of more time to mature as far as self-rule is involved. In a conversation between Jusper and Tumbo, the spectator learns about Kafira's problems: lack of meritocracy, nepotism, and ethnic divides. For instance, crucial decisions in Kafira are made in makeshift way because those in authority are incompetent. *Uhuru* among Kafirans is deferred by a culture of ineptitude seen in Tumbo's choice to have Jusper use his play in the on-coming event. Kafira is about to host a prominent foreign dignitary and a play ought to be performed to entertain the guest. Tumbo tells Jusper that, "A sum of money has been allocated for a

play-writing competition, but there is no point organising a competition if we already know what the play out to be produced […] the democratic aspect of this game is that anyone has a right to participate. Now, without wasting any more time, I pronounce you winner." (51) Not everyone in Kafira is given the chance to participate in nation-building. The endorsement of Jusper shows the way incompetence builds a culture of exclusion against those that can do something resourceful for nation-building. The competition should have been held in order to choose the best playwright who understands the socio-political condition of Kafira. However, Jusper turns out to be aware although it doesn't excuse Tumbo's unsuitability to mediate the process of selecting the artist to present the play.

Earlier, Tumbo converses with Jusper concerning his writing career where we learn why Jusper has not been able to succeed in the venture. Jusper says that "One publisher simply returned the manuscript and with it one line. It read: 'I am afraid your manuscript is unpublishable under the present circumstances; your truth is too much in the nude'. He wanted me to dress up the truth, give it a little more padding so that only few would recognise it." (50) Jusper manages to explore his passion in writing because he meets a figure of authority (Tumbo) who provides the opportunity without thoroughly examining his ability. As long as the citizens cannot freely express their grievances based on the operations and objectives of the state, it is not yet *uhuru*. In Kafira, truth is a crime and thus the democratization of the postcolony is deferred from actualisation. Jusper maintains that he will "wait until we are of age" (50) to signify that Kafira needs to postpone the search of true freedom for a later date. Jusper's impediment to tell his stories through plays is a typical illustration of the how the control of the national discourse by the state impedes progress because truth is a crime.

Boss uses Mulili to carry out his orders banking on the fact that Mulili is uneducated and incompetent. The limits which Mulili is willing to exceed to impress Boss are beyond

comprehension since he is somehow related to Boss and there is a guarantee of obtaining wealth if he offers a good service. Pointing to nationalism, ethnicity and democracy, Solofo Randrianja reminds us that, "African elites reproduce themselves, imprisoned as they are in the framework of politicised ethnicity, constitutes an obstacle to democratization. The competition for power is becoming fiercer. African elites are obliged to deploy new strategies for conquest and managerial power. (37) Psychologically, we can use the relationship between Boss and Mulili to unpack the strategy used by Boss to secure his position of authority. Mulili is inferior to Boss intellectually and for his lack of ambition. All that drives Mulili is greed and the desire to impress his master, and therefore he presents no threat to Boss. Mulili is merely a pawn to force dissidents into compliance and he is willing to disregard his humanity because he believes that he has an obligation to obey and execute Boss' orders.

The central distinction between Jere, a policeman who accompanies Mulili, and Mulili is that Jere knows the edict they are asked to enforce is inhuman and crosses a line, while Mulili does not seem to understand and makes less effort to see the plight of Adika's parents. Mulili refuses reasoning with Jere claiming that "It too dangerous." (21) This demonstrates how Mulili is caged by his veneration of Boss. Jere recalcitrantly breaches the loyalty between the state officers to the oppressive regime by acknowledging that "These are my people. They have done no wrong. Look at the grave. This is proof that their son was murdered. The man wanted to rid himself of the ghost by burning the body." (21) On the other hand, Mulili remains blindly loyal to the regime and ridicules Jere by challenging him "You still believes in ghost?" (21) Mulili remains stubborn and disregards Jere's appeal for a humanistic reason. He embraces his determination to carry on the edict of Boss in prohibiting Adika's parents from conducting the funeral rights. Jere importunes Mulili "That boy died for Kafira's progress. He was slaughtered like a goat and sacrificed for a non-existent peace and

harmony. Surely he deserves this ceremony!?"(21) This indicates that *uhuru* is delayed by a diminished sense of nationalism in the grassroots. Law enforcers are part of the ordinary public and ought to see the line separating humanity from inhumanity. The slogan for Kenyan police is "*utumishi kwa wote*" which translates connotatively to "*fair public service for all*". Ruganda argues that Mulili is a key character in unpacking the problems of the postcolony. Mulili's English is what would be termed in Kenya as broken English. It is a common trait among the policemen to be overly physical or offensive, but verbally incompetent. Comedy shows mock the police character calling him *'Afande'* (mostly a confrontational man) to stress the central idea of someone who only knows how to follow orders without thinking for himself. '*Afande*' is how police in Kenya respond to a call on radio call and how they address each other. Imbuga is thus invested in painting a picture of the ruthless arm of the government that disregards decency and cares only about the "commandment" (102), as stated by Mbembe. According to Mbembe, a "Confrontation occurs the moment the *commandment,* seeks to compel submission and force people into dissimulation" (108) thus the brutality of the police within the postcolony embody the means of the despotic postcolonial government.

From a decolonising stance, English still continues to be a sign and metaphor of oppression in that it draws a line on how alienated the postcolonial subjects are from their reality. Ruganda further insists that, "Mulili's self-depreciating use of language of oppression is an indirect attack on our complacency. His linguistic infractions liberate him as our proficiency and encases us in the ideology of oppression." (21) Up to today, Kenyans still find humour in the inability to eloquently articulate themselves in English. Comedy shows like 'Churchill Show' and 'Churchill Raw' still use the trope of broken English as a humorous situation that disparages rural Kenyan accents as a sign of being left behind. If you can speak clearly in English, you are considered smart, intelligent, cultured and powerful to a

certain extent. Wa Thiong'o notes that using the colonial language dissociates "the sensibility of [the colonial child] from the natural and social environment, what we might call colonial alienation" (17) Imbuga allows us to reflect on the language of the coloniser as a phenomenon that should remind us the various ways through which the notion of modernizing the postcolonial subject continues to diminish an authentic African-self thus inhibiting a full detachment from the culture of the coloniser. In *Betrayal in the City*, Imbuga interjects aspects of orature to appreciate the import of African folk knowledge by appending the wisdom found in orature (proverbs and pithy sayings) as shown in Doga's speeches. The fact that Doga and Nina are assassinated by Boss is rendered even more problematic by the fact that the wisdom they possess will disappear with them.

Earlier in an attempt to warn Nina on whom to trust, Doga insists that, "Who is the sub-chief? Have you soon forgotten the rumour that now bears the same weight as the noble north? Nina, when dry thunder tears the sky before our eyes, do we forget the storm of yesterday?" (9) Instead of openly pointing out that the sub-chief and by extension the figures of authority are incompetent, untrustworthy sycophants, he uses a proverb to caution Nina to be safe. Ruganda observes that "At a psychological level, Imbuga sees the figure of the elder as the most traumatised individual of all colonised people. From the position of power the elder has found his authority questioned and challenged by […] by strangers…" (46) These strangers are propagations of the colonial legacy seen in the various postcolonial structures that take upon power immediately the colonisers exit. Doga sees what appears to be eclipsing the entire society and he is cautious to put the word out there that there are men to be trusted and others to be edged away like a plague.

Lastly, Imbuga performs the state of the early postcolony by depicting the entire nation as being in the state of detention. Essentially, the metaphor of protracted detention signifies a stagnation through which we can better glimpse at the postcolony during critical

socio-political timelines. In his critical examination of the performance of power within the Kenyan theatrical landscape, George Outa Odera proposes that there are "critical decades" (14) which artists have claimed to better represent the "the constructions and relations of power within the postcolonial African polity." (14) Power is realised in a number of societal levels. Imbuga examines the mechanism of power from a number of stances based on the socio-political period. The circumstance of illegal imprisonment as a practice of power in early postcolony expands the metaphor of deferred dreams further. This opens the pathway to explore the pressing concern for freedom and actual progress. In preparation for a guest who is to visit Kafira in a few weeks, Boss chooses to have the play that will entertain the guest to be performed by prisoners in order to symbolize national unity. In a conversation that happens between Mosese and Jere, the irony of the entire decree from Boss helps in painting a clear picture of the sole reason why Kafira may not see the dream of independence come true anytime soon. Mosese is puzzled and unwilling to compromise,

MOSESE	A certain head of state is due to visit Kafira in a few weeks' time. Now, because of his love for the dramatic, Boss has decided that a play be performed for the visiting head of state as part of his entertainment. The ludicrous part of it all is that he wants the play to be acted by prisoners. (*Laughs*)
JERE	That is not funny. Why?
MOSESE	It would symbolise national unity. That would show prisoners actively involved in nation-building.
JERE	What then has that to do with your release?
MOSESE	If the exercise is a success, he has promised the release of six hundred prisoners.
JERE	I see. In that case I feel we should volunteer even if we won't be released.
MOSESE	I will not bend so low.

(30)

The most alarming thing is not the fact that the prisoners are the defining image of this nation for a foreign guest, but that there are other six hundred in detention. A prisoner represents an individual whose hope of progress has been halted thus having no power to grow or even enjoy life. The state of Kafira is thus under stagnation because the nation is divided and

diminished by the fact that large number of innocent people are in detention. The sacrificial death of Mulili at the end of the play suggests that a revolutionary movement might be growing, but given the history of Kafira, the process might be very long. The overt political unrest identifies common concerns that have been brought up in postcolonial democracies at early stages.

The Present Postcolony: 'The Metaphor of Reclamation and Actualisation of Dreams' in *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013).

The place and time in which *The Green Cross of Kafira* exists shows how theatre can be instrumental in fostering a close discussion of postcolonial perspective in the twenty-first century. At this time so much has happened in postcolonial Kenya. The nation was celebrating fifty-years of independence. Within this timeframe, nationalists, intellectuals and politicians raised the question '*what have we done with uhuru*'. Dr Joyce Nyairo who interrogates the interface between politics, identity and culture, probed into salient socio-cultural parameters that can help enrich our understanding of the journey of Kenya independence in *Kenya at 50: Trends, Identities and The Politics of Belonging*. Within the Kenyan socio-political scene, the discourse of *uhuru* gained popularity at this time. Dr Willy Mutunga (former Chief Justice of Kenya) identifies that the concern Nyairo raises are relevant. Mutunga sees the essence in the liberating discourse on nationalism claiming that the text is vital in its depiction of how "the state defines individuals and the means by which individuals shape their own sense of belonging." (Postscript) The way the fictional Kafira is constructed in *The Green Cross of Kafira* heeds greatly to the transformation in politics, economy and culture prevailing in Kenya at the time. The play construes a national consciousness that expects and demands further development. The play's central concern is grounded on the intent to awaken the ordinary man to fully embrace civil duty.

In order to understand the play's postcolonial commentary it is important to reflect on some defining events of 21st century Kenya that can be used to provide a postcolonial dramaturgical basis. Daniel Torotich Arap Moi's dictatorship ended (2002) passing power to Mwai Kibaki. On 27th August 2010, a new constitution marked a significant transformation of the Kenyan republic with journalists, politicians and intellectuals calling Kenya 'the new republic'. Earlier, Kibaki's government had been valorised as the government that possessed so much prospect of transforming Kenya as the indomitable coalition that took over Kenya after Moi's depletive dictatorship but things never worked out well. Reporting for Standard online Newspaper on the 5th of December 2013, Henry Munene notes that *The Green Cross of Kafira* can be seen as "Imbuga's way of seeking to highlight the pitfalls that may lead seemingly progressive regimes to slide back to the bad old ways." The play received its world premiere at the Kenya National Theatre on the 28th of March 2013 and was directed by Tirus Gathwe.

In the opening scene, the narrator, whose name is Sikia Macho which in Swahili means 'listen to your eyes' or 'hear your eyes' (1), insists that what the audience is about to experience is an important story. Deliberately, Imbuga alerts his audience to pay attention to what takes place within the temporal and spatial frames of the play, which is set in Kafira and deals with Kafira's political experience. The narrator postulates that, "The Republic of Kafira attained her self-rule than three decades ago. During all this time, Kafira has been ruled by a rich variety of leaders; some good, others not so good while the rest were outright disasters." (2) The tone and position assumed by the narrator prioritizes the need to examine the postcolonial experience from a historical stance. History within postcolonial discourses (in our case theatre) establishes a strong socio-cultural consciousness which equips the audience with a critical view of the postcolonial condition. Sikia Macho opens the play by assuring that the account he is about to deliver encapsulates "the experiences of people of Kafira during

the rule of one of the most nervous regimes our country has ever had. So welcome to the games of rhetoric and silence that characterised the rule of that particular regime, the regime of Chief of Chiefs." (2) The active voice of the informed narrator equips the start of the play with a particular political momentum. The presence of Sikia Macho's overarching understanding promises a genuine socio-political criticism that Imbuga intends to use in opening up the world of Kafira to broader questions. The narrator points out that Kafira has had a "rich variety of leaders; some good, others not so good while the rest were outright disasters." (2) This annotation asks the audience to examine and scrutinize repetitive patterns of leadership in the postcolony. As Sikia Macho explains, the story unfolds in Kafira whereby 'more than three decades' have lapsed since independence and thus launches a plane of expectation on what the timeline quoted has meant for Kafirans. The underpinning question here is: What have Kafirans done with their independence?

Writing for *The Daily Nation Online* on 22nd November 2013, Egara Kabanji who worked as a textual dramaturge in the development of the play says that "It appeared to me then that a bigger role for the narrator as a commentator on issues discussed in the play and as the conscience of the society and carrier of authorial vision would help enhance the themes even further." The narrator embodies a narrative position that is founded on a form of openness which shows the attempt of the playwright to use a more blatant political voice. As Sikia Macho draws in the audience, he promises that his character viewpoint is informed, candid and instructive in providing a historical and political assessment of "the experience of people of Kafira" (2) thus foregrounding him as a fundamental driving force that unveils a sense of civil awareness. Civil awareness is a crucial dimension that shapes the direction of the play. Here, Imbuga depicts a dictatorial regime that is ruled by an individual who goes by the name 'Chief of Chiefs.' Imbuga merges the postcolonial perspective with Kenya's post-

independence politics while attempting to articulate the postcolonial struggle vis a vis the failings of democracy.

The opening scene entitled "Mind Games" (1) consists of a discussion between two politicians, Mwodi and Yuda, who are scheming on how they are going to remain in the government now that the general elections are approaching. The play is segmented into episodic scenes framed by surtitles that explain the given circumstances of each scene. The two politicians are so worried that they stop at the roadside to express their dismay upon the realisation that the power of Chief of Chiefs might be over soon:

MWODI:	But what about the opinion polls?
YUDA:	What opinion polls? Polls before the actual polls? Forget them. After all they are conducted by people who know nothing about how we do things here. My brother in politics, experience will carry the day, not opinion polls. So, don't worry.
MWODI:	It is their consistency that worries me.
YUDA:	Look, we know who is behind the manipulation of those opinion polls, and we will soon prove them all wrong.
MWODI:	Alright, for now you win; but let us agree on one thing before we proceed.
YUDA:	What?
MWODI:	When we get there, you'll do most of the talking.
YUDA:	Hon. Mwodi, when the Chief of Chiefs appointed us for this mission, he didn't give us guidelines on how each one of us should talk.

(4)

The above conversation reflects the fear felt by the two characters over Bishop Ben'sa's influence. For the current regime, she is a threat because she is rising in the political landscape while the Chief of Chiefs is losing his popularity. It is very important to note that Imbuga brings to us a Kafira that has been shaped by the Chiefs of Chiefs. It is a kind of regime whereby the despot is the centre of the universe and conducts his business with help from a coterie of sycophants who seem to be preoccupied with preserving the status quo. Macharia Gaitho in the Tuesday 28th June 2016 in relation to top government parastatal appointments postulates that, "the Jubilee regime is more attuned to rewarding political

cronies. This comes at the expense of committed professionals who would make a real difference towards transforming State corporations into key drivers of national development goals, wealth creation and employment generation." (28) Gaitho is bothered by the political culture that seems to recur in the Kenyan political scene even at a time when the state is trying to create a false national narrative under the banner that 'we live in a new Kenya'. The play showcases Mwodi and Yuda as political leeches who Gaitho laments "would not manage to get jobs in a competitive field."(28) Above all things they are unqualified.

The discussion Imbuga is trying to initiate cannot be divorced from what is happening in Kenya at the moment. He asks a number of questions that bring the audience closer to understanding certain political situations that have been popularised to characterise politicians. It is thus not an accident that Imbuga's stages his third Kafiran play in a forty-year old Kafira that is said to have been ruled by various tyrannical regimes. *The Man of Kafira* (1984) and *Betrayal in the City* see the rise and decline of the leader who is called Boss while *The Green Cross of Kafira* ends with the decline of Chief of Chiefs. The conditions that foster dictatorial regimes can be particularised by sycophancy, nepotism and corruption.

The second scene entitled "Seeds of Discord" takes place in Bishop Ben'sa's home. We see Ben'sa having a conversation with Sister Leah about changing a specific line of the lyrics for a song they are rehearsing belonging to The Green Cross of Kafira organisation. Ben'sa recommends they change the line from "Welcome to the Green Cross/Cradle of our future" to "Welcome to the Green Cross/Cradle of our times" (8). Sister Leah insists that the old line sounded "a bit flat" (8) to signify that the time for their organisation to initiate change is now. This scenario challenges the use liberation slogans, political parties and revolutionary movements in the public and political spheres to embrace an active present by focusing more on the desire to initiate action in the present postcolony. Before the entry of

Mwodi and Yuda, Ben'sa and Sister Leah sing; "Welcome to the Green Cross/Where all members are free/Welcome to the Green Cross/Cradle of our times/Welcome to The Green Cross/We sing and pray together." (9) After the song ends, Ben'sa observes, "That is much better" (9) demonstrating that the new direction is more suited to advance the agenda that the organisation stands for.

In the second scene, Yuda and Mwodi try to convince Bishop Ben'sa to curb the political voice of Mama Mgei. Mama Mgei is the wife to Pastor Mgei who has been detained by the government out of malicious allegations of inciting the public against the government. However, Yuda and Mwodi as delegates of Chief of Chief end up disappointed when they are faced with Ben'sa's lack of cooperation. She insists that the three organisations, The Green Cross of Kafira, The Green Cross Church and The Green Cross Clinic, are all different entities that serve the society, and she argues that the members affiliated with the various branches do not represent the image of all institutions. The two politicians come to sway Ben'sa but she sees through them and defends the course of her organisation. The discussion that ensues between Ben'sa and Mwodi and Yuda clearly depict the rift that exists between the image public servants in Kafira should embody and who they truly are. As corrupt politicians, Mwodi and Yuda undergo a level of discomfort being in a space that is transparent and liberated because it is dedicated to serving the common man. They come with a camera intending to snare Ben'sa but they fail. Ben'sa's home is depicted as a space of possibility with emphasis on crucial nationalistic attitudes which entail honesty, loyalty and commitment. Ben'sa retorts to Mwodi's attempt to bribe her by asserting that,

BEN'SA:	That is not what I meant Hon. Mwodi. You know you can be a perfectly honourable Christian without paying tithes. But that aside, I still don't understand how our organisation can assist you in a matter of *Serikali* and the media.
YUDA:	Bishop, let me put it this way: it is sometimes good to call a spade a spade and I believe…

BEN'SA	It is always good to call a spade a spade because that is what it is. Remember, truth is heavenly.
YUDA:	I agree.
MWODI:	Me too, truth is heavenly.
YUDA:	Bishop, as you are no doubt aware, in the matter of the abduction of the two visiting priests from your church *Serikali* had no hand in it. That is why we will leave no…
BEN'SA:	…stone unturned until the culprits are brought to book.
YUDA:	Absolutely. So why does the media think that somehow *Serikali* had something to do with it? Where is the evidence?
BEN'SA:	The disappearance of our priests after their abduction should be the concern of every self-respecting Kafiran. Those two were here to assist us in the fight against poverty and ignorance. What wrong did they do that they should vanish into thin air under mysterious circumstances? As a church, our immediate concern is the now familiar harassment of known members of our by agents of *Serikali.*

(12—13)

Mwodi and Yuda represent what they call *Serikali* which is the Swahili word for the government. When used in postcolonial discourse, the term connotes 'the strong arm of the government' and under colloquial circumstances it describes the capability of the government to coerce people or situations which are not in the favour of the government's agenda. Therefore, the two government officials come with the sole reason of intimidating Ben'sa primarily to intimate that there is a possibility that '*Serikali*' (the strong and capable arm of the government) may take action against her organization. Ben'sa's headquarters frame the postcolonial view by embodying the protracted struggle against oppression and subjugation. The Green Cross of Kafira is an incendiary ground that manages to pose a strong threat to the current occupants of the governmental offices because the organisation with the related branches serves the people and it is geared towards healing the community. The Green Cross of Kafira under the leadership of Ben'sa can be seen as fertile political ground where the seeds of revolution sprout strong.

"Testimonies," the first scene of the second act, presents a testimonial account of postcolonial subjects in a regime that is reluctant to enforce change. The scene takes place in The Green Cross Clinic that is being used as a refuge for Kafiran rejects. The rejects are despondent and dejected because their dedication to build a better state has become the very thing that puts them in danger. Reject One for instance used to be a policeman. His rescue of a child from a burning building caused him to be hated by irresponsible colleagues. Reject Four recounts that, "It was a fine sunny morning, so we sang happily as we planted the seedlings. Suddenly, very suddenly, an irate group of men and women descended on us with crude weapons. They beat us and left us for dead." (35) Reject Four suffers for his dedication to conserve the environment. Reject Three is coached to take part in a public protest that turns out violent. He says that, "They came to my room at night and said they wanted to change my life once and for all, and having lived in poverty all my life I got tempted. I accepted the money and agreed to be coached." (37) The government of Chief of Chiefs is a government of propaganda. Reject Four is trapped by the conditions of his plight when he's offered an opportunity that appears to be a form of salvation from his lifelong impoverishment. Each Reject comes with a different story pointing fingers at the crude operations of the government. Instead of serving the people, the government of Kafira depletes and disposes anyone who sets out to do something productive. From a postcolonial dramaturgical approach, this specific scene can be linked to what Bhabha conceptualises as the "colonial testimony" (171) whereby the postcolonial subject's experience is shown in light of systems of aggression and oppression are inherited from the colonialists. These systems are adapted by the new leaders ending up perpetuating the same system of exploitation, oppression and inequality. At this refugee centre led by Mama Mgei, we see the seeds of the revolution that will overthrow the long dictatorial regime of Chief of Chiefs. We are brought to the realisation that unity is power. The power of revolution is shown to

emanate from the synergy of faith and dedication. When Mwodi and Yuda come to consult Mama Mgei, she shows them what the regime has done to ordinary Kafirans and assures them that the time of neo-colonial subjugation by fellow Africans is over.

MAMA MGEI:	No deal. You people in *Serikali* are living in a totally different world from the one we live in. When were elections held? Who told you that you or the Chief of Chiefs will decide who will be the next *Serikali*?
MWODI:	That is why we are here. We came to consult you and to strike a deal on the way forward.
MAMA MGEI:	You came to consult me as who?
MWODI:	Mama Mgei, everyone knows you are one of the opinion leaders in Kafira.
MAMA MGEI:	Too little too late.
MWODI:	Too little too late? Is that what you think?
MAMA MGEI:	Yes. Only a fool runs after a train that has already departed.
MWODI:	But why, I mean, how…?
MAMA MGEI:	(*Pointing to where the rejects are seated*) Answers to those questions are over there. Come and I will show you what you have refused to see over the years. Come and I will introduce you to the realities of Kafira, our motherland. (*She leads the two to where the Rejects are seated. One by one she invites the Rejects to narrate the story of their misery.*)

(33)

The way Ben'sa confront Mwodi and Yuda indicates the discontent that the people of Kafira have had to endure to this point. She brazenly confronts these men forthwith with intent to alert them that all Rejects are a representation of everything that is wrong with the nation of Kafira. Each of the Reject was subjected to mistreatment and rejected by the government. The Green Cross Clinic stands as a space for possibilities. The Rejects get the chance to access liberation because they are given the chance to forgive, learn from past mistakes, and be able to face the future differently.

Shannon Jackson propounds that, "Theatre delineates the powerless from the powerful and moves marginalised subjects from a state of unknowingness to the more enlightened state of knowing one's mind." (190) This understanding of the means of theatre

is close to that of Bertolt Brecht who believed that drama could be instrumental in fostering change and development. Brecht maintains that, "The concern of […] theatre is thus eminently practical. Human behaviour is shown as alterable; man himself as dependent on certain political and economic factors and at the same time as capable of altering them." (86) *The Green Cross of Kafira* takes the Kenyan audience to a 'critical auditorium' that pushes the political debate on leadership further. The play boils down to the depiction of certain political ills of the government and showcases ways in which people can change the structure and the ideology of *Serikali* so that they may become more accountable.

The last two scenes tie up two fundamental discussions of postcolonial theatre in reflecting the condition of the present postcolony. They answer the questions 'where as a nation Kafira is now and what are the possibilities for changing/confronting the current challenges.' Scene three of the second act is entitled "The Unexpected Reward" and depicts how informed and determined civil action can transform dire political situations. The narrator emphasizes that what he witnessed was a transformational "resolve of Kafirans on that voting day. People refused to sleep because they wanted to stand up and be counted, and counted they were. It is even rumoured that expectant women gave birth as they waited to vote. It was a right that they desperately clung to." (53) The delight of the narrator shows the impact of the resolve adopted by united Kafiran underdogs. The play ends with profound hope which resembles an actualisation of the dream of independence that Kafirans had waited for a long time.

The conclusion of the play inevitably takes us back to the beginning of the Kafiran trilogy when this postcolonial state was fettered under the chains of the despot Boss in *Betrayal in the City.* The ending of the play takes the audience all the way to the end of the regime of Chief of Chiefs thus marking a new dawn for Kafira. Sikia Macho's promise for a

new Kafira is seen when he enunciates that "It was a time of rebirth, a time of reconciliation and a time of hope. No one knew whose hand they had shaken vigorously because such knowledge would be of no use; it was a thing of the past. To tell you the truth, I can't wait for tomorrow." (53) Overtly, Imbuga is challenging his audience to realise that unity is strength. Through the words of the narrator, the playwright argues that change is always in the hands of citizens. The play holds a positive outlook on post-independence politics by suggesting that there is always a possibility to move forward. In the last scene entitled "The Past Meets the Present," Imbuga dramatizes a swearing in ceremony of Mgei who now has been released from detention. Importantly, Imbuga advances that change and real independence is accessible alongside a few manageable challenges since Mwodi (from the previous despotic regime) is still part of the new government.

Imbuga represents a political postcolonial struggle in *The Green Cross of Kafira* by staging a nation that is tired of dictatorship and exploitation by the privileged few. The only way that Imbuga manages to have the depiction of the postcolonial struggle(s) possible is by situating the play at a given relevant place and time. The play depicts a protracted struggle where the bodies of Rejects and revolutionaries bear witness to their persecutions and lay out the possibility for transformation in a nation that seems to be at a deadlock. Nyairo, while accounting for questions that came up when Kenya was celebrating fifty years of self-rule, points out that, "We did not ask all of the questions that we should have asked. And yet, asking questions about our being and belonging is the only way to come to terms with the future and to prepare for it." (Postscript) The best way to depict the role of postcolonial performance in the prevalent struggles is the use of the performance space to present a story that pushes the audience to evaluate the present state of the nation and proposes various ways to make it better. Time and space combine to represent the postcolonial condition in a way that centres the broader discussion on the relationship between civic duty and public

institutions. In Brechtian terms, effective theatre is that which puts the spectator at a position of ‘a need to act’ and that is what Imbuga does by interrogating the postcolonial condition from a historical and political standpoint.

PART TWO: WHO SINGS THE KENYAN NATION–STATE?

Incorporating National Discourse in Postcolonial Literacies: The Nairobi Revolution of 1968.

Kenyan cultural discourses have been used to perpetuate a socio-political discussion that responds to significant historical events and postcolonial struggles in order to generate a transformational national consciousness. On October 24th 1968, Henry Owuor-Anyumba, Taban lo Liyong, and James Ngugi (now Ngugi wa Thiong'o) who were lecturers in the University of Nairobi's English Department forwarded a memo entitled "On the Abolishment of the English Department" proposing a fundamental reform that would see the establishment of a literature department that would heavily have an Afrocentric content. The proposed reform was carried out. In the course of time, this initiative has been seen as revolutionary. The existing English department was inherently Eurocentric and the scholars saw the need for a literacy that broadly informed the postcolonial African subject. Wa Thiong'o later noted that the essential question was about "what would be at the centre? And what would be on the periphery, so to speak?" (*Decolonising* 80) The Nairobi Revolution was not entirely focused on discarding the study of European literature but the troika saw immense importance in building an anticolonial nationalism through postcolonial literacies. Apollo Obonyo Amoko postulates that in the postcolonial African context, "the study of literature—as well as the subsequent production of high canonical literature—cultural nationalists thought critical because of its perceived instrumentality in the establishment of the appropriately nationalist postcolonial cultures." (16) Amoko notes that since Africa at the time did not have a vibrant technological base, cultural discourses took a centre-stage in promoting nationalism and raising relevant questions on identity. Despite the fact that the troika's initiative was entirely literary, drama was part and parcel of the conversation. Liyong and Ngugi wrote and staged plays in the wake of Nairobi revolution thus theatre was an instrumental tool in taking the conversation further attitude. Amoko notes that *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977) (co-written

by wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii) and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) (co-written by wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo) depicted an attempt to construct a national culture. Over time, Kenyan theatre has become an avenue for contesting dominant notions such as national identity, ethnicity and statehood.

Singing the Kenyan Nation-State: Identity, Ethnicity and State.

Kenyan theatre has been instrumental in exploring the entire Kenyan landscape from a political, cultural and sociological stance. For that reason, fundamental facets vital in understanding the Kenyan postcolonial society such as ethnicity and national identity take on a centre stage in Kenyan drama. George Outa Odera accounts that within the Kenyan artistic arena, "tribe or ethnic background is a central plank that shapes the various discourses and commentaries." (33) Outa prioritizes the focus on ethnicity by characterizing it as the morass upon which the Kenyan identity stands. He points out that theatre-makers in contemporary Kenya are confounded by the convoluted nature of the Kenyan context. Outa opines that there is a recurrent desperation "to be relevant and appealing in a contemporary Kenyan context [due to its] multi-ethnic and extremely multi-vocal character." (34) Therefore, the central inquiry of this chapter takes on a theoretical conception of the postcolonial society within the matrix of national identity. The broader concern to be explored here is the notion of inhabiting and claiming the Kenyan nation-state.

In an interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Judith Butler postulates that; "If the state is what "binds," it is also clearly what can and does unbind. And if the state binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it is also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes." (5) Butler acknowledges that the intent to craft a national identity construes a certain force that regulates the concepts of belonging or not belonging. Within the Kenyan political landscape questions surrounding national identity are prevalent due to the fleeting nature of national unity. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the

Kenyan society, the practice power becomes a contested issue due to ethnic imbalance in representation. Certain ethnic parties in Kenya feel expelled or banished not necessarily by loss of their citizenship but rather by the diminution of their of power. Butler expounds that if the state unbinds "it is not always through emancipatory means, i.e. through "letting go" or "setting free"; it expels precisely through an exercise of power." (5) Butler's postulation on state's power to bind and unbind clarifies how the dysfunction of a democratic state promotes exclusionary and inclusionary forces among various members of the society. In circumstances where some social groups feel excluded from the political sphere, members of these ethnic groups feel undermined within the nation-state. As democracy operates under the assumption that the government is of the people for the people by the people, when there are dissatisfactions among citizens from some ethnic groups, such individuals may feel discouraged from claiming a sense of national heritage because they feel that they are politically irrelevant.

In postcolonial Kenya, history shows that ethnic schism has existed in the political scene from the start. These differences and divisions have become part and parcel of the Kenyan political culture on a foundational level. For instance; Ali Mazrui illustrates at length that democracy has comfortably married the African ethnic diversity because the "political pluralism in the present democratic Africa has tended to assume an overtly ethnic character" (*Babel* 106). From a sociolinguistic point of view, differing as well as integrated ethnic pockets are bound to emerge out of this situation since ethnicity is at the root of political climate. The competition for national resources has been a root-cause of ethnic antagonism in postcolonial Kenya. However, to fully understand how ethnic diversity has become a plague to national unity, we ought to examine the sophisticated nature of the postcolonial relations. Colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism plays a key role in the creation of ethnic

rivalry in the postcolony. Mazrui contextualises the complexity of the situation by closely examining the nature of postcolonial relations.

The Postcolonial Relations: The Eurafrican Condition.

Ali Mazrui proposes a rudimental literary and philosophical perspective resourceful in creating an understanding of the precarious nature of the postcolonial state's sense of unified nationalism. Through the use of the metaphor of marriage, Mazrui contextualises the destabilising African–Europe affair by showing how colonial relationships continue in the post-independence era. He calls the union and its aftermath 'Eurafrica'. In the eyes of Mazrui, the colonial connection between Europe and Africa "can be seen as a marriage, a forced marriage. Africa was not a willing partner, though contracts were sometimes written, signed, and sealed. It was a mixed marriage, racially, and one wonders whether it is bound to be a tragic marriage. (*Africa* 433) Mazrui brings the discussion on postcolonial relations into the 1982 postcolonial Africa emphasizing the need to rethink Eurafrican affairs. It is approximately 20 years after Kenyan independence, and Africans have betrayed fellow Africans, Europeans have betrayed Europeans, Africans have betrayed Europeans, Europeans have betrayed Africans. These premises challenge us to understand the complex nature of the Eurafrican relationship. Ethnic antagonism in the Kenyan political and public scene has been the doing of colonialism as well as the Kenyan post-independence society. It is a betrayal which can be viewed through the Eurafrican viewpoint. Using dramatic scenarios from popular plays like *The Tragedy of Othello: The Moor of Venice* (1604)*, Madama Butterfly* (1903) and *Shaka* (1965), Mazrui explores the theme of betrayal in order to expand his Eurafrican idea. He emphasizes that the "pendulum of power in postcolonial Africa will continue to swing between the black man infatuated with an aspect of the white world, and the black man obsessed with an aspect of the black world". (446) The colonial legacy continues to shape African political and public spheres in impactful ways that challenge the

repeated attempts to institute a national consciousness that seeks the build a unified society. Mazrui emphasizes that the foundation of the postcolony is imperilled by socio-political divides that are put forward by differing African nationalists each with the aim of rebuilding the postcolonial society thus binding them to an unavoidable clash. In relation to the ethnic conundrum within the Kenyan socio-political sphere after independence, Mwangi Kimenyi explains how the Eurafrican bond has continued to impact the postcolony even after the presumed divorce (declaration of independence) because the tussle between KADU (advocated for regional government) and KANU (a centralised government) was "short-lived and since the late 1960s Kenyan politics has been influenced primarily by ethnicity as the primary axis of political mobilisation, accompanied by high concentration of power in the executive." (162) The pioneering political parties for Kenyan independence were already torn along ethnic lines. The basis upon which the newly independent state was to be re-established relied heavily on ethnic based alliances. This dynamic consequently encouraged deleterious attitudes in allocation of national resources, policy-making and governance. Pal Ahluwalia points out that towards the attainment of independence, "the regional orientation of the constitution, then supported by the colonial authority, became the basis of the Kenya's independence settlement." (33) The diversity in the Kenyan society seemed suited to the regional government (*Majimbo*) which KADU proposed because it meant all ethnic groups would be given the chance to participate in the governing process. Ideally, KADU was advocating for a system that would establish a unified sense of nationalism. However, on August 14, 1964, Kenyatta made it clear that his governance integrally focused on establishing a republic and this meant a great disfavour for regionalism.

Imagining the Kenyan Nation in Francis Imbuga's Drama.

From a historical viewpoint, Imbuga's drama helps forge a progressive voice meant to encourage the Kenyan postcolonial audiences to get in touch with their realities. The

playwright has used his plays to show the experiences of the Kenyan postcolonial subject from a political, economic and sociological standpoint challenging the prevailing postcolonial structures, attitudes and habits. John Ruganda notes that in Kafiran plays, Imbuga employs "a naming strategy of distancing in order to alienate the characters from the ethnocentric realities outside the context of the plays" (8). Imbuga's approach thus prioritises the important discussion within Kenyan postcolonial audiences by pushing for a consciousness that dissolves ethnic differences thus building a national homogeneity that sees the need to imagine a unified nation. Ruganda maintains that "From the context of ethnicity, these characters cannot arouse our anger or scorn, for the simple reason that their names do not purport to deal with or signify ethnic cleavages" (8). For that reason, the play is able to homogenise the audience into 'Kenyans watching a play on the Kenyan postcolonial condition(s)'. For Imbuga, the focus is always on the ordinary citizen. As discussed earlier, a close reading of *Betrayal in the City* (1976) allows us to ruminate on postcolonial struggles in 1960s to 1980s. The play gives us a glimpse of salient postcolonial impediments by considering systemic and political flaws that have had detrimental effect on the ordinary Kenyan. The play's use of relatable characters and plots is particularly significant. Under the critical premise that Odera Outa terms as "the dramaturgy of power and politics" (345), Imbuga's drama in postcolonial Kenya is used to propagate vital political questions that privilege the spectator with insight to re-evaluate the operation of the postcolonial state from a socio-political stance. One way of creating a national consciousness through theatre in early postcolonial Kenya was through plays that raised relevant political questions that made the spectators reflect on the state of the nation. By watching the means and impact of political power, the audience members were invited to ponder on politics within the postcolony and to question the effectiveness of the state in implementing the dream of independence.

Imbuga's plays create a space to discuss land rights, postcolonial democracy, meritocracy (leadership by wealthy educated elites), distribution of national resources, and ethnic representation. Drama as a resourceful cultural discourse propagates a continued inquiry into political and historical experience with the aim of building a cohesive idea of national identity. Essentially, by raising these questions theatre becomes a prolific platform in establishing an edge that can help the society move past negative ethnicity. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin observe that within postcolonial cultures, "Regardless of the status of the particular group, its ethnicity is a key strategy in the furtherance of group political interests and political advancement." (101) Thus having a form of ethnic consciousness encourages members of the same group to pursue their specific interests. The rise in ethnic pride and entitlement infests ethnically diverse societies with perilous differences, hinders leadership and national unity, and endangers the life of growing postcolonial states. For example, Francis Imbuga's *The Successor* (1979) satirizes the notion of political legitimacy and leadership in Masero, a fictional African Empire in which the play is based. The Emperor, Chonda, is betrayed by the greedy Chief Oriomra who is willing to raze everything to the ground at the beginning of the play just to ensure the so-called 'outsider' doesn't succeed in deposing the aged Emperor. The play raises relevant historical and political questions that enable the Kenyan spectator to reflect on ethnic tensions seen in defining political events in Kenyan history. The play addresses the succession of Kenyatta by Moi (1978), alongside the power tensions that followed the 1982 coup d'état. From a postcolonial dramaturgical viewpoint, the play allows the Kenyan audience to contemplate also on diminished government popularity following the assassination of Tom Mboya (1969) and J. M Kariuki (1975) both of whom had a lot of approval and support among the masses as legitimate successors of Kenyatta. In *The Successor*, Chief Oriomra urges Chief Sasia to consider the risks of having an outsider in a leadership position "[…] a stranger comes here

from nowhere. He is about to be placed over our heads. I ask you for your opinion and what do you I get? [*mimics*] "What can a man say?"" (23) Chief Oriomra feigns frustration over the idea that Chief Jandi who is not born in Masero is the top choice of Emperor Chonda. The construction of distinct categories of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' becomes a pathway for Oriomra to manipulate the political climate of Masero in order to create a chance for himself to rise when everything falls apart. His manoeuvres in the play reflect an insular nationalistic attitude that is common within the Kenyan political sphere where ethnic-based preferences often foster the emergence of entitled figures of authority who are not fit to govern. This situation impedes Kenya from focusing on nation-building since many ethnic communities are preoccupied with gaining and retaining power instead of focusing on the common good of the nation.

The National Ethos in Twenty-first Century Kenyan Theatre: *The Return of Mgofu* (2011) and *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013).

The twenty-first century Kenya saw immense historical and political changes that meant Kenyan people became more conscious on a national scale. There was an elevated attempt in the socio-cultural discourses to initiate political change thus the urge for national socio-political reforms became an integral part of national dialogue. A number of performances created in the twenty-first century Kenya have been characterised to elicit a progressive national ethos concerning politics, history and culture. Theatre has since become a rostrum for promoting productive discussions that foster productive national conversations. Rose Wangui Komu in her doctoral thesis opines that "The relatively democratic and tolerant political environment since 2003 has seen the state interfering less in the business of arts and artists and plays that could not see the light of day during the Moi era can now be staged or taught in schools without fear." (210) Theatre was greatly shaped by the change in leadership that followed the defeat of Moi in the election of 2002. This shift in the political arena translated into a favourable ambience for the artists and thus granted the arts more appeal

within the Kenyan society. The transition in Kenyan leadership meant a substantial change in the way postcolonial relations were to be examined socially, politically and economically. Censorship in socio-cultural discourses diminished and artists, like David Mulwa in the play *Inheritance* (2004), brought to light Kenya's gruelling political journey on the stage. The end of President Moi's dictatorship informed the play's central concern for a new beginning. Staged in a fictional African state called Kutula Republic, the play historically constructs a postcolonial state that undergoes a depletive dictatorship but eventually culminates in a revolution. The dictator Lacuna Kasoo is overthrown by his adopted sister Songoi in a peaceful victorious uprising that is dramatized to emphasize growing national unity. Songoi is loved and accepted, and she is perceived as a new hope for the country in spite of the fact that she has ties with the West that may become problematic in the advancement of Kutula Republic.

In order to understand the ways through which Francis Imbuga's *The Return of Mgofu* and *The Green Cross of Kafira* open the twenty-first century Kenyan society to a possibility of transcending ethnic politics, we ought to understand Spivak's notion of a "native informant" (*Reason* 30) as an individual possessing an "itinerary into the post-colonial [experience], which remains unrecognised through various transformations of the discussion of both ethics and ethnicity". (*Reason* 30) The native informant is both a witness and an enabler of the unethical schemes perpetrated in the postcolony through the fostered neo-colonial policies and ethnic imbalances. Characters in these two plays give a platform to the voice of the native informant by inscribing an identifiable postcolonial journey for the audience to draw from. In the two plays, Imbuga contextualises the experience of the Kenyan post-independence society thus creating a sense of agency for the postcolonial subject.

This chapter will thus attempt to establish how *The Return of Mgofu* (2011) and *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013) encourage the Kenyan spectator to rethink the notions of

ethnicity and its relation to national identity in nurturing a progressive national ethos. It will also identify the ways through which Imbuga tries to challenge contemporary Kenyan audiences to move beyond ethnic politics by advocating for a national identity that interrogates a sense of belonging in the postcolony while examining the dynamic of political domination and control. Additionally, it will examine how political drama claims a sense of belonging to the state that can move Kenyan audiences past negative ethnicity and towards national cohesion.

A historical lens is instrumental for understanding how ethnicity has repeatedly thwarted attempts to promote a cohesive national identity in Kenyan cultural discourse. Ethnic consciousness in Kenya has brought about polarised socio-political relations that have recurrently subverted the idealised dream of Kenya becoming a stable state. Max Weber avers that ethnicity comprises of "human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent—because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation or migration—in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of the nonkinship communal relationships." (389) Ethnicity is thus a form of social glue that produces and perpetuates socio-politically opinionated standpoints in diverse societies. Imbuga proposes the realisation of a cohesive national spirit in the two plays by reworking the role of ethnicity and all forms of diversity within the nation-state. Mdinka's (*The Return of Mgofu*) and Kafira's (*The Green Cross of Kafira*) histories become the reflective mirrors through which the spectators can examine the detrimental nature of negative ethnicity and civil reluctancy in the postcolony respectively. The two plays summon a national spirit that places the welfare of the state at the forefront.

Towards a Post-ethnic Kenya: Challenging the Role of Ethnicity in *The Return of Mgofu* (2011).

In 2007, exactly forty-four years after gaining independence from the British, Kenya held its tenth general elections. Wainaina witnesses in his memoir that "Raila's party is now nakedly saying in rallies all over Kenya that their campaign is about forty-two tribes versus one tribe—the Gikuyu. The Kikuyu have become "blemishes" in some parts of Rift Valley. Blemishes that need to be wiped away. They have gone mad, our politicians." (237) Through his transparent language, Wainaina emphasizes on the need to focus ethnically charged political scene in Kenya at the moment.

The Return of Mgofu opens on a market scene where two spirits of dead victims from political violence that occurred in Mdinka long time ago pay the current generation of Mdinka a visit. Thori (the man) enters pushing Thoriwa (the woman) in a wheelchair. They alert their audience that they come from a different time when Mdinka's history was redefined by political violence. Even in death, the spirits are wounded by the memory of what was lost and the damage that was done. The spirits hail on the need to focus on 'what used to be' in order to prioritize the need to challenge the present society to rethink the political future of the nation. In the conversation below, Thori and Thoriwa problematize the divisions that abruptly arouse in Mdinka in their time.

THORIWA: […] But that was before our people lost their heads. Before they began spitting on the village well so that no one could have water. Yes, people who had co-existed for long began pointing accusing fingers at one another. (*Thoriwa and Thori get into a mock struggle. My land… My cat… My maize… can be heard in the struggle*).

THORI: (*Nodding his head*) People who had performed rituals sang, danced and laughed together. Yes, they farted without parting their buttocks.

THORIWA: A pity indeed. People who had even borrowed salt from one another began shaking hands with madness.

THORI: (*Gesticulating*) Someone said it: The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing. Yes, they opened their heads. They allowed madness in. soon they began to warm themselves with fire of their neighbours' burning skeletons. Good people did nothing!

(4-5)

The salient realisation underpinning the conversation between Thori and Thoriwa is that at one time Mdinkans used to be united. There used to be a time of harmonious coexistence. The nostalgia inscribed in the two spirits indicates that this society once grew and lived peacefully without regard to possible differences concerning land and identity. The concept of 'madness' invites the audience to reflect on the nature of political violence. Thori postulates that "They allowed madness in" (5) and Thoriwa goes ahead to reiterate the fact that "We lived happily in the three ridges until that night (*looking downcast*). A deranged man or woman set a neighbour's house on fire. No one bothered to know who had done it and why." (5-6) So, essentially, once the people were manipulated or rather 'maddened' to behave violently in order to acquire more land, nothing else mattered other than destroying and inflicting pain to a point of losing their humanity. Discussing the events that happened, Thori and Thoriwa relate that they died with others who had been hiding in a shrine. The rebels who were killing people across Mdinka were indeed deranged. After ordering people to come out of the shrine they killed them point blank. To make matters worse, they also burned the shrine alongside those who had remained inside. The picture that this situation presents is ghastly, inhuman and brutality.

Moses Atwoli does a close assessment of certain aspects of orature in Imbuga's *The Return of Mgofu* (2011)*, The Burning of Rags* (1989) and *Aminata* (1988) studying how they serve the central concerns of the plays. In relation to *The Return of Mgofu,* he points out that the play's viewpoint is very didactic. Atwoli propounds that "the play offers a lesson on the sanctity of human life. As depicted in the text, human life supersedes all else in terms of

importance." (40) Therefore, the play prioritizes the concern on human lives with the sole aim of disparaging political violence in a culture that associates violence with politics. The position that Thori and Thoriwa take in reminding the people of what happened, promotes an informed political engagement that does not take the beliefs, statements and sentiments of political figures at face value. Imbuga establishes a metaphysical dimension in the play in order to append a vociferous legitimacy to the purpose which Thori and Thoriwa embody. Thori insists that "We are messengers of those who went before us, our ancestors" (3) and for that reason, the people in the market place are reminded that it is the will of the ancestors to reflect on Mdinka's dark history and learn from it. Within the African social hierarchy, ancestors are accorded divine abilities. They are revered for guiding the society in decision making, bilking, and handling calamity alongside acting as a connection between the community and the gods.

The fluidity between the spiritual life and earthly life marks this play distinctly thus creating a stage reality that is full of theatrical promises. Imbuga sets out to use this play in creating a possibility for reforming how the Kenyan society understands of the relationship between politics and ethnicity. This play introduces us to a society that has been marred by its past to an extent that the memory refuses to depart. Thoriwa stubbornly maintains that, "But Thori and I are different. We have refused to forget" (9) to signify that their mission is to remind everyone what happened and what it meant then and now. These characters are clearly transcribed to heighten the influence of the past on the present.

The play exists in theatrical frames that set the two ancestral spirits as guides for the audience in uncovering what can be learned from the tragedy that befell Mdinka. As Thoriwa directs, "Prepare yourselves to be transported to Kadesa's shrine, in the forest of ogres in the Northern part of Nderema" (9) we are acquainted with the fact that they are informed and capable of accessing this particular society in the past and present. At the end of the first act,

Thori announces that "[…] we have done what we came to do. To shut the doors through which history repeats itself." (29) This marks the fact that they are responsible for imparting wisdom to the audience. The play is encased in a form that makes the audience witnesses because Thori and Thoriwa return to show the Mdinkan spectators an important facet of the past that connects to the present and probably may shape the future. The two messengers (Thori and Thoriwa) are presented as symbols that frame the dark past of Mdinka when political violence bled the land and caused so much pain and division. In the second scene of the first act, Thori and Thoriwa introduce us to Kadesa and the group of refugees from Mdinka. It is in this scene where Mgofu's son is born.

The play exists in visual frames by the way the two spirits introduce what is about to happen thus intently challenging the audience to realise the need to rethink each and everything that they see. Towards the beginning of the first act, Thori invites the stage audience to keenly pay attention to what is about to take place. She avers "Listen to Mwami Mhando. Discuss, consult and agree with his counsel or you will be punished for the sins of your forefathers" (29). The second act commences with Mhando's probe into the rumours of Mgofu being somewhere in Nderema. On the level of character, Imbuga manages to make the unusual landscape of this play plausible because the metaphysical dimension creates a level of possibility whereby the past and the present can be examined. The ability to tap into the past and then move to the present creates a resourceful theatrical engagement that promotes the possibility to understand violence, death and displacement. In the world of this play, violence, loss, displacement and underdevelopment are seen as forces that drain life from the nation. In the end of the first scene, Thoriwa exhorts the market goers to "Prepare [themselves] to be transported to Kadesa's shrine, in the forest of ogres in the northern part of Nderema. (*Pause*) The story of how Kadesa and several other people had been exiled from Mdinka, their motherland" (9-10) Thori and Thoriwa want their audience to face the

traumatic history that led to the present-day Mdinka. By the end of the first scene, it is clear that Mgofu, the blind seer, and his wife, Nora, disappeared into the forest while the other people left in the shrine were killed. Mgofu and his wife survived but Mgofu died shortly after crossing the border. Adonija however declares that, "I knew Mgofu would be back. You know Mgofu didn't die! Mgofu is back" (21) aiming at clarifying that Mgofu is reincarnated through his son

The second scene of the first act opens in Nderema showing a refugee camp with exiles from Mdinka under the leadership of Kadesa. They have built tents nearby a shrine that is called "the shrine of Katigali" (12) as Kadesa mentions when welcoming Mude. She goes on and explains that the shrine means "farewell to the ogres that wanted to devour their own blood. Our people behaved like deranged animals, killing one another like ruthless brutes. (*Reflects*) So we said farewell to them, farewell to the ogres." (12) The exilic scene creates the chance for the audience to problematize the legitimacy of violence as a political tool for change. Postcolonial Kenya has experienced political violence regionally and nationwide. Using Achille Mbembe's notion of the *commandment*, we can look into the various ways through which Imbuga in this play encourages the Kenyan audience to ruminate on the ways through which the Kenyan political scene operates. Theatre in postcolonial Kenya has been a vibrant avenue in promoting a national discourse that examines power relations. The way the notion of the *commandment* is embedded is through the socio-historical basis through which we see a certain narrative attaining the control of Mdinkan national mentality. As Mbembe asserts, "in the postcolony, the *commandment* seeks to institutionalise itself, to achieve legitimation and hegemony" and thus it is inherently a narrative or consciousness that is aimed at imparting a given sense of control. In short, a power that is skewed to particular parties or individual. It is realised through "periodic consciousness, vocabulary and narratives that" are propagated to produce a viewpoint that is not only based on symbols but also

"invested with a surplus of meanings that are not negotiable" (103). Within the political and public sphere, violence has been used to institute certain agendas for the benefit of powerful people or groups. Mbembe explains that "To ensure that no such challenge takes place, the champions of state power invent entire constellations of ideas; they adopt a distinct set of cultural repertoires and powerfully evocative statements; but they also resort, if necessary, to the systematic application of pain" (103). *The Return of Mgofu* performs the aftermath of political violence utilizing characters and events that give insight into the ways through which national sphere has been invaded by the forces of the *commandment* to a point of being 'zombified'. Mbembe points out that when the postcolonial society's living space is permeated by the *commandment*, there is inevitable "zombification of both the dominant and those apparently dominated" (104). Mbembe uses the concept of zombification to elaborate how vitality is leeched by the tussle between the power factions in the postcolony. He emphasizes that the postcolony doesn't possess only one public space but several, a fact that makes evading the *commandment* very difficult. By the time we are brought into the play's world, so much has happened in the past thus putting Mdinka into stagnation. Mdinka is *zombified*. When Nora arrives at the shrine where she gives birth to the reincarnated Mgofu Ngoda, she is accompanied by Adonija. Adonija is a witness of the events that can be used to understand the political impasse in Mdinka. He is a marginal character who seems to be mentally challenged but recognises the truth concerning the perpetrators of violence. He walks with a camera around his neck and claims that, "I saw them kill one another because of soil. It's all here. I secretly recorded some of their meetings. There were preachers, priests and a chief. They were all there, plotting to shed the blood of their brothers and sisters." (22) As the conversation progresses, Imbuga draws us closer to the Kenyan political scene in the conversation with Bizia.

BIZIA: What is your name?

ADONIJA: Name? I already answered that question. Everything starts with a name, and then you are either friend or foe. What is in a name? Father, Pastor or Chief, what do you they mean? What is in a name? They hunted one another like mad dogs. They destroyed our good name. This time I said no, not again. I will not be party to this again. So I decided to become Mgofu Ngoda's eyes.

(22)

From a postcolonial stance, we may propose that Imbuga here is trying to illuminate us on the role of ethnic politics in regional violence in the Kenyan postcolony. As Mbembe sustains, violence is widely associated with the African postcolonial politics. He propounds that, "The postcolony is characterised by a distinctive style of political improvisation, by a tendency to excess and lack of proportion, as well as by a distinctive ways identities are multiplied, transformed, and put in circulation." (102). He sees the political character of postcolonial cultures as mercurial in ways that those in charge can find ways to transmute opinions, sentiments and beliefs in their 'improvisations' that always become pestilent outbursts in the grassroots. In the mercurial and uncontrollable environment of ethnic politics, violence is an unfortunate possibility.

Imbuga encourages us to realise what is at stake by giving us a privileged view of the people of Mdinka. He doesn't present ethnic markers into the world of the play but reiterates the fact that in Mdinka the surprising thing was how people turned against their own under mere claims of 'soil'. When Adonija falls asleep after crossing the border, he lapses into sleep-talking and describes how the violence in Mdinka had brains, resources and significant figures behind it. His mind is perturbed by what he has come to know and see.

ADONIJA: Thank you for giving me this chance Mister Chairman. As you all know, my uncle is the best blacksmith around here. With your permission I could ask him to make enough bows and arrows for the job. (*Listens to others before he speaks.*) I beg your pardon? Yes, you are right, he will need funding. (*Pause*) Fifty thousand will not be enough for the weapons, Mister Chairman. I suggest one hundred and fifty. (*Listens to others.*)

> Thank you very much Mister Chairman. Yes… you can't fight with us… come for the spoils… yes… (*He is about to go back to normal sleep when he suddenly relapses into sleep talk.*) That is a very good idea, the radio. The radio would be an effective tool (*Listens to other voices.*) No! No! No! Not national. We must go local. I mean vernacular, mother tongue. Yes, mother tongue, vernacular.
>
> (25)

In Kenya, vernacular radio stations are characterised by ethnic insiders who take great pride in their identity. The rise of ethnic radio stations has been seen as the upshot of socio-cultural avenues that portray a development in Kenya national media scene in a quest to acknowledge and fortify national ethnic diversity. However, they've had a detrimental effect because during ethnic squabbles, vernacular radio stations actively promoted ethnic division. The Luos were bound to share their opinions concerning the elections as well as the Kikuyus, the Kalenjins and Kambas alongside other communities. It was very clear that these stations were promoting national disintegration and were able to mobilise locals to react in ways that national broadcasts couldn't. Writing on the impact that vernacular radio stations had in spreading hate speech during the post-election, Edwin Okoth points out that,

> […] the Kenyan Human Rights Commission believes there is cause for concern over the language broadcast by some of the stations and there is evidence that in the past the vernacular stations (*Kass FM, Lake Victoria a*nd *Inooro* are named) have been responsible for "spinning information to support candidates and parties who are of the same tribe as their audience while openly castigating those who are not of the same tribes (KHRC, 2008)."
>
> (26)

Ethnic-based radio stations rely on a parochial audience and target their message to reach the fears and delusions of a specific group. Adonija's memories, delivered in a state of theatrical somnambulism, are reminiscent of the account Hornsby gives in relation to the ICC (International Criminal Court) investigations that followed after the violence subsided. Hornsby notes that "The ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo called the politicians' bluff, and issued public pre-trial notices for crimes against humanity against six Kenyans.

Summoned to The Hague [included high profile politicians and] Kalenjin radio station head Joshua arap Sang (for Kalenjin-Kikuyu violence in the Rift." (773) Sang, a local radio presenter in charge of Kass FM (a Kalenjin vernacular radio station) is attributed the same political influence of renown politicians whose recognition stretched nation-wide and internationally. This is because Sang's alleged ethnic incitement destabilized the state of the Kenyan nation and produced serious concerns both domestically and abroad.

The Return of Mgofu invites us to take a glimpse into political discipleship in an attempt to obviate the culture of putting too much trust in political figureheads. Adonija's lack of fluency speaks to the dramatic device prevalent in Imbuga's drama where marginal characters are very fundamental in unveiling power imbalances. John Ruganda propounds that, "The marginal characters of Imbuga's drama are in many instances burdened with the function of articulating unpalatable truths. The significance of these comic figures lies in the fact that the author has set them in concealed, but transparent, opposition against figures of authority" (9). Therefore, through Adonija, we get to understand there were leadership figures greatly responsible for the politicization of violence in Mdinka. Adonija alludes to figures of authority using emblematic terms like 'Mister Chairman' to point out that whatever transpired in Mdinka was perpetrated by powerful men with selfish agendas. Adonija is a scatterbrain who is not taken seriously. He is shown to be bothered by what people think of him. He complains that, "They all say that I don't know what I'm talking about. (*Addressing the audience*) People, surely, do I look like I've got a leaking bucket for a head?" (18) As a marginal character, Imbuga stages Adonija as an agent of truth. He embodies the traumatic experience of witnessing ethnic genocide alongside acting as the custodian of the evidence that may in the future be used to prosecute the perpetrators of the violence. While somnambulating, Bizia (Kadesa's son) thinks Adonija has a "moon spill" (25) which connotes that he is possibly mentally ill. From a postcolonial dramaturgical viewpoint, the

disregard hurled at Adonija by various characters depicts the postcolonial subject's alienation from fully redeeming the state because Adonija's evidence may not be taken seriously.

In this society, it's all about the use of the '*commandment'* to promote a particular narrative that ensures a particular order is validated and maintained. The play at this point moves its audience beyond ethnicity by focusing on the roots of effective nation building. Chinua Achebe insists that the only way to realise a unified national development is by "outgrowing tribal politics [meaning that] a citizen could live and work in a place of his choice anywhere, and pursue any legitimate goal" (5). This means that ethnic lines within the African socio-political sphere have been a major impediment in realising a strong national identity and pride. What it means to be a Kenyan is problematized by dominance of some ethnic communities in positions of power. What happens in Mdinka shakes the foundation of the entire nation to a point of taking measures to redeem the nation. In the second scene of act two, Mhando converses with his council seeking ways to save Mdinka which seems to be on the brink of socio-economic deterioration. The scene is entitled "The Inner Circle" and dramatically magnifies the viewpoint of the spectator to the very crux of the nation whereby the leaders seem greatly troubled by the recent turn of events. Mhando observes, "(*In a pensive mood*) Floods and drought. What could be the cause? Is it not the blood of the brothers and sisters that was shed by those that gave birth to us?" (40) Here Mhando links the natural disasters affecting Mdinka to the traumas created by ethnic violence, thus construing violence as a tragic curse.

By the end of the first act, Mgofu is lost to Mdinka. We are informed that he died after crossing the border to Nderema. The death of the seer and his reincarnation in a foreign land could mean many things. However, Imbuga tries to portray a fundamental metaphysical connection that was irremediably compromised when Mdinka expelled Mgofu and other individuals, and forced them to become refugees. The second act is primarily driven by the

attempt to salvage what has been lost in the past. The new ruler of Mdinka, Mwami Mhando sends scouts to Nderema in order to find out if the rumours are true about Mgofu Ngoda being in Nderema. When they return, Scout 1 reports that, "Mgofu Ngoda is revered in the whole of Nderema. He's not only a seer like the ones before him but also a healer as well. His shrine is always filled with people wishing to be treated of one ailment or another" (32). The play is set in a modern African state but the playwright intentionally juxtaposes traditional and modern African beliefs in order to render the two structures co-dependent. The current president/leader of Mdinka Mhando is tormented by a dream that compels him to seek a possible solution that could heal Mdinka. While conversing with his advisors, he says that the mystical creature that he has seen in his sleep and that transformed itself into a big bird told him that "Mdinka's salvation may be shared with Nderema" (49). The play fundamentally inscribes a broader question into the play: what happens when one crosses the ethnic divide? For that reason, it is important to investigate what Mgofu as a primary character brings into this play. Mgofu's displacement, reincarnation, and return mean something important. Since Imbuga's sense of characterisation is always strategic, we can thus investigate Mgofu's spiritual transformation as essential in addressing an integral aspect in the Kenyan society.

Mgofu helps us understand that it is possible to transcend ethnic politics by focusing on true patriotism, which is the unconditional love for one's own country. Mgofu decides to come back to Mdinka because the nation is on the brink of socio-economic deterioration. Achebe reminds us that a patriot "is a person who loves his country. He is not a person who *says* he loves his country. He is one who *cares* deeply about the happiness and well-being of his country and all his people" (15) The return of Mgofu is a sign of redemption for Mdinka. The playwright attaches a strong sense of meliorism to Mgofu's character since Mgofu chooses to overlook the fact that his father was expelled from the very nation that now calls

him back. He chooses to discard the socio-political wrangles that pertain to land, power and greed in the hope that Mdinka is truly ready for change.

Mgofu's decision to return during the 'Remembrance Day' that commemorates the victims of the violence that erupted in Mdinka in the past is a sign that he believes in a bright future for the community. The play thus paints a very important picture on patriotism and nationalism that transcends ethnic lines. *The Return of Mgofu* creates a reconciliatory ambience which promises to discard previous attitudes concerning the leadership of Mdinka and to redefine the entire state in light of the mistakes made in the past. When Mhando holds a discussion with Mdanya and Mtange, he reveals that "The problem is in our people's minds. (*Pause*) Our people just don't believe in themselves. That's partly why I called you here this morning" (44). Imbuga argues that there has been a fundamental flaw in the way the dream of independence was set to be implemented, and that it is vital to move past ethic division in order to build a new future.

The play is concluded by what seems to be the demise of Mgofu at his home while delivering an inspiring speech. Thori and Thoriwa suddenly return to the stage and explain that "In this slice of life that we have shared, whether Mgofu Ngoda's return ended in death or whether it did not is not the matter. The matter is that the possibility was always there" (70). The end of the play encourages the Kenyan audience to reflect on the possibilities available for healing and nation-building through reconciliation. A number of statements are made during this revolutionary homecoming of Mgofu. There is a pantomimic scene played for the guest that features two creatures that appear to be humans with horns. They are bound to each other at their necks. The two creatures enter the stage but are distractedly drawn to two totems placed at the opposite ends of the stage. The rope that binds the two is not long enough for both of them to reach at the totems at the same time. They struggle with each pulling to their own side. The struggle persists till they both fall down exhausted to take a

rest. They sleep in the process of resting. One of the creatures wakes up and manages to remove the rope on his neck after realising the horns on his head are no more. The creature who woke up first then rushes to the other and pulls his horns off and also helps untie the rope. They are about to fight for the nearby totem when they realise all they needed to do was work together. This particular metatheatrical device highlights the importance of sharing national resources. Imbuga seems to be urging that national resources can be shared only when the parties agree on fair and equitable terms. The playwright at this point seems to be pointing at the Kenyan audience in building a national consciousness that disregards inequalities across identifiable social groups in the economic and political aspects. Imbuga with respect to the defining image of this play, functions as a "native intellectual" as Franz Fanon points out. Fanon states that, "the native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities. He must go on until he has found the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will emerge" (66). Imbuga ensures that his audience learn about Kenyan ethno-political realities in forging a way forward. The playwright's sense of theatrical experience seems to be pointing to the fact that theatre should immerse the spectator into an experience that transforms his/her mind-set and enable an active engagement with the prevailing issues in the society.

It is hinted that Nora (Mgofu Ngoda's daughter) may end up getting married to Mhando whose wife just passed on. The play promises that the union may mean reconciliation for future Mdinkan communities. It is not overtly stated that there are different ethnic communities in Mdinka but the play shows that Nora's people are the ones who were originally displaced from Mdinka. Moreover, considering Adonija's comments about vernacular radio stations, it is highly probable that ethnicities exist in Mdinka. Therefore, Nora getting married to Mhando can be seen to mean a strong political bond uniting all people. The portrayal of Nora as a strong political figure is reinforced by the fact that

everybody shouts and rejoices when she stands to address them in the ceremony. In the second act it is stated that although Nora was educated abroad in the University of Southampton, she never severed her ties to her country and kept visiting Mdinka. In her speech she tells the people that, "From our short stay here, it has become obvious that your current leaders wish to break clean from the past. (*Crowd claps*) Most of your leaders want Mdinka to return to oneness and to wholeness." (68) Her presence ignites the audience. In spite of her residence abroad, she seems to possess a good understanding of Mdinka's political sphere. It is stated that Nora visits Mdinka now and then. She believes that change may come to Mdinka but it is bound to face some opposition because it is never that simple.

E. S. Atieno Odhiambo recommends that, in Kenya, "[…] we should look ethnic sovereignty directly in the face and understand it for what it is: the fulcrum around which African politics turns. Its primary goal is centralised despotism." (94). It takes Mdinka protracted drought, poverty and economic deterioration to realise that they need Mgofu to heal the nation. As Odhiambo notes, ethnicity is the basis upon which African political scene is perceived and understood. *The Return of Mgofu* constructs the postcolonial state as sick and needing to be healed and it showcases to the audience that the only way to redeem the country from its ethnic divisions is to eliminate ethnic biases and foster a culture of leadership and patriotism.

Building a National Homogeneity: The Redemption of the State in *The Green Cross of Kafira* (2013).

The Green Cross of Kafira concludes the Kafiran trilogy by underscoring the role of the public in bringing reform in a politically oppressive state. The play is constructed in frames that portray the various flaws and forces (like corruption and dictatorship respectively) within the postcolonial nation-state that constantly impede the realisation of freedom and development. Just like *The Return of Mgofu,* the play is staged as part of the

larger history and it is meant to educate the spectators on the ways change can be brought to postcolonial societies. This play sees the twenty-first century postcolonial subject as the redeemer of the state. Imbuga can be seen as a native intellectual who aims at staging the native informant to raise an essential ontological question that problematizes the social order in relation to the practice of power in the modern-day democratic state with the sole aim of asserting that change is only palpable through systemic reformation. Spivak considers the position and image of the native informant as "a site [that can be used to] steer through cultural relativism regarding" the postcolonial period because she sees the need to "commit not only to narrative and counternarrative, but also to the rendering (im)possible of (another) narrative" (6). When the native intellectual commits to the employment of native informant's viewpoint, he/she invests in unravelling cultural, literary and philosophical perspectives important in understanding the postcolonial society. The theatricality of this play is founded on the attempt to create a sense of homogeneity that integrates ordinary citizens by encouraging them to excogitate on the reason why leadership challenges have persisted in the modern day Africa. The state has been conceptualised by wa Thiong'o as an entity that performs power. Butler asserts that, "The nation-state can only put some people, always, in quite a state, but which state is this?" (34) Butler's question equips us with the insight to explore how the state as a political unit shapes its subjects. She conceptualises the power dynamic between the state and its subjects as one predicated on a line of inclusion or expulsion. Butler thus situates the discourse on national identity within a possibility of the state possessing a power that can dispossess individuals. Focusing on the twenty-first century African political scene, Butler's interrogation taps into the narrative of 'the ordinary citizen' being a pawn for political gains by a few ruling elite who own the state. The position and potential of the ordinary man as the typical postcolonial subject becomes a tenable socio-political mobilizing force. This narrative angle is used by Imbuga to homogenise ethnically,

religiously and geographically heterogeneous citizens to embrace a common course of bringing a fundamental reformation. The play contrasts public scene and private scene in order to problematize the mechanism through which state power is used to establish a dominant narrative that aims at maintaining a particular status quo. This play foregrounds a form of state power that turns citizens into Rejects and alienates certain members of the society from taking part in national conversations. The state as domineering political entity is constructed as powerful and intolerant enough to expel some conversations within the public sphere that may destabilize its operation, popularity and power.

The play is delivered by an orator who is fully aware that the story the audience is about to experience is very important for a critical assessment of politics in the nation of Kafira. He states that, "The Republic of Kafira attained her self-rule more than three decades ago. During all this time, Kafira has been ruled by a rich variety of leaders; some good, others not so good while the rest were outright disasters" (1-2). He conspicuously places the audience in the privileged position of informed observers thus capacitating them to learn something that will help them decide which political path to take in the future. The spectators' journey examines what Kafirans have done after all these years of self-rule. This expedition construes the play as a public forum that deploys theatre as a means of political inquiry.

The orator who goes by the name of Sikia Macho, which in Swahili translates to 'listen to your ears' or 'hear your eyes,' functions as a guide for the spectator to learn from the historical experience. Sikia Macho postulates that "My story today is the story of the experiences of the people of Kafira during the rule of one of the most nervous regimes our country has ever had. So welcome to the games of rhetoric and silence that characterised the rule of that particular regime, the regime of Chief of Chiefs" (2). The play thus starts unravelling the truth behind the dictatorship of Chief of Chiefs focusing especially on the

political manipulations, the partisan rhetoric, and the civic silence that has enabled the dictatorial culture.

In the first scene of the play, the ordinary citizen is portrayed as an underdog deprived of any access into the affairs of the state. The gap between the ruling elite and the common man is presented as a game of calculations to maintain a certain culture of domination by certain individuals. The scene entitled 'Mind Games' shows how Yuda and Mwodi are obsessed with securing their positions in the oncoming government. They are absolutely alienated from the roles they were appointed to perform as leaders. As disciples of the dictator Chief of Chiefs they are confident that in one way or another, they will find a way to highjack Bishop Ben'sa's popularity because she is a threat to a possible re-election of the Chief of Chiefs. Yuda notes that, "What opinion polls? Polls before the actual polls? Forget them. After all they are conducted by people who know nothing about how we do things here. My brother in politics, experience will carry the day not opinion polls." (4). The scene casts the crusaders of the current regime in the limelight by clearly illustrating them as the obstacle that stands in the way of progress. The play is set in a way that speaks to the ordinary people with the aim to inform them on the need for political reform. The first scene asserts that the people need to stave off the habit of bringing back previous leaders into new political reformations because this means that they get to bring back the attitudes and laxities that had previously contributed to the failures of past regimes. Kenya has been known for re-electing leaders who have served in previous regimes thus depicting a fundamental flaw in the system of governance. As Yuda notes confidently, there is a way "we do things here" (4) denoting the existence of a certain political culture in Kafira that has been leaching the nation. As the scene concludes, Yuda and Mwodi set out to threaten Bishop Ben'sa. As shown below, the dialogue that unfolds aims to awaken the postcolonial audience in realising how certain

parties control the political climate through propaganda in order to deceive the nation and affect the way vital decisions are made.

MWODI: I will remember it if you tell me what this second strategy is all about.

YUDA: We can link the Pastor Mgei demonstrations to her NGO and threaten to deregister it. Alternatively, we could just postpone the elections and spread rumours of the imminent release of Pastor Mgei and see what happens.

MWODI: Diversion of the national mind?

YUDA: Absolutely. It is dangerous to let a nation think about one thing for too long. (*Looks at his watch*) Oh, come, we are getting late. We should be on our way. We will talk about strategies later.

(7)

As the title of the scene suggests, the spectator is informed of the ways through which politicians deliberately control national discussions through lies and fear. From a postcolonial dramaturgical viewpoint, when Mwodi refers to the "diversion of the national mind", he seems to highlight a number of ways through which powerful politicians are able to manipulate narratives within the public scene. This so called diversion is seen in propagation of propaganda that essentially takes the focus of the public to other discussions so that the incompetent leaders can carry on in their mission of depleting the state. One way that powerful politicians in the postcolonial society have been able to divert the national mind is via the control of the media. Hornsby recounts that when Kenya was experiencing media freedom towards the end of Moi's dictatorship, the liberation of the media opened another channel for the circulation of political rhetoric. Hornsby notes that, "While the media were liberated from direct censorship, however, politicians now owned most media channels. In 1995-7, the Moi family and Kulei had bought the *Standard* and KTN, which gave them a strong influence over public opinion." (653). Imbuga's portrayal of politicians and the power they wield helps Kenyan audiences to rethink their civic responsibility to reject despots and

their followers. The beginning of the play conceptualizes the audience as a microcosm of the oppressed and deprived masses who should realise their power and capability in bringing in change. At a time where the public relies on the media to make political decisions, the very nature of the media must come under scrutiny.

The second scene, entitled 'Seeds of Discord,' shows a confrontation between the political front that is geared to champion new reform and the front that seeks to maintain the old system that is exploitative and tyrannical. It takes place at the residence of Bishop Ben'sa which is the headquarters of The Green Cross of Kafira. This organisation works closely with The Green Cross Clinic and The Cross Church to ensure the welfare of the people of Kafira. Before Mwodi and Yuda enter, Ben'sa and Leah are shown editing an important line of one of the anthems from "the cradle of our future" to "the cradle of our times" (8) to signify the need of immediate positive reforms. Yuda proposes that, "The Chief of Chiefs is particularly disturbed about this turn of events. He wants the organisation, and particularly your church, The Green Cross Church, to work hand in hand with *Serikali* in order to develop this God-given land of ours. That is why he sent us here." (11). However, Ben'sa is reluctant to accept the proposition because she knows the truth behind their visit. She rebuffs the politicians' proposals claiming that "As a church, our immediate concern is the now familiar harassment of known members of our movement by agents of *Serikali*." (13). Ben'sa stands as a symbol of redemption for the ordinary man in Kafira. She dedicates her entire life to bring healing upon the victims of the present dictatorial regime. Ben'sa abridges the demand for freedom with the realisation of freedom by advocating for Mama Mgei's work in caring for the expelled patriots through a process that fuels change in Kafira. When confronted by Yuda and Mwodi, Ben'sa rejects their proposal to form a coalition with the Chief of Chiefs and defends Mama Mgei's motives claiming that "We stick to the business of our calling as you have repeatedly told us. But Mama Mgei is not a bishop, neither is she a pastor of a church.

Her allegiance is only to her conscience." (17) Ben'sa's reaction points out that Kafiran salvation is possible only when people choose to have a conscience. She reminds Mwodi that, "the business of the hard politics of government should be a matter of individual conscience" (19) to reiterate that true leaders need to have concern for the ordinary citizen by honouring the terms of a political position. 'Conscience' within this context metonymically stands for the urge to develop a sense of responsibility among officials in public offices. She implies that politicians are incompetent by pointing out that, "Gentlemen, as politicians your problem is that you do not believe in what you are doing. I mean what do your alliances believe in, detention without trial?" (19) Her speech suggests that the political leaders as public servants are totally alienated from their responsibility and simply interested in keeping their power. This particular situation connects to a widely acknowledged systemic dialectic within the Kenyan political scene which is the relationship between *Mwananchi* (which connotes 'the one who owns/claims the nation' but used to mean 'ordinary citizen/citizen') and *Serikali* (which colloquially means 'the government's arm of authority or power' but used to mean 'the government').

Essentially, the ordinary citizen is meant to be the boss in postcolonial democracies while the leaders are the servants put in place to implement the dreams, goals and aspirations of the nation. However, in Kafira, this relationship is inverted thus preventing the ordinary man (*mwananchi*) from feeling a sense of national pride because he/she is totally irrelevant to the process of decision-making. This particular scene spells the fundamental discord between these two entities that should be conjoined in a reciprocal relationship for the success of the state. Outa avers that within the Kenyan political scene, the term "*Wanainchi* is used [and has thus] acquired connotative meaning where it has since come to distinguish the political elite as a separate body/class from the other 'people', ordinarily referred in the political parlance as *wanainchi*, i.e. the common people." (347) Through the eyes of Ben'sa, we get to see how the

wanainchi [singular—*mwananchi*] (ordinary citizens/voters) are eclipsed from nationhood because their leaders are so preoccupied with enriching themselves. Ben'sa uses Pastor Mgei's detention without trial to highlight the fact that the current regime is detrimental for the growth of Kafira. She confidently asserts that, "Precisely, it pleases me a great deal to know that *Serikali* is not asleep, that it is very much aware of what is happening in our country. I am also happy that for once the Church is being recognised as a place where national healing and reconciliation can take place." (18) She is sarcastic because she sees through the two sycophants who are worried by the growing power of Ben'sa and Mama Mgei. Ben'sa represents the reform that is needed for twenty-first century African democracies. She deflects Yuda's and Mwodi's attempts to persuade her by protesting that "Night running activities do not qualify to be called dialogue." (18). Writing on the recent events in the Kenyan political scene after the presidential elections in October 2017, Rasna Warah witnesses on how confounding the new bond between Raila and Uhuru translates in the Kenyan public. Reporting on the dilemma, Warah notes that:

> Many Kenyans felt a deep sense of betrayal when opposition leader Raila Odinga shook hands and joined forces with President Uhuru Kenyatta to cement their newfound political truce. One stunned Kenyan on Twitter even wondered whether the real Raila had been killed and been replaced by a clone. Others speculated whether the state had captured the opposition, just as it had captured some sections of the electoral commission and the judiciary.
>
> (14)

Ben'sa feels obliged to reject a truce with Mwodi and Yuda under the request of the Chief of Chiefs because she realizes that corrupt politicians mean no good for the common man. She knows that a pact with the two agents of the repressive regime inherently means betrayal of the public who believe in her and entrust her with the ability to stick out for their wellbeing. When the two politicians leave, Ben'sa tells Leah that "It is panic; they are beginning to panic because of last week's opinion polls. We should tell Mama Mgei to be careful." (22). It is evident that the power of the current regime is diminishing due to the initiatives of Mama

Mgei and Bishop Ben'sa in organizing the deprived citizens of Kafira to claim their power in instituting a leadership that serves them right. Sister Leah states that "Mama Mgei is not the one conducting the opinion polls," suggesting that the renewed political consciousness of Kafirans is the result of an authentic popular movement, not the outcome of partisan manoeuvrings" (22). Her confidence signifies there is power in a unified public even in states that are plagued with oppression. Ben'sa retorts that "From our not too distant history, it is when *Serikali* is as nervous as it is now that prominent people begin to disappear or die in mysterious circumstances" (22). This conversation illustrates the way in which reform is distanced from full realisation since the authoritarian state had so much power at its disposal. The play at this point is attempting to depict that social and political change is necessarily a slow process.

The fears that Ben'sa has are valid. They confirm the existence of an oppressive political culture seen in the ruling regimes of the so called postcolonial democracies in Africa. These current regimes have mutated into camouflaged forms that are undergirded by the traditional postcolonial political rhetoric. Nowadays terms such as 'dialogue' and 'alliances' are often merely buzz-words to manipulate the public in order to hinder reformation. Reporting on recent events that shocked Kenyan politics, Stella Cherono discusses the assassination of Christopher Chege Msando noting that;

> The body of Mr Msando, stripped to his underwear, was identified yesterday at City Mortuary, three days after he was reported missing. His left arm appeared broken and he had wounds. Mr Msando, a systems development manager, is reported to have played a key role in the management of computer systems for voter identification, transmission and tallying of results. He has made a report to the police that his life was in danger.
>
> (4)

The murder of Msando showcases the way the political state of Kenya is still held back by violent political tactics. After the murder of Msando, when the general elections were held in

Kenya, presidential elections were nullified by the Supreme Court due to errors in tallying, and allegations of rigging spread across the nation . Both Kafira and Kenya face a strong resistance in their campaign towards a complete systemic reform because the old band of leaders is still mighty powerful. The Kenyan post-election violence erupted due to claims of rigging in 2007. After the 2017 general elections, the presidential elections were nullified because the poll numbers did not match the registered voters. The common denominator between the fictional state of Kafira and Kenya is that despite the numerous claims of change and reform, the government often retaliates against its own citizens in an attempt to hold the reins of power. Ngugi wa Thiong'o asserts that the state "performs power" (38) and thus it is able to influence the sphere of public opinion. Imbuga at this point is trying to dim the optimism cautioning that no matter how tall the tide of change might be, reform in modern Kenya should be approached with scepticism because it is prone to contamination and susceptible to fall into old habits.

The third scene is entitled 'Revelations' and portrays the resolve between Yuda and Mwodi to devise a new way to thwart the change that is bound to happen in Kafira. Yuda tells Mwodi that the previous meeting with Ben'sa "is already bothering me. It has made me begin to doubt myself. Why I am alive, what I believe in and where I am going. Hon. Mwodi, what do you as an individual believe in?" (24). Mwodi on the other hand is cautious and insists that "it is that kind of questions that causes people heart attacks. Is it your desire that I die now?" (24). The way Imbuga portrays these characters helps us reflect on the reason why reform in the twenty-first century postcolonial democracies in Africa should be evaluated cautiously because of the manoeuvre, ambition and capability of those who are bound to stand in the way. Later in the same scene, Yuda proposes that,

> YUDA: Let us start with alliances. If alliances deny you your individuality what are you left with?

MWODI: Stress. If they deny you your individuality, you will definitely be left with stress.

YUDA: That is true. So between you and me, alliances are rich grounds for the transfer and spread of stress from one set of individuals to another. Once we have established that, what do you think should be the way forward?

(25)

The dialogue above shows scepticism about the possibility of revolutionizing the political scene in the postcolony. This play challenges the reassuring image of a twenty-first century Kenyan reform born under a new constitution celebrated in the name of a new republic. Even in the post-Moi era, Kenya is still tangled in firm strings that deter it from fully evolving into the dream nation that the twenty-first century *wanainchi* aspire to build. Hornsby reports that after Moi was defeated, NARC's problems immediately emerged. Hornsby states that, "Some of the blame could be placed on NARC's inheritance of personnel from KANU (which was Moi's party)." (710). In *The Green Cross of Kafira*, Imbuga interrogates the state of postcolonial Kenya and manages to awaken the Kenyan audience to the fact that the reform brought about by the new regime is fraught with problems that trace back to the post-independence period. The play challenges the political convention that has been accepted in Kafira where violence, ethnicity and sycophancy are the dominant traits of political discourse. Kimenyi tells us that the Waki report about Kenyan post-election violence suggested that the factor that contributed to the deterioration of Kenyan political conditions was "the politicization of violence in Kenya [whereby] politicians used violence to gain power since the country instituted multi-party democracy in 1991. [These politicians] at times exploited ethnic differences to win elections" (167) Referring to the ethnic skirmishes that erupted in Kafira, Mwodi complains to Yuda that he should have been among the people honoured by the Chief of Chiefs in relation to the operation that brought peace. He feels bad for not being honoured in the event even if it is clear he had little or nothing to do with the restoration of peace in Koru. Yuda apologises noting that "I was equally shocked to see

names of people who had nothing to do with that operation being honoured" (27) which shows that the government of Chief of Chiefs operates behind a façade of lies. Yuda reveals that Chief of Chiefs has chosen them out of trust and patriotism and excoriates Mwodi claiming that patriotism is not the same as trust. The political scene in Kafira is just but a band of greedy men who are united in depleting the nation.

The second act starts with a scene entitled 'Testimonies'. It takes place at The Green Cross Clinic. The clinic is inhabited by Rejects of the current regime who are gathered by Mama Mgei for healing. We are brought into the communion of these patriots who have been discarded by the regime of Chief of Chiefs for doing good deeds. Mama Mgei urges them, "Finally, pray genuinely for the identified individuals and institutions, for you strongly believe that they know not what they are doing. When you think you are through, go into the usual groups and compare your views." (31) Mama Mgei's directive identifies that the problems facing Kafira are both systemic and individualistic. She sees true power in forgiveness, synergy and reconciliation, even at a time when the nation-state is not in the possession of Kafirans yet.

Sikia Macho later comes back and reports that after a lengthy meeting involving Mama Mgei, Yuda, Mwodi and the Rejects, changes occurred in Kafira. A new party was formed by the name Gender Party of Kafira (GPK). Sikia Macho informs the audience that, "A few *Serikali* officials gathered courage and resigned, the most prominent one of them being honourable Mwodi arap Mwodi. Yes, Mwodi had finally abandoned the alliance to which he had sworn to be a life member." (40) It is evident that Mwodi being in the new party shows the possibility of individuals to change and develop a more democratic conscience, but it is also a sign that the new regime might be carrying some flaws of the previous one. Since the audience is not privy to what will happen in the future, the presence of Mwodi in the new Gender Party of Kafira retain both positive and negative connotations.

The common denominator between Kenya and Kafira at this point is that change is never a clean slate. In the next scene entitled the 'The Dream of Reality' Mgei in his sleep experiences a nightmare seeing Mwodi in the jail cell holding a bible as a sign that he will be sworn in when the new government is in place. Towards the end of the scene, Sikia Macho enters and reports that,

SIKIA MACHO	As I have said, no one knows what Hon. Mwodi and Hon. Yuda discussed with Councillor Mama Mgei. But it would appear that the two officials are no ordinary mortals, they were double-edged swords. Somehow the two seem to have agreed that in order to cleanse themselves, one would have to betray the other while the other would feign shock and disappointment

(49)

It is not entirely clear what transpired in that meeting but it is clear that Imbuga is trying to propose that despite the celebrations seen in the last two scenes entitled 'The Unexpected Reward' and 'The Past Meets the Present' respectively, the new reform in Kafira is just but a step closer to true victory. The new party wins the elections seeing the end of Chief of Chiefs dictatorship. It is clear Kafirans are done with the current government. Sikia Macho goes on and reports that "Pastor Mgei was released from detention with a stern warning not to participate in any political activities. But that was too little too late. By this time Kafirans had seen the light. They were not about to be returned to the dark days of lack of belief in themselves." (49) What eventually saves Kafira is a unified national consciousness that sees the true enemy of the republic. As the narrator hails, "they were not to be returned to the dark days of lack of belief in themselves" signifying the true roots of democracy is the homogenisation of the nation under empowered citizens who are keen in practicing their democratic right that gives them power to vote in the leaders that serve them right.

However, it is clear that, there is still some old blood in the new coalition. Imbuga seems to be asking a very essential question. Spectators are prompted to ask 'who the Kenyan Nation-state belongs to' and 'if there is a possibility of fully reclaiming the nation from the individuals and forces binding its full realisation of self-rule'. After engaging with *The Green Cross of Kafira*, contemporary Kenyan audiences must come up with their own answers to some of the pressing questions posited by Imbuga. The play places emphasis on the power of the electorate in rewriting the fate of the republic and on the quest to define the ways through which postcolonial societies imperilled with political instability can move past negative politics. Imbuga seems to be suggesting that Kenya can move past ethnic politics that have plagued the nation for a long time. The playwright creates a story that concludes the Kafiran trilogy with a promising systemic reformation that can only be possible through a unified national identity that privileges the plight of the common citizen over the minority elite leaders. Imbuga seems to remind Kenyans of what happened in the year 2002 when Moi's regime ended. It was a time when Kenya was unified as a community. *The Green Cross of Kafira* invites the postcolonial spectator in the twenty-first century Kenya to reflect on the possibility of reforming the Kenyan political scene through national unity. As Bertolt Brecht proposes that, for theatre to have a significant impact on the audience, "the spectator should be put in a position where he can make comparisons about everything that influences the way in which humans behave" (86). This play challenges the twenty-first century Kenyan postcolonial audience to rethink political habits and conventions that have lasted for a long time in the Kenyan political scene. By encouraging the common man to participate actively in imparting reform, Imbuga lends more power to the unprivileged postcolonial subject in Kenya to reclaim his/her power and voice.

CONCLUSION.

A close examination of *Betrayal in the City, The Return of Mgofu* and *The Green Cross of Kafira* shows that drama in postcolonial Kenya has contributed immensely to the discussion of postcolonial subjectivity. This study uncovered the close coordination between postcolonial theory and postcolonial theatre in building a dramaturgical perspective that interrogates post-independence relations. The postcolonial dramaturgical perspective challenges the political culture of the post-independence society through a discussion of power, identity, and politics. This dramaturgical viewpoint has allowed the postcolonial spectator to question the place of the ruling elite in post-independent Kenya and explore the convoluted dialectic between *mwananchi* (ordinary citizen) and *serikali* (government or figures of authority).

Achille Mbembe reminds us that "The practices of ordinary citizens cannot always be read in terms of "opposition to the state," "deconstruction of power," and "disengagement." In the postcolony, an intimate tyranny links the ruler with the ruled." (128). In both the public and private sphere, Mbembe conceptualises that the rulers and the ruled are two systemic entities that are fundamentally inseparable. From a postcolonial socio-political basis, Mbembe identifies that the postcolonial subjects have "internalised authoritarian epistemology to the point where they reproduce it." (128). Part and parcel of the postcolonial political culture is an inherent flaw through which identities are multiplied. Mbembe points out the postcolonial subject feeds and upholds the instituted narrative of state supremacy because the only capacity the individual has is "to play with it and modify it whenever possible" (129).Through Imbuga's plays we are able to understand postcolonialism from a socio-political perspective. Political subjects are meticulously inscribed in Francis Imbuga's drama in exploring the relationship between the *serikali* and *mwananchi*. This is a fundamental relationship established by building a national consciousness using metaphors of

postcolonial politics to portray the political transitions that have marked an elevated dissatisfaction among postcolonial subjects. A postcolonial reading of the three plays shows that theatre, as a resourceful cultural discourse in postcolonial Kenya, has been used as an avenue for fostering nationalism, patriotism and crafting a national identity that debunks ethnicization of politics.

Imbuga stretches the *serikali-mwananchi* dialectic wider because it is not a clear-cut difference. As Mbembe insists, this connection is rather "an intimate tyranny link" (128) between the two entities. *Betrayal in the City* gives us a glimpse of the early postcolony languishing under the dictator Boss. The play depicts how early nationalists in the wake of independence betrayed the dream of national freedom. Additionally, the national culture is deeply entrenched in the voices and images of these nationalists who have assumed power. They become figures of perfidy and thus building more challenges in the post-independence society that is already worn out by the fight for freedom. A comparison between *Betrayal in the City* and *The Green Cross of Kafira* showed how a particular political culture has come to be institutionalised in the Kafiran political scene. On the top of the food chain, we see Boss (*Betrayal in the City*) and Chief of Chiefs (*The Green Cross of Kafira*) embracing the oppressive culture of the colonialist and being supported by a political culture that ties them to their dominance over the ordinary citizens. Yuda who is a close disciple of Chief of Chiefs points out that there is a way that they (Kafiran politicians) do things. (4) Imbuga builds political characters perspective that challenges the conventionalised idea of being a politician. Using the fictional republic of Kafira, Imbuga illustrates how nepotism, sycophancy, oppression and lack of transparency have robbed the postcolony the vitality that was once attributed to the re-establishment upon the attainment of independence. Performing the postcolony is made possible by explaining the socio-political experience of the postcolonial subject as well as striving to propose ways of changing it.

The discourse of *Uhuru* has been popular in African postcolonial drama. Aime Cesaire, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Micere Mugo and Ngugi wa Mirii among other dramatists have mentioned this term on several instances in their dramatic works. '*Uhuru*' is a Swahili term that means independence or freedom or liberation within Pan-African scholarship. In *A Season in the Congo* (1968) and *A Tempest* (1969) Cesaire uses the term *uhuru* to reinforce a Pan-African revolutionary force in postcolonial societies seeking to move past colonialism and neo-colonialism. Wa Mirii and wa Thiong'o in *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977) incorporate the term *uhuru* in order to append a nationalistic theme within the Kenyan postcolonial audiences. After a close reading of *Betrayal in the City, The Green Cross of Kafira* and *The Return of Mgofu,* I have realised that Imbuga has recurrently incorporated a dramaturgical perspective that explores a continued effort within the postcolony to find *uhuru*. All the three plays end with a political triumph. As depicted in the Kafiran trilogy, freedom (*uhuru*) within the political and public sphere is a dream. It is a dream that has continuously been deferred. This metaphor of 'a deferred dream' has been borrowed from Langston Hughes who used the 'deference of dreams' to explore the plight of African-Americans during the Harlem Renaissance in his poem "Harlem: A Dream Deferred". In a political postcolonial culture that is rife with injustice, freedom can only be dreamt of in order to inspire a quest for change and reform, and to rewrite the future of the postcolony. Samuel Ndogo avers that the idea of nationhood can empower both the individual and community to overcome personal and socio-political realities, and he postulates that, "Dreaming can be viewed and understood beyond the realm of the imaginary, with inherent connotations of hope, destiny and accomplishment." (92) The inherent dramatic question in *Betrayal in the City*, *The Green Cross of Kafira* and *The Return of Mgofu* is the duty that patriots can do in reforming the current state of the postcolony because they believe, hope and dream in the possibility for a brighter future. When Jusper in *Betrayal in the City* turns and shoots Mulili

to death, he proclaims that "I did it for Kafira. I did it for all of you people." (77) Imbuga shows that the redemption of the state can be attained through building a nationalistic attitude that can save the postcolony. This attitude is placed at the core of the characters that encapsulate the central concern of the play by making it the crux of their action and psychology. Redeeming the state is a matter of a choice founded on what the patriot would like the state to become. Ndogo insists that, "Nevertheless, the imagery of deferment suggests reversal of these virtues, leading to dissatisfaction with regard to socio-economic and political circumstances." (92). Kafiran trilogy and other plays by Imbuga explore this dissatisfaction by building an image of the postcolony alongside interpersonal relations that help in formulating questions concerning the journey of *uhuru.* Therefore, performing the quest for *uhuru* goes hand in hand with the process of decolonisation the postcolonial societies. The virtues that supported notion of freedom/independence (*uhuru*) have been undermined by post-independence governments. The attempt to perform *uhuru* means challenging the current social systems and organisations. Franz Fanon reminds us that the process of decolonization greatly shapes individuals in ways that modify them fundamentally. Fanon insists that the decolonisation process greatly transforms members of the society. Fanon avers that, "It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity." (36) It is thus vital to closely examine how postcolonial African drama deploys decolonizing viewpoints, approaches and attitudes, in order to overcome all forms of colonisation that defer the dream of independence. In *The Return of Mgofu* (2011) Imbuga debunks the conventional view of African politics which are inherently strengthened by ethnic affiliations. The play proposes a way to transcend ethnic politics by building a culture of patriotism that undermines ethnic (all other forms of) differences. The play builds a national identity that is founded on a dream to foster national unity towards the advancement of the state. In this play, the welfare of the state transcends

ethnic loyalties and land entitlements. In *The Green Cross of Kafira,* Imbuga builds a national homogeneity among those devoted to build the state by showing that national unity is invincible in the face of all impediments. In this case, the quest for *uhuru* is explored under a postcolonial dramaturgical viewpoint by exploring the ways through which drama interrogates post-independence relations and politics. Imbuga's plays prove that theatre can contribute to the construction of a national identity and help the postcolonial societies prepare for a brighter tomorrow.

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APPENDIX 1: Outline of Key Political and Historical Events in Kenya

- → 1924—the formation of KCA (Kikuyu Central Association)—formed to present land grievances among the Kikuyu to the British colonial government.
- → 1944—the appointment of the first African, a Kikuyu (Eliud Mathu) to the legislative council due to elevated pressure from Africans demanding political representation.
- → 1946—KCA is renamed KAU (Kenya African Union) with more diversity though dominated by Kikuyu supporters.
- → 1952 to 1954—the Mau Mau uprising that entailed guerrilla tactics aiming at fighting for African land, the movement was dominated by Kikuyu but in the course of time (1954) it gained support from other communities like Maasai, Kamba and Ndorobo.
- → 25th May 1960—KANU is formed with its headquarters in Kiambu (which is a stronghold for the Kikuyu community). KANU was seen as a successor to KAU. The Kikuyu, Luo, Embu, Meru and Kamba communities were included. Joseph Gichuru (a Kikuyu) was chosen as its president while Oginga Odinga was the vice president (a Luo).
- → 25th June 1960—KADU is formed gathering support among people from Kalenjin, Maasai, Coast province communities and Somali among others. It was seen as a means to ensure protection for minority communities.
- → 1963—Kenya gains independence with Kenyatta (a Kikuyu) becoming the prime minister
- → 1964—Kenya becomes a republic under Jomo Kenyatta (a Kikuyu) as the President and Oginga Odinga (a Luo) as the vice president.
- → 1966—Oginga Odinga resigns from the government due to ideological differences and forms KPU (Kenya Peoples Union) as an oppositional party.
- → 1967—the publishing of *Not Yet Uhuru,* which was an autobiographical text by Odinga outlining the disappointment experienced due to the deferred dream of independence due to neo-colonialism. The text promoted a national consciousness.
- → 5th July 1969—Tom Mboya (a Luo) is assassinated. Ethnic tensions elevated when the investigation conducted revealed that Mboya had been killed by a Kikuyu. In the same year, the Kisumu massacre occurred over disputed relationship between Kenyatta and the Luo people after a rally on the opening of a national hospital in Kisumu (Luo stronghold) went really horrible when police fired killing 100 people and injuring many following a revolt from the Luo hosts.
- → 12th March 1975—the mutilated body of J. M Kariuki is discovered. Kariuki was seen as a possible successor to Kenyatta and had high approval rates across the country like Mboya. His death triggered protests and adverse reactions towards Kenyatta's government. Kariuki was from Nyeri (a Kikuyu stronghold). There was an antagonistic relationship between Nyeri Kikuyus and Kiambu Kikuyus (who hold a lot of power in the nation). The Kenyatta government's popularity in the 1970s diminished. GEMA (Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association) discarded the claims that Kenyatta's government had a part in Kariuki's death.
- → 1976—GEMA makes an attempt to prevent Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi (a Kalenjin) from succeeding Kenyatta. The initiative was called "change-the-constitution" movement.
- → 22nd October 1978—Jomo Kenyatta passes on. Constitutionally, Moi (a Kalenjin) took on power. On 12th December 1978 Moi released all political detainees.
- → 1979—Moi won the General elections under the banner of KANU becoming the second elected president of Kenya.
- → 1st August 1982—Kenya experienced an attempted coup d'état led by the military rebels under the concerns on Moi's regime which was said to suffer from corruption, abuse of power by politicians and a recent military pact signed between Kenya and USA.
- → September 1983—Moi wins the fifth presidential elections since independence.
- → 1986—opposition against the government elevates leading to a new wave of political detentions of lecturers and popular dissidents. The opposition was undergirded by an underground movement called *MwaKenya* which was a Swahili acronym for *Muungano Wa*

Wazalendo Wa Kukomboa Kenya (Union of Nationalists for the Liberation of Kenya) and had strong similarity with the course of the Mau Mau Liberation Movement.

→ 13th February 1990—Foreign Minister Robert Ouko (a Luo) was murdered. Students rioted and Luo farmers broke into open revolt. The murder of Ouko fuelled campaigns for multi-party democracy.

→ 1st July 1991—Kenyan government is called out by 'Africa Watch' an international human rights monitoring organisation for protracted assaults on human rights in a report.

→ 2nd December 1991—the president (Moi) announced the return of multi-party democracy.

→ 29th December 1992—Moi's emerges the winner. This was the first multi-party elections in 27 years obtaining a lot of recognition in postcolonial Africa. Kenya seemed to reject Moi but he won due to problems within the opposition party FORD (Forum for Restoration of Democracy). FORD was divided due to leadership wrangles between Oginga Odinga (a Luo, who ended up leading FORD Kenya—termed as the original FORD) and Kenneth Matiba (a Kikuyu, who became the leader of FORD Asili).

→ 1997—KANU's Moi wins elections facing a divided opposition and a fall out with the West.

→ 2002—Moi's dictatorship comes to an end as Kenya sees a transformation under President Emilio Mwai Kibaki (a Kikuyu) winning with a NARC (National Alliance and Rainbow Coalition) ticket. NARC was a strong conglomeration of salient political parties that meant coming together of leaders from different communities. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta who had been endorsed by Moi under the KANU ticket was defeated heavily.

→ December 2007 to February 2008 —Kenya experiences the catastrophic post-election violence following the dissatisfaction of ODM (Orange Democratic Movement) with the election results that granted a win to PNU (Party of National Unity). This period saw massive loss of lives, economic degradation, ethnic antagonisms and internal displacement that would take Kenya a long time to recover. ODM candidate was Raila Amolo Odinga (a Luo) and PNU candidate was Emilio Mwai Kibaki (a Kikuyu).

→ 28th February 2008—a power-sharing deal is put in place between Raila Odinga (a Luo, assuming the role of Prime Minister) and Mwai Kibaki (a Kikuyu, remaining the President).

→ 27th August 2010—Kenya promulgates the new constitution after a victorious referendum with a humongous ceremony that hosted 10 heads of state and was acclaimed to mark the commencement of a 'Second Republic'.

→ 4th March 2013—Uhuru Kenyatta becomes Kenya's forth president with a ticket from Jubilee Alliance coalition. Jubilee comprised of Uhuru's TNA (The National Alliance) joined with William Ruto's United Republican Party (URP), Najib Balala's Republican Congress Party (RCP) and Charity Ngilu's National Rainbow Coalition (NRC). Jubilee defeated it's close competitor Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) which was a coalition of multiple political parties, built around the triad of Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka (a Kamba), and Moses Wetangula (a Luhya). CORD unsuccessfully refuted the outcome of the elections.