

Exploitation and Betrayal in Dele Charley's *The Blood of a Stranger* and John Kargbo's *Let Me Die Alone*

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine exploitation and betrayal in Dele Charley's *The Blood of a Stranger* and John Kargbo's *Let Me Die Alone* and show how both playwrights create characters to portray images of exploited African societies. It also aims to show Africans who connive with the European masters to exploit and betray their own people. Using the Archetypal theory (also called totemic, mythological, or ritualistic theory), the study investigates the nature of exploitation and betrayal in the plays. It finds that the people are exploited and betrayed physically, economically and culturally. It also finds that the Europeans and their African collaborators betray the people and the gods in their quest for filthy lucre. The paper concludes that the exploitation and betrayal are sanctioned by the gods and, despite the exploitation and betrayal, the society always emerges stronger, better and exploiters and betrayers get their just desserts.

Introduction

Dele Charley (Raymond Caleb Ayodele) was born on the 27th March, 1948 in Sierra Leone. He wrote in English and Krio Languages. His play, *The Blood of a Stranger* was staged in Festival of African Arts and Culture, organised in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977 and won the award for the best play. His other plays are *PeticotKohna* (1982) and *Fatmata* (1983). *The Blood of a Stranger* has received a good number of critical reviews. The play centres on the fraudulent activities of a white colonialist, Whitehead, who shows tremendous disrespect for the people's customs and traditions. He also corrupts them with petty gifts,

seduces their women, and steals their diamond. The play dramatises key aspects of Sierra Leonean history and culture.

Born in 1954, John Kolosa Kargbo is also from Sierra Leone. His play, *PoyoTogn Wahala* demonstrates the corruption, incompetence and indifference of the ruling elites. *Let Me Die Alone* depicts the topical issues of colonialism, gender discrimination, excessive desire for power, suicide, homicide, human sacrifice, and above all, exploitation of Africa's rich natural resources by the colonial masters in Africa. In our analyses, we shall deploy the archetypal theory. According to M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham (2012, p. 16),

The term archetype denotes narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, themes, and images which recur in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, dreams, and even social rituals. Such recurrent items are often claimed to be the result of elemental and universal patterns in the human psyche, whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes a profound response from the attentive reader because he/she shares the psychic archetypes expressed by the author.

The focus of the archetypal criticism is on any narrative designs or character types that exist in the human psyche either consciously or unconsciously. Abrams and Harpham further explain that:

An even more important antecedent was the depth psychology of Carl G. Jung (1875 – 1961), who applied the term “archetype” to what he called “primordial images”, the “psychic residue” of repeated patterns of experience in our very ancient ancestors which, he maintained, survive in the *collective unconscious* of the human race and are expressed in myths, religion, dreams and private fantasies, as well as in works of literature (17).

Carl Jung holds that behind each individual's "unconscious" (the blocked – off residue of the past) lies the "collective unconscious" of the human race: the blocked-off memory of our racial past, even of our prehuman experiences. Thus, unconscious racial memory produces "primordial images" shaped by the repeated experience of our ancestors and expressed in myths, religion, dreams, fantasies, and literature. On their part, Hugh Holman and William Harmon (2009, p. 43) argue that:

The literary critic applies the term (archetypal) to an image, a descriptive detail, a plot pattern, or a character type that occurs frequently in literature, myth, religion or folklore and is, therefore, believed to evoke profound emotions because it touches the unconscious memory and thus called into play illogical but strong responses ... In this sense, the archetype is, as Northrop Frye defines it, "a symbol, usually an image which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole."

Peter Aihveba (2012, p.78), on his part, submits that "archetypal criticism is a demonstration of some basic cultural patterns of great meaning and appeal to humanity in the work of art." He goes further to say that:

Archetypal criticism has been greatly contributed to by two figures whose works have been of great influence to literature – George Frazer and Carl Jung. Jung's contribution to archetypal criticism is his assertion of the theory of the *collective unconscious*, that civilized man preserves, though unconsciously those pre-historical areas of knowledge which he claims obliquely as myth.

As argued by Aihveba above, archetypal criticism has a connotation of the sacred, and always involves rich ritualism and mythology together. Myth and ritual have a common psychological and religious basis, and in them can be explained not only the latent content of rituals of a

particular society but also of other culturally organized behaviour of that society as well. Charles Nnolim (2012, p. 13) on his part, argues that:

Carl Jung, who is a major influence in the growth of myth or archetypal criticism, gives us the tools for exploring the darker recesses of the human psyche. He tells us that the *shadow*, *persona* and *anima*, are structural components of the psyche that man has inherited. ... In literature, the *persona*, the *anima*, and the shadow are projected respectively in the characters of the hero, the heroine and the villain. ... The *shadow* in Jung's theory of the psyche is the darker side of our unconscious self, the inferior and less pleasing aspect of our personality that we wish to suppress.

These are the tools that Jung gives us in exploring the human psyche. The *persona* as argued further by Nnolim is the reverse of the *anima* the image of the other side of the coin (13). The deployment, therefore, of the archetypal criticism in the study makes it possible for us to see the link between man and his tradition. We see how both playwrights present to the world the efficacy or meaningfulness of their social customs and rituals. From all of these explanations and opinions, we can safely conclude that archetypal criticism uses recurring patterns, image, character and theme(s) which appear in mythologies and literature as the basis of evaluating a literary text.

The two plays, *The Blood of a Stranger* and *Let Me Die Alone* dramatise the wickedness visited on the African continent, symbolised by Mando (*The Blood of a Stranger*) and Mende (*Let Me Die Alone*). They both demonstrate the descent of Africans into confusion and anarchy under the colonial imperial system. Temi Tayo (2017, np) claims, and rightly too, that *The Blood of a Stranger*:

Successfully demonstrates the evils of the African colonial encounter with the west, without presenting the colonized as mere victims. Kindo represent a major obstacle to Whitehead's plan matching him wit for wit

and always a step ahead of him, he disciplines Whitehead for not according deserved respect to King Santigi and eventually kills him for his evil role in their land.

Tayo believes that the play orchestrates the evils of the colonial masters to the African people. He uses Whitehead as a character symbol that represents the White Colonial master. On their part, Nwanchukwu-Agbada J. O. J. et al (2015, p. 113) argue that:

The Blood of a Stranger centres on the unavoidable conflict between traditional preservation and the modernizing presence of the British colonies. ... In the play, there is integrated use of these three artistic elements; incantations, drumming and dance occur concurrently most times. ... By this, we can infer the functionality of these three elements which is to facilitate the transportation of the priest to a higher plane to commune with the spirits on behalf of the people.

Here, Agbada et al assert that the playwright sets out to depict the tradition and culture of his people by using incantations, drumming and dance, to show how peculiar the African tradition is. On his part, Okojie Micheal Ighodalo (2015, 135) opines that:

The Blood examines the historical and cultural phenomenon that pervaded African continent between the late 19th century and the early 20th century. The play harps on the effects of the imposition of colonial imperialism and economic exploitation on traditional Sierra Leone Community, human decent, corruption, and mans' inhumanity to their fellow men which are prevalent in our society. Dele Charley emphasizes how European exploited African natural resources and sexually assaulted African women during colonial era in *The Blood of a Stranger*.

Ighodalo further believes that the play is an historical play that documents the negative effects of the imposition of colonial imperialism and economic exploitation in Africa. On his part, Ibitola A. O. (2015, p. 146) reviews the play and says:

In this play, Sierra Leone people are presented not only as victimized, but also as complicit in the exploitation of their own people. Through the gifts of “strange tobacco” and alcohol, whitehead takes advantage of the drugged natives and exploits their resources. ... The play, *The Blood of a Stranger* is a simplified drama. It is about the life and culture of a Sierra Leone village of Mando and an attempt by white man to capitalize on the people’s ignorance to exploit the people of their rich natural deposit.

Ibitola’s reviews on the play are based on the significance of setting to the development of the plot of the play. He focuses attention on the characterization of Whitehead who consistently assaults and rapes the culture and tradition of the Mando people. He goes on to say that “the play also shows the belief of Africans in their gods and how much they respect and fear their gods” (147).

On *Let Me Die Alone* Oliver Iluebe (2017, p. 367) explains that:

The play, *Let Me die Alone* explores the spate of betrayal, cheap blackmail and deceit. The play also explore the spate of cabal or conspiracy which is a secret agreement between two or more people to perform an unlawful act. This group of conspirators in the play includes Lamboi and Musa. One of their selfish aims is not only to take charge of the chieftdom but also to kill, maim, and betray at will.

Here, Iluebe takes a swipe on the characters of Lamboi and Musa whose aim is only to destroy, or maim their own families and friends. At will, they kill whosoever that does not agree with them. Lamboi

betrays his own sister, Yoko, and also connives with Musa to kill Chief Gbanya. Furthermore, Okojie Ighodalo explains that

The playwright in *Let Me Die Alone* examines the condition of African Kingdoms during the colonial era, how the colonial masters plundered the natural resources in Africa and also humiliated Africans during the colonial era and emphasizes how the European desecrated African traditional royal institution and exploited African natural resources during the colonial era. (170).

Nwachukwu Agbada et al (2015, pp. 120-121) argue that *Let Me Die Alone* is

A feminist critique of a masculinist culture, at a time when feminism as a theme was still unpopular and rare among male playwrights in Africa. Kargbo deals with wife beating, male prejudice against female leadership, the problems of loveless marriages, and the tendency to measure masculine virility and sexual dominance against female oppression and sexual dominance. It also considers relations between husbands, women forced into stereotypical roles and the right of women to determine whether their feminity should consist solely in their ability to bear children.

From all these opinions, it is clear that both plays dramatise the double jeopardy that Africans suffered in the hands of their colonial masters and their African collaborators. Africans were exploited and betrayed by Europeans who pretended to be good but were actually bad.

Therefore, Charley's *The Blood of a Stranger* and Kargbo's *Let Me Die Alone* depict exploitation and betrayal perpetrated by archetypal European characters with the active connivance of their African helpers.

AI. Exploitation in *The Blood of a Stranger* and *Let Me Die Alone*.

One of the recurrent archetypes in literature is the trickster figure. The trickster figure, as explained by Holman and Harmon “plays an important role in the zone between individual and society, life and death, sacred and secular, engagingly employing ... deception to break rules and violate norms in mischievous ways.” (561) Both Charley’s *The Blood of a Stranger* and Kargbo’s *Let Me Die Alone* present African societies with great respect for their tradition and cultural heritage. However, the white colonialists, Whitehead and Governor Rowe, treat the people’s customs and traditions with disdain, corrupt the African people with petty gifts, seduce and rape the women and steal their diamond wealth by trick. Exploitation, according to Peter F. O. Omonzejele (2011, pp. 27-28) is “an act involving at least two agents whose interaction is sometimes characterized by imbalance of power ... to disproportionately further their own interest ... An outcome of unjust human relations where the more powerful inflict injustice on the less powerful to disproportionately further the interest of the former” (27 – 8). This outcome plays out in both texts.

Whitehead is the instigator and archetypal trickster in *The Blood of a Stranger*. The trick he employs is giving money to his collaborators to buy their conscience.

WHITEHEAD:Maligu, I have given you much money ... I must be able to get anything I want or I shall demand my money back ... I want her tonight at my place ... Find her. She must be somewhere. Bring her tonight! (*Kindo enters*)
Ah, Kindo ... we both agreed to bury the hatchet. Why did you not come with Wara? (72 – 3).

The ‘her’ of the extract is Wara and his intention is to forcefully sleep with her. When Kindo, the very inquisitive Chief Warrior of Mando, wants to know why Whitehead has come to Mando Whitehead replies:

WHITEHEAD: You have good soil, very good soil for planting tobacco. You will see when I begin to plant. (74)

The truth is that Whitehead has tricked the people into believing that he has come to plant tobacco. He has come to mine Mando's diamonds illegally. When, later in the play, he is reminded that he is in Mando to plant tobacco, he replies:

WHITEHEAD: This is what everyone has been made to believe. There are diamonds in the stream and in the place near the tobacco farm. The people have never seen a diamond, so you will tell them before they begin to dig that there are many devil stones in that place. Each one they find must be put into a special jug which we shall take away every day to the shrine, so as to kill the devils before we throw the stone away into the river. (90)

Instead of planting tobacco, he mines diamonds illegally, rapes young girls and kills those who refuse to do his bidding. He employs deception and capitalises on the ignorance of the villagers who, ironically, trust him.

In the course of exploiting the villagers, Whitehead desecrates the culture of the people. As explained by archetypal theorists, a people's culture is embedded in the "collective unconscious." In other words, they people know how rites and rituals are performed in the land. They are co-celebrants with the Priest who performs the actual rituals. However, Whitehead plans how Maligu will perform a false sacrifice and deceive the people. He asks Maligu to wear a mask, pretending to be Soko, the Priest. The following extract shows this perfidious attack on the tradition of the people:

WHITEHEAD: They will not know who is wearing the mask. They will believe that the power of the spirits is in Soko and his voice has changed. You understand, don't you?

MALIGU: Yes, Whitehead

WHITEHEAD: You must not make a mistake. You must not let me down. If you fail, there will be no diamonds. There will be no money if there are no diamonds. If you fail, Kindo will have you banished from the land in disgrace (94-5).

Governor Rowe in *Let Me Die Alone*, like Whitehead also represents colonial imperialism in the play. He is in the employment of the imperial Majesty the Queen of Britain. Mende Chiefdom and other Chiefdoms are within the colony which Governor Rowe oversees. He is callous, arrogant and inhuman. Like Whitehead, he desecrates the African royal institution. He chastises and reprimands Gbanya, the paramount ruler of Mende, for sending his warriors to assist John Caulker to fight against George, his brother. He is exploitative; a symbol of the archetypal wicked master in African folklore.

ROWE: Shut up! (*Soldiers enter with guns*) When people like us leave our civilized society to come and bring both the light and the word to you out here in the bush, we expect you to conform. You, Gbanya, you have the effrontery, the audacity, to participate in a revolt even when I, Dr Samuel Rowe, the sole representative of her imperial Majesty, have commanded that there should be no more fighting (19).

Rowe orders his soldiers to beat up Gbanya ruthlessly and commands that Gbanya must give him cattle and rice as further punishment or he will teach him the lesson of his life. Furthermore, when Yoko becomes the Queen of Mende, she tries to honour and please Rowe and anyone who is associated with him. She demonstrates absolute loyalty in an effort to please Rowe, even to the detriment of her people. When Governor Rowe sends his messenger to instruct that she and her people must pay taxes, she complacently says:

YOKO: If the Governor says we pay, we pay. I will be in charge of collecting payments for this area and I'll turn over to the Governor any chief who prevents his people paying. (56).

Yoko enjoys much favour from the colonial masters. Because of this, her influence rises all over Senehun and Mende Chiefdoms. However, at the end of the play, she suffers from the exploitative tendency of the wicked master. She becomes disappointed, disenchanted, and disillusioned when the same colonial master whom she has an absolute trust in and has diligently and meticulously served, sends his messenger to inform her that parts of her Chiefdom have been ceded to another Chiefdom. Her anguish is felt in the reply she sends to Rowe:

YOKO: Enough: Say no more (*There is a long pause*). Tell the Governor that I understand the contents of his letter ... Tell the Governor that I have risked my life and throne to carry out his commands. And it is only now that I have come to realize, now that I am getting old, that I have been a fool. (86 - 7)

She resolves to kill herself as a result of Rowe's exploitative nature. Rowe not only exploits her people by forcing them to pay taxes on their huts but also seizes some of the Queen's communities and land. She sends the messenger to tell the Governor what he has done to her is an insult to her as a Queen. After she drinks the poison, she says:

YOKO: This heart that has known no known happiness, this heart that has known love and power. ... And now I will know peace. Gbanya make way, Yoko is coming, make way my husband ... Yoko is coming in search of peace (93).

After she witnesses the treachery of Musa and Lamboi coupled with Rowe's exploitation by taking parts of her kingdom, she did not see any reason to live again. The character of Whitehead in *The Blood of a Stranger* and Governor Rowe in *Let Me Die Alone* symbolize the European exploitation of the African natural resources.

BI Betrayal in *The Blood of Strangers* and *Let Me Die Alone*

In analysing betrayal in these plays, we shall examine the characterisation of Maligu and Soko in *The Blood of a Stranger* and Musa and Lamboi in *Let Me Die Alone*. These characters betray their loved ones, their communities and the gods.

In *The Blood of a Stranger*, Maligu is the King's Adviser and Soko is the Chief Priest. Both represent (or should represent) the political and religious souls of Mando. In the play, Maligu is referred to as "the wise one" because he is educated but he is greedy and over ambitious. He uses his position as the King's Adviser to plant the story of a false prophecy from the gods. He is so blinded by his desires to get rich quick that he undermines, belittles and betrays his king and the community. Instead of using his wisdom positively for the betterment and advancement of the people, he plots a means to find a way for Mando to receive the stranger, Whitehead, even though he knows that his custom forbids receiving any stranger in the village. He deceives Soko by telling him that anybody that helps the white man settle in Mando, the person will become rich. He tells Soko:

MALIGU: Talk to the king. Talk to the people. Your voice is the voice of unearthly wisdom. It is the voice of the spirits of our forefathers. You divine the fate of the land ... Tomorrow, you will summon the people and tell them that you see a stranger approaching and that he must be received because the spirit of our forefather say that harm will befall us if we drive him away. (25)

His duty as the Chief Adviser to the king is to protect the people from aggression, rather, he chooses to betray the trust reposed in him for filthy lucre. His character in the play is symbolic of African political advisers who do anything, no matter the consequences, to get rich even at the expense of others. Maligu tells King Santigi that "the whiteman

has plans that will make the tribe rich” (58) and blackmails Soko to support his scheme. The exchange between him and Soko goes thus:

MALIGU: Do you want to die a poor man? A servant to the king? ...

The custom demands a priest **SOKO**. When you die, the priesthood dies. is your destiny to die poor and unhappy?

SOKO: I am not dying, Maligu and the priest does not seek happiness for himself. His happiness is the happiness of the people.

MALIGU: Then why do you not sleep in the cave? Why do you have a nice warm hut in the bush? Why do you deceive the people? Why do you break the custom?

The conversation above demonstrates how Soko deceives the people. He tells them that he sleeps in the cave in the course of doing his duties. Unknown to the people, he has “a nice warm hut in the bush” as Maligu reveals to the reader. Both Maligu and Soko are tools the playwright uses to represent African men who betray their people for cash or other benefits. When Soko tells him that the spirits of their forefathers will come after him, he tells Soko “I am not the priest. I do not believe in them” (85). He even betrays the gods by denying them. Like Maligu, Soko is also a betrayer. He betrays the King, the people and the gods. In the play, Soko’s voice is like the voice of the gods as he mediates between them and the people. His pronouncements are believed. This is why he is enlisted into Maligu and Whitehead’s dubious scheme. He is a schemer, a scammer and a deceiver. He lives a double life which makes it very easy for Maligu to blackmail him. Because of his greedy nature as a priest, he succumbs to Maligu’s financial inducement. Soko also betrays the gods by attributing to them instructions they do not give and prescribing a sacrifice they do not demand:

SOKO: Here are the words of our forefathers. (*everyone prostrates. Soko speaks in a stranger voice*). We gave our blood for peace. We gave our lives for our children. But peace is like

the moon. It stays forever. The sun drives it away. A stranger comes to the land. If you want peace, treat him well. If you want peace, throw more blood. The blood of a virgin, born in another place. (38).

Soko betrays the gods and the people he is supposed to stand in the gap for. He is callous and wicked. He chooses Wara, Kindo's betrothed for the virgin sacrifice because he knows that Wara's mother is not from Mando. When Whitehead begins to have amorous disposition for Wara, he tells Soko and Maligu to take Wara to his house so that he can forcefully sleep with her. Soko joins Maligu to kidnap her. Even after Wara escapes from Whitehead's house, she meets Soko, but he pretends that he does not know that Whitehead tries to rape her. He uses the opportunity to lie to Wara that the spirits have chosen her for the virgin sacrifice and advises her to leave Mando immediately. By giving false prophecies, prescribing false sacrifices, Soko betrays the gods. This gives Whitehead the opportunity to plan evil against Mando. Although he is co-opted by Maligu into the diamond scam, he now freely spins ideas on how their deceptive project would succeed.

In *Let Me Die Alone*, Lamboi is Yoko's brother who is hell-bent on ascending the throne. Like Maligu in *The Blood of a Stranger*, he also deploys blackmail and intrigues to achieve his purpose. He is deadly, vicious and will stop at nothing to get what he wants. He betrays Yoko by convincing with Musa to poison Gbanya and Like Soko and Maligu in *The Blood of a Stranger*, Lamboi's inordinate ambition would not make him reason well. In the play, Lamboi is not only a betrayer, but a blackmailer as well. He makes concerted efforts to convince Musa to kill Gbanya. He wraps his evil intention with an altruistic garment. He tells Musa:

LAMBOI: Look Musa, this is not just for my sake, it is for the sake of the people. The people, Musa. Think of the people. ... I fear that woman, Yoko. If he lives longer, she might be able to convince him to pass the chieftdom to her. And with war

threatening each passing moment, with enemies surrounding us, it is necessary that a man should succeed Gbanya, not a soft woman who has music in her ears, itchy dancing feet and a beautiful body to seduce a man (9 – 10).

However, when Musa declines the offer, Lamboi resorts to blackmail. He reminds Musa, who earlier claimed that he had never killed anyone all his life, that he had earlier killed Yattah's son, Mama Kadi's daughter and several other persons whose fat he used to make charms: **LAMBOI:** The blood of Yattah's son and Mama Kadi's daughter.

Those you slaughtered and whose fat you used for your *bofima*. You want me to name what charms you made with their private part? Or do you want me to lead Gbanya, whom you want to protect, to their shallow graves out there in the bush? (14)

Musa becomes afraid that Lamboi will reveal his secret. He cowers and he agrees to help Lamboi kill Gbanya. He timidly replies:

MUSA: Lamboi! *Ndaker*, what are you getting angry for? I was just trying to make sure you are serious. You know I will do anything you say. After all, we are both working for the good of the chiefdom. (14)

Furthermore, Lamboi betrays his blood sister, Queen Yoko. He kills Jeneba and accuses Yoko of the murder. His intention is to have Yoko deposed to enable him ascend the throne. When the oracle reveals it is Musa and Lamboi who kill Jeneba and not Yoko, Lamboi, rather than wait and face the consequences with Musa, escapes and leaves Musa to face the punishment alone. By so doing, he betrays the man he blackmails into doing his bidding.

Musa, in *Let Me Die Alone*, is a seer and a medicine man who is supposed to give divine guidance to Yoko, the Queen, and the community. Yoko describes him as a chameleon who is not trustworthy. Musa is clearly an enemy to his people who trust him because he is the mouthpiece of the gods. He connives with Lamboi to

poison and kill Gbanya, abducts and kills Jeneba in order to set the entire community against Yoko. He kills without remorse. In the play, he does not only betray his king. Gbanya, by poisoning him, he also betrays his own people by killing them to renew his charms. He connives with Lamboi to kill Jeneba and accuses Queen Yoko. As soon as Jeneba disappears and Yoko goes to Taima to crown Yoko chiefs; Musa lies to some group of women who are searching for Jeneba in the bush that it is Yoko who has killed Jeneba. Again, when he meets Lavalie, he lies to him that there is no way that they can find Jeneba because the oracle has revealed that it is Yoko who has used her blood for sacrifice. The dialogue below shows how wicked Musa is:

MUSA: Lamboi, Ndapi has so much grief for his daughter in his head that he will not be able to think properly. He will believe anything we tell him now. ... I journeyed to the shrine yesterday to divine.

LAVALIE: Yes. You mean you went to the Poro Bush? What did you learn?

MUSA: What the Gbeni told me is only for the ear of madam herself.

LAVALIE: Look, *Ngo* Musa, the Queen ordered us to find that child and we must

LAMBOI: The child cannot be found. Madam herself has used her as sacrifice.

LAVALIE: Impossible!

LAMBOI: Go on, *Ngo* Musa, tell him the truth

MUSA: She has been used as sacrifice; buried her alive in a big pot. (61 – 62)

Again, like Soko in *The Blood of a Stranger*, Musa also lies against the gods. African folklore is replete with archetypal seers, prophets and medicine men who lie against the gods to achieve their nefarious purpose(s). Musa is symbolic of such dubious men of the gods. At the end of the play, Musa does not end well. In the play, both Musa and Lamboi are characters that the playwright uses to deploy the evils of being a betrayer.

IV Conclusion

This study has examined the treatment of exploitation and betrayal in two representative African plays that encapsulate the African experience. Colonial Africa was a hub for exploiters who masqueraded as explorers and missionaries. These colonial masters found ready collaborators in local men who, for trifles, helped the “masters” to exploit and betray their people. Even the spokesmen for the oracle succumbed to the temptation offered by the white man. This is the case with both plays studied in this essay. In both plays, we see that the coming together of the people to offer sacrifice signifies oneness, the believe in spiritual matters and the sanctity of their traditional system. In these plays, social rituals seem to unify the people. This shows that social ritual is a way of showing the readers of the efficacy of African customs and tradition.

The advent of the European masters is strictly to exploit Africans. One, Whitehead’s aim of coming to Mando land is to exploit them of their rich diamonds by cashing on their ignorance. He pretends to cultivate a tobacco farm, whereas his real intention is to steal their resources. His death in the hands of Kindo marks the triumph of African values and resilience over Western exploitation. Two, Governor Rowe, a symbolic representation of the European presence in Mende land, is a schemer and also an exploiter. He seizes six lands belonging to Queen Yoko, and demands that all elders living in Mende land should pay tax. He orders his soldiers to beat up King Gbanya with horse whip, and fines the king a “fifty pounds in the equivalent of cattle and rice”. It is his autocratic leadership that sends Yoko to her early grave. Both characters, Mr. Whitehead in *The Blood of a Stranger* and Governor Rowel in *Let Me Die Alone*, are archetypes of the wicked master and the meddling strangers found in traditional tales. They both desecrate the custom and traditions of the people they lord it over. Maligu and Soko, Lamboi and Musa are the local collaborators in both plays. Despite their social standing, they collude with strangers to

betray their loved ones, betray the people, betray the gods and expose the people and the community to danger. All these characters do not end well in the plays as in real life.

As we conclude, it is pertinent to point out that despite the many years of independence of African countries, Africans are still, ironically, being exploited by neocolonialists and are still being betrayed by fellow Africans. However, as dramatised in *The Blood of a Stranger* and *Let me Die Alone*, the societies emerge stronger after these infractions. Also, neither the exploiters nor the betrayers end well because, as in archetypal stories of exploiters and betrayers, there surely will come a day of reckoning. For, as a Yoruba saying has it, *odaleba'leku, enibad'ale a ba'le lo*.

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