

## A critique of Some Selected West African Post-independence Novels of Disillusionment

Bilkisu Abubakar Arabi

Department of English

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Gombe State University

Nigeria

[bilkisuarabi7@gsu.edu.ng](mailto:bilkisuarabi7@gsu.edu.ng)

07037713059

### **Abstract**

The novels of post-independence disillusionment depict the struggles and disappointments faced by the newly independent nations of the world in the aftermath of colonial rule. These novels follow a trend of historical phase that is peculiar to each region of the African continent which the writers follow in weaving their stories. The novels are characterized by a sense of disillusionment, as the high hopes and aspirations of the newly independent nations are dashed by corruption, socio-economic instability, and political unrest. One of the key objectives of the paper is to ascertain the tension between tradition and modernity, as the newly independent nations seek to modernize and industrialize while preserving their cultural heritage. Another important objective is to explore the role of education in the novels under study, as many protagonists are educated individuals who struggle to challenge the new leaders that are trying to jeopardize the system. The study also explored the impact of colonialism on the psyche of the African people, as well as the legacy of colonialism in terms of economic and political instability. In order to harness the aforementioned objectives, Achille Mbembe's model of post-colonial theory and Chinua Achebe's *The Novelist as a Teacher* are adopted. Many of the protagonists are disillusioned with the new African governments, which they see as continuing the same exploitative practices as their colonial predecessors. Overall, the study concluded that the writers of the African novels of post-independence disillusionment create their stories via a powerful reflection of the struggles and challenges faced by each region in the wake of colonialism and postcolonial experiences. Where some of the writers are of the opinion that the African continent will live in perpetual gloom. Whereas some are highly optimistic that there is light at the end of the tunnel despite the gloominess. This paper therefore, supports the notion that the novelist is a teacher, that rights the wrongs of his/her society and this continue to resonate with readers around the world today.

**Key points:** post-independence, disillusionment, corruption, colonialism, leadership

## **INTRODUCTION**

The leadership of most African countries since independence has been largely characterized by corruption, embezzlement of public funds, lack of social amenities, political instability, religious and ethnic crises, all of which have determined the chaotic and violent nature of these African societies. African history since colonial incursion has been awash with political violence, crude use of power, and deepening socio-economic crises. The principal factors that shaped this tradition are couched in hegemony, capitalism, and political exclusion (Nwosu 2, Kukah 16), which confirm the logic of imperialism.

It is against this background that creative writers have tried to portray their pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Most African novels are a reaction to colonialism and post-independence disillusionment. The themes of these novels range from leadership failures, political instability and resistance, ethnic and religious rivalries, the misery of the common man during the years of military rule, dictatorship, oppression, corruption, lack of solid developmental and technological base, hybridization, the quest for societal and individual freedom, war, gender relations, patriarchy, an obvious interest in political issues, resistance to oppression, HIV and Aids, etc.

The paper aims to draw focus from abstract and the paper entirely. Precisely Achille Mbembe, and Chinua Achebe's perspectives on postcolonial literature and other critics and writers like; Samuel Moni Gogura, Niyi Osundare, and Abiola Irele.

## **THE POSTCOLONIAL WRITER**

Postcolonial writers and critics are too numerous to mention because of how vast the concept is. We have the likes of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and of recent Achille Mbembe. These critics have one common theme of criticizing Postcolonialism,

but they differ in terms of aspect and focus on the subject. Achille Mbembe's postcolonial theoretical postulation is adopted for this study.

Mbembe is known for his influential work (*On the Postcolony*) on the complexities of postcolonial states and their legacies. Some of his key postulations are adopted for discussion on this paper. Mbembe provides a profound analysis of the political and social realities of postcolonial African states. He describes the hierarchical stages of consciousness within the colony. Achille Mbembe further explained that what comes after the colony has similarities and differences with what happened during the colony are both important.

Mbembe's work provides a nuanced understanding of postcolonial power dynamics, the persistence of colonial influence, and the complexities of identity and governance in contemporary African states (194).

It is pertinent to note that, the aforementioned features are peculiar to most postcolonial writers, who have always tried to give vivid accounts of political and historical development. Indeed, Sunusi has rightly pointed out as follows:

Fiction and fact are creatively managed to intensify the realism of creative work. In a specific sense, postcolonial writing in Africa portrays the decay and decline, the materialism and corruption of nations, the consequences of indigenous dictatorship as well as the disappointment and disillusionment with political leadership. It can be argued that imaginative writing in Africa which was dominated by colonial experiences has also significantly responded to the internal contradictions in socio-economic and political development in Africa (1).

In the same light, Achebe's article; *The Novelist as a Teacher*, asserted that the writer is a revolutionist who helps his/her society regain belief in itself, and put away the complexes of denigration and self-abasement (3). In essence, Achebe is of the view that the writer should take it upon himself to re-educate and work for the moral and social regeneration of his society. 'in fact the writer should march in front. For he is after all – as Ezekiel Mphahlele says in his *African Image* - the sensitive point in his community' (3-4). Moreover, Samuel

Moni Gogura in his article '*From Disenchantment to Pessimism: A Pedagogical Perspective on Post-colonial West African Literature*' depicts the role of a writer in his society in these words:

The writer is the visionary of his people; he recognizes the past and the present not for the purpose of enshrinement, but for the local creative glimpses and makes statement on the ideal future. He anticipates, he warns, it is not always enough for the writer to be involved in the direct political struggle of today, he often cannot help but envisage ... which is the declared aim of the contemporary struggle (105).

These scholars are of the view that the writer should be a forerunner of development, peace, sustainability, equality and equity in his/her society despite the colonial experience. They advocate for the natives to tell their own stories the way they are in order to look inward and come up with a new vision that will steer their societies forward.

## **DISILLUSIONMENT IN SOME WEST AFRICAN NOVELS**

Historically, African novels are written based on the historical phases of the continent, where each region has its peculiar concerns. For Adetuyi, Chris Ajibade, in his article *Post-Colonial Disillusionment in Contemporary African Prose Fiction*, explains that; African literature can be divided into three categories. The first category writes on cultural nationalism; the second category focuses on all issues of anti-colonialism, while the third is that of post-independence disillusionment (104). In West Africa, for example, the Nigerian novel evolved before independence. However, periodization of the novel based on generation is a subject yet resolved. Nevertheless, Adesanmi and Dunton as quoted in Ogundipe Olumide, argue that "the generational approach remains one of the cornerstones of literary criticism largely due to the possibilities it offers for a systematic understanding of literary trends and currents synchronically and diachronically" (13). They maintain the view that the generational strategy helps in classifying literary works based on the trends and patterns peculiar to them and the periods they describe. For them, a generation is not a period of thirty years, but a means to

understanding literary commonalities (2). The worldviews of the members of the first, second, and third generations were/are shaped by the realities of their times. According to Adesanmi and Dunton; the writers belonging to the first two generations ‘’ were mostly born during the first five decades of the twentieth century when the colonial event was in full force. Their textualities were [...] massively overdetermined by that experience’’ (14). The writers of the first generation were concerned with the dream of self -governance (independence) and refuted the stereotypical narratives of the Europeans about Africa. Writers of this generation include: Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Hubert Ogunde, Ibrahim Tahir, Flora Nwapa, T.M.Aluko, John Pepper Clark, Christopher Okigbo, Cyprian Ekwensi, Elechi Amadi.

The second -generation writers are focused on the idea of nation building. However, it was pulsated by the general attitude of the people and the series of ethnic hostilities that engulfed the country immediately after independence, thereby exposing the country as ‘’an amalgam of peoples welded together in the interests and for the benefit of a European power ‘’ (Forsyth as qtd. in Olumide 4). The writers of the second generation were mostly born late ‘’into the colonial event but their formative years were shaped by independence and its aftermath of disillusionment and stasis’’ (Adesanmi and Dunton 14). The following members belong to this group: Tanure Ojaide, Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare, Ben OKri, Festus Iyayi, Odia Ofeimum, Tayo Olafioye, Wale Okediran, Zaynab Alkali, and Buchi Emecheta etc. Most of them were shocked by how the country quickly deflected after independence from 1960. Such were illustrated in the writings of Olafioye and Emecheta, where they denounce colonial rule and mock the Nigerian leaders for subjecting the country to hostilities and political vices so early in its existence as a sovereign nation.

Members of the third generation were born mostly after independence (Ade’e’ko’ 11) ‘’and thus [are] excised from personal history of colonial events’’ (Adesanmi and Dunton 15). Aside from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chris Abani, Sefi Atta, Richard Ali and Helon Habila,

Amah Darko, other members of this generation include; Biyi Bandele, Dulue Mbachu, Uzodimma Iweala, Nike Adesuyi, Olu Oguibe, Akin Adesokan, Abubakar Adam Ibrahim, Noo Saro -Wiwa and many others. Their writings are massively overdetermined by the politics of identity in a multi -cultural and transnational frame, and they remap the troupes of Otherness and subalternity by “questioning erstwhile totalities such as history, nation, gender, and their representative symbologies” (Adesanmi and Dunton 15). Nevertheless, the novels of post -independence disillusionment started immediately after independence with Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People* (1966), which shows the activities of the ruler in relation to the fate of the masses. This is because many Nigerians have become frustrated as the new rulers have practically become replicas of the European colonialists. According to Adetuyi, Achebe’s *A Man of the People* showcases the indictment of the African society after independence; where the society is replete with greed, violence and ignorance. The unfolding events reveal a society that is uncertain of the future. The society is governed by the likes of Chief Nanga, a corrupt politician. He sees the nation as a cake “from which each group should try to get as large a share as possible” (108). Corruption and nepotism are at their peak in the novel which is a typical representation of an African society. There are many events involving corruption and the misuse of public funds. It is a society where many political officeholders have a residence of “seven bedrooms and seven bathrooms, one for every day of the week” (41). However, the level of poverty in the country is nothing to write home about, as it is captured via Odili’s viewpoint; as a houseboy in Giligili, his experience is captured in the following lines:

The only excitement I remember in Giligili was our nightly war on rats. We had two rooms in the large iron-roofed house with its earth walls and floor. My sister, her husband and two small children slept in one and the rest of us – three boys- shared the other with bags of rice, garri, beans and other foodstuff. And, of course, the rats (46).

The depiction of poverty is in sharp contrast with the description of the bedroom in Chief Nanga’s house:

I was simply hypnotized by the luxury of the great suite assigned to me. When I lay down in the double bed that seemed to ride on a cushion of air, and switched on that reading lamp and saw all the beautiful furniture anew from a lying down position and looked beyond the door to the gleaming bathroom and the towels as large as lappa I had to confess that if I were at that moment made a minister I would be most anxious to remain one for ever (41- 42).

Despite this, Chief Nanga continues to acquire more property while the poor in the villages are getting poorer and poorer. This is a society where exploitation can go on for a long period without any protest. The impact of the human psyche as outlined by Mbembe where he explained that the coupling of the ruling power's own violent quest for grandeur makes vulgarity and wrongdoing its main mode of existence (133). This act of vulgarity paved way for the total demotion of state accountability as portrayed in Chief Nanga's residence and the traditional moral order of society is replaced with double standard as exemplified in the character of Odili.

The leaders continue to exploit the needy even when they are far richer than them. Inhumanity is seen as a new normal which has become part and parcel of the people of the society. For example, Josiah who steals the stick of a blind man, Azoge, later receives cheers from the same villagers during the parliamentary election campaign. The writer as a visionary of his society, therefore, describes the nation as a cake to scramble for. This is why the political regime after independence begins to scramble for power and position, and job allocations are appointed based on who you know rather than merit.

The political decadence in the society creates an avenue for an incursion of a wide range of values which contribute immensely to the destruction of the traditional balance between the material and the spiritual sphere of life, which has led to the hypocrisy of double standards. Odili, a moral voice in the society, is equally hypocritical. Despite his moral objections to the political conduct of Chief Nanga, he could not help himself shouting 'Hear Hear to the gathering of people at Anata Grammar School listening to Chief Nanga's remarks. Odili

envisage in his mind: 'I like to think that I meant it to be sarcastic' (10). It is glaring that Odili is seeking favours from the Minister but he is in denial of accepting such fact; thus, making most of his actions hypocritical. Even though he advocates for a change in the country's political system, he is portrayed as selfish. He also condemns bribery and corruption but accepts money from politicians during campaign. In essence, Achebe's *A Man of the People* showcases the disillusionment of the populace where the traditional moral order of the society is replaced with a double standard that is impossible to escape from because the whole society is guilty of it.

Similarly, the Ghanaian novelist, Ayi Kwei Armah, depicts features of post-independence disillusionment in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The novel is filled with images of scatology, decay, putrefaction, filth and everything connected with human waste in order to show the extent of the disillusionment of the populace. The symbolic descriptions of objects and situations reflect an aspect of the decaying process with which the world of the novel is cluttered. The disgust and disillusionment of Ghanaian society are portrayed via the characters of Koomson, Estella and Timber contractor. The writer presents the immature principle of uprightness within the character of the Man, and his struggle to resist temptation. He struggles to survive in a corrupt and polluted society, where there is no point for an individual to try to change. For instance; the reader becomes aware of the filth that litters the street despite the waste receptacles." K.C.C. RECEPTACLE FOR DISPOSAL OF WASTE" bins which we are told are set up to keep the whole of Ghana clean because the dirt was undesirable and must be eliminated (7). The campaign for waste disposal is championed by a doctor, a Presbyterian priest, and a senior lecturer from the University of Legon, whose aim is to rid the town of its filth has brought hope at first but this hope is shattered in the end.

In the end not many of the boxes were put out, though there was a lot said about the large sum of money paid for them. The few provided, however, had not been ignored. People used them well, so that it took no time at all for them to get full. People still used them, and they overflowed with banana peels and mango seeds and thoroughly sucked-out oranges and the

chaff of sugarcane and most of the thick brown wrapping from a hundred balls of kenkey. People did not have to go up to the boxes any more. From a distance they aimed their rubbish at the growing heap, and a good amount of juicy offal bit the face and sides of the boxes anymore before finding a final resting place upon the heap [8].

This thing [the box] had been a gleaming white sign when it was first installed, and that was not for very long ago. Now, even the littering on it was no longer decipherable. It was covered over thickly with the juice of every imaginable kind of waste matter (7). The failure to implement the anti-litter campaign not only shows the ineptitude of the governing class in managing public affair, but also the rootedness of corruption and decay. Here, Ayi Kwei Armah uses the image of the constant overflowing state of the ‘‘ receptacle of waste’’ and the omnipresence of filth and rubbish on the street to expose and attack the corrupt system. The description of the Man’s office and especially the banister is truly repelling. The putrescence of the banister is obvious but nobody cares:

Of course, it was in the nature of the wood to rot with age. [But] apart from the wood itself there were, of course, people themselves, just so many hands and fingers bringing help to the wood in its course towards putrefaction. Left-hand fingers in their careless journey from a hasty anus sliding all the way up to banister [...] right – hand fingers still dripping with after piss and the stale sweat from the fat crotches. The callused palms of messengers after they had blown their clogged noses reaching for a convenient place to leave the well- rubbed moisture ... (12-13).

Armah’s use of the grotesque bodily image allow the reader to picture the decayed society in his/her mind’s eye. The banister which symbolizes the society is also compared to ‘‘a very long piece of diseased skin’’ (12). This irreparable decay of the banister symbolizes the inevitable moral decadence in the society against which nothing can be done because the wood would always win (Awitor 49). The character of Koomson portrays the luxurious life of the corrupt leaders in contrast with the lives of the poor masses that are depicted via scatological images. Ironically, Koomson, the Minister, seeks refuge in the Man’s room, when the military toppled his government through a coup. He is afraid of being killed by them (military). Interestingly, the writer as a revolutionist who helps his society in regaining

belief in itself ... (Achebe 3), is what Armah does to bring his message home through the character of Koomson, the Minister. Despite his flamboyant and luxurious life, his body oozes out a stench odour; especially his decayed mouth which is unbearable to the man. The stench is described in the following lines:

The smell was something the man had not at all expected. It was overpowering, as if some corrosive gas, already half liquid, had filled the whole room, irritating not only the nostrils, but also the inside, of eyes, ears, mouth, throat [...]. The man held his breath until the new smell had gone down in the mixture with the liquid atmosphere of the Party man's farts filling the room. At the same time Koomson's insides gave a growl longer than usual, an inner fart of personal corrupt thunder. The man thought he would surely vomit if he did not get out from this foul smell (161-163).

Koomson's bodily decay suggests his moral corruption. Oyo, the man's wife, who always admires the Minister's way of life, complains to her husband via whisper; how he smells. This unpleasant situation foreshadows the downfall of the Minister and the end of his corrupt way of life. It is worthy of note that Koomson who refused to use the latrine to relieve himself when he visited the man sometimes ago because of the smell is now running away through the 'shithole' in order to save his life. This singular act of running through the shithole with shit smears all over his body showcases his downfall implicitly. His underlying reality now becomes an apparent reality: the real personality of Koomson is revealed. It is grotesque because the scene marries the repulsive 'shit' with humour and a sense of justice being done (Awitor 51). The bitter disappointment of the masses is echoed in the novels. Their dreams for development and self-realization after the colonial era are far from being actualised. The sharp contrast between the rich (government officials) and the poor is apparent. Bribery and corruption have become the order of the day. The images of decay, filth and putrescence fill Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. These instances bring out the failure of the new nations to provide good governance for their people bringing about the disillusionment. The grotesque images depict corrupt leadership thus the impact of colonialism on the psyche of the African people in terms of economic and political

instability. These instances go in line with Mbembe's postulation that 'what comes after the colony' has similarities with 'what happened during the colony'. The similarities are in terms of political order that have peculiar characteristics of colonial sovereignty, arbitrariness and intrinsic unconditionality. For these similarities he labels contemporary African polities *postcolonies* (194). The colonial state relied on established hierarchies and patronage networks that prepared the way for the socialization of arbitrariness which in turn came to constitute the cement of postcolonial African authoritarian regimes ruling the Continent at present.

Despite the depiction of grotesque and scatological images that symbolizes corruption and embezzlement of public funds through the characters of government official. The character of the Man, however, symbolizes hope for the future as he single - handedly fights corruption. Armah is implicitly telling his audience that the future of Africa is bright but we need more hands like that of the Man to fight corruption and maladministration because he is too fragile to fight the battle alone.

The novels of post-independence disillusionment are more of historical phase which African writers attempt to interrogate the postcolonial realities that pervade the society through historical recreation of events in the continent of Africa. In Nigeria for instance, the contemporary/emerging writers interrogate the realities of society and are not afraid to make socio-economic, political and futuristic statements. They derive their source material from their immediate environment and their countries of origin. Although this critical 'new' face in African literature is to a large extent being grown, germinating and concretizing abroad, this is realistically so because the post -colonial (African) writer tends to immigrate to the centre as a result of the push and pull factor (Pius Adesanmi 35) Most of the contemporary African writers are in the diaspora who focus more on topical issues like military dictatorship, African migrant writings with focus on African post-independence

disillusionment. Just like Achebe, Helon Habila, writes on the Nigerian post-independence disillusionment with a focus on the Nigerian military era in *Waiting For an Angel*. Habila depicts the historical phase of the military dictatorship in Nigeria. He mirrors a postcolonial African state, Nigeria, writhing under the yoke of military rule, human rights abuses, socio-economic and political failures. He further describes the horrors of the postcolonial state in its grim portrayal of the everyday realities that face the citizens of Nigeria. The novel, therefore fits into the corpus of contemporary African novels where Kehinde states:

[...] reflections of the realities of post-independence Africa with its inherent cultural contradictions political and economic instability, corruption, sexual promiscuity, rape, the ravaging HIV/AIDS syndrome and nepotism. Hence, the contemporary African novel is an amalgam of facts, fiction and history (89).

*Waiting For an Angel* goes back and forth in time as it introduces to the reader the lives of the ordinary man in the city of Lagos (a microcosm of Nigeria); we see the main character, Lomba, women and children living in poverty, on poverty street. His depiction of urban poverty is akin to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. The people in the text are living on the margin of the society like all marginalized people in the Third World and postcolonial Africa. It will be difficult to doubt if indeed, the people portrayed in the novel are not the wretched of the earth:

The houses were old and craggy and lichened. The place had the unfinished, abandoned appearance of an under waterscape. Crouching under the bigger or in their own clusters were hastily build wood and zinc structures that housed incredibly large number of families: The fathers were mostly out of work drivers, labourers, fugitives convalescing between prison terms (97).

The masses live in poverty street, typifies poverty; that is to say they live poverty, eat poverty, talk poverty and sleep poverty. For them, like Lomba in prison there is no escape

unless they escape into hope. Habila continues to interrogate such social issues as prostitution, fuel scarcity, motorist molestation, student protest and what is known in Nigeria as jungle justice, amongst others. By discussing these realities in his novel, he submits himself to the demand that the writer contributes solutions to societal problems, by bringing the problem to the centre of discourse, in a genuine attempt at engendering the much need change in attitude of both the victims and their oppressors. Helon Habila paints the postcolonial African state as a lawless society where siren blaring vehicles force other road users off the road and in some cases, to their untimely death: More than once our taxi was forced to hug the kerb as siren blaring military jeeps passed at top speed... (43). Accident and stationary vehicles are left on the road, only to become lethal weapons in the termination of the lives of others. The aforementioned instance of siren blaring vehicles is in turn captured in Mbembe's *postcolony* where we see the infusion of history and reality in the narration which is typical of postcolonialism.

As a chronicler, Habila infuses history and reality in the narration of the novel where he inserts historical events and happenings in Nigeria under military rule. He uses the real names of some major actors like the hanging of the Niger Delta activist, and writer, Ken Saro Wiwa, the killing of the founding Editor-in-chief of Newswatch Magazine, Dele Giwa via a parcel bomb and the killing of Kudirat Abiola, wife of the acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria, Chief M.K.O Abiola and the military president, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) who annulled the election.

Helon Habila also fulfills Osundare's identification of the writer as one who is helping the people, through his vision and inspiration, to demolish the chains and dungeons of the king and rout his taskmasters (7) by using Joshua and Lomba (both aspiring writers) to galvanise a traumatized people into questioning the status quo. Worthy of note is the character of Lomba, who according to Achebe's *The Novelist as a Teacher*, is a revolutionist that wants to change

the narrative of his society but hampered by forces beyond his control (the military government).

Furthermore, Amah Darko's *Faceless*, on the other hand, showcases the Ghanaian phase of post-independence disillusionment that is geared towards fighting the course of the poor and the needy in society, child labour, abuse and abandonment. Darko portrays the ghetto town of Sodom and Gomorrah where all sort of atrocities prevails. We see crimes such as child prostitution, rape, robbery, hard drugs, brutality and violent death. However, street life is not peculiar to Ghana alone as most countries of the world experience the impact of deviant acts as a result of the children due to poverty amid other social/cultural issues.

*Faceless* tells the story of abandonment. It is the unfortunate story of what can happen to any human society where children are born and abandoned by parents due to "poverty" or "carelessness". At the center of this gory tale is Fofu, a 14 years old daughter of Maa Tsuru. She is a victim of rejection and abandonment. According to the story, a part of Fofu was and would always be the fourteen years that she was but the harshness of life on the streets had also made a premature adult, part of her. She was both a child and an adult (6).

It is worth noting that the setting of the story at Agboghloshie specifically Sodom and Gomorrah a typical slum area that seriously needs the attention of the government. This is also to expose the hustle people go through to secure accommodation in Accra. Most houses in those areas do not have the necessities of life, like toilet facilities, etc. Baby T is also beaten to death, and Fofu suffers at the hands of poison. Men that are supposed to protect women rather use them as punching bags. This should not be encouraged in our society. Moreover, children in the novel are enrolled into all kinds of trade through no fault of theirs. The outlined situation above typically exemplified Mbembe's perspective that the natives no longer expect anything from the future. In Africa after colonization the natives are "zombified" in the sense

that their feelings are eroded as a result of the hardship and cruelty they face. This practice is synonymous to experiencing death at the very heart of their own existence (199).

The police who are supposed to protect the lives of the citizenry and ensure security is maintained in all ramifications are portrayed as public servants who are redundant, powerless and inefficient. The institution is depicted to have become nonchalant towards discharging its duties. The police and the station are described thus:

The police station stood in a very busy area and was simply put, a sorry sight Broken windows, leaking drains, cracked walls and peeling paint greeted Vickie and Kabria. The officer behind the outdated front desk who seemed very bored with his world, his job and his very own self too, responded to their loud and clear greeting with a sullen nod ... (80-82).

In the same vein, Darko contrasts the work of the police to that of the media and the MUTE group (a non-governmental organization). While the police are portrayed as inefficient, the media most especially Harvest FM, wields power and authority in society as a result of the role they played in exposing, and unfolding some of the causes of child abandonment that lead to the ‘‘street child syndrome’’. Similarly, the MUTE group played a significant role in being the mouthpiece of the ordinary man in society. Despite been an NGO, the MUTE group seeks the interest of the people in trying to curb the menace of the street child. With the backing of society, the group investigates the death of Baby T and rehabilitate Fofa. She happens to be a victim of child prostitution and labour, as a result of poverty and abandonment of responsibility on the side of her mother, Ma Tsuru and an absentee father.

Child labour is a menace in our society which should be curtailed by the government. Fofa, Odartey and most of the children in the slum are deprived of access to education because of their parent’s irresponsible lifestyle. Through the narrator’s voice, we see the children sending money to their parents for the family’s upkeep. Baby T and Afi (the househelp of Dina) are sold into prostitution. Unfortunately, for Baby T who does not benefit directly from the

proceeds of the prostitution dies early. Afi, is fortunate to have escaped from the woman she was sent to. Child Labour needs to be eradicated from our society. The rules governing children's right should be properly enforced in Ghana as it will help ease the burden of these children who are abandoned with a dashed dream.

Post- independence African writers continue to look at socio-political issues with a critical eye in the 'independent' African nations like failed leadership through a striking realism by portraying chaos and decadence along with people's disenchantment as is the case in all the aforementioned texts. Many writers strive to cross-examine these issues which may manifest from both internal/external forces related to the unending colonial hangover and neocolonialism (Irele, Gikandi & Alou as qtd. in Yacoubou 60). In this endeavour, the role of the African writer is to foster their readership to reflect on these preoccupations; this literature has the proclivity towards some socio-political activism and it less focuses on "art for art's sake" (Nnolim as qtd.in Yacoubou 60-61). It is worthy of note that post-independence African fiction is geared towards travel and immigration stories where Nigerian writers relocate abroad (a safe haven) in order to voice out their grievances of post-independence disillusionment and disenchantment of the African masses. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, happens to be one of such writers and of recent is Noo Saro- Wiwa.

Noo Saro-Wiwa, as a diaspora writer in her travelogue, a creative non-fiction: *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria*, where she focuses on development related issues which serve as another angle of looking at post-independence disillusionment in the Africa of today. Thematically, she showcases the Nigerian failed electricity and water supply and advocates for a change in the following lines: "maybe Nigerians ... differ from the rest of the world. Perhaps all those electricity blackouts and traffic go-slows have stretched Nigerians' attention spans and raised our tolerance threshold" (81). This assertion agrees with Mbembe's lack of state

accountability in the side of the government and the numbed emotions of the natives that resulted to their zombification (Benedetta Lanfranchi 194).

The narrative continues to bring out another development-related issue via a detailed description of Nigerian city cumbersome and cantankerous transportation system resulting in public unsafety (Yacoubou 64). Saro-Wiwa, continues to paint a picture of the transportation system precisely, in Lagos, Nigeria with the minibus taxi, known as danfo. “Danfos are condemned hand-me-downs from Europe, so decrepit that one can watch the tarmac moving beneath one’s feet” (ibid 19). Aside from the danfo, the motorbike taxi known as Okada is also used as public transport. The majority of the populace prefer to use the Okada because; “they are cheap and fast and can weave through the traffic go-slows that consume such a huge proportion of people’s days” (37).

To the writer, these public transport systems have failed because riding in them means jeopardizing one’s life because of the recklessness of the driver/rider and the dilapidation of the road. To the writer these unsafe means of public transport makes many Nigerian cities appear as a twenty-first-century urban jungle, where “hustling” becomes the lifeblood of people (ibid 23) tunes the reader’s cognizance of areas that need to be changed in Nigeria and many other places in Africa (64).

Corruption will always remain an integral part of the Nigerian system of governance. Poor leadership and mismanagement of public affairs are factors that hinder development in Nigeria and Africa at large. Saro-Wiwa creatively captures how corruption has eaten deep into the hearts of Nigerians:

... bad governance explains the ever-spreading corruption with new generation workers afraid of suffering from the same misfortune their seniors experienced. ... successive governments have been very slow in releasing many civil servants’ pensions some regretted why they had not stolen. This fear of suffering like their elders cause the younger workers to steal. In a similar vein, lack of priorities in governance causes the implementation of projects that result in penury of daily needs and plunges the

country into economic stagnancy (Yacoubou 64).

In the same light, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's collection of short stories; *The Thing Around Your Neck*, portrays issues and challenges that are germane to the African continent. For instance, *Cell One* and *The American Embassy* depict the need for developmental needs in Nigeria and Africa as a whole which is another angle to discussing the post-independence disillusionment in Africa. Adichie as one of the contemporary /diasporic writers, feels the need to wake up her African/Nigerian society from its slumber. She "daringly cast [s] a critical look at [her] their societies and averred their concern regarding the stubborn question of development in the continent" (Yacoubou 65). A close and critical reading of *The American Embassy* tells the story of a single family that strived to leave the country for America as a result of persecution by the government. The husband escapes, but little Ugonna is killed violently by the stooges of the military government. The wife, who narrowly escapes death fears her life will be endangered if she stays in Nigeria. This singular act represents a failed political leadership as an impediment to advancement in Africa. These unfolding events showcased what Mbembe's *Postcolony* explained about the similarities between colonial and postcolonial regimes where the authorities decide if a citizen can live or die as exemplified in *The American Embassy*. Instead of them being the guarantee for peoples' security and welfare, many leaders turn out to be a threat to their fellow African lives, which most fellows often consider leaving their countries to migrate to a not welcoming western environment. In portraying this sad event, the writer strives to contribute to raising African leadership awareness and development activities/agencies to mull over the situation.

Moreover, in *Cell One*, Adichie features Nigerian University cultism, political leadership's failure to implement a sound justice system, and corruption as obstacles that hinder Nigeria and African efforts for change. In the story, university cultism represents a threat to both

students and professors as it creates an atmosphere of fear on the campus. Different gangs are formed, each gunning down opponent groups while girls are leered and raped (7-8).

The feeling of insecurity jeopardizes university education which constitutes an important pillar for development. As the story unfolds, the reader learns that the police intervene to arrest those who are involved in cultism. The narrator tells us that her brother, Nnamabia, is arrested while drinking alcohol in a pub with his friends during a night curfew and they are believed to be part of the gangs on campus. Through this episode, the writer takes her audience through the Nigerian justice and police system.

The depiction of a failed justice system in Nigeria appears to be Adichie's way of featuring post-independence disillusionment in *Cell One*. Failure to implement an upright justice system jeopardizes the effort of peacebuilding (Alou as qtd.in Yacoubou 66) and creates insecurity which in turn hinders developmental motives. The story showcases injustice with the character of 'the old man' who is jailed because "his son was wanted for armed robbery, and when the police could not find the son, they decided to lock him up instead"(15). The violent practice of enforcing the law has become persistent and everybody (the populace) knows that "it is wrong, but this is what the police do all the time. If they do not find the person they are looking for, they will lock up his father or his mother or his relative, ..." (15). Besides this unthoughtful strategy and instances of bribery (10-13) as "symptoms of a larger malaise" (13), the threatening of people by the police at the prison house is revolting. The suffering of the old man and another inmate in the hands of the police (16-17) depicts an irresponsible leadership that lacks human concerns, and this triggers revolt and possibly causes mayhem which would endanger development initiatives. This awkward way of law enforcement reveals bad governance and incites people to hate the police which is supposed to be a protector rather than an oppressor. In *Cell One*, the native's psyche does not care about his land for him to

realize the importance of fighting for it as depicted in Mbembe's postulations. In short, he is trained to be unpatriotic hence the feeling of indifference (194).

This feeling of injustice fuels anger and hatred towards the government which in turn results in the lack of respect for law and order on the side of the population. Thus, chaos would prevail, peace threatened and development postponed.

The novels of post- independence disillusionment in some West African Countries are represented based on the complexities that are particular to each region. History plays a significant role in shaping the stories that are peculiar to each nation. In essence, we see writers as teachers of the society that depict the picture of current trends in African writing; something Irele calls 'new realism of the African writer' which: '... reflects the mood of disillusionment that has invaded African minds as the hopes and expectations inspired by the general euphoria of political independence, taken as the signal for a new and positive phase of African development began to fade' (214). The analysis of the texts summed up the assertion that the writer does not write in a vacuum, hence, every writer is a product of his/her society. The post-independence African writers, therefore, are ever ready to reflect the realities of their societies that are already 'tailor-made' for them by a postcolonial Africa that is consciously sliding from the path of a destiny to becoming great, after being free from the yoke of colonialism. To wrap it all, most African writers write out of an experience and out of commitment to an African destiny they all dream to achieve (Achebe 9).

## CONCLUSION

The paper concluded that writers of post – independence disillusionment can be categorized in to two camps where some are of the opinion that Africa is in state of despair and decay that is irredeemable. While some are optimistic about Africa's future inspite of the pessimism. We see writers that aligned with Mbembe's gloomy conclusions about African future without a tentative standpoint of reclaiming African humanity. Nevertheless, Achebe and other writers

give or opt for a bright future inspite of the revolutionary advocacy. It is so glaring that novels like Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* are in line with Mbembe and Irele's postulations that suggested a gloomy end. However, Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*, Darko's *Faceless*, Saro Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* and Adichie's *The American Embassy* and *Cell One* are advocating for a change and a better future for postcolonial Africa that is in line with Achebe, Osundare and Gogura's perspectives that the future will be bright despite the challenges faced.

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