

Postcolonial Political Manipulation of the Marginalized: A Critical Analysis of Ogbeche Frank Ogodo's *Harvest of Corruption*

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Abstract— This study conducts a critical analysis of postcolonial political manipulation in Ogbeche Frank Ogodo's play, *Harvest of Corruption* (2013). Employing postcolonial theory as a framework, the research examines how the play dramatizes the systemic exploitation of marginalized citizens by a corrupt political elite in a post-independence African state. Through a qualitative textual analysis, the study reveals that political corruption permeates all societal institutions, leading to economic devastation, injustice, and the moral degradation of both the powerful and the vulnerable. The analysis demonstrates that characters such as Chief Ade-Amaka, Ochuole, Aloho, and Justice Odili function as metaphors for the entrenched networks of corruption and the profound human cost they exact. The study concludes that Ogodo's work serves as a powerful indictment of the neocolonial patterns of governance that continue to perpetuate oppression and social injustice long after the end of formal colonial rule.

Keywords— Postcolonial literature, Political corruption, Neocolonialism, Ogbeche Frank Ogodo, *Harvest of Corruption*, Subaltern, African drama.

I. INTRODUCTION

Political corruption represents a profound and persistent crisis in post-independence Africa, effectively perpetuating cycles of exploitation that echo the colonial past. This corruption typically stems from weak governance and a systemic disregard for the welfare of the marginalized. Across the continent, a glaring disparity persists where political elites accumulate vast wealth under favorable terms, while technocrats and the general populace grapple with inadequate livelihoods. This dynamic indicates that Africa remains caught in a colonial matrix of power, characterized by sustained control over economics, authority, and knowledge (Quijano, 2007, pp. 168-178). Frantz Fanon (1961) observed that colonialism seeks to impose its logic not only on a colony's present but indelibly on its future, a legacy that postcolonial states must vigorously confront.

In this context, postcolonial literature assumes the vital role of social critique. While theorists like Eagleton (1999) note the risks of cultural overemphasis, the value of such literature lies in its capacity to challenge entrenched power structures (p. 26). African writers, therefore, bear a responsibility to act as societal watchdogs. This study focuses on Ogbeche Frank Ogodo's *Harvest of Corruption* (2013) to investigate the literary depiction of postcolonial political manipulation. The play offers a searing portrayal of a political class that, having inherited the state, continues to employ colonial tactics of control and exploitation against its own citizens.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

This study addresses the literary representation of how political power in a postcolonial setting is wielded to manipulate and marginalize the populace. Although nations like Nigeria achieved political independence, the subsequent struggle for power has been severely hampered by rampant corruption, stifling authentic development. Ogodó's play is rich with political elements that expose the roots of this decay. While its satirical nature and themes have been noted, a concentrated postcolonial analysis of its portrayal of systemic manipulation remains underexplored. Consequently, this study aims to utilize postcolonial theory and textual analysis to expose the mechanisms and impacts of political manipulation on the marginalized as depicted in *Harvest of Corruption*.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A POSTCOLONIAL LENS:

This analysis is grounded in postcolonial theory, which is fundamentally concerned with resistance to imperial power and the dismantling of colonial-era assumptions (Hume, 2008). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1998) define the post-colonial project as encompassing "various indigenous local and hybrid processes of self-determination" that actively challenge residual imperial cultural knowledge (p. 1). For this study, key concepts from this tradition are essential. The analysis employs the lens of **neocolonialism** to critique the ongoing economic and political exploitation by a domestic elite who mimic colonial structures of governance for personal gain. Furthermore, the condition of the **subaltern**—populations existing outside the structures of hegemonic power—provides a framework for understanding the marginalized characters in the play who are acted upon and silenced by the corrupt system. Through this dual lens, the study examines how Ogodó dramatizes the injustice of a system where the subaltern are the primary casualties.

IV. METHODOLOGY: A CRITICAL LITERARY ANALYSIS:

This study employs a qualitative critical literary analysis guided by postcolonial theory. The methodology involves a systematic, three-stage process applied to the primary text, *Harvest of Corruption*:

1. **Close Reading:** The play was meticulously examined to identify key passages, dialogues, and narrative elements concerning power, corruption, and marginalization.
2. **Thematic Coding:** The identified textual data was categorized into emergent themes, such as "abuse of political office," "institutional complicity," and "victimization of the vulnerable." These themes were then analyzed through the specific postcolonial concepts of neocolonialism and subalternity.
3. **Interpretive Analysis:** The coded themes and character arcs were interpreted to construct a coherent argument about the play's critique of postcolonial political manipulation. This process aligns with the view of textual analysis as an objective engagement with meaning (Barthes & Marshall, 1977).

V. SYNOPSIS OF *HARVEST OF CORRUPTION*:

Harvest of Corruption follows Aloho, a desperate university graduate in search of employment. Lured by the promise of a job from her former schoolmate, Ochuole—now a corrupt administrative officer—Aloho is introduced to Chief Ade-Amaka, a powerful and morally bankrupt minister. Unwittingly entangled in a drug trafficking syndicate orchestrated by the Chief, Aloho is arrested. Despite warnings from her friend Ogeyi, Aloho's desperation leads her deeper into the corrupt network, resulting in an unwanted pregnancy and her ultimate death. The play unravels a comprehensive web of corruption that implicates politicians, judiciary officials, law enforcement, and businesspeople, painting a portrait of a society where integrity is sacrificed for power and wealth.

VI. DISCUSSIONS

Ogbeche Frank Ogodó (2013) demonstrates how corruption affects all facets of society, affecting political institutions, security and law enforcement agencies, and taking a terrible toll on the daily lives of people. The main problem throughout the play is corruption. In Jacassa, corruption is evident wherever you look, even in unexpected areas. Chief Ade-Amaka is at the vanguard

of this wickedness, stealing and abusing public office for his pleasure. Chief exhibits wickedness by turning Aloho into a drug peddler without her consent.

6.1 Postcolonial Political Manipulation on the Lives of Marginalized Characters in the Play:

In portraying postcolonial political manipulation on the lives of the marginalized characters in *Harvest of Corruption*, the playwright connotatively relates the main character's name, Chief Haladu Ade-Amaka, to three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. This signifies that corruption does not lie with one person or one ethnic group, but it cuts across all facets of society in Nigeria and Africa as a whole (Omeje, 2008, p. 91). The historically unequal and exploitative relationship between the metropole and the hegemonic elites in postcolonial states constitutes the "external social relations of postcoloniality." Chief Ade-Amaka, as a metaphorical character, stands in for the leadership that has been deeply influenced by political corruption in Africa.

Metaphorically, "corruption" makes Chief Haladu Ade-Amaka a moral decadent. Chief is linked to corrupt practices to the extent that he disregards morality completely. Using his political power, he garners great wealth by stealing public funds and peddling drugs. The money at his disposal allows him to co-opt all political and civil institutions: "I did my homework, my Lord. I do not know why that good-for-nothing Custom Officer who has been on my payroll for God knows how long suddenly decides to leave his duty post..." (*Harvest of Corruption*, p. 49). This is emblematic of how many politicians in Africa operate.

Since he obtains his money effortlessly, Chief adopts a wasteful and promiscuous lifestyle, as portrayed in the following conversation:

Chief Ade-Amaka: Aha! As for cash no problem. Please send us two bottles of big stouts. Chilled please and two mortars of ishi – ewu the usual, you know!

Madam Hoha: (Cuts in) Ah! Chief you are not being fair. What about me?

Chief Ade-Amaka: ...Just serve yourself. Whatever you want and add the bills.

Madam Hoha: You join your girl. She is dying to have you already. (Raises her voice) Ochuole take things easy o! I beg you. There he is. He is all yours. Chop am if you like... (*Harvest of Corruption*, pp. 14-15)

Following this, Chief gives out large sums of money when Ochuole feigns annoyance. He practices all kinds of vices, from extramarital affairs to bribery and drug peddling. Political corruption enables Chief Ade-Amaka to abuse his public office, using government employees for private gain—both for sexual pleasure and criminal enterprise. The powers granted to African leaders confer privileges they frequently abuse, leading to constitutional manipulations and rampant unlawful practices. This is what Chief Ade-Amaka, as a metaphorical character, exhibits.

Though the various public servants used by Chief are punished by incarceration, Aloho is not lucky, and she pays the ultimate price by losing her life. Her death is a metaphor for the many people who suffer or die for politicians during campaigns and rallies. Chief Ade-Amaka is unrepentant, believing he will always have everyone in his cartel. However, luck eventually eludes him when activism in Jacassa rises to challenge his deeds. He loses his prestige and is sentenced to twenty-five years of incarceration. This outcome resonates with the postcolonial agenda to reclaim control over the economy, authority, and knowledge—the interconnected domains described by Quijano (2007, pp. 168-178). The use of postcolonial theory, therefore, is meant to address these acts of corruption among top officials.

Ochuole is an old schoolmate of Aloho and a Chief Administrative Officer attached to the Minister. A conversation between Aloho and Ogeyi reveals that Ochuole was linked to corruption even during her school days:

Aloho: ... I ran into Ochuole at Secretariat (purse). You remember her? That girl who was almost making herself a nuisance on campus.

Ogeyi: Yes! Yes!!... Ochuole, who won't know her. Yes!

Aloho: She is the one I met and she had offered to introduce me to her Minister and she assured me of a job. She ...

Ogeyi: And she what? (Claps her palms together) Say again, have you forgotten her lifestyle? And why should you get yourself mixed up with Ochuole of all people, why? That girl who has soiled the reputations of all decent girls in this Jabu. Is that the girl you ran into? I won't allow you to associate with her. (*Harvest of Corruption*, p. 18).

From this, it is clear Ochuole is morally perverse. The political corruption in her life does not affect her alone but also anyone she contacts. She indulges in prostitution for money and luxuries and is open to luring innocent girls into drug peddling and prostitution, disregarding the consequences.

Ochuole is also an accomplice in Chief Ade-Amaka's schemes, including signing and collecting state funds for private use. The impact of political corruption on Ochuole leads her to believe she can act with impunity due to the support of the "powers that be." Finally, her wrongs catch up with her, and she is sentenced to ten years of hard labor. In this light, one considers Appiah's (2013) assertion that postcoloniality can become a "condition of pessimism" (p. 353). Ochuole is directly linked to vices that hinder national development.

Aloho is a metaphorical character representing upright individuals whose hardship in a corrupt environment leads to moral failure. It is difficult to maintain integrity amid economic hardship and corrupt associates.

Metaphorically, political corruption makes Aloho a victim of circumstance. Years of unemployment lead her to associate with Ochuole and Chief Ade-Amaka. Her desperation for a job clouds her judgment, making her susceptible to their whims. She falls victim to drug peddling unknowingly. Her direct contact with the corrupt Ochuole exemplifies how bad company corrupts good character:

Aloho: ... She assured me that her Oga will employ me. Ogeyi I am going. Right now I want to get a job and I will try to be careful about it, ... I am tired of searching for a job. (*Harvest of Corruption*, pp. 8-9).

Aloho loses her moral standing as a result of this pressure:

Ogeyi: Calm down, Aloho, the world has not ended you can still pick up the pieces...

Aloho: Ogeyi, you may not understand my position. I was even lured into having affairs with Chief. Ever since my detention, I am feeling funny and I am sure I am pregnant...

Ogeyi: Preg... What? ... Aloho! Are you so daft? After all my warning to you... Just under three months in Jabu and you have ruined yourself like this. Aloho why? (*Harvest of Corruption*, p. 59)

The impact on Aloho is so great that she ruins herself in three months, becoming a fornicator, a drug peddler, and pregnant out of wedlock. This is metaphorical of the real-life situation of young women who suffer from corrupt political leadership.

Justice Odili is a judge who allows himself to be used by Chief Ade-Amaka. Political corruption affects him so deeply that he loses his sense of judgment. Instead of removing criminals from society, he protects them for bribes:

Chief Ade-Amaka: ... My Lord I have come with a little kola for you. I know that you would like what I have brought for you... Meanwhile, here is a little cash for your fuel (he opens his portfolio and brings out bundle of naira notes and hands them over to Justice Odili who receives it with a show of gratitude). My Lord, more will come so long as you continue to protect me...

Justice Odili: I can't thank you enough. (Smiling broadly). Once again, you are welcome but all..., I can say is that you should be careful... (*Harvest of Corruption*, p. 30).

Justice Odili seems to enjoy his ill-gotten gains to the extent that he resorts to blackmail:

The Judge (Justice Odili): Chief, this is not an easy case but I shall try as usual and you have to be reasonable this time... if this girl squeals, you are in for it.

Chief Ade-Amaka: That's no problem. (Sensing the trap of blackmail but could do nothing about it). I shall come to the house with five hundred thousand naira this evening.

The Judge: That's all right. In fact, I will discuss with her lawyers and the case will be dismissed for want of evidence. The amount should be raised to one million naira, to take care of all the people involved in the case...

Chief Ade-Amaka: (Fuming) You old crook! (But calms himself) I shall bring the money in the evening (highly irritated). (*Harvest of Corruption*, pp. 50-51).

In the end, the Judge disgracefully loses his position and is incarcerated. He represents corrupt judges who deny justice due to bribery, reflecting the disillusionment with leaders who continued colonial-style oppression after independence (Ayittey, 1992).

Harvest of Corruption also shows two Customs officers: one on Chief's payroll and one who is not. This represents the dichotomy in African civil service between genuine servants and those placed by political patronage. The officer on the payroll protects Chief's illegal business, illustrating how state agencies are compromised. As Chief laments, "I do not know why that good-for-nothing Custom Officer who has been on my payroll for God knows how long suddenly decides to leave his duty post..." (p. 49).

Madam Hoha, the proprietress of Okpara Hotel, is another accomplice. Corruption impacts her so much that she lacks any uprightness. She is described as a "well-fed 'cash madam'" (p.11) and views the young women she exploits as "prey" (p. 12). While pre-colonial African women held powerful political roles, Madam Hoha is a metaphor for women leaders who have failed, prioritizing profit over patriotism by shielding criminals in her hotel for financial gain.

VII. CONCLUSION

The characters examined from Ogbeche Frank Ogodo's *Harvest of Corruption* highlight how people suffer the effects of corrupt practices exhibited by the political class in Africa. In the play, the playwright uses well-crafted characters and characterisation to reveal the general social and political patterns prevalent in Africa. The characters are metaphorical as they are symbols or representations of the very real people in the present situations in Africa. In most cases, leadership styles and actions are influenced by postcolonial ideologies and are involved in corrupt practices. The spirit of patriotism has died in them. The nature of the effects of bad leadership is revealed in the characters who suffered in the play while only few important characters represent individuals who seek justice and change from the malfeasance that characterises their society

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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