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The “anglophone problem” in postcolonial anglophone cameroonian drama : Bole Butake’s and Bate Besong’s plays

Mbonyingingo, Audace; Supervisor : Prof. Christopher Joseph Odhiambo

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THE "ANGLOPHONE PROBLEM" IN POSTCOLONIAL ANGLOPHONE CAMEROONIAN DRAMA: BOLE BUTAKE'S AND BATE BESONG'S PLAYS

BY

MBONYINGINGO, AUDACE

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE, THEATRE AND FILM STUDIES;

MOI UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER 2017

DECLARATION

This Thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University. No part of this work may be reproduced without the prior written permission of the author and/or Moi University.

Mbonyingingo, Audace **Signture**…… **Date**: ……..

SASS/D.PHIL/LIT/02/14

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISORS

This Thesis has been submitted with our approval as University supervisors.

Prof. Christopher Joseph Odhiambo **Signature**…..……..… **Date:** ……

School of Arts and Social Sciences

Department of Literature, Theatre and Film Studies

Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

Prof. Peter Tirop Simatei **Signature** ……..…… **Date:** ……..

School of Arts and Social Sciences

Department of Literature, Theatre and Film Studies

Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my exceptional family:

To my father Aaron Selemani, and my mother, Sophie Mbonimpa; for their support, love, prayers and whose faith in me was never in vain,

To my wife, Imelde Sinzinkayo and our children: Shammah Ariella Igiraneza, Queen Melphine Impundu, Mitt Mbonyingingo Mutere, and Seron Mbonyingingo for their incredible patience and love during my absence from home,

To my brothers and sisters, their love, patience, and support have given me the impetus to live a happy and fulfilled life.

ABSTRACT

Anglophone-Francophone differences in postcolonial Cameroon pose nation-building problems. Cameroonians are divided around identities constructed on the basis of the two former colonial master's languages. The questions of nation building and representation that constitute central points of the "Anglophone Problem" is the major concern of this research based on Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's selected plays. This study sets out to examine how the post-reunification Cameroon nation is represented in the playwrights' possibilities of dramatic art form. In the Cameroonian context, national identity is based on official language affiliation rather than on traditional ethnic belongings. Yet, Cameroon has been independent for more than half a century. This prevailing form of domination of the colonial over the pre-colonial legacies implies a form of neo-imperialism. I argue that post-colonial identities are stronger than or as strong as pre-colonial ones in the context of contemporary Cameroon and that the "Anglophone Problem" has affected the aesthetic expression of the post-colonial Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights. Even if Anglophone Cameroon literature is not seemingly widely known outside the national boundaries, the selected plays function as theatre that calls for the collective re-examination of the question of Cameroonians' identity. This qualitative library based study brings contribution to the understanding of the post-reunification Cameroonian nation building crisis within the "Anglophone Problem" agenda as dramatised in the selected plays. I have employed content analysis as a qualitative research methodology and mode of analysis. Also this thesis has analysed the plays, using other postcolonial theories and within Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as an "imagined political community", Augusto Boal's "Forum Theatre", Bertolt Brecht's notion of *Verfremdung,* translated as 'the alienation effect' or 'the distancing effect' and Richards David about "Framing Identities". This study therefore evolves on the premise that, in the plays under study, in imagining a post-reunification Cameroonian nation the playwrights adopt a number of techniques that enable a stylistic development from the aesthetics of resistance and confrontation to the poetics of reconciliation to engage with identity politics occasioned by the "Anglophone Problem". This study stresses on the tensions and anxieties between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians and considers them as an expression of the continuing western imperial domination embedded in the former colonial masters' languages. What emerges from this study is that the "Anglophone Problem" is central in the plays under study. While Butake grapples with it by employing the poetics of reconciliation for a collective reconstruction of a Cameroon nation, Besong constructs an "Anglophone Cameroon nation" from a revolutionary dramatic aesthetics. Since the "Anglophone Problem" is basically a problem of marginalisation and representation of the Anglophone Cameroonians in the largely post-reunification Francophone-dominated nation-state, drama can be an effective tool to mediate the divided nation. In doing so, the two playwrights link drama to history in an attempt to raise to the ground the reunification epistemologies and also connect them with the Cameroonian institutions.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Anglophone Cameroon drama should be understood here, despite the many controversies in its definition, as drama scripted by Cameroonian playwrights of English language expression.

Ethnicity: A more appropriate understanding of "ethnicity" is borrowed from Smith (1998: 204) who asserts that, "ethnicity must be viewed as a plastic and malleable social construction, deriving its meanings from the particular situations of those who invoke it… Ethnicity has no essence or center, no underlying features or common denominator". In this study "ethnicity" accounts generally for Cameroonians' variation in terms of culture, tradition, language and social patterns and the colonial experiences which thus allow them to transcend the assumption of a Cameroonian society divided into fixed, genetically determined biological types. An important remark here is that after the scramble of Cameroonian communities among the British and the French, the same ethnic groups were split among the two colonial forces, thus giving the former two different new identities: Anglophone and Francophone. These two are the ones most specifically referred to in this study as ethnic groups.

Hybridity, as postulated by Bhabha (1994: 38) is "one of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in postcolonial theory". It commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone. It is used in this study with the meaning of the in-between space in which cross-cultural differences in Cameroon are negotiated, enacted and exchanged.

Identity is defined as the set of personal and behavioural characteristics which define an individual as a member of a certain group. In this thesis it should be understood as the set of characteristics that one possesses that make them feel they are "Anglophone Cameroonians" or not. In the context of this study individuals may possess more than one cultural identity as a result of geographical and social mobility and their desire for belonging to a particular community. In Cameroon,

we distinguish two major identities based on the two Cameroon's official languages: Anglophones and Francophones.

Marginalisation means the social process of becoming or being made marginal (especially as a group ithin the larger society). It is also the relegation or confinement to a lower or outer limit or edge, as of a social standing. In the course of this discussion, this concept is used in relation to the fact that the Anglophone Cameroonians feel limited to access to power that is in the hands of the Francophones. The former feel pushed by the latter from the centre (where power is) to the margins. Being on the margins of power therefore "indicates a positionality that is best defined in terms of the limitations of a subject's access to power" (Ashcroft 2000).

Nation: this normally refers to a community of people living (or not) in a defined territory with an accepted for of government. These people have a lot in common such as language, historical experiences and culture. The modern nation-state is understood as the predominant mode of sovereignty which emerged during modernity, and which bases its legitimacy and territorial boundaries upon distinctly national imaginings of collectivity and belonging. However, the Cameroonian "nation" we engage with in this study is still problematic as it lacks this sense of belonging whereby one group (Anglophones) feels to be excluded or discriminated from collectivity.

"Othering" means the process of perceiving or portraying someone or something as fundamentally different or alien. In fact, it involves any action by which an individual or goup becomes mentally classified as "not one of us". In this study refers not only to the continuous imperial domination by the West, but also by the Francophone over the Anglophone Cameroonians. And the "other" is used here to refer to the discriminated Anglophone Cameroonians whose identity is gazed through their "Masters" Francophone Cameroonians.

Subjectivity means how someone's judgment is shaped by personal opinions and feelings instead of outside influences. This is a view that is based on emotive

and/or personal experience. Again this involves determining factors in the construction of individual identity by which, according to Althusser (1984:37), "unequal social relations are reproduced. The ruling classes not only rule, they rule as thinkers and producers of ideas so that they determine how the society sees itself (*hegemony*)". In this study the term refers to the process of creating a subject, who should be understood as the Anglophone Cameroonian.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Modern African nations have evolved as complex political structures in which unitary forms of government maintain an uncertain equilibrium in ethnically plural societies. Imagining or narrating the nation is a topical issue by many postcolonial writers and critics. In fact, this can be justified by the fact that the national state, national consciousness or nation-ness has created a lot of controversies because the boundaries or borders delimiting one national state from another had become porous and questionable. This thesis examines identity dynamics and the inherent nation building crisis in the multicultural and post-reunification Cameroonian society. These two concerns underscore what is known as the "Anglophone Problem", which is basically a problem of marginalisation and representation of the Anglophone Cameroonians in the largely Francophone-dominated society as depicted in Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's selected plays. It explores how the playwrights grapple with the "Anglophone Problem" in their dramatic imaginaries. More specifically, it analyses alternative possibilities the playwrights envision towards the resolution of the post-reunification Cameroonian complex situation. To do so, this project identifies the techniques employed by the playwrights to deconstruct the two former colonial masters' language-based identities in the post-reunification Cameroonian society. This study focuses on three plays by Bole Butake and three by Bate Besong, respectively: *Family Saga, And Palm Wine Will Flow*, *Betrothal without Libation* and *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, *Beasts of no Nation*, *Requiem for the Last Kaiser.*

1.1. Background to the Study

The question of Cameroonians' different identity markers is best understood when one locates it in the colonial and postcolonial discourses that dominated the Cameroonian literary production over the last half-century. Post-colonial, as postulated by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin (1995: 2) stands, "for both the material effects of colonisation and the huge diversity of everyday and sometimes hidden responses to it throughout the world." They see it as "the continuing process of resistance and reconstruction" in countries that were once colonies. This process normally involves "imperial suppressions and exchanges" as practiced by the colonial power. It is within this postulation that this study looks at the historical-political frictions in Cameroon out of which much of Anglophone Cameroon drama has developed since the reunification process. Indeed, the colonial rule in Cameroon is not innocent with regard to the turmoil that characterize post-colonial Cameroonian period. Most of the Anglophone literary production for example is dominated by the discourse around identity tensions, dehumanization, marginalization, and subjugation rooted in the colonial history of the country. That is why this study on postcolonial Anglophone Cameroonian drama tackles, among other issues, the question of nationhood and nation building projects as they create differences in worldview and thus undermine the unity of the country.

From a constructivist point of view, in the Cameroon society, as is the case for all societies, identities, whether of individuals or communities, are fluid rather than fixed. Nkealah (2011) underscores this when she argues that in Cameroon, for example,

people's political identities are constantly changing. As regards Cameroonians whose ethnic identity links them to the language spoken, English or French, one can be Anglophone now and Francophone the next day depending on circumstances. A person who belongs to one of the opposition parties today may switch allegiance to the ruling party tomorrow with relative ease, especially if there are promises of greater financial or material rewards or if the move will mitigate threats from ruling authorities. Awasom (2003) rightly observes that:-

> These ethnically related Anglophone and Francophone groups or kingdoms are those Cameroonians who under one circumstance are mobilised by, or act because of, deep-seated loyalties. Under other circumstances, they are mobilised by or act because of their modern acquired identities in the shape of English and French. Put differently, at one point these peoples invoke their African-ness with inspirations from their deep-seated ties. At other moments they are pure Anglophones or Francophones (p.91-92).

Thus Nkealah and Awasom hold the view that political identity, like social, sexual and ethnic identities, is not a statutory concept but one that evolves with the passage of time and the evolution of which is dictated by prevailing circumstances.

Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays and other postcolonial Anglophone Cameroonian writers' recurrent concerns are the internal tensions which are based on the former colonial masters' languages and the neo-colonial politics of division, exploitation and marginalisation. A Cameroonian today identifies himself/herself with reference to the two official languages used rather than on ethnic belonging. This has also been a concern by Schröder (2004: 152) who also observes that "in Cameroon identities are established on the basis of official language background". These two cultures and identities are the roots of what constitutes the "Anglophone Problem" today. The identities that

colonization established along English and French languages resulted in divisions that still cause challenges to the Cameroonian nation building as expressed in *The Buea Declaration* (1993):

> Within these thirty-two years, our Union Accord has been violated. We have been disenfranchised, marginalized and treated with suspicion. Our interests have been disregarded. Our participation in national life has been limited to non-essential functions. Our natural resources have been ruthlessly exploited without any benefit accruing to our territory or its people… (p. 2).

This is also the kind of marginalization of Anglophones in Cameroon that Fru (1993: 79) refers to as "historical colonialism". This, among other things, is the central concern around which Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays are built. For example Biatcha (1991) reports to the Cameroon Government about *Beasts of no Nation* in the following terms:

> It is a clear political pamphlet directed at the regime in power that is held responsible for the economic crisis through corruption, favouritism and capital flight to foreign banks. The author holds the thesis that Francophones in power are responsible for the economic crisis because they are producers of waste matter, embezzlers of public funds…The author equally affirms, and this is the central thesis (philosophy) of the play, that the Anglophones of Cameroon are marginalized and confined to undignified roles like that of "carriers of excrements (p. 11).

This is well highlighted in the play because the main characters do not have any good status and are even deprived of any professional identity cards, which they are asking for in vain. The play thus raises the anger of the Cameroon government. It is a play that appeals for rebellion and the disregard for the present authority. As Biatcha reports further, at the end of the performance, "the playwrights took the stage to publicly declare that the future of Cameroon is uncertain and that chaos can set in at any time" (11). The

"Anglophone Problem", as it shall be discussed later, is a concern of most of the plays under study with an emphasis on the global interpretation of the nature of the politics and leadership in Cameroon's decolonization. The different scenes dramatized in the plays are first of all a representation of post-reunification Cameroonian darkness and tragedy where man's efforts at self-determinism are endangered. Later on the societies are presented in a setting where power politics are in a progressive change and the masses of the people are engaged in a form of liberation. However, the worlds of Bate Besong and Bole Butake's plays are progressively presented as interplay of many forces that should be engaged in collective struggle and the advancement of material human condition in order to come to terms with the so-called "Anglophone Problem". In other words, the authors seem to agree that without the spirit of the collectivity and organized determinism, tools which could crystallize around a revolutionary individual or force in a world of dictatorship and incomprehension, there could never be a positive transformation of society.

Cameroon is a country in Sub-Saharan West-central part of Africa bounded on the north by Lake Chad; on the east by Chad and the Central African Republic; on the south by the Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea; and on the west by the Bight of Biafra (an arm of the Atlantic Ocean) and Nigeria. In 1919, following the defeat of Germany in World War One, the territory was split between the victorious allies, the British and the French. This arrangement was later confirmed by the League of Nations, and thus Cameroon was colonized by France and Britain. The French occupied four-fifths of the territory while one fifth fell under British administration. This explains why Cameroon is a bilingual country, using both French and English as official international

languages. Thus, as Konings & Nyamnjoh, (2003: 10) rightly argue, “separate colonial state formation and the development of territorial differences in languages and cultural legacies laid the spatial and historical foundation for the construction of Anglophone and Francophone identities”. We can note that the Anglophone part of the country is smaller in terms of territory and population than its Francophone counterpart, which has negatively affected the Anglophones’ community.

1.1.1. A brief socio-political presentation of Cameroon before and after independence

Map of Cameroon



Source: http://www.tffcam.org/foundation/cameroon.htm

To address effectively the issues at hand, there is a need first to understand the Cameroonian complex colonial heritage and how it has generated the current identity tensions often referred to as the "Anglophone Problem". According to the history of Cameroon, most of the Cameroonians are Christians and about 24 percent of the population adheres to traditional religions, while about 21 percent of the population is

comprised of Muslims. Muslims predominate in the north and Christians in the south. Cameroon contains about 200 ethnic groups who speak as many local languages. In general, Bantu-speaking peoples inhabit the south, and Sudanic-speaking peoples dominate in the north. Among the more dominant ethnic groups are the Bamileke, a Bantu-speaking people, and the Fulani, a Muslim people. French and English are both official languages. French dominates, however; English is confined mainly to the west. In the 1960s, after the Reunification Act, the sizable English minority pressured the government to prevent the English language and culture from being absorbed by the Francophone society.

In order to have a full understanding of the postcolonial Cameroon, a look at the history of Cameroon before and during the colonial era is important. Cameroon, like many African countries of its period, was colonized. The first Europeans to reach the coast of Cameroon were Portuguese in the 15th Century. In 1884 the German colonial power established the German protectorate *Kamerun*.

After World War I when Germany was defeated, in 1919 the Kamerun colony was split and placed under the mandate of the French and British colonial powers. While the larger part (432,000 km²) went to France, the western region (88,000 km²) came under British mandate and was annexed to the British colony of Nigeria. According to Ardener (1996: 341) the French mandate was called *Cameroun*; the British became known as the Southern and Northern Cameroons. French was established as the official language and complemented the many local languages and dialects. The British applied a system of

indirect rule in their mandate territory, administering the population through native authority areas.

In 1960 French Cameroon attained independence. As we can read from Takougang and Krieger (1998: 47-58), the British mandate continued until 1961 and ended in a plebiscite organised by the United Nations in which the population of British Cameroon was given the option to choose between integration with the Federation of Nigeria and reunification with Cameroon. While the northern region opted for integration with Nigeria, the southern part voted for joining the Republic of Cameroon. Cameroon was then turned into a Federal Republic with distinct administrative and legal frameworks in the Anglophone and Francophone parts.

According to Takougang and Krieger (1998), Ahmadou Ahidjo became the president and his vision of Cameroon was not one of a federal but unitary state in which emphasis was laid on nation-building and the cultivation of a single national identity. In 1972 Ahidjo abolished Cameroon's federal constitution and renamed the country the United Republic of Cameroon. He administratively divided the Anglophone part, creating the South West and North West provinces, while Francophone Cameroon comprised five administrative units. In promoting an ideology of national unity, the above mentioned critics continue, Ahidjo pursued a strategy of ethnic and regional balance and recruited representatives of all areas and population groups into his political elite. Local organisations of an ethnic, regional or confessional nature were branded as politically dangerous and actively suppressed. Ahidjo was also opposed to the idea of a multi-party system and transformed

Cameroon into a single party state. In 1966 he established the Cameroon National Union (CNU) as the country's sole and ruling party with himself as president.

In 1982 Ahidjo resigned from the post of president and was succeeded by Paul Biya, his close collaborator and a member of the Beti ethnic group of southern Cameroon. The early years of Biya's rule were characterised by his efforts to dissociate himself from his predecessor. However, Biya largely sustained Ahidjo's ideal of a unitary state, but promised a more tolerant and democratic regime (Takougang & Krieger 1998: 63). As an expression of his vision of a democratic society, he renamed the state party the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) and assigned it the motto 'Union, Progress and Democracy'. In 1984 he changed the name of Cameroon from the United Republic to the Republic of Cameroon. He increased the number of provinces from seven to ten (two Anglophone and eight Francophone provinces) and considerably expanded the country's political and administrative apparatus. Similar to his predecessor, Biya stressed national unity over regional, ethnic or religious factionalism. However, by promoting the enrolment of southern Cameroonians, mostly members of his own ethnic group, he encouraged ethnic favouritism and resentment (Takougang & Krieger 1998: 93).

During the 1990s, Cameroon experienced some of the most eventful and challenging period of democratic changes and transformations. There happened to be the introduction of democratic freedoms and, at the same time, the intensification of social insecurity and economic hardship. The country's political liberalisation included a number of aspects, such as the rise of multiparty system and the proliferation of the private press in the early 1990s. The subsequent years were characterised by the politics of belonging that fostered

the emergence of regional and ethnic elite associations as political pressure groups. For many Cameroonians, however, the country's political transition has been a disappointment, and the initial enthusiasm has been replaced by disillusionment and cynicism. Ambe (2004b) underscores this when he argues that:-

> Since independence in Cameroon, there has been a deliberate and systematic ploy (some may disagree) by successive neocolonial governments and their exploitative partnerships to completely eclipse the Anglophone reality in Cameroon, and have the country as a French-speaking state, though the country's constitution boldly engraves her bicultural and bilingual status (p.2).

Indeed, upon reunification, Cameroonian constitution recognised the bicultural and bilingual status of the country. However, the two successive regimes made deliberate changes and modifications of this most powerful instrument to suite partisan interests. There was thus a consolidation of a monolithic form of governance that favoured the Francophone majority. Anglophone Camerooon history was relegated to the back position. Anglophone Cameroon drama therefore comes across as another voice in the battle for political and economic reforms/liberties or another voice that demands a radical transformation of the Cameroonian society.

Before the 1972 Referendum for a Unitary State, the two Cameroons were existing as federated states, with two educational systems, two administrative and legal systems. And, to this day, the vast majority of the Cameroonian populace, in spite of their bounteous resources, find themselves caught up under the banner of National Unity and Integration, totally alienated from the production process in their country. While, for example, it is true that the vast wealth of the country (Timber and Petroleum) comes from the English-speaking parts, it is paradoxically also true that the roads and infrastructure of

this area suffer an almost complete neglect. To use the graphic description of Besong (1993), the people from this area have been:

> …subjected to perpetual mental and psychological servitude, they are the storybook victims of a cultural holocaust...an embattled people caught in the terrifying coils of a world beyond their comprehension...the product of an age of profound discontent...profoundly afflicted by cataclysmic changes and traumas... hollow men without speech, fighting against titanic odds (p.16).

We recall that, of all imperialist forces in contemporary Cameroon, it is the French that had, and still is clearly visible on the socio-economic and political landscape; and supports directly the various dictatorships. Gobata (1996:66) writes that "Cameroon is overwhelmingly composed of little Frenchmen, pupils of French mentors who believe that without the French they are finished". At the beginning of the democratic struggle in Cameroon in the early 1990s, French politicians and the so called "Strategists for African Affairs" declared that it was improbable and impossible for France to support an English-speaking Cameroonian as president, if that came to pass. Today, it is an open bitter political reality in Cameroon that English-speaking Cameroonians do not get appointed to head strategic ministries (such as Finance, Education, Interior, Defense, Justice) and/or corporations in charge of Petroleum, Energy and Water. Instead, they are appointed, in most cases, only as assistants to their French-speaking "compatriots" who make and take all decisions. This is the major concern of Bate Besong's selected plays. In the same line of utter lamentations Fru (1993) has condensed all these recollections in the following description:

> It is by now fairly obvious that although the Francophones and Anglophones of this nation live side by side, with far-fetched national policies of integration, the plight of the Anglophone Cameroonian is peculiar to his group. Today, the fate of the Anglophone Cameroonian is hardly different from that of Africans when the so called Colonial masters were openly in control. Because of his minority status, the Anglophone is a second class citizen who is watched, always suspected. He is one on whom strange policies and superficial gibberish which preach the "national good", but are indeed meant to alienate him from his heritage, are imposed (p.85).

The above excerpt illustrates how Anglopones in the union are not given their position as full citizens. As Fru reiterates, Anglophone Cameroonians, earlier colonized by the white man, are once again victims of "colonization" but, this time, his colonizer is his former partner with whom he served, and were together tormented and exploited by the colonialist. Therefore, the Anglophone sees himself today in a social, political and cultural union in which he is not comfortable. As shall be demonstrated in the course of this discussion, the post-reunification Cameroonian leaders were not above their tasks to unite the people and the violation of democratic principles worsened the situation.

1.1.2. A History of Anglophone Cameroonian Literature

As New Historicists opine, a study of art and ideology in any publication, cannot be separated from the contexts which gave that specific literature its initial and current imperatives. Cameroon Anglophone literature can therefore be well understood if one places it in dialogue with the undercurrents that define and produce it. First and foremost it is important to remind oneself of the "paucity" of the Anglophone literary production at national and international levels. In fact if one compares the literary production of

Francophone Cameroonian literature with that of its counterpart Anglophone, there is paucity of Anglophone literary production and appreciation. Anglophone Cameroon literature emerges out of the above historical development of Cameroon as a federated and then reunited country and later on as a republican country. Ako (2009: 1) strongly mentions that "Cameroonians writings in English are, to a large extent, still unknown both within and outside of their national territory" (1). And according to Stephen (1987: 500), "hangovers from colonial policies do much to explain the imbalance between Francophone and Anglophone literary productivity". According to Stephen, this "paucity" can be justified by the fact that "the French, with their assimilation policy in education; taught literature, not just language, in their schools, whereas the English taught only language and for purely utilitarian purposes" (501). However, for the emblematic author Bate Besong in an interview accorded to Bernard Fondio, Anglophone Cameroonian literature is "a literature which is in search of its imprint and which is at the same time piercing and incisive, tender and soothing, and controversial" (1). However, Stephen (1983) provides a somewhat different apt account of Cameroon Anglophone Literature:

> Ask any expert on "neo-African" literature about Anglophone Cameroon literature and you may get one or two names? Dipoko, Maimo, Oyono-"Mbia, or perhaps Fonlon, if the essay is considered as literature. Ask any Anglophone Cameroon writer who his or her colleagues are and the list will be expanded by two or three names, with the usual quick qualification, "but they aren't published." In recent years considerable commentary in the Cameroon English language newspapers would lead one to assume, erroneously, that Anglophone Cameroonians have almost no writers in their midst. Academic accounts in periodicals are few and contradictory (p.1).

Anglophone Cameroon literature, even though it is struggling to attain its momentum of recognition, is still suffering from not being published at a larger scale. This can be explained again by the historical evolution of Cameroon as a republic. It is important to note that the play texts under study suffer from the same problems of being available locally (Cameroon publishing houses) or even outside. It was not easy for me to access copies of the texts. Thankfully, I was assisted by my contacts— some senior lecturers and professors in Anglophone Cameroonian universities like Buea and Bamenda.

However, what many scholars would still like to know is how one should designate this literature: Cameroon English-speaking literature, Cameroon literature of English expression, Cameroon Anglophone writing, or what? Nkealah (2011) has somehow the same questions. For her:

> ...the expression "Cameroon literature" raises a number of questions. Does Cameroon literature presuppose a literature of French expression? What about writing by English-speaking Cameroonians? Can this literature be adequately recognized in a country that is predominantly French? To what extent does literature by French-speaking Cameroonians mirror the experiences of English-speaking Cameroonians? (p.13)

Contemporary Anglophone Cameroon Literature is a creative and imaginative reflection of the contradiction of the rhetoric behind the reunification politics. It is a literature that involves a paradigm shift since it must convey the totality of (Anglophone Cameroon) experience; thereby giving voice to the traumatic dislocation that the post-reunification disequilibrium engendered. That is why the contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian writers use "bold statements" (3) as Bate Besong emphatically postulates in the interview with Bernard Fondio.

Anglophone Cameroonian writers are mainly concerned with the grievances of the Anglophone Cameroonian population for which they are spokespersons. According to Aseh's (2006) metaphor, they write

> ...to search for a response to the specific question as to why the house was never built, [they] had to revisit the original Cameroon idea and make a critical interrogation of the various historical processes, going beyond the builders to re-evaluate the intentions of the designers and supervisors (p.2).

The "builders" Aseh refers to are the Francophone Cameroonians who have led the country since reunification: Ahmadou Ahidjo from 1961 to 1982 and Paul Biya ever since then. The "designers and supervisors" that the critic refers to are the former French colonial masters who masterminded and supported at all cost the reunification process. The writers of this era never cease to hide their anger against this domination or discrimination. One only needs to see the sizzling ire in some Anglophone titles to measure the depth of feeling against continued Francophone monopoly of leadership: *The Swamps, Born to Rule, What God has put Asunder, Beasts of No Nation, Requiem for the Last Kaiser, On Their Knees, People Be Not Fooled, Disgrace, Family Saga,* to name but a few. Furthermore Stephen (1987) makes reference to two statements by Bernard Fonlon that describe this situation most emphatically. This is found in "Will We Make or Mar" published in *Abbia* of March 1964:

> unless the East Cameroun Francophone leader in whose hands cultural initiative lies, is prepared to share this authority with his brother from West of the Mungo [Anglophone], unless he is prepared to make the giant effort necessary to break loose from the strait-jacket of his French education, unless he will show proof of his intellectual probity and admit candidly that there are things in the Anglo-Saxon way of life that can do his country good, there is little chance of survival, neither for English influence, nor even for African values in the Federal Republic of Cameroon (p.499)

The cultural and literary production and consumption in Francophone and Anglophone parts of the country are not on equal considerations. As it comes clearly from the above excerpt, there is fear that the cultural and linguistic heritages on the part of the Anglophone Cameroon could be swept away by the privileged Francophone elite.

1.1.3. The Anglophone Problem

There is general agreement that the roots of the "Anglophone Problem" may be traced as back as to the partitioning of the erstwhile German Kamerun Protectorate after World War I into British and French mandate/trust territories. The subsequent development of territorial differences in language and cultural legacy laid the historical foundation for the construction of Anglophone and Francophone identities. An even more important factor was the form of state which the Francophone majority more or less imposed upon the Anglophone minority during the constitutional negotiations for a reunified Cameroon. Commenting on this historical development of Cameroon's official term of reference, the Anglophone critic Alobwed'Epie (1993: 51) notes that the change from a federal to a unitary government is what led to the introduction of the words "Anglophone" and "Francophone" as a means of identifying the two language groups of people who formed the United Republic. Furthermore, according to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003):

> The root of this problem may be traced back to 1961 when the political elites of two territories with different colonial legacies— one French and the other British— agreed on the formation of a federal state. Contrary to expectations, this did not provide for the equal partnership of both parties, let alone for the preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of each, but turned out to be merely a transitory phase to the total integration of the Anglophone region into a strongly centralised, unitary state. Gradually, this created an Anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being 'marginalised', 'exploited', and 'assimilated' by the francophone-dominated state, and even by the Francophone population as a whole (p.2).

The critics' argument is that in the course of the socio-historical development of Cameroon, two unequal and culturally different parts of the same country were put together to form a federal state and later on as one republic—La République du Cameroon. This created unequal share and integration in terms of cultural and political heritages. This politics of 'marginalisation', 'exploitation', and 'assimilation' of Anglophones by the francophone-dominated state continued until the 1990s when some Anglophone elites started to claim for self-determination and autonomy. They attempted to get international recognition of their fate but to no avail. The autocratic governments that succeeded each other and the transformation of the former Federal Republic into first The United Republic of Cameroon (by Ahidjo) and later on into La République du Cameroon (By Biya) did not favour this campaign and instead fortified measures and strategies that had to keep a neo-colonial domination and power fortified. Ngoh (2001: 365) reports that the Francophone elite succeeded "to create divisions among the English-speaking elite, to reward some allies with important positions in the state apparatus previously reserved for Francophones and to repress all actions designed to change the status of the Southern Cameroons". This created Anglophone consciousness: the feeling of being recolonized and marginalized in all spheres of public life, thus becoming second-class citizens in their own country. Therefore, Anglophone Cameroonians' grievances are numerous in the political, economic and cultural domains.

The 1961 plebiscite organized by the UN annexed the South West to East Cameroon, according to Konnings & Nyamnjoh (1997), created a territorial imbalance and strengthened Anglophone marginalization. Bate Besong in the same interview with Bernard Fondio mentions that:

> In Cameroon, the neo-colonial power structure dates back to Foumban and you cannot understand its nature without a firm grasp of how the Plebiscite that led to the Re- Unification of the "... two, equal unifying parts", evolved. Our present culture of "national integration" has been deliberately handed down by the Quai d'Orsay to ensure our annihilation. The Gaullists installed a puppet ruling class within the fledgeling francophone and Anglophone bourgeoisie, for the continuous exploitation of Cameroon. This has left unsalutary pockmarks on the threshold of our history. Exploitation and control of production is being done for the interest of these askari-elite in collusion with its overseas overseers. The struggle for national liberation has therefore become more imperative, particularly, on the cultural front. Derek Walcott wrote somewhere that "A writer dies inside when he betrays, like a paid spy, the rhythms of his people (p. 209).

From this brief account, one can begin to see why the Anglophones developed grievances against the Francophone leadership as was mentioned earlier. In the real sense, when talking of the Anglophones resentment against the Francophones, one does not mean the cordial relations between the two groups of people, but the real problem was a constitutional one. Bate Besong's claims here sound rather different from what seems to be the propounded reasons behind the sufferings of the Anglophone Cameroonians in the hands of the Francophones. According to Besong, the neo-colonial "puppet ruling class" that is responsible of the Anglophones' marginalization is composed of "askari-elite" from both the "Francophone and Anglophone bourgeoisie". During the negotiation process, it is also reported that some Anglophone association leaders were not above their competences to lead their cause to the desired destiny. Konings & Nyamnjoh (1997: 209) argue that "John Ngu Foncha, the Prime Minister of Southern Cameroon and leader of the Anglophone delegation, had proposed a loose form of federalism but was eventually forced to accept a highly centralised system of government and administration". George Ngwane (1994) accuses the Southern Cameroons delegation to have arrived at the negotiation venue while still divided over what form of government they really wanted.

As such, the proposals of Bamenda were simply ignored and President Ahidjo presented his own document, which some members saw for the first time on the morning of the opening ceremony.

Thus, the process of reunification was seen as a strategy by the Francophones to "colonise" the Anglophones. This then fuelled tensions between the two groups. Of recent, the conflict has escalated, with Anglophone Cameroon threatening to break away and form an independent Southern Cameroon republic. In spite of the repressive techniques used by the ruling government to quell the secession, the Southern Cameroon elites have maintained their stance to gain victory by using "the force of argument and not the argument of force" (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003: 202). Such is the argument Butake presents in one of his plays entitled *Family Saga* which, among others, is the subject of this study. Even though the dream for national unity pose serious problems to most newly independent African states, the case of Cameroon is very special and the challenges are enormous, considering the fact that two territories inherited from French and British colonial rule, with different cultural heritage, linguistic differences and different levels of economic development need to be merged and form a single unitary hetero-ethnic nation.

All in all, just as scholars have disagreed over the concept of Anglophone in Cameroon, they also hold various and varying opinions over the "Anglophone Problem". Some Anglophone and Francophone elites claim that there is nothing like the Anglophone problem. Some narrow it down to the problem of ethnic minorities because Anglophones are in only two of the ten administrative regions of Cameroon with less than 30 percent of

the population. Again, even those who claim to recognize the existence of the problem, differ in their conceptualization of it. For instance, the Anglophone problem according to Ngoh (2004: 214) is "broadly speaking, the non-participation of Anglophones, on an equal basis with Francophones, in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the nation". This definition is grossly inadequate because from the definition above, the Anglophone problem is cultural, ethnic, regional and even nationalist. And Nyamnjoh & Koning (1997: 207) hold that the problem is the self-perception of the former West Cameroonian as a distinctive community defined by differences in official language and inherited colonial traditions of education, law and public administration. These critics advance the idea that the "Anglophone Problem" is the problem of a people in search of their identity—an identity blurred by constitutional and political reforms that departed from the spirit of the 1961 federal constitution. The Anglophone problem is therefore understood in this study as the struggle by the ethnic Anglophones (former Southern Cameroon Anglophones) to rescue their cultural identity threatened by the assimilationist policies of the majority Francophones. As it shall be demonstrated in the course of this research, the construction of new ethnic identities and persistent refusals by the regime to negotiate with Anglophones about either a return to the federal system or peaceful succession (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2000) are the various strategies deployed by the successive regimes to thwart Anglophone efforts at reconstructing their identity.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Anglophone-Francophone differences in postcolonial Cameroon pose serious nation-building crises. The "Anglophone Problem" is both a problem of identity and marginalisation of Anglophone Cameroonians at the hands of the Francophone

Cameroonians after reunification. Cameroonians are nowadays divided around two identities that have been formed from the two former colonial masters' legacies. Yet, Cameroon has been independent for more than half a century. The prevailing form of domination of the colonial over the pre-colonial legacies implies a form of neo-imperialism. The emergence of an "Anglophone Problem" in Anglophone Cameroonian drama has imposed dramatic possibilities to reimagine the post-colonial Cameroonian nation. Bole Butake and Bate Besong employ a number of dramatic strategies that enable the recreation of a Cameroonian "imagined political community" in different ways. This study therefore focuses on the "Anglophone Problem" in post-reunification Cameroon as presented in the dramatic imaginaries of Bole Butake and Bate Besong. It traces the writers' aesthetic engagement to intervene, through drama, in the identity and nation building crises. In other words, I set out to examine the "Anglophone Problem" vis-à-vis Butake's and Besong's imagination of the Cameroonian nation and how they deploy textual structures to represent the post-reunification Cameroon nation. In addition this study attempts to analyse how the playwrights envision alternative solutions to the "Anglophone Problem" and how their dramatic structuring affects their aesthetic expression.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study has four objectives:

1. To interrogate what, in Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's dramatic imaginaries, the "Anglophone Problem" means and why it is problematic.
2. To examine how, in the selected plays, divisions and tensions on the basis of the colonial languages help foster the former colonial masters' imperialism.

3. To demonstrate the artistic strategies used by the playwrights to grapple with the "Anglophone Problem".
4. To investigate the alternative strategies and solutions envisioned to build a post-reunification Cameroonian nation in the two playwrights' dramatic forms.

1.4. Research Questions

The important issues that are raised concern:

1. What is, in Butake's and Besong's selected plays, the "Anglophone problem" and how do they grapple with it?
2. In what sense does the "Anglophone Problem" influence a particular deployment of the dramatic and stylistic form and structure?
3. What are the elements of drama that enable it to participate in the project of post-reunification Cameroonian nation building?
4. Is there any progressive, different or similar vision of the Cameroon nation in subverting potentials and challenging dominant constructions of identities across the selected plays?

1.5. Research Assumptions

This thesis evolves on the premises that, in the plays under study, the "Anglophone Problem" is a complex problem of identity and marginalisation. I also contend that in imagining a post-reunification Cameroonian nation the playwrights adopt different strategies that enable a stylistic development of the poetics of reconciliation or the aesthetics of resistance and confrontation. I then synthesize that the tensions and anxieties among Cameroonians is an expression of the continuing western imperial domination

embedded in the former colonial masters' languages. Thus, even if English and French colonialism only lasted 45 years and that Cameroon has been independent longer than that, the superimposed identities still constitute the Anglophone-Francophone division. This study finally posits that, in the selected plays, subjectivity built on colonialism is as strong as or stronger than subjectivity built on the pre-colonial identities.

1.6. Significance of the Study

Modern African states have evolved as complex political structures in which unitary forms of government maintain an uncertain equilibrium in ethnically plural societies. This thesis analyses this complexity as it appears in the plays of Bole Butake and Bate Besong. These playwrights more often than not engage with the "Anglophone Problem" in the Cameroonian nation, a problem of identity and marginalisation. Investigating the paradoxes of nation and nation-states and how they are represented in literary works is therefore particularly important today since national governments in many parts of the world are facing challenges in adopting more equitable forms of rule to hold together their ethnically diverse and deeply divided societies together. While it is generally argued that such divided societies need a democratic regime that stresses consensus instead of opposition, that includes instead of excludes, it is striking that in most African countries, authoritarian regimes do not handle the notion of nation properly. More importantly, however, if one makes an examination of the issue of ethnicity in the world, it would be undoubtedly true that Africa has some of the most fragmented societies in the world and its inhabitants most of which constitute a large proportion of national minorities. To this effect, there has always been a big challenge to the question of nation building in such diverse societies. For example in post-reunification Cameroon Anglophone minorities

have their own theoretical and practical demands that are specific to them such as self-determination (regional autonomy). It is also important to note that not only the idea of self-determination is important to the marginalized Anglophone group within Cameroon nation-state; it also "serves as the prerequisite for achieving positive human conditions for decent life and self-fulfillment" (Jeong, 2000:223).

The post-colonial Cameroonian discourses and literary productions have recently been marked by protest against the societal internal tensions and divisions and the subsequent forms of totalitarianism, imperialism, and human rights violation politics. The selected plays are very important in this study insofar as they function as theatre that calls for the collective re-examination of the post-reunification Cameroonian vices and perhaps an equal renunciation of those vices for a collective reconstruction. This study is important since the problem it grapples with needs to be investigated from many different angles. In so doing, this study demonstrates the role of theatre/drama as an intervention tool that can be used to sensitize the masses and mediate the ethnic tensions in Cameroon.

I settled to study plays from Cameroon for two reasons: On the one hand, Cameroon is interesting to investigate because of its peculiarities that distinguish it from other post-colonial African countries. In effect, Cameroon is the only African country where both English and French are used as official languages. It is also the only African country that passed in the hands of three colonial masters (Germany, France and Britain) during the colonial encounter with Europe. Thus, one of the most salient aspects of interest in this study is Cameroon's colonial heritage, that is, its two official languages—French and

English and the inherent tensions and divisions. These two accidental languages harbour two occidental cultures (English and French). More interestingly (and surprisingly) Cameroonians who speak these two "supra"- languages, despite the fact that there are 286 indigenous languages, are divided only in two sub-identities, two personalities, and two "supra"-cultures (Anglo-Saxon and French) attributable to the two colonial languages. Thus this study contributes first in understanding how over the last decades, the "Anglophone Problem" has influenced a particular dramatic form and structure that can be helpful to resolve the identity tensions in Cameroon.

Therefore, like Canada and Belgium, Cameroon is important to investigate because of its bicultural specificities that result from the two official languages. Second, a close analysis of the plays by Butake and Besong reminds us that behind these divisions and tensions there are untenable stereotypes that need to be de-mystified in order to tighten the knot that put Cameroonians together as a people.

On the other hand, while in other African societies like the neighbouring Nigeria, Chad, Gabon and the Central African Republic (C.A.R) identities are established with respect to the local languages spoken, religions practiced; the two major Cameroonian identities are constructed according to the two official colonial languages, which, as I perceive it, is the continuing western imperialism embedded in the western languages (French and English). So, this study is a continuation of the interminable debate on the neo-colonialism and imperialism.

One may also ask "why the two writers?" Butake and Besong are the most amblematic figures of the Anglophone Cameroonian literary production whose works engage with the issues at hand most vividly. Indeed, the plays that constitute the corpus of this study cover up a relatively long period of the post-reunification Cameroon. Finally, my reading of Bate Besong and Bole Butake's plays reminds me of Ambe's view (2007: 190) that "where human efforts and actions are rendered impotent or made to remain at that dangerously stagnant state...there is necessity for the rebuilding of a new functional society— from decadence to growth, immobility to mutability, trauma to wholeness and communion— it is necessary to meet, discuss, re-examine self, plan and collectively execute strategies". As the "Anglophone Problem" dominated the literary, political, media debates of the last three decades in Cameroon, Butake's and Besong's plays contributed in providing alternatives to handle it.

Finally, one may want to know why the above mentioned justification has to be dealt with through drama. Or simply put, why drama? The answers to this crucial question are many and have to be understood from a multifaceted perspective. In effect, I perceive both Butake and Besong as popular playwrights. And all forms of popular drama share the objective of using drama to educate and/or empower people who might not ordinarily have access to so-called elite forms of theatre. Oga (1994) argues that:

> …popular theatre has the potential to engage people in exploring issues that are important to them, to challenge the status quo and to encourage an analysis of the barriers to change and development, while operating from within a cultural matrix based in people's reality and providing a powerful process of cultural validation (p.84).

Thus, one of the strengths of theatre/drama is its ability to portray ideas and conflicting opinions in a relatively straightforward fashion. Theatre, like all literature genres, can

present a microcosm of the world by having different characters represent different and conflicting positions. This personalizes, and often clarifies, the "Anglophone Problem" debate in the post-reunification Cameroon.

1.7. Scope and Limitations of the Study

This thesis focuses on two Cameroonian dramatists. Although their writings include novels, short stories, and poems; the present study examined six plays. It analysed three plays by Bole Butake, nmely *Family Saga, And Palm Wine will Flow* and *Betrothal without Libation* and *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, *Beasts of no Nation*, and three by Bate Besong, namely *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*. Even if the playwrights have got many plays on their records, the selection of these particular plays was motivated by two criteria: First, I selected those ones that address closely the issues at hand: The "Anglophone Problem" and the relevant dramatic possibilities to provide alternative solutions. The other criteria are the period when they were produced: late 1980s to now. In fact, the 1990s appears to be the most interesting period when demands from Anglophone Cameroon were hot. Even if other tenets were referred to, I read the selected plays within Benedict Anderson's definition of nation as an "imagined political community", Brecht's notion of the V-effect, Augusto Boal's notion of "Forum Theatre" and Richards David's ideas on "Framing Identities". My central concern was the way the playwrights grapple with the "Anglophone Problem" to address the socio-political situation of Cameroon after independence and the re-unification. The study considered the Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians as two antagonistic "ethnic" groups whose relations are dramatised in the plays under this study. The period that was

considered is that of after the reunification, even though, for clarity, references to the previous decades were made.

1.8. Review of Related Literature

Many critics have been interested in the literary interpretation and/or representation of the nation and state in post-colonial Africa. A number of novelists, poets and playwrights have produced a good deal of works to represent the problems of nation building from many different perspectives. In this section I review what has been written in relation to the "Anglophone Problem" in the post-reunification Cameroon. Finally, I account for works that have so far been conducted on Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays. It is important here to mention that Cameroon Anglophone drama is fundamentally protest in nature and deals with questions of identities, injustices and deprivations of a people whose complex culture, history and politics have been so badly abused.

Simatei (2001) argues that politicians, historians and writers discuss and narrate the Nation controversially. Simatei envisages the plurality of perspectives by analysing the works of indigenous African writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Leonard Kibera, David Rubadiri, Peter Nazareth and M.G. Vassanji. Talking about the role of the novelistic artform in narrating the nation, Simatei (2001) further argues that:

> ...unlike the European experience where the novel served the ideological interests of the middles classes, the literary imagination in Africa and in the Third World in general, tends to subvert rather than affirm the ideological interests of the African ruling elite, despite the sometimes elitist tendencies of the novel itself as a genre or the obvious paradox that emanates from the writer's own elitist and middle class status in Africa (p.20).

As Simatei rightly puts it, there is a close relationship between the writer's status and the novelistic imagination of what a post-independence African nation is or should be. Therefore African literary imagination and the nation building project relate more or less on the colonial encounter between Africa and Europe, and later on with the neo-colonial realities. The post-independence Cameroonian nation-state is being haunted by the contradictions that result from the colonial legacies and the post-reunification elitist greed for power. This study continues Simatei's debate on the question of nation building, but now with focus on the Anglophone Cameroonian dramatic form. Drama also, as a literary genre that had been there in Africa before the novel, has been used to imagine and represent nations.

The question of nation building in post-colonial African writings is as complex as the era itself. During the era of independence, the African novel has abandoned the project of nationalism in so far as the latter has been reformulated to justify the subjugation of the people to the terror of the state. Henceforth, what the state defines as the nation is regarded as nothing but, to quote Pease (1997:3) "an ideological mystification of state power". The change of literary mission of the novel has also been the concern of Aizernberg (1990) who notes that:

> ...the narrative of liberation that saw as its task the realisation of the truths of the nation in the face of colonialist disfigurement has given way to narrative that challenges the nation and the identity wrought by independence. The novel now combats the very thing it once sought to constitute (p.80).

The post-colonial African writer has engaged the question of nation-state in a paradigmatic shift that echoes Fanon's (1981) theoretical reference. According to him,

the African elite had no intention to alter the state in any radical form since, as a class, it was content with the "unfair advantages" it had inherited from the colonial state. This is what pushed many a post-colonial writer to change of pen and now write back to the new group of African elites in a new novelistic project that combats the "the very thing it once sought to constitute". Fanon further argues that this group "has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists prosaically, of being the transmission between the nation and capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism" (122). The post-reunification Cameroonian nation building crisis is, indeed, a camouflaged neo-imperial domination of the former colonial masters. In fact, the continuing domination of the superimposed colonial identities (English and French) that form the basis of the "Anglophone Problem" can also be partly explained as the failure of the nationalist politician to work beyond the indigenisation of the Cameroonian colonial state.

The aspects of interethnic relations and identity politics in northwest Cameroon (which is basically the site where the "Anglophone Problem" is prominent); Michaela (2006) undertakes a comprensive investigation on members of three ethnic groups, namely Grassfielders, Mbororo, and Hausa, their performances and discourses of difference, and their activities across ethnic boundaries. She examines the performative and discursive sides of ethnicity, and takes a historical and gender-sensitive approach. The focus is on. She examines the correlation of emic and etic models of ethnicity, and argues that all three groups have different but coexisting conceptions of their ethnic identity, which provide the socio-cultural frameworks for their interaction with each other and the state. Moreover, differences in group size, economic power, and involvement in international

networks account for divergent strategies of political representation among the three groups. Michaela's (2006) ethnographic thesis' findings indicate that state and group representatives play a crucial role in the mediation of conflict, and at times are its inadvertent cause. While Michaela's study draws from field work data, mine is on the same Cameroonian society but bases arguments on literary works to explore the playwrights' engagement with the "Anglophone Problem", which is also an ethnic-identity portrayal.

The plays that consititute the corpus of this study have also been an object of interest for some critics. Odhiambo and Nkealah (2008) read Bole Butake's play *Family Saga* as a conscious artistic intervention, written to mediate the conflict between the English-speaking Cameroonians and their French-speaking counterparts. The critics identify and analyse the strategies of applied theatre deployed by Butake to catalyse the process of expiation and amelioration that are a requisite for meaningful reconciliation. To engage with the protagonists' discovery of their true identities and from a comparative perspective, this study distances from Odhiambo and Nkealah's in that this one looks, from a comparative perspective, for dramatic possibilities in which Butake and Besong engage with the "Anglophone Problem" in order to provide alternative solutions to the nation building crisis.

On her side and using the tenets of the feminist framework to analyse Bole Butake's selected texts Nkealah (2011) engages with the ways in which the Anglophone Cameroonian playwright interprets questions of gender, sex and female power. Her analysis focuses on how women construct power in the imaginary worlds of Butake's

writings and how, in turn, power is constructed through them. Nkealah's findings prove that Cameroon is facing gender crisis as an identity marker and that this hampers the fulfilment of the post-reunification project as portrayed by Butake. Nkealah is concerned with gender issues in Butake's plays; my study investigates the question of the "Anglophone Problem" which is also an identity question in the post-reunification Cameroon. In fact, my focus is the tensions and anxieties rooted in the former colonial masters' languages whereby the playwrights' imagined Cameroonian nation is possible if only the ethnic divisions are mediated through dialogue and collective commitment.

In an earlier article, Odhiambo (2009a) interrogates the way power relations and their display result in an effective agency of the women, how women end up creating a strong presence in the re-arranging and re-ordering of power relations. Odhiambo reads Butake's plays from a feminist approach and concludes that the women tend to subvert patriarchal power structures in such transitory moments and spaces. While women's acts and reactions are more liberating, Odhiambo reaffirms, men have been made impotent as a result of power being concentrated in the body of one person—the ruler. My argument in this thesis is however that Butake, like Besong, use dramatic strategies to empower the oppressed in order to find solutions to the everyday sufferings. Both the men and women in the plays have the same problem: oppression; and the playwrights concern is to use drama to enable their vision of a Cameroonian society free of identity crisis to be realized.

In another paper on the role of drama/theatre (in the context of Anglophone Cameroon), Odhiambo (2011) argues that theatre as an apparatus of change has for a long time

privileged the transformation of the oppressed people by inciting their conscience and consciousness. For him theatre/drama as a tool of intervention should be framed in such a way that it provides possibilities for the oppressor to change instead of acting as an imaginary that only privileges the vanquishing of the oppressor. Odhiambo's article is useful to my study because, though my reading of the plays is not necessarily from the perspectives of the Theatre of the Oppressor; my argument is also that Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's dramatic possibilities enable the oppressor to change. To do so, I subject my analysis to eclectic postcolonial theories to bring out the images of the "subaltern" (the Anglophone in this case) and how the playwrights lend him a voice to speak out the unspeakable injustices and abuses. Like Odhiambo then, this study shows that, through drama as "a substantive revolutionary art", just to borrow from Mao-Tse Tung, (1975: 81), the playwrights empower the masses with enthusiasm and impel them to unite and struggle to transform their environment to revolutionize the peoples' struggle against the ethnic division undercurrents.

Form structural, linguistic and fucntional perspectives, and using the tenets of the New historicism literary theory and functional theory of language, Seino (2013) sets out to validate the hypothesis that the use of Bible passages in *Beasts of No Nation* makes the play a metaphor of the Cameroonian situation. In fact she seeks to show how Bate Besong presents his case of protest in a derailed society using biblical passages. Her study knits together context, use and subject matter to bring out those elements that appeal for protest against oppression. Seino's work is important for this study in that it shows how Besong turns history to fiction, so as to create change in the society. She concludes that where there is oppression, the language of the oppressed faction will

obviously be the language of revolt in their writings. This defines the register used by Bate Besong in *Beasts of No Nation,* since the context in which he is writing determines the linguistic choices he makes. This research benefits from Agwa's analysis of Besong's *Beasts of No Nation* and extends it to the other plays in order to further investigate how the characters in the subsequent plays are committed to active revolution.

On of the plays by Bole Butake entitled *The Rape of Michelle* has also attracted the attention of his contemporary Besong (2004). The latter argues that this play could be described in Brechtian terms as bourgeois theatre method. According to Besong, this play is an exploration of the post-independence trauma at both the social and individual levels where irony and satire as major dramatic techniques have been used to indict the Cameroonian situation. Besong's article concludes that the hero, being only too aware of his ineffectiveness, prefers withdrawal rather than action. He does not seem to have any sense of direction that would lead him to any recognizable mode of action. Therefore the protagonist has shown a total lack of awareness on the boomerang effects of his actions and can be considered as the post-colonial African intellectual who, indirectly promote the negative ethnicity that has overwhelmed the continent. This stand by Besong illuminates my research in that it serves as a background study that helps to engage with irony and satire as dramatic techniques in other plays by Butake and Besong himself and show rather that the playwrights' protagonists are caught up in a progressive active development to change their plight.

From a triple literary approaches: Marxist, Sociological and Formalistic approaches to literary criticism Ngongkum (*nd*) underscore the centrality of *Beasts of No Nation* and

Lake God in the evolution of Bate Besong and Bole Butake as dramatists of revolt. Ngongkum proclaims that the playwrights do not only realistically and critically capture post-colonial Cameroon in its political, social and spiritual essence but, actually lay the basis of a future of hopes and possibilities through the actions of the oppressed in these plays. She concludes by saying that the dramatists demonstrate that the oppression suffered by the masses because of false ideas and ideologies can be eliminated if the people are willing to take the necessary steps to do so. Therefore, Ngongkum observes, drama can be seen as a powerful weapon in moving people to dismantle oligarchies in contemporary Africa. What the post-reunification Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights do is that they use everyday phenomena such as human sufferings, poverty, oppression and exploitation of man by man to create pieces of work which typify these inherent contradictions and struggles of people. Ngongkum's work is important but is supplemented by mine in reading the playwrights' engagement with the "Anglophone Problem" by means of "Forum Theatre" to create a liminal space where the oppressed discuss about their sufferings, oppression and exploitation.

Again Odhiambo (2009b) reflects on the project of the nation and nation-ness in postcolonial Africa with specific attention to the two plays by the Anglophone Cameroonian playwright Bole Butake. Even if in his paper Odhiambo argues that in Butake's dramatic imaginary, the project of the nation and nation-ness are highly romanticized, meaning that the playwright does not engage with the issue at hand in a practical way; my argument is that it is through this romance drama as a performative act for the healing and reconciliation mission, sine qua none conditions for building a new Cameroonian nation, that the playwright envisions is possible. Narrating the nation is

arguably one of the most evident preoccupations pursued with such obsessive frequency by majority of postcolonial literary writers and critics.

Pangmeshi (2012) uses the tenets of postcolonial theory and new historicism to address and capture the problem associated with the definition of a nation with focus on postcolonial Cameroon. Even if Pangmeshi rightly demonstrates that the notion of nationhood in postcolonial Africa is unequivocally paradoxical, he fails to situate this in the context of the neo-imperial forces that are exercised by the Cameroonian language policy, the engine of the ethnic tensions. This is the gap that this present study fills in.

Ambe (2004) in 'Shit and Stench as Dramatic Strategy: Bate Besong's *Beasts of no Nation.'* approaches the play from a materialist, dialectical and inter-subjective interpretative perspective and argues that the theatre of Bate Besong seeks to dramatise the psychosocial, economic and political disequilibrium that has been imposed on his post-independent society, and the attempts of the traumatised masses and victims of that reality, to redress their dislocation and overcome the forces and causes at the root of their alienation. Ambe (2004: 10) presents "stateless and physical material depersonalisation of the oppressed characters pitted against the deliberate insensitivity of their leaders". But the question here we ask is, "with this characterisation in 'shit and stench', how does Besong empower the oppressed to face the autocratic leadership? Or to what extent has Besong's imaginaries developed to create characters that are in desperate conditions but are committed to act towards the betterment of their plight?"

Ambanasom (1994) situates the analytical premise from which the new Anglophone dramatists in Cameroon study their society. He stresses the point that literature, being part and parcel of the social and political life of the people, it is only in the last decade (1980-1994), that, that kind of drama has become properly established in Anglophone Cameroon. His study is useful to my research insofar as it explains to the audience of this drama the socio-political background against which Anglophone playwrights in Cameroon produced their plays and shows that socio-historical background is an integral part in the exploration of public themes.

Nkengasong (2005) questions the process of independence of the two Cameroons (North West and South West) that was completed unabated with the "Union" with "La république du Cameroon" in 1961. Nkengasong (2012:51) interrogates the rationale for the union by examining the Anglophone Cameroon poets' portrayal of the "Anglophone Problem". Nkengasong's concerns are these "historical experiences and visions which explore the irreconcilable union that constitutes the Cameroon nation". Nkengasong's concerns in his analysis of Anglophone Cameroon poetry in many regards resonates with the object of my research on drama as a different literary genre. However, my study distances from Nkengasong's in that it reads the plays within the possibilities of "Forum Theatre" in order to revisit the union for a peaceful living together in a Cameroonian nation that accepts differences.

Vubo (2005) sets out to validate the contention that the central element in identity formation is historical awareness. His use of the definition borrowed from Chazan *et al.* (1992: 106) allows him to engage with a principal question whether it is possible for

various communities to live their individual identities at their level and at the same time live the identity of citizens within a nation-state. Vubo's work may be pertinent but seems to gloss over the very superstructure question of identity crisis of the modern Cameroon nation-state whereby local identities are perceived as problematic or antithetical to national construction in Cameroon. My study, among other things, lays emphasis on two important superstructures that are central to the question of ethnic tensions and anxieties in the post-reunification Cameroon nation: Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians division. Of course, as is discovered from the analysis of the selected drama, the ultimate goal of the playwrights whose plays are central to this project is to see Cameroonian people as French-speaking or English-speaking Cameroonian, and Cameroonian at the same time without any of these statuses constituting a problem. Vubo's findings, however, are supplemented by the argument advanced in this study that identity construction is not something "fixed", rather something that may change as different circumstances come into play. As I demonstrate in the course of this study, the playwrights' characters with different identities have transcended "the short-term consciousness about their identities" and now have embarked on the long-term one where a Cameroonian can identify himself/herself with different identities "without these constituting a problem" to nobody.

This study, while recognising the insightful contribution made by the above critics, my thesis differs from the aforementioned in many perspectives as demonstrated above. The major difference here is that I also attempt to analyse, from a comparative perspective, the writers' aesthetic creation as largely a theatre which is a momentous response to the realities of Cameroon society.

1.9. Theoretical Framework

Focusing on the "Anglophone Problem" and the paradoxes of nation building project as major determinants of the evolution of postcolonial Anglophone Cameroon writings, this study critiques Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's selected plays within the frameworks of Postcolonial theories. The postcolonial theories assist my reading of the plays' relationship between the identity crisis in Cameroon, the "Anglophone Problem" and its representation in the dramatic form and structure. More specifically, this study anchors on Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as "an imagined political community", Augusto Boal's techniques of "Forum Theatre" and Richards David's ideas on "Framing Identities". In the following discussion, I demonstrate how these theories are suited for expressing the relationship between the "Anglophone Problem" and the post-colonial Cameroonian politics and history.

An important view for my argumentation for the post-colonial Cameroonian "Anglophone Problem" as explored in Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays I find Ashcroft *et.al* (1995:2) take on post-colonialism particularly apt when they argue that the post-colonial field has become so heterogeneous that it involves "discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses'. Ashcroft *et.al* argue that "postcolonialism is the continuing process of resistance and reconstruction" (2) in countries that were once colonies of European powers like Germany, Britain, and France. It is important here to notice that the contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian literature sprouts from the writers' close scrutiny and consideration of the past and present socio-political, cultural, historical and economic

situation. This situation is not innocent in any way from the scars left by colonialism and neo-colonialism disguised in political domination, economic exploitation, political manipulation, social disruptions and political barbarism. This is sustained by the editors named above when they reiterate that "all post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem" (2). The dramatic imaginaries of the selected plays are portrayals of societies in the process of construction of a distinctly national 'people'. Indeed, the colonial languages constitute one of the most important ways in which the Cameroonian people's commonality as well as its exclusive limits is defined.

This study, therefore, broadly draws from the rich field of postcolonial theory to critically investigate the subject of identity and the consequent "Anglophone Problem" in Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's selected plays. The time of publication of the plays under study (1990s-2000s) situates their settings in a post-colonial imagined Cameroonian community. Dramatic actions and thematic explorations illuminate the nature of elite rule at decolonisation in Cameroon. In this work aspects of identity, nation and nationalism, ethnicity and dramaturgy are brought together in each of the chapters in order to address the aims and objectives of the study conceived as responses to the research questions.

Anglophone Cameroon writers, poets and dramatists alike address the inconsistency between the official version of the country's history and the people's perceptions and experiences. They do so by showing how the nation's past shaped men and women's life in specific phases. The Cameroonian nation that Butake and Besong create in their

dramatic imaginaries is, just to borrow Anderson's (2006: 6) influential phrase, an 'imagined political community'. To assess the playwrights' literary outputs of the projected Cameroonian nation, it is necessary to probe their theoretical understanding of nations and history. The national communities and their pasts are reconstructed from the meaning of these concepts which are intended to define and regulate human's life. Since these conceptions are, however, aimed at creating a sense of collectivity, or what John McLeod in "Nation and Nationalisms" refers to as "national imaginings of collectivity and belonging" (99), a lack of identification with the country's history has put the Cameroonian project of Re-unification in jeopardy. This is so because even if these collectivities are 'coherent imagined communities' McLeod further argues that:

> …nations invent divisive borders, coercive regulations, notions of authenticity and illegitimacy which impact upon the matters of belonging and group membership. The nation is always imagined as a finite space, occupying a certain terrain, inclusive of a particular people, 'us' rather than 'them'. The national borders of most (once-) colonized countries have been imagined and imposed by European powers, who reorganized and violated indigenous mappings of terrain (p.101)

This excerpt is very important insofar as it reminds of the colonial impact on the current boundaries between and dispatch of communities in the "once-colonised countries". For example the post-independence African nation is a result of the 1884 conference in Berlin. In fact the former colonial masters gathered around the African map and divided the continent by tracing boundaries that scattered communities that once were sharing the same territories and with common cultural and traditional values. For the case of Cameroon, before the many colonial encounters, all Cameroonians were gathered around homogeneous ethnic groups that recognised a sense of belonging to a unit known as "community".

Modern collectivity was first authoritatively defined by Benedict Anderson who claims that the nation is an "imagined political community". His interpretation insists that national communities were not the natural products of given homogenous sociological and cultural conditions. Instead common ground had to be forged in spite of differences of languages, cultures and ethnicities in certain regions of the world. McLeod in the quotation above focuses on the postcolonial nation and its challenges to fulfill the unification goals.

However, and in addition to my argument above, I am much aware of Partha Chatterjee's response to Anderson's idea of "imagined community". In the process of nationalisms Chatterjee (1993: 5) asks a pertinent question about "whose imagined community?" For her, postcolonial worlds have been forced "to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas". Further, she therefore interrogates: "what do they have left to imagine?" Chaterjee's interrogations here suggest that the idea of imagining the nation is itself already colonised insofar as it was conceived by imperial and colonial agendas.

The descriptions above can find justification in Chatterjee's concern that in the process of nation formation and imagination in the postcolony, the former colonial power still has influences on the way dramatic possibilities imagine the post-colonial nation. Illustrations are drawn from a presentation of Bengali drama. In his exploration of the "modular forms" that influence this drama, Chatterjee bases his argument on the fact that there is

also an obvious relation between the "nation" and its "political power" where "the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power" (6) and "language therefore became a zone over which the nation first had to declare its sovereignty and then transform in order to make it adequate for the modern world". (7)

Such is the concern of Butake and Besong who urge their characters to act with a high sense of commitment to transcend the "borders" that McLeod is talking about. For the playwrights an absence of such commitment can have especially tragic consequences for a post-colonial Cameroonian nation which was evolved along ethnic division lines. This thesis, among other issues, examines the strategies employed by Butake and Besong to trace Cameroonian past and the nation building process in their dramatic forms. The playwrights have effectively used a number of dramatic imaginaries with the desire "to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity" (Gilroy 1993: 19).

Finally, Anderson's contention that the post-colonial nation is an "imagined political community" allows me to look into the potential cultural and political touchstones that are general and, at the same time, specific enough to hold together a diverse group of people. This further gives me reasons to argue in favour of an Anglophone Cameroonian identity and space in the nation in-building that Bole Butake and Bate Besong imagine as a response to the "Anglophone Problem". Nevertheless, of particular interest in the course of this exploration of the complexity of the post-independence Cameroonian identity crisis is this question: is identity inherently given or is it formed in one's interaction with the world and therefore subject to change and growth? The post-

reunification Cameroonian goal of restoring Cameroonian people to their history informs my investigation. How exactly this request has been addressed in the plays is discussed with reference to Boal's idea of "Forum Theatre" in order to examine the socio-political landscape in which Butake and Besong locate and relocate their characters.

Some of the plays in this study are subjected to the tool of analysis known as "Forum Theatre". This technique is a form of interactive theatre developed by the Brazilian theatre director, Augusto Boal, as part of his 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. According to him, "Forum Theatre" empowers the audience to actively explore different options for dealing with shared problems and motivates them to make positive changes in their own lives. "Forum Theatre" encourages people to find solutions, through debate that is action led rather than purely verbal. "Forum Theatre" technique was developed as means of promoting social and political change presented in Theatre of Oppressed. Its values, among others, are to create a sense of empathy between people in different opinion groups. From this postulation, I refer to how Bole Butake's two plays: *Family Saga* and *Betrothal without libation* enable the dramatist to create learning opportunities and give voice to those who do not have one or cannot defend themselves and to tackle the overriding problems of the lives of the ordinary people. But while using this approach, it is also possible to address this question: "How does the use of this technique help in negotiating the politics of identity in the post-reunification Cameroon?"

Since the purpose of "Forum Theatre" is to create a space where people can express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns; Butake's two plays lay bare the ground on which the Anglophone Problem is negotiated. In these plays the main characters confront

oppression, an unjust use of power that is maintained by a threat of force. Even though they are victimized, the oppressed confront a problem, analyze what is happening and take action to change their situation. Of particular interest here is the way in which the playwright urges audiences to discuss difficult issues in the open that they would otherwise be uneasy about in personal life. In the open and in fictious settings, Butake wants his audience to take ownership of issues and their solutions. This means that after collectively debating the challenges and identifying some problematic behaviour of the players, he believes that his people will be motivated to avoid similar behaviour of their own that they might have been unconscious of before.

Thus, "Forum Theatre" techniques are of a crucial importance in attempting to unlock the meanings contained in these plays. This forum functions as a form of dramatic exploration that, in a subversive way, provokes understanding and learning, devising possible coping strategies to assist a group or individual in investigating possible solutions to particular oppressions or challenges. As Boal further describes it, forum lets people "explore other personas, other ways which give [them] more power in a situation. It is to learn another form of behavior if it will help [them] out of [their] oppression". Therefore, in engaging the characters in open dialogues, Butake forges a third space where the antagonistic ethnic groups' (an allusion to the Anglophone and Francophone) problems to be settled.

One of the common aspects in the plays under investigation is the issue of agency. Butake's and Besong's plays teach the audience how to react critically to what is being observed, and to translate this reaction into political activism and participation, in shaping

their community. In fact, one of the central elements of their philosophy is to make the ordinary citizens aware of their potential to participate in the process of change. Instead of passively witnessing the unfolding of political and social events, the people should feel encouraged to act and to note their personal impact on history.

The plays under study can also be well approached if one considered Bertolt Brecht's term of *Verfremdung*, which is often translated as 'the alienation effect' or 'the distancing effect'. Related to "Forum Theatre" to some extent as discussed above, *Verfremdungseffekt* technique refers to direct address or stepping in and out of role commenting on the action. For Brecht, in such kinds of plays, the focus is not on plot but narrative. We all know that one of the important roles of a play is that it must try to educate the audience about an important issue. This entails that the playwright does not want the audience to become emotionally involved as s/he wants them to make a reasoned judgment. Indeed this is a dominant feature in the Brechtian epic theatre, where the spectator must be aware of the fictional character of the play. Only then can the characters' actions be judged in an objective way. The motivations behind these actions are explained by the actors, often through another device typical of Brecht's (1978:104-5) style – *gestus*, defined in his own words as 'convey[ing] particular attitudes adopted by the speaker towards other men' and 'allow[ing] conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances'. In Brechtian terms, presenting a problem is not sufficient; a play must engage the audience in a dialogue. While studying the selected plays, I realise that Brechtian techniques play an important part. In fact, the playwrights have employed these techniques in trying to maintain audience participation or in facilitating the task of

speaking to the spectator. This contributes much in creating a sense of active involvement in what is being performed at the stage.

This study, to supplement the previous contentions, takes the strand by Richards David about 'Framing Identities'. David here subscribes to the constructivist school to argue that there are "the 'essential' or 'natural' or 'commonsense' categories by which identity is constructed: 'race', ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality". Here, as David reminds, it is important to mention that identities are "not fixed and rooted, but products of a world in constant motion". According to him,

> ...although 'race', ethnicity, and nationality may appear to be the solid bedrock upon which we shape a sense of ourselves, these are not, nor have they ever been, stable, but are always being formed and reformed in different patterns and combinations in a process of constant interaction and change shaped by historical circumstance. As a consequence, identities are also in a constant state of flux. Colonialism has been a major engine driving an accelerated pace of change, forcing different cultures into new forms, 'unfixing' what was thought to be solid, and creating new identities (p.9)

The postcolonial project has deconstructed cultures that had claimed themselves to be fixed to cede place to what David calls 'travelling cultures' (meaning cultures in a constant process of transformation). (9) Butake's and Besong's dramatic imaginary try to 'unfix' what was thought to be "solid" and create "new identities" in the post-reunification Cameroonian nation. Cameroonian culture, like all postcolonial cultures, has not been spared by this flux of identities. The "Anglophone Problem" is the cornerstone issue to be examined in the course of this study. And as mentioned in the definition of key terms, this problem is more political than social.

From the above discourses on "Framing Identities" as postulated by David Richards, we come to the conclusion that in the course of identity construction, societies pass through a number of stages whereby, subaltern identification, however compromised, is necessary to enable agency. In order to break open this dilemma, Gayatri Spivak proposes a kind of compromise to enable subaltern identity and therefore agency. Her concept of 'strategic essentialism' argues that it is necessary to adopt certain 'essentialized' identities (national, ethnic, gender, racial) in order to 'speak' and to achieve specific strategic goals. In the lines of this strand, with reference to the plays under study, it is possible to explore the processes in the evolution and definition of the status of the former West Cameroon in its union with the former East Cameroon in order to make an artistic projection in the future of that union. I believe that a careful reading of Butake's and Besong's selected plays opens room for one to see a place where "the subaltern can speak". It is in this venture, as propounded by Bhabha (1994:4), that the reader is offered a "liminal space" in the world of the plays "to indicate the threshold between the sensate and the subliminal, the limit below which a certain sensation ceases to be perceptible". The sense of the liminal as an "interstitial or in-between space, a threshold area" in which cultural change may occur: the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different groups. This 'liminal space', which is 'a pathway between upper and lower areas', is understood in this research as a space of symbolic interaction in the imagined Cameroonian nation that Butake and Besong create in their dramatic imaginaries. Bhabha (1994:4) reiterates that this "interstitial passage

between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (4).

The Anglophone Cameroonian literary landscape in its relatively short existence and with Bole Butake and Bate Besong is unique. The subsumed national writing (Francophone Cameroon) has been central to this country's endeavour to come to terms with current socio-political developments. Acknowledging the potential of momentous events to impact personal experiences, it is important to assess the various ways in which individual identity can be in this kind of writing. Butake's and Besong's protagonists are ordinary citizens in extraordinary circumstances. From the above tenets, this thesis shows how the dramatists present the country's past and they build up a national consciousness within the confines established by the "Anglophone Problem". Their approach is twofold: in every play they simultaneously compose an individual and collective identity, while each dramatic imaginary represents and illustrates a stage in life cycle of this emerging nation.

In conclusion, it is important to remark that the above frameworks' underpinnings are interdisciplinary, combining elements of political history, literary criticism and postcolonial studies as to ensure a detailed, prismatic understanding of the playwrights' works: aspects on identity construction (travelling cultures, marginal identity, fixed identity, and liminal or hybrid identity), nationhood and nation-state in the multi-cultural Cameroon, and the "Anglophone Problem" and its inherent controversial metaphors. The above mentioned theoretical perspectives enhance objectivity and scientific rigour in the course of the study and offer the interpretative grid for the plays selected for analysis. To

work with paradigms as diverse as the above is to privilege an eclectic approach to the application of the theory. This indeed is the intended approach in this study. Finally, it is important to remind the reader that the terminologies chosen in these frameworks situate this study within the category of Postcolonial discourse, itself a motley of critical approaches.

1.10. Research Methodology

The method that is used for this research is fundamentally qualitative. The key qualitative research methodology that was employed in this study is content analysis. Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 142) define content analysis as "a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases". They note that this form of research is usually performed on forms of human communication, such as books, films, art and music.

Thus this study was a desk research involving a textual analysis. It was library based and consists of a critical analysis of Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's selected plays in order to deduce patterns of Anglophone Cameroonian identity and how it is problematic in the post-reunification era. I deal with variables which cannot be quantified directly such as nationhood, cultural identity, and colonial language legacy. In total a number of six plays were my primary sources. The library was used to research and review what scholars have written about Africa in general and (Anglophone) Cameroon in particular and the predicament after colonization and the re-unification process in order to understand and interpret the selected texts. These were selected after reading widely on Cameroonian

literature and the Anglophone Cameroonian literary engagement with the "Anglophone Problem". The two playwrights were selected on the basis of how they attempt to dramatise and represent this problem in their imaginaries. Therefore, the plays are used as a representative sample of the Anglophone Cameroonian drama produced after independence or the reunification process. This was used to ensure purposive homogeneity in textual analysis. The analysis was supplemented by secondary sources and existing literature on Cameroon, which consist of books related to the topic, literary magazines and journals, articles, reports, official documents from the Anglophone region and websites which are relevant for grounding my arguments. By the use of such materials, I was able to obtain all necessary information. And thus I did an objective literary critical analysis of data collected in relation to the topic. More specifically, attention was given to the following areas:

i. **"Anglophone Problem" complexities**: since this study's major concern is the "Anglophone Problem" and how it is grappled with by the playwrights' imaginaries, the spectrum of choice deliberately paid attention to the controversies produced by the reunification process and nation formation models in Cameroon. The playwrights engage with conceptual inadequacies to lay bare internal and external factors affecting nation-building and the identity complexities in Cameroon.

ii. **Dramatic Possibilities**: the study paid attention to diverse dramatic strategies such as characters, plot, theme, dialogue, convention and audience. These techniques and methods are used by the playwrights to create the desired stylistic effect.

iii. **The concept of 'nation-state'**: this is the feeling of the people to belong to an "imagined political community", in which each citizen ensures participation and is ready to contribute positively towards nation-building for autocentric socio-economic development, in a state that is politically democratic, popular and participative.

iv. **Historical context**: guided by the understanding that the authors dramatise the Cameroonian history, present and past; it was important to settle for play texts that best projected the trajectory of the Cameroonian nation-state in its struggles to nation-building and formation. The plays under study were written in a period when Anglophone Cameroon was claiming for its separation from Francophone Cameroon, a starting point of the "Anglophone Problem". Both playwrights chronicle events during this struggle. But they do so in different ways, and thus a keen attention was made on their different dramatic visions.

The above central issues in this study are purely qualitative. Thus qualitative methods were used to come up with the interpretation of characters, themes and stylistic engagements that the playwrights employ to capture well the "Anglophone Problem". Then this entails that a cumulative evaluation was used to assess the data collected from the plays. Finally, this cumulative evaluation led the analysis to consider the observations made and conceptualise them in order to come up with the findings herein.

CHAPTER TWO

ANGLOPHONE CAMEROONIAN LITERARY ENGAGEMENT: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the period of the 1990s onwards as it saw the emergence of a new generation of Anglophone Cameroonian writers with a different vision of what Cameroon as a reunified nation was going to be. I mainly analyse the uniqueness of Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's literary engagements, with a particular focus on the historical realities that inform their plays. The playwrights draw characters from the lower classes and engage them in a struggle to change their own destiny. As revolutionary playwrights, their characters are taken in a collective resistance against the marginalisation and exploitation of the people by a highly repressive regime in place. The playwrights are thus particularly interesting because their task is, to borrow from Wastberg (1988: 17), "to reshape a distorted history and portray a misjudged society honestly, without idealizing it".

This chapter thus explores the interconnectedness between dramaturgy and politics in Cameroon by highlighting the post-reunification malaise that is resented by Anglophone Cameroonian writers in general, and in particular by Bole Butake and Bate Besong. More specifically, this chapter endeavors to show that Bole Butake and Bate Besong are revolutionary playwrights whose dramatic engagement gestures towards the idea of nation-building project which was timidly "idealised" by the previous generation of writers. It finally seeks to show how uniquely the playwrights engage with the

Anglophone Problem and how they envision the Cameroonian nation within the possibilities of their dramatic engagements and representations. The chosen plays seek to offer in-depth analyses of the reunification epistemologies and also connect them with the Cameroonian institutions. There is a "horizontal colonialism" (Doh, 1993:78) tantamount to the European colonialism which obliges a dialectical perspective enabling us to understand not just the Anglophone Cameroonian history but also the post-reunification Anglophone Cameroonian literary production.

2.2. The Writer and Politics in Anglophone Cameroon

Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's literary engagement became more pronounced in the late1980s, a period when Cameroon as a nation was already in transition to "democracy". The previous decades had been characterised by socio-political and economic crises that necessarily stand out to be the source materials of this drama. If we turn back our eyes to Cameroonian literary landscape, we notice that Anglophone Cameroonian literature as an engaged creative art form is new if one compares it with its counterpart Francophone literature. In an introduction to his collection of critical essays on Cameroonian fiction and drama, Ako (2009: 1) regrets that, "any mention of Cameroonian literature will, almost inevitably, bring to mind names such as Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, and René Philombe" who are all Francophone Cameroonian writers. It is in the late half of the twentieth century that we saw the emergence of an Anglophone Cameroonian literary engagement. The relationship between the two Cameroons has been the urgent concern of many Anglophone Cameroonian writers and critics from the Anglophone part of the country. It is true that every writer belongs not only to a universe of discourse, but he/she will also have his/her place within other groups by virtue of shared values, opinions and

aspirations. Thus the birth of a national literate discourse in Anglophone Cameroon is a very important step in nation-building.

Closely related to this, Stephen (1983: 507) gives a brief account of how Anglophone Cameroonian drama developed over the last century. For him "the elder dramatists are Sankie Maimo and Mbella Sonne Dipoko. The undisputed master, however, is Victor Elame Musinga". However, Sankie Maimo's drama play entitled *The Mask* has been critiqued by Besong in his article *Who's Afraid of Anglophone Theatre*? as a dramatic recreation of an individual rather than group response to political repression. He expresses the haunting facts of Cameroon politics in terms of the symbol of the mask. It will take time Victor Epie Ngome and Bole Butake to give Anglophone Cameroon serious drama that pays attention to the larger version of society rather than individual.

Besong also emphasises the stages of development of Anglophone Cameroonian drama as an engaged art. From the onset of Cameroonian drama in English (not Anglophone Cameroonian drama), the engagement with an Anglophone Cameroonian identity and culture was not the concern of the playwrights. This waited the emergence of playwrights such as Butake, Besong, Ngome and the like, and this was until the 1990s. A more important question that needs to be tackled here is the role by the artist in the politics that affects people's lives. This can be answered by making reference to Okot p'Bitek's renowned collection of essays *Artist, the Ruler* in which an article under the same title stresses the role of the artist:

> I am insisting that in any society, anywhere, in any age, there are two types of rulers: namely, the artist who provides and sustains the fundamental ideas, the foundation of society; and the political chieftain, who comes to power with the aid of his soldier and rich business brethren, who merely puts these ideas into practice in ruling or misruling society (p.39)

Art is and has been an expression of fundamental ideas of a society. Ngugi (1986: 8) expresses more or less the same sentiments about the role of art in what he calls "Art War with the State". Ngugi insists on the idea of art to change a country and how this ideology of national redemption becomes a "subversive power" to which the new nations immediately respond by "gunpoints":

> And yet the most easily noticed fact in looking at the artist and the ruler is the disparity in their powers: one has only a feather in his hand; the other, the entire killing machine behind him. One has the capacity to spill ink only, the other the capacity to draw blood. Why is the writer, or more broadly the artist, then, with his feather, with his bottle of ink, and a white piece of parchment, often seen as a threat to the absolutist state of whatever ideological colour, guise, or credo? Why do its rulers fear the open word…?

From the above quotations the writers and critics are concerned with the role of art to change the society. This role is specific to the kind of drama typified by Bole Butake and Bate Besong. In an attempt to investigate on their literary engagement, one need first to clarify what makes their drama unique in the contemporary Cameroonian literature. The playwright have been censored and imprisoned by the Cameroonian government. Talking about these issues, Breitinger (1993:565) mentions that "censorship as practiced in Cameroon is not limited to the harassment and intimidation of writers; it extends into economic harassment in that writers are effectively prevented from living from the returns of their intellectual work." This gives us more right to pose anew the question of the "subversive" power of art. Certainly it is Besong's play *Beasts of no Nation* that influenced the government's decision to imprison him, even though there were other

factors that could be seen to substantiate the government's perception of Besong as a threat to Cameroon's social stability. It would be hazardous to presume that one seemingly radical act could condemn Besong. Nonetheless, throughout his life and actions and after his detention, his commitment clearly shows that he seeks to dismantle the neo-colonial evils he sees in his society. But this theatre, which was shut down more than once by the Cameroonian state and was ultimately razed by state police, permits us to take seriously the possibility that art can be at war—in more than a metaphorical sense—with the state. What indeed is the origin of the regime's anxiety? Is it mere paranoia? Or did Butake's and Besong's theatre pose a real threat to the neocolonial state in Cameroon?

As far as Butake is concerned, an easy presumption would be that his politics can be identified as Anglophone Cameroon-centered. But this assertion misses the point. While Butake rarely uses the terms Anglophone or Francophone to describe his perspective, it is precisely within this vocabulary that his many other contemporaries prefer much, that the significance of his works resonate. A reading for example *Family Saga* and *Betrothal without Libation* creates a sense of coming together against forms of injustices, discrimination, tribalism, and oppression. Given Butake's attention to authenticating devices and other graphic details regarding Cameroon's history, one absorbs these stories of oppression and becomes an ally to Butake and his people's strife. This is not, however to devalue Butake's experience as commonplace or ordinary in no way. Instead these plays align the readership on a unified axis and thus promote a politics devoted to Cameroonian ideals. He sidelines with the majority group of the oppressed, who are not necessarily Anglophones or Francophones in Cameroon. His plays are mostly a result of

his larger project of Theatre for Development (TfD) as he declares in an interview accorded to Kimeng Hilton Ndukong:

> I have visited nearly all parts of Cameroon, holding workshops with ordinary village people on techniques of theatre for development. I have taught or introduced them to using theatre in human rights activities, women's rights, early pregnancy and marriages amongst young girls, the education of the girl child, democracy... In short, we have worked in many areas.

Butake's use of Theatre for Development is an attempt at espousing the pertinence of theatre as a tool of intervention in the lives of people, especially in a developing African nation-state like Cameroon. Butake, on the verge of embarking on the community theatre project nationwide, readies himself for some of the most groundbreaking intellectual and revolutionary events of his life. As he reveals, the experiences in this project changed him and deepened his awareness in the power of the people and art to initiate social and political change.

In Butake's larger project on Theatre for Development, he introduces a dramatic frame that enables us to discuss the exploitable opportunities that go along with the deployment of theatre in enhancing national unity. Thus we can deduce that theatre, in whatever form, has a vital role to play towards creating a strong, responsive and effective representative institution and in advancing the frontiers of development in any society, particularly in the post-reunification Cameroonian context. In Butake's plays there is an ideological context available as a reference for interpretation, explanation, and a realisation of what, precisely, is new, or individual in his works. For him what constitutes the "Anglophone Problem" is not first an affirmation of some "Anglophone identity". It is instead

subverting all such ethnic straitjacketing that transcend being Anglophone or francophone in Cameroon.

Yet the grim truth remains that Anglophone Cameroonians are oppressed as Anglophone Cameroonians —that such national categories, ontologically empty though they may be, continue to exert an implacable political force. But Butake goes beyond these confines established by an Anglophone identity to extend the power abuses to the ruling oligarchy. This is generally what concerns him in the plays under study. In his earlier play, *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, Butake reveals the extent to which power can be misused. He is able to create a dramatic imaginary where fear looms large in the minds of the people of Ewawa, a land where no one is permitted to criticize the ruler for fear of death. As a satirical play, Butake attacks the Fon's misuse of power. The Fon is dazed because of too much drinking; a rare metaphorical exploration that the playwright employs to show to what extent power can intoxicate. Butake's tone and mood change considerably in his later plays. In *Family Saga* for example, he experiments with "Forum Theatre" methodology to engage individuals with conflicting ideologies in order to create a sense of positive change of their conditions. The same conflicting situation is central in *Betrothal without Libation*. Indeed the playwright's concern in this particular play is the tribal and ethnic fundamentalisms that undermine the development of Cameroonian society into an inclusive and liberal contemporary world. In sum, Butake's vision of the Cameroonian nation is optimistic and opens up to a progressive change.

Finally, Bate Besong stands out to be the most controversial playwright in Anglophone Cameroonian literary engagement. Not only do his view and envisioning of a post-

reunification Cameroonian nation largely differ from Butake's, but also and more importantly a reading of his plays requires a deep consideration of the text's formal logic and organic constituent parts, their linguistic components, and their reference to the external world. What appears to be more interesting in Besong's plays is the way he incorporates known historical facts and realities within his plays. Like that, his plays offer a room to see into the past, into history, in order to explain the present and future, though this may not be the case with all of his plays.

From the above discussions, I can argue that contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian writings cannot be detached from the political environment which influences them. These writings majorly link the contemporary history of Cameroon with the fact that Anglophone Cameroonians are a people apart. To some lesser or greater extent, Bole Butake and Bate Besong are two of the most representative writers of this cause. Their drama thus emerges as Anglophone Cameroonian literature. But first and foremost what is "Anglophone Cameroonian Literature" and what makes it different from the "Cameroonian Literature" as a whole? Is it still the same when one calls it Cameroonian Literature in English? Above all, who is an "Anglophone Cameroonian writer"? Some answers to these questions can be found in this interview conducted by Manjoh Priscilla Musoh with Mwalimu George Ngwane:

> An Anglophone Cameroon Writer has two definitions; the broader definition which deals with any one whose historical origin can be traced back from the geo-political territory called Southern Cameroon, West Cameroon or the present North West and South West Provinces of Cameroon. In addition and in a more specific thematic manner the Anglophone Cameroon Writer assumes a deeper identity as one whose themes reflect the particular socio-cultural, politico-economic and historical worldview of the people of his/her geo-political territory.

From the aforementioned there is necessarily an "Anglophone Cameroon Literature" with its own concerns and characteristics. In addition to this the Anglophone Cameroonian writer in his dual complexion expresses the grievances as summarized in the *All Anglophone Conference* and the *Bamenda Declaration*. Associated with this is the "Anglophone Problem" that informs and is informed by mainly the works of contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian writers. Anglophone Cameroonian literature therefore deals with socio-political experiences as lived by the people from North West and South West Provinces of Cameroon. However, Anglophone Cameroonian writers share a number of concerns with many post-colonial African writers. Again in a more generalised sense, the above definition of an Anglophone Cameroonian writer reminds us of Soyinka's assertion as cited by Wastberg (1988: 5) that any writer "must not content himself with chronicling the customs of society. He must play the part of bard and oracle, he must see more clearly and exactly than other people, he must be a visionary, a warning voice and a builder of the future." The Anglophone Cameroonian writer's role in his society is to form and inform that there is an "Anglophone Problem" and that it is real. This is captured well in Besong's play *Beasts of no Nation* when he announces, through Narrator, the real image of Cameroon after reunification. The setting of the play, Ednouay, is presented as a city where the Night-soil men are complaining about their desperate conditions. The word "frog" is ironically used in this play to refer to the Francophones who are the source of all "economic ulcers":

> **NARRATOR:** Beware of false Crisis Managers who come to you in lamb clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil-frog, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking who to devour. If you desire counsel about your economic ulcers, we shall be glad to assist you. (*pause*) […] Today every Ednouyan should decide whom he will serve. (*pause*). As for my family and me, we will serve Freedom and Liberty (p.90).

Through the narrator, the author turns history and politics to fiction. The political, historical, economic and social context in which the author finds himself is fictionalized in this play to create a successful play that proves the "Anglophone Problem". By the use of biblical metaphors the play *Beasts of no Nation* reinforces the views that apart from it being a linguistic identity, the "Anglophone Problem" is also and more importantly a socio-cultural, politico-economic and historical "Problem" that needs immediate solutions. From the onset of the play *Beasts of no Nation*, Besong captures the problem as being between two categories of people: "the rich thief" (or simply the authority who is the Francophone) and the "poor jaguda man" (or simply the Anglophone Cameroonian) as illustrated in this Biblical allusion. Narrator says, "what the rich thief has put together let no poor jaguda man put asunder" (86). The playwright alludes to a verse in the Bible that is used most during a wedding ceremony, meaning people should not destroy God's covenant. The marriage metaphor is employed to satirize the uneasy union and tensions between the Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon as described in the previous chapter. The deep meaning of this reference is reinforced later on as the play develops when the Night-soil men sing like this: "so my dear frog-brother, wack and burn this damnbrubah Ednuoay" (101). Among the Anglophones, the word 'frog' refers to the Francophone and thus the "rich thief" comes from the French section of the country. The "poor jaguda man", who comes from the English section of the country is often referred to by Francophones as the "Anglo" or "Anglofou". Besong manipulates this when the First Night-soil man says "we the Anglo Union and congress…" (125).

From the above exerpt, we can say that Besong's play here is an indictment of the Francophones in Cameroon. He exploits the reunification of Anglophone and

Francophone Cameroon in such a steadfast overt manner that the reader contemplates the dramatic style through the play. The dramatic scenes reveal historical materials which are inflated into linguistic and aesthetic elements that portray Besong's perception of the Cameroonian society. A reading of the play *Beasts of no Nation* leaves us with a feeling of the playwright's uneasiness generated by his strong ideological leanings which confirm the persistence of an "Anglophone Problem". However, this play resembles Butake's *And Palm Wine will Flow*. The two plays are similar in the sense that both are concerned with the fate of 'the wretched of the earth'. In effect, Aadingingin in *Beasts of no Nation* is very similar with the Fon in *And Palm Wine will Flow*. The two are dictators and the ordinary citizens in both plays suffer from this dictatorship, reminiscent of Cameroonian President Ahidjo's regime in the 1970s and 1980s.

The "Anglophone Problem" that supersedes the literary production of the 1980s in Anglophone Cameroon appears to be a multifaceted issue that takes origin in the putting together of the two Cameroons upon reunification after 1961. This is evident in the dramatic world of *Family Saga*. The characters are drawn from socio-political environments that represent the different forces that are responsible of the present situation in Anglophone Cameroon. On the one hand, there is Kamalo and his father, Fiekafhim. These two are to a larger extent responsible for Kamala's family exploitation and misery. This exploitation has always been masterminded and supported by Fiekafhim. Kamalo uses the privileges offered by his father to rape Kamala's daughter, Sawa though the two are said to be twin brothers. Note that this rape is not only physical but also metaphorical. Sawa, the playwright's coinage of the South West of Cameroon

(Anglophone Cameroon), is raped by his own uncle. But a deep meaning of this rape is the political, economic and social exploitation Anglophones suffer at the hands of the Francophone dominated regime.

This is the same idea that Ambe (2007: 99) has when he observes that "the circumstances leading to the union, the morality of the major players, the expectations of the masses, and the threats and betrayals of the politicians are facts and issues" that Butake manipulates into his dramatic imaginaries. Indeed, Anglophone Cameroon writing as Nfah-Abbenyi (2006) writes in the introduction to her anthology, is reflective of the

> …postcolonial malaise of a union that for some never was and therefore in need of dissolution; a union that for others is fragile, diseased, in dire need of healing and reconciliation. Anglophone Cameroon literature is as such obsessed with what is known as 'The Anglophone Problem,' for it showcases the anxieties of a marginalized group of people that is required to assimilate and often deprived of the rights of full citizenship (p.1).

Broadly speaking, Anglophone Cameroonian writers provide a comprehensive representation of Anglophone literary production. They offer readers a window into contemporary Anglophone Cameroon writing that is actively engaging with local issues but also national, international and global concerns.

The play *Family Saga* opens with an overt dispute between the two brothers over their relationships: Kamalo sees it as a form of bondage while for Kamala it is brotherhood. When the dispute fails to bring about any settlement, Kamalo and Kamala decide to consult their respective fathers, Fiekafhim and Baakingoom. The proceedings of the consultations reveal that Kamalo benefits from full support of his father, Fiekafhim while Kamala's father, Baakingoom keeps silent. This insinuates the roles played by the former

colonial masters in managing the conflict between the two Cameroons. The relation of Master-Servant that exists between the two brothers translates the same relation between Francophone Cameroon and Anglophone Cameroon upon reunification. *Family Saga* is thus a play that tackles socio-political issues that are not only relevant in Cameroon but also that concern post-colonial African countries. It is perhaps what Butake himself acknowledges in the foreword of the play when he argues that his plays are mostly concerned with such issues as: "…women's rights and children's rights, democracy and human rights, HIV and AIDS, good governance, environmental protection, etc." (6). Looking at the play, one sees the relationship between the play and the socio-cultural and political setting at the time in Cameroon.

Finally I can argue here that Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays prove how the playwrights understand the post-reunification Cameroonian nation to symbolize a failed nationalist quest. The selected plays reveal that the writers are engaged in a struggle with voices outside the text, voices which obviously suggest alternative ways of grappling with the post-reunification condition in Cameroon. These voices speak to the political malpractices that constitute the root causes of the "Anglophone Problem". The latter dominates the dramatic universes in the chosen plays.

2.3. Bole Butake and Bate Besong: The Second Generation of Anglophone Cameroonian Writers

Bole Butake and Bate Besong stand out to be the most prolific Anglophone Cameroonian playwrights whose plays speak eloquently to the question of nation building in a post-colony. In the reading of the selected plays, this section stresses the problematics of narrating/dramatizing the nation by the second generation of Anglophone Cameroonian writers. In fact, I interrogate how this generation (with focus on the two playwrights) constructs/imagines the image of the Cameroonian nation from a perspective that differs from the previous generation of writers. However, even though Butake and Besong belong to the same generation, each writer uniquely presents his version of the nation. This is, however, demonstrated in details in chapter three.

Even though Anglophone Cameroonian literature is seemingly unknown to the outside world it is as old as the region itself. In its efforts to gain recognition and influences, Anglophone Cameroon literature as a written form can be traced as far back as the 1950s. In the interview conducted by Ngwane, Butake carves Anglophone Cameroon Writings in three generations:

> The first generation of Anglophone writings especially in terms of fiction was basically cultural. It was a trend that was inspired by the quest for using writing as a pedagogic tool that was common currency with other African writers. This probably was due to the political high-handed regime of the then President Ahmadou Ahidjo who had no sympathy for protest literature especially of political nature.

This first generation of fiction writers is not seemingly widely known in the Cameroonian literary arena given the fact that the issues of their concern were not overtly inclined towards a direct political confrontation against the dictatorial regime of the time. As

Ngwane enumerates, it registers such names as Sankie Maimo, Victor Musinga, Kenjo Jumban, and Mbella Sonne Dipoko. The first generation of Anglophone Cameroon writing dealt with the encounter with Europe or a clash of cultures and covers the period from 1959 to 1984. The writings/books during this period were mostly a reaction to colonialism and the changes imposed on the people in the name of colonialism and religion. This according to Ngwane (1994) was immediately followed by the second generation of Anglophone writers that was

> …influenced by grievance, protest and conscientisation, and the drum major came to be Bate Besong. [it was] also favoured by the wind of change in the 80s and fuelled by the pent-up national frustrations that had gripped Cameroonians, [and] turned their pens into hand grenades chronicling the history and bondage-hood of their people (p.6).

This second generation was championed by such writers as Bate Besong, Bole Butake and Victor Epie Ngome. It can be understood as a generation of Anglophone Cameroonian writers that inaugurates a new discourse in the post-reunification Cameroon. What is more interesting from these playwrights is that they hold the idea that the disposition of citizens has a great impact on the social, political, and economical advancement of the post-reunification Cameroonian society. Butake's and Besong's plays are thus a call for justice, freedom, honesty, trust, stability and tolerance. In subsequent chapters, an analysis of their plays provides a perspective of interrogating how certain tropes like history, memory, myths and modes of narration can be used to understand the contested discourses and terrain of nationhood. Particularly in these plays, there is a way of emphasizing how this second generation of writers exemplifies commitment to some ideals in struggles for freedom, democracy, human rights, advocacy, activism and nation-building. Butake's and Besong's theatre is viewed in purely instrumental or transitive

terms as a passage way to something more desirable, their civic virtue such as commitment to equality among all Cameroonians, whether Anglophones or Francophones.

A more obvious element in their plays is that, as Ngwane still argues, they did not develop in isolation but were shaped by colonial encounters and more especially the reunification experience in Cameroon. In addition their writings document the transformation of the Cameroonian society and articulate the tensions and desires of the Anglophone people in Cameroon. Even though the second generation of Anglophone Cameroonian writers comprises a number of prolific writers with somehow the same concerns, as it is demonstrated in the following pages, their literary commitment differs to some lesser or greater extent. For instance, Bate Besong explains how he differently builds up his texts:

> I draw all my main characters …from the lower classes. The way I present my hero(es) is different from say Ba'bila Mutia, Victor Epie Ngome or John Nkemngong Nkengasong for instance. I believe in collaborative effort, thus I present characters whose heroism is quite often sanctioned from within as you find for instance in *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* and *The Banquet*. But, again, not in *Change Waka* or *Once upon Great Lepers*...

In this paradigmatic shift the characters that are found mainly in Besong's plays work out their destiny. Besong achieves his literary engagement through plays and essays which relay the strengths and limitations of post-reunification Cameroonian history. Reading his essays and plays simultaneously is a consistent tone, and an effective one that underlines the conflicting nature of re-telling Cameroonian history. It is also important to note that Besong's theatre, with its artistic content emanating from the dramatist to the audience through an ever widening and deepening symbol, is highly metaphorical and symbolic in

nature. Besong has been criticized for being complicated and complex in language usage and thematic treatment. In effect, he uses an absolutist ideological vocabulary that reduces the suffering of the people of Cameroon into one type of reality based on his being Anglophone Cameroonian. But I perceive his plays as being reductionist while treating the complex interrelation of forces that shaped post-reunification Cameroonian political and social landscape. Of course, as an art form, theatre represents an experience of an event or experience which can be real or imagined and which is communicated to an audience through a medium. This reminds us of Shakespeare's definition, as quoted from Yerima (2007: 84), that "theatre is a mirror for highlighting man's humanity and also a tool for understanding why man also finds it so easy to transgress that same humanity". Man's inhumanity is the central thematic concern in all of Besong's plays. In *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* for instance the protagonist Etah-Major Andze Abesollo ironically paints the scenes of inhuman treatments in Agidigidi

> I don't enjoy drawing blood, you see… Throughout my career I have only killed seventeen people… I don't enjoy drawing blood, you see. After I have killed the fifteenth anglo student with my gorilles…At the CENER training school, I had been the torturer's dream…So, that night I handcuffed him, those eyes staring at me like eyes of the dead after Njindoum and Lac Nyos. I fired at him. Human being's life is funny (p.44).

In fact, Besong's theatre has the ability to break through the post-reunification contradictions by asking its audience to think about what they have seen; challenging them to face up to aspects of their lives that they try to ignore; challenging societal beliefs and forces. It is such aspects that make it a vital medium for conscientisation, mobilisation and communication. The nature of the characters and their engagements, and the playwright's overall dramatic vision can be apprehended if we situate it within the particular artistic parameters that the playwright uses or which influence his writings.

The syncretic nature of his plays or his ideological complexities should not, however, lead to the conclusion that he is above historical and political processes. Rather, we can see how his texts, both through what they say, and in the process of their writing, focus onto Anglophone Cameroon politics and history and in fact can help us towards a nuanced analysis of that history. In his essay "The Writer and His Past" published in *Homecoming*, Ngugi (1972) seems to speak to the problematic nature of doing the work of historian while being a literary writer:

> I want to talk about the past as a way of talking about the present…the novelist is haunted by a sense of the past. His work is often an attempt to come to terms with 'the thing that has been', a struggle, as it were, to sensitively register his encounter with history, his people's history (p.39).

From this we understand that there is a distance between lived experiences and interpretations, which is useful in portraying a society. However, this creates a certain ambiguity in history-making which infers an ultimate inadequacy in any project designed to make sense of the past. Butake's and Besong's objectivity is not a subject matter in this study insofar as their drama is closely approached with the playwrights' biases and perceptions. These are thus open and available for more extensive interpretation.

In a way the Anglophone Cameroonian writings of the second generation are a response to or a mutual accusation between Francophones and Anglophones in their literary production. In other words, the literary expression from Anglophone Cameroon is confrontational. This is because the Anglophone Cameroonian writer's concern (mainly the Anglophone Problem) is not necessarily in the interest of the Francophone Cameroonian writers. This means that we have two different literatures within the same country. For instance Ngwane (1994: 3) claims that "Francophone writers hardly take

their Anglophone colleagues and their besieged sentiments seriously". This can justify why the Anglophone Cameroonian writers aim at negotiating their double identity, first as writers and second as Anglophone Cameroonian writers. In their "bitterness-of-the-tongue" the Anglophone Cameroonian writers of the second generation are therefore committed/engaged writers *par excellence*. Besong opines that:

> the alternative literature that we write, with apologies to no one, is people-oriented literature, and this entails a dialectical approach of looking at society from the materialist angle, and unearthing the contradictions which bring about discrimination, injustice, exploitation, and marginalisation in Cameroonian society...We question those in authority. We know that under a dictatorship, a nation dies... We prefer bald statement to enfeebled imitation. We are no one's catspaws. (p.2)

Besong's works tackle issues of present social conditions through a lens shaped by the past. He provides us with an admixture of the realistic, the historical, the tragic, the comic all of these underlying a particular political ideology. His style— militant-like— enables him to display the workings of the inner minds of the masses that are in conflict with the oppressive forces. An understanding of Cameroonian's history is central to the concerns that Besong seeks to clarify. Indeed his plays draw upon Cameroonian's history for information and inspiration. *Beasts of no Nation* for example provides another avenue for expressing the sufferings that are characteristics of the post-reunification Cameroon. The characters he draws into the play are kind of negotiating or even forcing their survival.

Even if in his plays Besong includes a whole range of geographical and historical references, his work can still be aligned with 'conceptual' and 'allegorical' readings. The settings and names of characters in most of his plays relate to geographical and historical places and names that are known in Cameroon. Thus his plays can be conceived as

'parables' of the Anglophone Cameroonian political conflict. In condensing political themes, Besong still is complicit in politics, given that he is voicing a motion of resistance against the traditional literary representations of Anglophone Cameroonian identity politics. In doing so, Besong is trying to break the 'culture of silence' and creates a sense of togetherness for a common cause. His plays invite the reader to become a participant in the struggle against the oppressive rule. The playwright uses, if we borrow from Gikandi (2000: 198), "the power of the art to unmask the state by exposing its moral bankruptcy."

Butake and Besong are committed to send their straightforward voices to the very people whom they are concerned with. These are political, cultural and economic decision makers in the post-reunification Cameroon. However, the message is often directed to the masses of the people once they are caught up in their passive mood. In *And Palm Wine will Flow*, Butake does not only indict the Fon's rule but also all the people around him have proven themselves incapable. They have turned into "watchdogs" who only praise the Fon:

> The Fon has lost vision.
>
> The noble men and elders of this land
>
> Now only listen to the inner voice
>
> Of greed, and fear of a man who has
> Surrounded himself with listeners
>
> And watchdogs to do his bidding (p.89)

The actual moment of totalitarianism and political betrayal is dramatised by Butake in this particular play. The spirit of nationhood is metaphorically presented as the "Fondom" reminiscent of the kingdom in which all the power is in the hands of a king and the rest

are but his loyal sycophants. In this particular play, Butake portrays the leadership clique in totally negative terms. Leadership then becomes an effective tool of ensuring allegiance of the people to the neo-colonial "Fondom". Its totalitarian tendency does not allow for alternative voices to emerge. The Fon alone defines and maintains the political experience and social relationships. The comic shock here is meant to dramatise the historical moment in Cameroon when the liberators of Anglophone Cameroonian cause joined the ruling party in order to legitimate its position and power. The playwright is certainly pointing to the absurdity of the whole situation in which most loyalists to the Fon were once the "liberators". This satiric portrayal intends to critique the political establishment and its supporters. The monolithic and authoritarian "Fondom" has bred sycophants whose absolute loyalism is manifested in performing subservience. In his emphasis on the political issues, Butake's play foregrounds the social context of interpretation, functioning under the designation "Anglophone Problem" and how this problem was not handled responsibly by the Anglophone Cameroonians elites themselves.

At a stylistic level, this play has merits in its development. In effect, Butake succinctly creates a cosmopolitan dramatic universe in which there is a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized, the speeches of narrator (or probably the authorial speech), inserted genres, the speech of characters; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships. Butake's engagement in his writings is partly justified by the fact that he not only directly addresses the authorities but he also empowers the masses:

> *Shey Ngong*: What has come over him? Why, is everybody mad?

> *Kwengong*: (Emerging from mask) He is not mad, father of children. I have been thinking it over. The people must have a right in deciding who rules over them and what person rules. (p.86)

From the aforementioned, Butake's *And Palm Wine will Flaw* posits a revolutionary vision. His art is seen as an artistic response to the social reality in revolutionary form. However, unlike his contemporaries, as I shall discuss this in-depth in subsequent chapters, Butake's early artistic engagement seems to gloss over the very problem that Anglophone Cameroonians are facing: The "Anglophone Problem". His plays transcend this issue simply to consider the oppressed people from a generalised point of view; whether Anglophone or Francophone, Butake's focus is the people in power. As a way of recalling the definition of concepts, "Anglophone" here transcends the linguistic factor to signify people who were "brought up" under British administration. They acquired certain values and a heritage opposed to those of the Francophones (formerly under French tutelage) whose numerical and sociopolitical strength gives them considerable advantage. It would thus be the worst form of premature utopianism for Anglophone Cameroonians to strive now merely to circumvent their Anglophone identities.

Anglophone Cameroonian identity encompasses those characteristics which depict the uniqueness and specificity of that community, which are manifested through their colonial and historical experiences**.** Unlike Butake, Besong (2004: 2) claims what seems to be the Anglophone Cameroonian unique aesthetic engagement. For him, it is a literature that does not allow any "artistic and political compromises" which are "forcefully registered in the national consciousness and captured the imagination as a unique phenomenon". Later on in his artistic progression Butake (1996: 22) is of the view that the Anglophone Cameroonian writer "has a moral duty to steer members of his

society along a course that ensures the triumph of truth and justice for all". From these assertions, we can understand Butake's and Besong's use of their imagination as an historical methodology to elicit a text's validity, or an historical accuracy. Edward Said confronts this issue in his important work, *Orientalism*, by suggesting the fallibility of the "truth". He explains that the author, whether of fiction or historical narrative, is always present in the text: No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his environment (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society." (10)

That Butake and Besong are present in their literatures and political essays may seem obviously clear, but the authors' struggle with their presence in their texts is evident as well. How covertly do they position themselves within their plays? Is it then possible that their "selves" disappear within the narratives? Said claims the impossibility of such ambitions. In discussing the centrality of Orientalism for unearthing the complexities of cultural contacts, Said extols the author to remember that "Orientalism is— and does not merely represent— a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture." (12) In other words, a central actor in the historical narrative is always the author himself. He does not do the mere work of a scribe, he performs as well. In addition the writer's warning tone foretells what is likely to happen. In relation to this Butake reminds us that

> a writer who is concerned about happenings in his society will predict the turn of events with shattering exactitude. But it is not just guess work or fortune telling or foreseeing. It is an elaborate process which begins with concern, passes through alarming observation and ends with that terrifying scream of warning…(22).

From Butake's assertion above, I deduce that the writer's warning tone is reminiscent of Brecht's epic theatre and its function. Brecht highlights the audience participation by inviting them to develop their own thoughts and criticisms about the events on the stage. Drama as a tool of intervention should play the role of forming, informing and predicting in such a way that it provides possibilities for future projection with a clear mind. Once again, Butake's oppressed people in *And Palm Wine will Flow* after having dethroned the Fon now organize themselves to make future projections:

> *Tapper*: So what will happen?
>
> *Kwengong*: The people will rule through the council of elders led by Shey, here. The day that he takes the wrong decision, that same day, the people shall meet in the market and put another at the head of the council of elders.
>
> *Shey Ngong*: And the affairs of the land shall be debated in the market place.
>
> *Tapper*: Wonderful idea! So that all the people shall see clearly that the fowl has an anus. Wonderful idea! No more secrets in this land! (p.113)

Social justice, a tendency for protest and propaganda are Butake's sentiments and turn to be his responses to the political dispensation that influence his works. In effect, theatre as a public institution, should offer vision on the cultural and social conditions of a society and negotiate, so to say, with the audience (changing) norms and values of this society. Interestingly enough is the way Butake creates a space in which problems are communally resolved. Important decisions are taken back to the market place to be discussed before they are adopted. Before the play *And Palm Wine will Flow* comes to its end, there is a loud sound by "the sacred gong" that is calling upon the people to assemble at the marketplace the following day to decide on the destiny of their land:

> **Tapper:** People of Ewawa!
> People of this land!
> As the sun rises at dawn

> So shall we meet
> In the Market-place
> To decide on the destiny of this land.
> No more shall we allow
> One man to rule our land for us! (p.114)

Butake's attitude here is grounded in his belief in "arousing the masses by energies, by pure force" (Brecht, 1973: 12). That is most probably the reason why he chooses to exhibit a style of performance that is audience-centered which, like Brecht's epic theatre, employs a number of techniques and effects (*Verfremdungseffekt*) to arouse the audience's participation. Most of the protagonists of Butake's plays, from *Family Saga* to *Betrothal without Libation* to *And Palm Wine will Flow*, embody the spirit of communal leadership. As for the meeting venue that is frequently referred to in Butake's plays, Nkealah (2011: 217) observes that "the marketplace is a powerful motif in Butake's plays in that it features in all the plays focusing on the subject of leadership." Nkealah further remarks that the frequent use of the marketplace in Butake's plays is a symbol of people's power, the embodiment of the spirit of communion and cooperation.

Finally, we cannot close this discussion without tackling the political nature of the plays under study. The overall argument here is that a theatre-performance is both an aesthetic, artistic phenomenon but more so a social and political event. As discussed above, Anglophone Cameroonian writings of the second generation are those of commitment or engagement of which Denis (2000) says that:

> l'engagement littéraire se distingue de l'engagement tout court par le fait que l'écrivain souhaite faire paraître son engagement dans son œuvre littéraire. L'engagement de l'écrivain doit donc se concevoir « avant tout en termes littéraires et esthétiques : [il] implique en effet une réflexion de l'écrivain sur les rapports qu'entretient la littérature avec le politique (et avec la société en général) et sur les moyens spécifiques dont il dispose pour inscrire le politique dans son œuvre » (p.12).

This can be translated as:

> literary commitment is distinguished from commitment per se by the fact that the writer wishes to make appear his commitment in his literary work. The commitment of the writer must therefore be conceived "primarily in literary and aesthetic terms: [it] involves indeed a reflection of the writer on the relationship between the politics (and society in general) and literature and on the specific means available to him to register the politics in his work. (Translation, mine)

The writer's commitment to political issues enables him/her to capture the socio-cultural, politico-economic issues that constitute the concerns of his/her people for whom he/she is a spokesperson. The plays under study are celebrating that historical politics while showing the unity of their struggle. They are also a collective theatre, or what Boal would call a 'Theatre of the Oppressed', and are produced by a range of factors: a content with which people can identify carried in a form which they can recognise and identify. However, the writer in this case is different from a politician as Ngwane would remind us that:

> …a writer in politics is not necessarily a politician. A writer is a compass indicating the direction that the ship of state should take; but the actual pilot is the politician who has a choice to ignore or respect the directives of the compass. And in the Cameroonian context the writer is either ignored or humiliated to the peril of national development.

Whether writers in politics or politicians, Anglophone Cameroonian writers dig deep into history and use living political, historical and cultural experiences for the positing of their revolutionary vision. More often than not, this does not please the ear of the politician (the ruling class). However, Ngwane (1994) seems to accept the fact that the Anglophone Cameroonian writing is politicized, but with some nuances that:

> …all writing is a political statement. As long as it addresses the mores and lores, values and virtues, and highs and lows of society such writing speaks to the problems of leadership and existence. And that is what politics is all about. […] in the main, all writing is about how the city is governed. It is about transforming our rulers into leaders and our politicians into statespersons (p.13).

The Anglophone Cameroonian creative art is nothing but the artistic response to social reality in revolutionary form. For example Butake's and Besong's paradigmatic metaphors in their drama represent a tribute to human ingenuity. Their new dramatic form has imposed itself as a privileged mirror between socio-cultural and political events where man is at the same time actor and victim of these events. In fact it is drama that allows for experiments, and is therefore not an isolated, accidental phenomenon. In a sense, the playwrights draw their raw materials from mainly the pre-independence and post-reunification settings. Cameroonian independence did not solve the many problems that were left behind by the departure of the colonialist. Among the many and immediate of these were the leadership and economic gaps that were to be filled up by the new leaders. Despite the fact that the latter had, upon reunification sworn to guarantee freedom, equality and peace; the new politician had neither the wit nor the manner, nor even the goodwill to do so. Instead he continues, with total manipulation and outright totalitarianism to dispossess, deprave and incapacitate the citizens. In a particular way the post-reunification trickeries came in to worsen the situation. What was before a common problem for all Cameroonians got converted into an Anglophone-Francophone related issue. By forging a divisive strategy, the politician thought to have succeeded in paving away his greed, corruption, and personal interests. The already betrayed people were brought into hatred and despair which resulted into ethnocentrism. Unfortunately any attempt to protest, object or question the government's "New Deal" was coercively silenced. Butake's *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* gives a dramatisation of how Etah-Major Andze Abesollo, the law enforcer, was personally involved in killings in Agidigidi.

Abessollo is a law enforcer who has been assigned the mission to silence and eliminate those voices that protest against the will of the power. His own utterances are not only shocking satirical representations, but also they typify a real situation in Cameroon in the 1990. In fact I consider this as an exteriorization of the writer's deepest desire to lay bare the traumatizing experiences of the past, though this desire is not consonant with Agidigidi's people in power. Abessolo represents the brutal tendencies of mankind, but at the same time he represents the failure of post-reunification Cameroonian leaders to build a nation founded on democratic principles of tolerance, good governance, and human rights. Besong here describes the nation-state as a neo-colonial instrument and thus questions its legitimacy to bring about a Cameroonian national identity. The post-independence Cameroonian leaders are therefore indicted of being motivated by the desire to exploit and oppress the people. The police, the army and the judicial are such instruments inherited from the colonial state which contribute in suppressing democratic principles.

Therefore the Cameroonian playwrights of this second generation are concerned with re-investigating the role of politics and history in building the nation. Through their dramatic imaginaries, we are brought to accept the inevitability of history and come to terms with its errors so that the Cameroonian nation can be rebuilt. This form of capturing the post-reunification totalitarian regime in Cameroon and the violation of human rights perpetrated by the people in power is influenced by political situation that was prevalent in Cameroon that time. In effect, in his review, Breitinger (1993) recalls this:

> In May 1990 six people were killed in Bamenda, North West Province, at a rally of the newly founded Democratic Party, Social Democratic Front. Police and army fired into the crowd. [...]. In March 1991 more than thirty people were killed at demonstrations in Yaounde and Douala; in April 1991 several people were killed in Kumba, [...] The picture seems to be always the same: police and army opened fire to disperse unarmed demonstrators. When the police and the military stormed the university campus in Yaounde, half a dozen students sought refuge in the premises of the European Community mission, hundreds of students went into hiding in the town or in the villages and many more were detained and put into jail (p.560).

In this light Anglophone Cameroonian drama, whether in a political or literary engagement, is reminiscent of this political history that overwhelms the ordinary Cameroonians from their systems of governance. Writing about the interplay between Literature and Politics and how the two arts represent the whole set up of society, Ngugi (1981) explains that:

> Literature cannot escape from class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice… his work reflects one or more aspects of the intense economy, political… struggle in a society. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is whose politics? (p.xvi)

Politics in this sense is not streamlined to the existence and militancy in political parties. It does not mean the right wing or left wing 'governments'. Thus Ngugi's question of "whose politics" is very pertinent and needs to be answered. In this case, one may ask the question if the writer should write only about the politics of the masses, the 'wretched of the earth'. Of course the writer should be the eye and the voice of the oppressed masses and the writer must be committed to his people, but if we consider Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays, we notice their political inclinations. For example in one of his early writings, Bole Butake's play *And Palm Wine Will Flow* is set in the context of a traditional ruler, a Fon, who rules over the imaginary Fondom of Ewawa. Government officials felt targeted since the corrupt drunkard on the throne of Ewawa bear some likeness to some living person in high political office. Thus this is equal to an admission

of their guilt. It is the reason why many such writers in Cameroon try to hide their political tones because they are threatened, oppressed, imprisoned or even killed. Bole Butake, in an interview with Godfrey Tangwa, calls this "code de conduite: 'You have to be very careful about what and how you are saying it, because this country is very unpredictable'. So I am not going to say things in a blunt manner, simply because I want to be committed". In the words of Chinua Achebe, one learns that: "it is impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment, some kind of protest… in fact, I should say our writers, whether they are aware or not are committed (Qtd, Innes and Lindfors 1978: 40)".

Ngugi's and Achebe's arguments that the African writer cannot escape from political ties are similar. African writings, whether fiction or not, validate the assumptions that every literary piece that handles public issues geared towards the welfare of the masses is political. The selected drama for this study is seen as a performing art which involves the whole of man. As demonstrated above, Butake's and Besong's protagonists express their different predicaments and psychological worries in registers and metaphors that convey the seriousness and emotionality of their situations and experiences. The social universe of the plays can be correlated to the wider social background that informs the plays. My critical angle or reading to the play texts is thus related to the mimetic political referents. Ngugi (1981: 72) again emphasizes that, "literature and politics are about living men, women and children breathing, eating and crying… Men in history of which, they are products and makers". In this critical perspective we are able to explore and question the nature of Butake's and Besong's dramaturgies, their representation and configuration of the historical consciousness of a post-reunification Cameroonian actuality. This drama

particularly presents power struggle as social forces or classes struggling against the superstructures and also as individual struggles that result in the celebration and the consolidation of the prevailing status quo and order of things. Finally, I submit to Chinweizu *et al*. (1980) when they claim that:

> Literature (drama) and politics influence each other and writers are deluded who draw from absurd pretensions of art for art's sake put on this airs of an artistic elect who must keep their works unsullied by the political concerns of their fellow citizens (p.251).

This relationship has been so strong and so relevant that most writers refer to themselves as writers with a political orientation. This is so because their concern is mankind in conflict with his community or with the ruling politics of governmental pervasiveness. The writer can artistically create an opposition to confront the widespread political manipulations or the prevalence of vices and the excesses of the rulers. In the Cameroonian context, and in the worlds dramatised by Butake and Besong there is a depiction of man in conflict with the forces of his dehumanization. Most often the playwrights' visionary dimensions lead to a positive change and redefinition of the world of the oppressed characters. The different worlds captured in these plays could stand as a representative for any post-colonial African state that is beset with leadership problems. In a nutshell the selected plays can be classified as engaged drama since they confront all sorts of oppression and bad governance in Cameroon, especially the misuse of political and economic power by political leaders.

2.4. Dramatising the Reunification process: Diverging and Converging Discourses

The reunification process has generated many discourses in Cameroon since the 1990s. In many aspects, explicitly or implicitly, Butake's and Besong's dramaturgical projects grapple with the reunification process. Among other things they indict the cultural, intellectual, economic and political institutions in Cameroon and how they have worked together in the de/formation, perpetuation and dismantling of the nation building projects before and after the reunification of the two Cameroons. This section seeks to examine the playwrights' contribution in widening the scope of discourses around the "Anglophone Problem". At the political level, discourses reveal that there have been many intrigues in the reunification processes in Cameroon. In an artistic presentation these intrigues inundate the works by Butake and Besong. Therefore in dramatising the reunification metaphorically the playwrights are struggling to rescue the Anglophone Cameroonian cultural identity threatened by the assimilationist policies of the majority Francophones. In addition, since their dramaturgies are pregnant with layers of meaning, they give us sufficient insight into the ironies and contradictions that characterised the post-independence Cameroonian elites' struggles in the reunification process. The selected plays constitute a general historical presentation of the lives of the Anglophone people vis-à-vis the events and problems that plague the Cameroonian nation. The dramatists have artistically identified the usefulness of history, for giving a sense of identity to an emergent people. They engage, through drama, in the mobilization of the communal conscience of the Cameroonian society.

A quick glance at the history of Cameroon shows that the controversial reunification debates began a decade before the independence of French Cameroon. These discourses were first propagated by the western educated elite to further the political development of their territory, and their political careers. In its initial stages, the reunification question aroused many controversies. Awasom (2000:93) aptly reminds us that: "the reunification question has turned out to be such a controversial subject that both initiates and non-initiates into Cameroon studies find themselves thoroughly confused and dumbfounded." These controversies and confusions are indications that the reunification process was not genuinely negotiated. In fact by reuniting with the former French Cameroon, the Anglophone political elite had hoped to enter into the federal union with a clear aim of protecting their territory's minority status and Anglophone cultural heritage. Instead, Awasom (2000) further discusses, it soon became evident that the Francophone political elite preferred a highly centralised, unitary state as a means of promoting national unity and economic development. While the Francophone elite received strong support from the French during constitutional negotiations, as Awasom argues further, the Anglophone elite was virtually abandoned by the British who deeply resented the Southern Cameroonian's option for reunification with Francophone Cameroon.

In this analysis, I focus on the playwrights' engagement with the problematic of nation-formation and the impulse of reunification inherent in the discourse of nation building in Cameroon. The desire by the post-independence Cameroonian leaders to construct a unified nation generates another conflict that seems to ignore the bicultural identity of Cameroon. Instead of this desire to be one of nation building, it rather turns into a form of

construction of a highly centralised authoritarian state. It is surely in line with this that Bole Butake and Bate Besong deal with these controversies and contradictions behind the reunification process in Cameroon. For instance for Butake's *Family Saga* to achieve its goals, as Odhiambo and Nkealah (2008) observe, he uses many techniques drawn from Forum Theatre, especially the techniques of playback and play-within-the play to lay bare the historical developments and the realities found in the reunification of the two Cameroons. Therefore, by using Forum Theatre techniques Butake adopts a stylistic strategy that moves from the aesthetics of resistance and confrontation to the poetics of reconciliation.

In the third movement of the play, we find the inequalities between Kamalo and Kamala's well being. Kamalo becomes ironically "frank" because he is hypnotized by Sawa's extraordinary beauty as indicated by the stage direction: "*Kamalo (same as in opening scene), and Sawa, a strikingly beautiful lady who is wearing expensive wax wrapper material, are dancing to a Bikutsi tune. Both have been drinking and making merry.* (25)" Sawa (Butake's metaphor for the South West in Anglophone Cameroon) is Kamala's daughter and in her naïve mind she has gone to visit an uncle: Kamalo. Their conversation below is an eloquent example of Butake's engagement with the reunification controversies and ironies:

> **KAMALO:** You are such a charming beauty. Why did your father hide from me for all this long?
>
> **SAWA:** It's cool and nice in here na? Out in the fields na? It is hot, very hot na? The sun can even make you to melt like chocolate na? I don't know why daddy cannot also build a house as beautiful as this your own na?

> **KAMALO:** Because there is division of labour. He only executes what I conceive. Period. That's what…
>
> **SAWA:** What what? What what na, uncle? (p.25)

In this scene Kamalo is presented as a super power. In fact he is wealthy and spends his time in merry making. His work is to conceive while Kamala, his son Ngong and his daughter, Sawa are presented as poor and executers of Kamalo's orders and will. Their work is only to execute what Kamalo conceives. In this sense, Kamalo is a master while Kamala is a servant. What used to be a bond of brotherhood has quickly changed into bondagehood. These assumed roles are metaphors of the socio-political positioning of the Anglophone Cameroonian vis-à-vis the Francophones in the union. The majority Francophones assume their superiority to the minority Anglophones. That inequality, however, is paradoxical because the majority is presented elsewhere in the play as being lazy. In fact, though Kamalo's role is to conceive the conception he claims comes from his papa. This is what he cannot openly reveal to Sawa and keeps it in suspense with his frequent pronouncement: "That's what…"

As the play progresses Kamalo reaches a point where he ironically denigrates Sawa and his family. Despite the fact that he has proved his incapability to conceive he wants to convince Sawa that the work of hand is easier than the work of head:

> **KAMALO**: Sawa, let me tell you something. […]You people are very lucky that you are only working with your hands. Do you know how hard it is to think, to work with the head? That is my job; working with the head while your father only works with the hands. That is why I conceive and he executes. Period. That's what…Working with the head is more difficult, Sawa (p.27).

Kamalo has internalized a superiority complex which is reminiscent of Althusserian distinction between the notion of hegemony and rule. Throughout the third movement, Kamalo's ideological power is ironically shown to be of ultimately greater significance

than material power. According to Williams (1977: 101), hegemony is "the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings, values and beliefs of a kind which can be abstracted as a 'world-view' or 'class outlook'" while rule is direct political control, which uses force when necessary. Butake relates Kamalo's hegemonic power to his culture in general and to his ideology in particular. In fact, through Kamalo, Butake demonstrates the failure of the post-reunification leaders to give an all-inclusive history of Cameroon. Instead it becomes an ideology of a neo-colonial capitalism where the power of the former colonial forces is manifested into the many faces of the reunification of the two Cameroons.

To talk about the reunification between the two Cameroons, many Cameroonian writers and critics have adopted metaphorical expressions such as 'marriage', 'union', 'betrothal', and 'what God has put asunder'. For instance, at the end of *Betrothal without Libation,* there is a successful marriage of a bride and a bridegroom from two opposing ethnic groups. Butake uses this marriage allegory first to imagine a Cameroonian nation in search of a lost cultural identity. Secondly the play speaks to the contradictions around the reunification in Cameroon and how it was maneuvered by the many influential forces of the time. Finally the play deliberately minimizes the magnitude of the tensions to prove that there is still hope for reconciliation. Butake dramatically reveals that the national identity crisis can be partly explained by the many stereotypes formed around ethnic lines:

> **1st Woman:** That Nyangi, a woman? You do not know what you are talking about.
>
> **5th Woman:** What is wrong with the Nyangis? Are they not women like us?

> **1st Woman:** I am surprised, I am really surprised you do not know the Nyangis? The Nyangis? Those people who turn themselves into all kinds of animals—elephants, monkeys, boars, — to destroy people's farms? Every Nyangi woman lives in the bush in some form of some animal. And all of them, without exception, go around with frogs in their arses. (p.49)

The social universe of the play is highly faced with tribalism and discrimination that McLeod (2010: 99) calls "divisive borders, coercive regulations". The Nyangis are associated with some stereotypical evils which exacerbate the hatred between the different ethnic groups. What one notices, and this is Butake's intention, is that the old generation (here represented by 1st woman, who is the senior wife, the oldest and therefore speaks with an authoritative voice as she instructs the rest on the stereotypes) builds strong "divisive borders". But the young generation (represented by 5th woman, thus the youngest and also by Fointam and his fiancée, both university graduates) is committed to transcend these borders and dreams of a society free from any discrimination. In this particular play Butake operates on a binary perspective in which he delineates into two categories of the forces at work in the process of nation-building in Cameroon. There is on one side the dominant force of the old people associated with tradition which he considers as conservative and retrogressive. Opposed to this is the category of the educated and young people who are revolutionary and progressive. This formation is then translated into a dialectic of class where each class is against the other. However, the playwright, through forum theatre techniques, successfully enables them to sit together and come to a certain agreement. It is important here to mention that at the surface level Butake's characters are playing around the ethnic dimensions in Cameroon. But there is a way of extrapolating this to the two super ethnic groups whereby the Anglophones conceive stereotypes against the Francophones and vice versa.

Therefore Butake's critique of the national project reveals the hidden agenda that privilege certain experiences and histories that should not be glossed over while constituting nationhood. This is overtly brought forward in the play *Betrothal without Libation* where some social, political and economic issues are contested. In a sense Butake seems to, even though not overtly done, delegitimize the notion of nation-state in Cameroon. That is perhaps the reason why he interpellates the people to first sort out the issues that constitute their objects of discrimination. The playwright achieves his goals by using the techniques offered by Forum Theatre. He engages his characters in a number of experiences that push them to discover first their problems, solve them and then he makes them the promoters of their desired change. In effect, *Betrothal without Libation* is a translation of the actual ethnic tensions in Cameroon into a staged narrative structure. As a reminder, Forum Theatre is a form of interactive theatre developed by the famed Brazilian theatre director, Augusto Boal, as part of his 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. Butake employs Forum Theatre techniques to demonstrate the ethnic problem at the grassroots of the Cameroonian society. The effects of these techniques in the play are perceived when Fointam, the enlightened protagonist finally accepts to settle the conflict that has opposed him with his family. In fact, even though Fointam had betrothed without libation, before the play comes to its end he is empowered as he comes to draw conclusive remarks to the whole members of his tribe. His father, who had discarded him, sends an emissary to apologize on his behalf in these powerful words:

> **BOBE CHIA:** I have come here today to plead for my friend, your old man and father. He is dying to see the children and all of you too. What did you expect him to do? We are all ignorant people, living in a world of our own. Do we know what happiness means to you young people? Do we know that whether a man is Banyangi or Bamileke or Bali, he

> belongs to the same Cameroon? My son you have proved us wrong, and taught us, your elders … (p.74)

Here Butake, through the techniques offered by Forum Theatre, creates a sense of empathy between people in different opinion groups. The dramatist has created learning opportunities and given voice to the young generation who otherwise in the rigid traditional setting of the play could not have one or could not defend themselves. It is at this time when the play gets to its denouement that all the members of the family, both the young and the old confront the problem, analyze what has been happening and they take action to change the situation. The antagonistic factions in the fictive social universe of the play *Betrothal without Libation* are given opportunity to discuss difficult issues in the open that they would otherwise be uneasy about in personal life. In the play, after collectively debating the challenges and identifying some problematic behaviour in the society, the old and the young people are motivated to avoid similar behaviour of their own that they might have been unconscious of before:

> **FOINTAM** … I have heard what you have said, and am no longer angry. I have not seen the family for six years just because of some *foolish idea* that was buried deep in their heads. I am happy you now say that *marriage is not a question of tribe but rather character and love*. Above all, we cannot build this nation on tribalism and partisanship [Italics, my emphasis]. (p.75)

The stereotypes associated with the "other" ethnic groups and the interactions that are expected of the members are simply "foolish" conceptions. Through Fointam, Butake demonstrates that marriage— thus the reunification between the two Cameroons— between people from different ethnic groups is possible and that it is a matter of "character and love". It is Weber (1965) who defines ethnic groups as those groups that

> entertain a subjective belief in their common descent—because of similarities of physical type or of custom or of both, or because of memories of migration—in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of non-kinship, communal kinship relationship... regardless of whether an objective blood relationship exists or not (p.306).

This idea of subjective belief is the same as what Butake calls "foolish idea". In fact both refer to the common descent that can be summarized in a legend or myth of origins, either with fictive or real ancestor. The meaning here is that the divisive nature of the ethnic conflict in the play does not have any objective reason. Butake is perhaps concerned with imagining a nationalist history that interpellates the people in the myths of the nation in order to capture well the unity that he preaches.

In addition Butake uses Forum Theatre techniques to empower the characters to actively explore different options for dealing with shared problems and motivates them to make positive changes in their own lives. The people are encouraged to find solutions, through debate that is action led rather than purely verbal as is the case in *Betrothal without Libation*. The resolution of the ethnic tensions at the family level indicates that the Cameroonian communities can still live peacefully together despite the internal tensions and differences. The dramatic imaginary captures the reunification between the two Cameroons as one that occurred without commitment and goodwill but that, through dialogue and negotiation they can possibly form one harmonious and peaceful nation. However Butake's nation here is gradually dramatised as a borderless imagining reflecting Anderson's "political imagined community". For example *Family Saga* starts with an open conflict between family members. Before the play comes to its end, these tensions and anxieties that Butake dramatises are quickly transformed into a "liminal space" of tolerance and genuine agreement. The ending in this play shows that the antagonistic groups represented by Kamalo and Kamala can still transcend the intrigues

of the past and embark on common projects that enable them to live together as one people. This is what Ngong remarks when Kamalo has confessed:

> **NGONG:** Uncle Kamalo, it is enough that you have realised that you were in error and that you are very sorry for your terrible acts against your own brother and us your children. There is no illness without a cure. The mere fact that you have finally consented to mingle with us is the beginning of the cure (p.83).

By unearthing truth between Kamalo and Kamala, Butake as a playwright of morality and truth is concerned about the socio-economic and political realities of Cameroon. Nalova Lyonga once said that as a committed writer, Bole Butake "is always a step ahead of reality" and this reality can be seen within the context of contemporary political process in Cameroon.

As it has been discussed above, what is Cameroon today is a microcosm of the many forces that interacted during and 'after' colonisation. A close reading way back into the history of Cameroon informs us that it was first a German protectorate before it was partitioned arbitrarily and shared disproportionately between World War I allies, i.e., Britain and France. These are the referents in the dramatic world of the play *Family Saga*. The play's dramatis personae are carefully chosen to suit the purpose of the play: the origin of the Cameroonian community is associated with the goddess Kamanda that symbolizes the pre-colonial Kamerun territory. Yaman, Baakingoom and Fiekafhim respectively stand for Germany, Britain and France. The two major protagonists of the play, Kamalo (Francophone) and Kamala (Anglophone) stand for the Francophone and Anglophone parts of Cameroon as arbitrarily partitioned after World War I. Butake encodes images of the former colonial masters as dominant topography so as to profile a country still in the shackles of the West. The dramatic development is made meaningful

if we consider the rape incident that Sawa, Kamala's daughter, suffers at the beginning of the play. Sawa and Ngong, Kamala's children, represent the two Anglophone provinces that joined the Eastern Cameroon (Francophone) after the 1961 plebiscite organized by the UN. After the rape, Kamanda got an unwanted pregnancy which "gave birth to a set of twins, both of them boys. Kamanda named them Kamalo, meaning the big one, and Kamala, the small one. But the twins resembled neither Baakingoom nor Fiekafhim…" (80) This mythic presentation presupposes that the post-reunification Cameroon nation has been built in the image of the coloniser and the task of the playwright is to rebuild and redefine it. Kamala and his family are Butake's allegorical heroes to represent all the forces opposed to neo-colonialism in Cameroon as a collective entity.

The meanings that we can make out of those metaphors of rape, pregnancy, birth and the naming of the children are reminiscent of the long historical trajectory that Cameroon took before it became *La République du Cameroon*. By reflecting this historical trajectory Butake seeks to demonstrate the very obviousness of the domination of the West, the neo-colonial forces and the degradation it has caused to the citizens of the new nation. The most obvious of these forms of domination is the fact that the post-reunification Cameroonian leaders overtly privileged all that comes from the Francophone part of the country including the language. This is in line with Konings & Nyamnjoh (2003: 10) when they argue that "the reunification of the Anglophone Cameroon and Francophone Cameroon regions did not rationalise the territorial differences in languages and cultural legacies". Anglophone Cameroonians grouped in

many elite associations condemned their domination by the Francophones. This was expressed in what was later to be called *The Buea Declaration* (1993):

> Within these thirty-two years, our Union Accord has been violated. We have been disenfranchised, marginalized and treated with suspicion. Our interests have been disregarded. Our participation in national life has been limited to non-essential functions. Our natural resources have been ruthlessly exploited without any benefit accruing to our territory or its people… (p.2)

Anglophone Cameroonians made this pronouncement to condemn the sound discrimination, exploitation and oppression that was done to them because they are only Anglophones. This marginalization of Anglophones by Francophones in Cameroon is what Fru (1993: 79) calls "historical colonialism". The oppressors today are those who once were also colonised and shared the bitterness of the colonial experience. In *Family Saga* Butake emphasizes the spirit of exploitation that characterised the former colonial forces:

> But because both Baakingoom and Fiefkafhim wanted a grip on Kamanda's beauty and wealth, Baakingoom *took* Kamala and Fiefkafhim *seized* not only Kamalo but also Kamanda whom he has locked away so as to better exploit Kamalo and the wealth of his people, especially his brother Kamala and his two children, Ngong and Sawa (p.81).

The above quotation reveals the motives behind the division of Cameroon between the colonial powers. The whole deal was to take, to seize or even to grab the material wealth in the two regions. In fact colonialism was experienced preeminently in terms of dominance, that is, along the lines of material, physical, and economic exaction: conquest, taxation, conscription, forced labor, eviction, dispossession, etc. Simatei (2001) has the same idea when he indicts colonisation as having created a problematic discourse of nation building in East Africa:

> Colonialism— and later on neo-colonialism—problematizes the idea of nation since the latter is already circumscribed and persistently negated by colonial order that appears to thrive even better under the conditions of independence (p.21).

The way colonisation affected African nations before and even "after' independence is exactly what creates the problematic of imagining a national culture and spirit in Cameroon. This is what Butake tries to grapple with in this particular play. The next stage in the development of the play is reminiscent of the many diverging alternatives that were being proposed in order to achieve reunification in Cameroon. In effect, in 1949 many elites associations were born whose ultimate goal was to usher in reunification of the two Cameroons. The Cameroonian National Federation (CNF) was one of the many reunification forces that were on the ground negotiating reunification. Awasom (2000: 98) reminds us that the "CNF demanded separation from Nigeria, the unification of the British Northern and Southern Cameroons, and reunification. While requesting the reunification of the British and French Cameroons as they existed before 1914, majority opinion in the Southern Cameroons favored either independence or integration with Nigeria. Reunification was not an immediate, urgent, or popular goal, even if it was that to which candidates alluded" (106). But at the beginning, the political class in the British Cameroons was committed to three possibilities, namely, integration with Nigeria, reunification with the French Cameroons, and outright independence. However, later on the United Nations decided to organize a plebiscite to resolve the issue. We read in Awasom (2000) that:

> The plebiscite question was contained in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1352 XIV, of October 1959, which read:
>
> (I) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria? OR
> (II) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the in-dependent Republic of Cameroun? (110) (p.107)

When the plebiscite was done, the Northern Anglophone Cameroon chose the first option and the Southern Anglophone Cameroon the second. The results of this plebiscite were first aiming at imagining a "political community" in which members from different territories, different colonial legacies, and different languages were to be put together by a negotiated political agreement. However the constitution that defined the federation did not survive for long because it was later converted into a Reunified Cameroonian nation under the name of *La République du Cameroun*. Today, the reunified Cameroon nation comprises ten administrative regions (formerly known as provinces), an eighty percent Francophone majority, a twenty percent Anglophone minority, and a policy of official bilingualism coexisting with over two hundred indigenous languages. The Anglophone or Francophone identities are therefore an amalgamation of micro and macro-cultural segments. This admixture of micro-cultures with macro-cultures or the super-ordinate (foreign culture) is thus made much more complex.

Cameroon is the only African country to adopt two colonial languages —English and French —as its official languages after achieving independence and reunification. More than five decades later, the British/French colonial legacy remains central to what it means to be Anglophone, to be Francophone, to be Cameroonian. This partly has to be explained by the colonial administration policy of producing Cameroonian elites in the image of the Westerners and not the indigenous Cameroonian. All that the West brought to Cameroon through Western education was not positive. Today many Cameroonians, like many citizens of the former colonies, reject their traditional values and customs in favour of those of the West. The fact that identities are constructed in the name of the

former colonial languages is intrinsic to the representation of postcolonial identities in (Anglophone) Cameroon literature. Loomba (1990:66) reminds us that "the colonialist production of knowledge was not a simple process. It necessarily included a clash with and a marginalisation of the knowledge and belief system of those who were conquered, as also with some oppositional views at home". Despite the different colonial legacies the reunification project in Cameroon aimed to merge people of different individual identities into a political union. However, language as Ngugi (1981: 16) argues "is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world". In the context of Cameroon, this shared history that is manifested in the colonial languages habitually used entails perception which generates conceptual organization of what it is to be Anglophone or Francophone in the union.

The cohabitation of the two linguistic communities or the "marriage" as Bole Butake and many of his contemporaries have come to allegorically refer to it, has been a subject of many debates. In the eyes of Makuchi it is "a union that for some never was and therefore in need of dissolution; a union that for others is fragile, diseased, in dire need of healing and reconciliation"; Ngome sees in the union "What God has Put Asunder", but which is for Ako "What God and Goddesses have put together", and for Butake, it becomes a "Betrothal without Libation". A more comprehensive explanation of this marriage-union is provided by Doh (1993) when he argues that:

> Anglophone Cameroonian, earlier colonized by the white man, is once again a victim of "colonization" but, this time, his colonizer is his former partner with whom he served, and were together tormented and exploited by the colonialists. The Anglophone is being given the impression that he is at home but he is to toil very hard to survive, the Anglophone sees himself today in a social, political and

> cultural marriage in which the couple is uncomfortable, for the idea of marriage as a give and take does not apply to this "home" (p.78).

The Anglophones in Cameroon constitute a category of people without any political, social and cultural recognition after the "marriage" reunification with the French Cameroon. They are condemned to stay in a union in which they are uncomfortable about. In other words, they do not feel at home in the new formed nation. They live on the margins of a nation they belong to. This indicates the extent to which the history of Anglophones in Cameroon is full of many intrigues, contradictions, and betrayals.

In Africa and in Cameroon in particular, the dominance of the people's native languages by the languages of the colonial masters is an expression of the continuing imperial domination of the former colonial powers. Ngugi (2011: 5), paraphrasing Mazrui (1977: 92) is concerned with how "African countries, as colonies and even today as neo-colonies, came to be defined and to define themselves in terms of the languages of Europe: English-speaking, French-speaking or Portuguese-speaking African countries". Cameroon is itself today defined as an English-speaking and French-speaking country. The geo-linguistic representation of the Cameroonian identity is only possible if one refers to the superimposed official languages despite the more than 250 local languages. Far from being a national integration policy as was proclaimed by President Biya in his "New Deal Policy" (Konings 2003: 13) this bilingualism has rather created discrimination and assimilation of the Anglophones minority by the Francophones majority.

To assess the plays' literary outputs on the projected Cameroonian nation, it is also necessary to probe the theoretical understanding of nations and history. National communities and their pasts are reconstructed from the meaning of these concepts which are intended to define and regulate human's life. Since these conceptions are, however, aimed at creating a sense of collectivity, or what John McLeod (2010: 99) refers to as "national imaginings of collectivity and belonging", a lack of identification with the Cameroonian's history or its body politic on the individual's part can put the project of reunification in jeopardy. In fact even if the reunification project could succeed in making the collectivities 'coherent imagined communities' the tendency is the idea of "nation" bears with itself "divisive borders" which, if not well handled can always create tensions.

In the theoretical configurations above McLeod focuses on how the European colonial powers mapped out the African nations; and a nation in this sense is *ipso facto* implying borders and exclusion of communities that are non-group members. Again McLeod seems to argue that the concept of nation or "finite space" inherently separates communities that share a lot in common and one community is scattered in more than one nation. As a consequence, in the context of Cameroon this may be the reason why it gets it hard to fulfill the unification goals.

In *Betrothal without Libation* Butake dramatises the challenges of nation building and belonging. It is not an easy process for Fointam and his wife to transcend the ethnic boundaries imposed by the society. Despite their different ethnic belongings and because of their level of education they are able to engage in a marriage despite the sheer

opposition of Fointam's folks. The playwright believes that in a multiethnic community like Cameroon, the only solution of the ethnic tensions and discrimination is interethnic marriages. The marriage bond becomes here a metaphor that reminds of the reunification of the two Cameroons. It is true that the two parts of Cameroon have many issues in connection with the colonial experiences, but according to Butake, there are still many communal elements to put them together. As it is discussed in the next chapters, Butake's vision here is that of a unitary Cameroonian nation. In this play he corroborates Awasom's (2003: 88) argument that "in the case of Cameroon, the Anglo-French partition was transcended by the political elite of the two territories through reunification owing to shared historical memories, experiences and common ethnic identities and bonds."

Butake is trying to rebuild a distorted national identity. His engagement with elements of drama enables him to sell to the readers his project of post-reunification Cameroonian nation building. Fointam's family and their families-in-law form what Anderson would call an "imagined community" which is free from the ethnic divisions. Even if he had been exorcised by the whole family, before the end of the play it is revealed that his father is haunted by the disconnectedness that followed. He definitely comes to understand that tribalism does not help to build a strong community. It is at this end that Butake's desired Cameroonian national community becomes meaningful. At this juncture it is possible to relate this to Anderson's argument that national communities are not the natural products of given homogenous sociological and cultural conditions. Instead common ground has to be forged in spite of the differences of languages, cultures and ethnicities in certain regions of the world.

From the foregoing discussions, it is obvious that the reunified Cameroonian nation went through a number of political metamorphoses. At the initial stage there was formed a federated Cameroonian state which later on was abolished by a presidential decree and the name of the country was retained as *La République du Cameroon*. As demonstrated above, this led to the formation of two entities within the same country: an Anglophone minority and a Francophone majority. These identities were constructed in the name of the former colonial masters' tongues. The two different languages carried different cultures and heritages which constituted a problem when the two regions were reunified. The spirit of the constitution that put together Anglophones and Francophones had recognised the bicultural and bilingual nature of the reunited Cameroonian nation. However, this was only to be found in books. When it came to putting the contents of the agreement into practice there were misinterpretations. Butake sees in these deliberate misinterpretations a form of betrayal and subjugation. At the beginning of *Family Saga* Kamala interprets this agreement as brotherhood while for Kamalo it is bondagehood:

> **KAMALA:** Where is the deed of brotherhood that we both signed? I need my share of the resources.
>
> **KAMALO:** You mean the deed of bondagehood? My papa is keeping it.
>
> **KAMALA:** Keeping what? Your papa is keeping what?
>
> **KAMALO:** The deed of bondagehood which you signed (p.13)

The deed of brotherhood which Kamala still believes the two signed is deliberately misinterpreted by Kamalo as bondagehood. In this conversation the playwright has employed two expressions to address the reunification problem in Cameroon: "brotherhood" and "bondagehood". These expressions stand in for the metamorphoses

that the reunification process went through. The misinterpretations of a deed that the two partners willingly signed foreshadow, to quote Fanon (1963: 148) "the cracks in the edifice which shows the process of retrogression, is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity". As the play develops; the two antagonistic brothers, however, create opportunities to negotiate a "liminal space" or a common ground where they safely express their anxieties and tensions.

A reading of the play reveals that before the two partners came to a constructive agreement, many forces contributed in the process. These are mainly Kamalo and Kamala's fathers. When Kamala decides to go back to his "father" Baakingoom to complain, the latter's attitude is shocking:

> **BAAKINGOOM**: I gave you freedom upon your demand. I was hesitant because you were still too young. The kind of talents you had, needed proper nurturing. But the talents went to your head and you insisted of having your freedom against my better judgment (p.18).

Baakingoom regrets that Kamala was not mature enough to be granted freedom. The freedom that Kamala and Kamalo claim to have been granted does not however allow them to make independent judgments after the colonial masters have left. In the reunification process it should be underscored that the attitude of Britain, as the administering authority in the Cameroons, was important. Although majority opinion in the British Southern Cameroons favored independence, this did not have the blessing of Britain. The British government feared that the Southern Cameroons might not be economically viable, capable of standing on its feet if allowed to attain sovereignty. Anglophone and Francophone elites who took power after independence prove their incapacity "to rationalize popular action, that is to say their incapacity to see into the

reasons for that action", to quote Fanon (1963:148). Kamala complains about Kamalo that "he can't finish a sentence without reference to his papa. 'That's what my papa says. That's what my papa says' is the interminable refrain, like a cracked Ngoma record" (20). The frequent mention of the former colonial master ironically shows that both Kamala and Kamalo (especially himself) were not mature enough to be granted independence. Before they do anything they have to seek advice or point of view from their former colonial masters. To this Fanon (1963) regrets that:

> the national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace. In its narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country. But that same independence which literally drives it into a corner will give rise within its ranks to catastrophic reactions, and will oblige it to send out frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country (p.149).

The independence, which Fanon calls elsewhere "flag independence", did not enable the middle class to have power to take the destiny of their countries properly. The ruling classes in many African countries in general did not prove any capability in developing their economies. Instead they were concerned with looting their own country with the help of the former colonial masters whose presence in a form of neo-colonialism is still causing havoc. Kamala laments that his new colonial master collaborates with Fiekafhim to loot:

> **KAMALA**: Look at me, father. When I left this place, I had more than half-dozen suitcases full of clothes. This is all I have today. I toil in the fields all day long with my offspring; and when I go to get provisions from the barn, there is nothing left because, Kamalo tells me, 'My papa was here. He took the provisions.' I have never even set my eyes on him. He sneaks in like a thief, steals my provisions and sneaks out again. 'My papa was here.' *And why don't you ever come to visit me, father? Is it true what Kamalo says that you abandoned me, your son?* [Italics, my emphasis] (p.21)

Neither Kamala nor Kamalo are entirely confident of their own independence and are to varying extents ready to always accept the knowledge and power of their former colonial masters. Butake speaks to the neo-colonial forces and their different manifestations. He corroborates Ngugi (1986: 2) when he recalls that "imperialism is not a slogan. It is real, it is palpable in content and form and in its methods and effects." Butake, through Kamala's complaints, shows how the post-independence regimes in Cameroon use the same strategies as the former colonisers to continue looting the country's wealth.

Family Saga and *Betrothal without Libation* can be read as extended metaphors of the Cameroonian crisis that emerges out of the perceived betrayal of the spirit of the reunification deed that brought together Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians into a singular national entity. The characters' responses to the tensions and anxieties are signs of the emergence of a community envisaged as a project of an "imagined political community" that is characterised by a single Cameroonian identity. This project is intended to provide possibilities of reconciliation by creating a space where the oppressor and the oppressed express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns. The ultimate goal of the play is to forge a "liminal space" for mutual understanding and forgiveness:

> **KAMALO:** (*Unfreezing and gently placing Sawa on her feet*)
>
> Nothing can be hidden from the face of the sun!
> History can never be changed or forgotten.
> The truth, at last, has come out!
> Cursed be the day I saw the light
> To have been so evil to my own brother
> To have committed these abominations
> Against my own niece, my own daughter
> The offspring of my dear twin brother.
> Goddess Kamanda, why did you permit
> This evil to stride the world?
> What sacrifice, to what Gods shall pacify

> This horrid, damnable abomination
> That has visited the peace-loving people of Kamanda?
> My daughter, Sawa, I do not ask for forgiveness
> For such abominations are not, can never, be forgiven.
> Sawa, my daughter, I ask you to condemn me to the cruellest death. (*Kneeling before Sawa*) I await the pronouncement from your lips, my daughter.
>
> **SAWA:** (*Taking his hand and lifting him to his feet*) It was not your fault na? It is that your papa who was fooling you na? Now that you are truly sorry, I am sure that the elders of the community can find a solution na? Or we can even sit together and discuss what to do na? There is no problem without a solution na? We can sit in a circle and discuss what to do na?

The finale that brings the stage performance creates a scene reminiscent of a purgatory where the oppressor acknowledges his sins, repents and asks forgiveness. Interesting in this scene is this change of positions. The once powerless characters (Sawa and the like) are elevated to the position of power. Good enough Sawa does not misuse this power because after all she makes up her mind. She seizes this opportunity to wisely forgive what is otherwise believed by her earlier oppressor as being unforgivable. This reversed order of things in the social universe of the play leads to reconciliation as the only way to live together in differences. Mutual accusation and intolerance may never build a strong and peaceful community. Here we can say that the play dramatises the long history and life trajectory that Kamala and Kamalo consciously or unconsciously lived in. It is narrated in a form of collective memories and discoveries to prove that the past cannot totally be forgotten or ignored. Instead, it has to be taken for reference in order to understand the present and build a promising future.

The contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian writers are mostly concerned with the issue of the reunification and its implications. For instance in dramatising the discourses around the reunification Butake's two plays have been of importance in redefining the polarities towards nation building. Forum theatre as a dramatic exploration tool has been

used by the playwright to provoke understanding and learning, devising possible coping strategies to assist a group or individual in investigating possible solutions to particular oppressions or challenges. As Boal (1979: 4) writes, these techniques let people "explore other personas, other ways which give me more power in a situation. It is to learn another form of behaviour if it will help me out of my oppression". *Family Saga* and *Betrothal without Libation* reveal that the relation between the French-speaking and English-speaking communities can be changed into a better understanding of one's own innate nature to help one to come to grips with the challenges of difference and injustice. The function of Butake's drama in imagining the nation and a national people is vital. As a creative writer, Butake has succeeded to forge a liminal space where feelings of community and belonging are embedded in particular historical experiences. The different settings represent specific landscapes that Butake sees as the common way of life of the imagined Cameroonian nation.

2.5. The "Anglophone Problem" Consciousness: La Luta Continua!

This section analyses how Bole Butake and Bate Besong use the art of drama to raise awareness of the Anglophone Cameroonian identity in the post-reunification Cameroon. Anglophone Cameroonian drama as a genre has contributed a great role in strengthening the relationship among the citizens but more so in nurturing a sense of their belonging in the highly centralized and Francophone dominated country. This is drama for conscientisation. It is rare to find a work by an Anglophone Cameroonian writer which does not explicitly or implicitly deal with the "Anglophone Problem". These plays do not simply reflect ideologies; they also militate against them or contain elements which cannot be reconciled with them. Their thematic and stylistic innuendos echo the protest

against exploitation and domination. Butake and Besong, among others, have become the conscience of their society. Elites and no-elites, adults and young alike use the playrights' works to clarify the political imbroglio that has been characterised by exploitation, oppression, and social injustices. Through their characters we discover the playwrights' condemnation of the ubiquitous presence of annihilating forces symbolized by the crisis of leadership in the post-reunification Cameroonian nation.

It has been expressed in the petition by *All Anglohone Cameroon* (as cited in Chapter One) that Anglophones in Cameroon have been exposed to a carefully considered policy aimed at eroding their language and institutions even though Francophone political leaders had assured their Anglophone counterparts during the constitutional talks on reunification that the inherited colonial differences in language and institutions would be respected in the bilingual union. The plays that constitute the subject of this study engage with social, political, historical and cultural issues which provide the source materials that are used to comment on a general malaise felt by the Anglophone citizens of Cameroon. Most of the time, these events are realistic situations which are dramatically created in such a way that the audiences easily identify with them. Such a historical kind of dramatic presentation is actually quite modern in itself. It is a product of present need, which reshapes, rather than simply invokes the past. According to Besong (2004):

> The pastness of the past is reflected in the present because the artist demonstrates a historical sense which shows that he writes not only of his generation but that it has a simultaneous existence and comprises a simultaneous order. The writer illumines a conscious present, which is the awareness of the past. It is a literature that apprehends Cameroonian history and its stages of development; and it is a literature that has an all rounded perspective of its (Cameroonian) humanity (p.3).

Many of the writers of the second generation as discussed above have in their literary tools a frequent use of historical material, in this case the reunification of Anglophone and Francophone Cameroons. They have now become the conscience of the society because their constant preoccupation is the problems of being of their society, a continuing search for a new world-view in which the Anglophone community can become master of its own destiny. Butake's *Family Saga* and *Betrothal without Libation* treat the question of Anglophone identity from a pluralistic angle. In fact, for Butake, the problem is not because the two Cameroons have once been put together. The plays rather demonstrate that there is possibility that the Anglophones can feel comfortable in the union if only the two partners sit together and discuss the constitutional issues of divergence. This is perceived through the characters like Kamalo and Kamala in *Family Saga*, who end up agreeing on the deed of brotherhood and that the "force of argument is better" (83). The same applies for Fointam and his parents in *Betrothal without Libation*. For Butake, the identity problem in Cameroon is magnified by the leaders. But also there is much to do with the ignorance of the ordinary citizens who "live in a world where everything that is foreign to the tribe is not only suspected but outright [sic] unacceptable. The only good thing is which comes from the tribe" (29). In this regard, Butake formulates some useful solution where the citizens "need more liberal-minded people" (29) to enlighten them on the importance of living together as one nation.

In the preface to his play *Opera Wonyosi* Soyinka (1981: 2) argues that art should "expose, reflect, indeed magnify the decadent, rotten underbelly of a society that has lost its directions, jettisoned all sense of values and is careering down a precipice as fast as the latest artificial boom can take it". Butake and Besong successfully recreate in

language and imagery the sensibilities and fractured postcolonial outlook of the society they set out to represent. In fact, the symbolism and imagery that contain the plays document the realities of a postcolonial Anglophone Cameroonian society and emphasize the long history of political, social and economic domination suffered by the Anglophones have been the greatest losers and victims in the formation and evolution of the Cameroonian nation.

Takougang & Krieger (1998) give a comprehensive account of how the political development of Cameroonian democracy was full of intrigues. According to them the 1990s in Cameroon is always regarded as the era of democratization and liberalization as was promised by Paul Biya's tenure. However, it is the same period when the "Anglophone Problem" starts to gain momentum, especially when the president changed the name of the country from "La République Unie du Cameroun" to "La République du Cameroun". In his interview with Makuchi, Butake informs us this:

> And at this time, many newspapers started addressing "the Anglophone Problem." In effect, it was only in Paul Biya's era that this Anglophone Problem drew more critical attention because in 1984, just barely two years after he became president, he went to parliament and passed a law changing the name of the country from United Republic of Cameroon to La République du Cameroun. He had a crushing majority in the National Assembly—there was no opposition party then—and he got the MPs to change the name from La République Unie du Cameroun to La République du Cameroun. Anglophones felt he had just reverted to the French colonial legacy and now saw themselves as a colony of La République.

As Butake recounts, the "Anglophone Problem" in Cameroon is as old as the current regime. In fact, it is during this regime that the situation was exacerbated, though it was masterminded by many forces distant in time and space. It is at this time of the second regime that Anglophone Cameroonians started to complain of their being colonised by

the Francophone Cameroonians. I have also discussed above that to be Anglophone or Francophone in Cameroon is to be much more than a speaker of English or French. The terms "Anglophone" and "Francophone" carry a number of meanings that can be well understood if we consider the cultural, political, and linguistic complexities that define the Cameroonian nation. In dramatising the Anglophone's plight the playwrights are clamouring for change. This is the hallmark of many a committed Anglophone Cameroonian writer to forcefully articulate a communal anxiety. Ngwane in the interview cited above complains that:

> The writer in Cameroon is saddled with numerous problems that include the personal, the social, the economic and the political – but the only solution is to continue writing in spite of these impediments. […] Quite frankly, the Cameroonian nation has not been founded. The artist must go beyond the confines of his own immediate constituency, his own class in order to give sufficient insight into the lives of characters and into their responses to the events and problems that plague Mr. Biya's turf.

In their search of a Cameroonian nation, many Anglophone Cameroonian writers and critics are eagerly critical of the present situation their people are living in. Besong's plays are a call for the suffering masses and their greedy leaders, to improve on their human conditions and uplift their society from the darkness and rot that have held it hostage. The characters in *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* are representative of the masses in bondage but trying to rescue themselves. Woman, Poet as Mandela, Gambari, Akonchong and the rest of the marginalised characters, succeed in recreating for themselves a new community, free from the excess of totalitarianism. In fact they effectively recollect themselves into a social force, a popular uprising with a collective goal. This play, far from being realistic, presents a situation where the writer's dreams of a free Anglophone Cameroon nation is possible but only if the oppressed/marginalised

are able to unite their efforts for the common cause. This call runs across many of Besong's plays and we can argue that the playwright believes in the possibility of change. He has hope in the masses of the people that they, one day, will succeed in bringing about the change they desire: La Luta Continua!

The "Anglophone Problem" as expressed by Anglophone Cameroonians has been inscribed in the archives of the United Nation under a submission called *All Anglophone Conference* (AAC) or the *Bamenda Declaration*. This expression of the Anglophone Cameroonians' grievances has been a subject matter in the literary and political arenas in Cameroon. The writers and elite associations denounce a double colonialism or what Doh (1993:78) calls "black second cousin colonialism— horizontal colonialism". This constitutes the cornerstone of Anglophone Cameroonians' claims for over three decades. As was discussed above the Anglophone Problem consciousness was started by Anglophone Cameroonian elites associations immediately when the federated state was changed into a reunified nation.

In *Beasts of no Nation* Besong is preoccupied with the socio-political realities of his society, protests against them and proposes how this state of affairs can be changed. Much that we learn about the Night-soil men is given to us by Narrator. He sees in them people without any future. They are not given dignity to the extent of denying them their identity. Eventually they keep on claiming for their identification card because "carrying night-soil without identification papers is tyranny!" (137) and this pushes them first to engage into a verbal confrontation with Otschama, Aadingingin's representative. They finally write a petition which they give to Otshama to take to Aadingingin. It is through

the voice of Otschama that again we often learn about the government's malpractices: corruption, oppression, torture, and totalitarianism. But Aadingingin's proclamation here below sums up his oppressive character: "I'll beat the life out of every one of them. I'll swallow each of them the way a snake slowly swallows a juicy Ewondo frog with money looted from the nation's bottomless hole" (139). Aadingingin is very proud that he will use the nation's looted money to torture and kill the night-soil men if they dare marching. And he promises them to get "a better life after death" (141). Before the play comes to its end, we have the Night-soil men attempting to raise their voice against their leader. They do this after a long period of suffering and, perhaps, the Narrator's conscientisation. However, they do not make it since Aadingingin's use of force triumphs as he utters: "My Word is Double Law. I AM THE LAW" (143).

Like Butake, Besong grapples with events which emanate not only from the historical past but are even contemporary. Due to the immediacy of the theatrical events their plays' success is determined by the relevance of the events to the audiences who feel appealed to and moved by the dramatic imaginaries. Aristotle defines drama as "action". This action results from the interaction between the dramatis personae. Through action, the audience understands the conflicts and follows closely how it is resolved. Dramatic action makes the fictitious story in the play alive. This is because dramatic action is the attempt to make fiction real.

However, in Besong's dramaturgies the "marriage" problem between the Anglophone and the Francophone Cameroonians is portrayed as one of the incompatibility with the

nation building project in a pluralistic society. The problems that Anglophones are suffering from in Cameroon are caused by the Francophone dominated system, which Besong attacks in all the three plays under study with utmost rigid language. At the beginning of the play *Beasts of no Nation* there is a stage direction about the monstrous character of Aadingingin: "Comrade Aadingingin is a lumbering gargoyle of mayor with a brooding brutishness. He is fat, extremely fat; the sort of bloated fatness associated with a very juicy toad" (138*).* This is a deliberate playwright's portrayal of a grotesquely animalistic physique of Aadingingin to capture his society's parasitic nature. The regime is a monstrous one that thrives on torture and uses brute force to silence people who want to oppose it. Dramatic reality is here made real through performance. This is what makes the allegorical nature of *Beasts of no Nation* concrete. Here, stage directions become very important to the creation of reality in drama.

Even if the world of the play is dramatised as an imitation of people the setting can reveal reality. In fact Ednouay city is a distorted reflection of Yaounde city (spelt backwards) with projection of real life, not for the sake of it but with the lofty goal to help transform people for the better. This is the purpose of Bate Besong's *Beasts of no Nations.* In this particular play Besong is critical of the government in Ednouay: the leaders are described as a "crop of ignoramuses, a brainless and sensuous class, who someday will take the Ednuoay nation hostage as a result of their inexhaustible greed" (141). As if the downtrodden to whom the narrator is addressing have not understood why they are what they are, Narrator informs them that all that has gone wrong and continues to go wrong in the city has its basis in "a mongrelized breed, beasts of no nation" who by their actions

have turned the city into a huge lavatory. This is so revolting and confronting to the extent that not only the actors but also the audience gets into expressive bad feeling.

The tensions are captured through symbolic characterization with the "haves" represented by Aadingingin and the "have-nots" represented by the Night-Soil Men, Cripple and Blindman. The population in the cast is dominated by the category of the downtrodden who are held in bondage by a small clique of unscrupulous rulers represented by Aadingingin and his right hand man, Otschama. The contrast between these two classes suggests that a class society is bound to breed tensions and inevitably invite the critical lens of the reader and audience. The downtrodden classis equated to the Anglophone Cameroonians for whom Besong speaks. The other category of the privileged is the Francophones in Cameroon who are presented as the troublemakers. The confrontational presentation of the two classes is Besong's play is an indication that the "Anglophone Problem" is real and that there is no middle alternative: for him the two Cameroons have to be separated or else La Luta Continua!

In *Beasts of no Nation*, the "Anglophone Problem" is artistically dramatised and rears its head to steer a different course peculiar to the Anglophone's plight. Thematically and stylistically, the shit and its derivative metaphors that Besong uses in most of his drama are pregnant with significations. In the many facets they are first of all metaphors of decay, both moral and physical. Secondly, they are a representation of a nation in the hands of a small category of beastlike leaders who have reduced the city and its people to filth and decay. This disgusting representation constitutes a mass mobilization strategy in

the dramatic imaginary to awaken the actors and audiences to the realities of social inequities in Ednuoay. The imagery given by Narrator's graphic description on one of the toilets sums up the facts:

> I am the alumnae, a genius in the academic cosmos of shitology (*squats as if answering call of nature*). This is the prolegomena of the brimstone, the Nitric acid, the effluvium, the gangrene, the syphilitic concoction, and the mycobacterium leprae of modern trade dealers (p.123).

In creating such an absolutely grotesque representation of the cosmos around his characters, Besong is fulfilling his responsibility as a political writer to influence positive changes. The narrator's statement shocks the audience and appeals to the collective conscience of the oppressed people to initiate strategies as to how this situation of depravity and callousness could be righted. In addition the playwright is trying to develop a revolutionary aesthetic geared towards raising the consciousness of the audience, mobilize them to action, awaken them to the political realities of their condition, and educate them while entertaining them. Since the people in the play and the audience alike are living the same situation that is being dramatised, the playwright succeeds in creating their awareness about their present plight. Talking about the importance of the present in dramatic action, Peter Szondi as quoted in Elam (1980) postulates that

> Dramatic action always occurs in the present. This does not imply staticness: it simply indicates the particular type of passage of time in drama. The present passes and is transformed into the past, but as such ceases to be the present – The present passes affecting a change, and from its antitheses, there arises a new and different present. The passage of time in the drama is an absolute succession of 'the present' (p.118).

The evolution of events and the new awareness that unravels in the minds of the dramatis personae and the audience makes dramatic action real and present. In this sense, language and stage direction are very necessary. The language reveals dramatic patterns that are

contemporary, in the first place to the dramatis personae. For stage direction, it basically provides a vivid picture of the scenario. The issues pertaining to time are discussed in details in chapter four of this study.

The socio-political system in Butake's and Besong's plays is one in which the common man is trapped by political and economic pressures. The playwrights criticize those in positions of authority for their high oppressive spirit in dealing with affairs. They use significant dramatic techniques of character, dialogue and parody among others to awaken the oppressed to the reality of their situation. The dramatists demonstrate that the oppression suffered by the Anglophones because of false ideas and ideologies can be eliminated if the people are willing to take the necessary steps to do so. In the reunified nation, the Anglophones see themselves most exploited, most marginalized and even treated as strangers. Despite the very high qualifications they have, they are given demeaning and lowly paid jobs. In Besong's *Beasts of no Nation* one of the Night-soil-men (who metaphorically represent the oppressed Anglophone community) cries out: "O me die man, innocent Anglo/Monkey work, gorilla chop? (89)". This lamentation is a clear case of the fact that the Anglophones in the reunified nation are not happy with the way they are treated. The theatre of Bate Besong seeks to depict out the psycho-social, economic and political disequilibrium that has been imposed on the post-reunification Anglophone Cameroonian society. It also brings about the attempts of the traumatised masses and victims of that reality to redress their dislocation and overcome the forces and causes at the root of their alienation. In the process of conveying such totality of experience, Besong delves into the realities in his changing universe, unearthing the contradictions and proposing possible forms of alternative functionality. Drama from this

perspective can be seen as a powerful weapon in moving people to dismantle oligarchies in contemporary Africa.

In *Beasts of no Nations*, Besong recasts the reality of Anglophone Cameroon's marginalisation in the Cameroon Republic as 'second class citizens', and their leaders as "insatiable locusts devouring tones of green, yet producing nothing but buckets of shit" (132). Shit is the main product in the play's setting, and its stench overwhelms the theatre space. In most of Besong's plays he uses the metaphor of shit and stench which necessarily has a dramatic effect on the actors and audience. Indeed, as the performance goes on, both the actors and audience develop a noseating feeling. The shit effect here is to arouse in both the actors and audience members a sense of disgust and revolt. The way the Anglophone marginalisation is described in this play creates a shared feeling of revolt among the oppressed. They have no identity in Ednuoay and this is because the "Anglos" are not believed to be integrated citizens. In an authoritative voice, Blindman in the play parodies his oppressors and imitates them first by putting on "glasses". Then he makes these cynical remarks to Cripple:

> **BLINDMAN:** Don't waste my time…
> Anglos are traitors and slaves.
> We saved them from the claws
> of the Igbos… (p.105)

In a cynical mimic-like tone, the blind man refers to the conceptualizations of the reunification of the two Cameroons. In effect in the play, the Anglophone Cameroonian's identity, with a status equal to that of the Night-soil-men, carriers of excrements is still not recognized in the union. The people live destitute lives, carting away night soil and their predicament is aptly captured in the bare nature of the stage and in images of

putrefaction. Through Narrator and because of their actions and reactions, these destitute characters are awakened to the reality of their situation and actively and insistently demand the right to be recognized as full-fledged citizens. Marginalisation and segregation are clear elements in the minds of these oppressed people. While the Francophones see themselves as superior, the Anglophones suffer as inferior and discriminated persons in their own country.

Unfortunately the play ends with the Night-soil-men's defeat in an attempt to overcome their dispossession and victimization. The final insolent exultation by Aadingingin that draws the curtains constrains and dooms the Night-soil-men once more to their 'valley of darkness': 'My Word is Double Law. I AM THE LAW!' (143) But again, such a totalitarian statement may instead suggest a call for a much more dedicated and organised social force to stop the oppression. It indicates that the incidents dramatised in the universe of *Beasts of no Nation* is a failed revolutionary attempt at stripping the ruling clique of its disgusting extremes, and restoring meaning to the social, economic and political conditions of the alienated masses. However this defeat of the liberation endeavour is the warning signal of doom and darkness emphasized in the central organising metaphor of shit and stench. This warning signal is that class exploiters, those with excessive power and connections, such as Aadingingin, would always usurp the final decisions about any persons or group of persons' future, if the struggle of the masses is not collectively well organised and coordinated. Besong's call to the oppressed people is that even though the regime has devised strategies to silence any revolution, the oppressed should not give in. They must continue the struggle and resist any form of oppression for it is only through this that they will gain freedom.

Finally, we can say that Besong's artistry is a dramatic imaginary aims at conscientising the oppressed masses. These are the people in Anglophone Cameroon for whom he is the spokesperson. If they can dare storm Aadingingin's office (the Francophone regime) in protest, it is an indication that they have been sufficiently awakened to that point of action.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine the literary engagement of Anglophone Cameroonian literature in the era of post-reunification discourses and "Anglophone Problem" in Cameroon. What stands out from the above discussion is that the "Anglophone Problem" is central in the writings of the second generation of Anglophone Cameroonian writers to which Bole Butake and Bate Besong rightly belong. It was proven that after the abolishment of the federated state in Cameroon, there emerged an "Anglophone" literary engagement with the agenda of creating an "Anglophone Cameroon" consciousness. The selected plays by Bole Butake and Bate Besong become very important in the emergence of an Anglophone and nationalist consciousness in contemporary Cameroonian literature. In this chapter I have discussed how the "Anglophone Problem" is differently perceived and represented in the selected dramatic imaginaries. One can conclude that there are elements of the past which magnify the "Problem" and these emanate from the colonial encounters. Butake's and Besong's dramatic imaginaries, in a more engaged artistic genre, grapple with the root problem, which is the reunification between the two Cameroons. Butake engages with the "Anglophone Problem" and the idea of "togetherness". Indeed he tends to advocate for dialogue, mediation, and forgiveness in

order to build a strong unified Cameroonian nation. On his part, Besong's plays are structured in a form of confrontational dramaturgies involving two unequal forces. This technique creates a shared feeling of revolt among the oppressed. The following chapter discusses how Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's selected plays imagine the post-reunification Cameroonian nation within the confines established by the "Anglophone Problem".

CHAPTER THREE

IMAGINARIES OF A POST-COLONIAL CAMEROON NATION IN THE SELECTED PLAYS

3.1. Introduction

Anglophone Cameroon drama is mainly concerned with a peculiar postcolonial political situation in which two peoples of opposing colonial experiences were brought together to form a nation. This chapter analyses how Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's dramaturgies imagine and represent the Cameroonian nation within the possibilities offered by dramatic art form. The post-colonial Cameroonian nation exists if it is understood from the perspectives of the "Anglophone Problem" and the different experiences of the Anglophone Cameroonians as a distinct category of people in the new nation. In the previous chapter we have discussed the history of colonization of Cameroon by three different European powers and how this has engendered cultural and linguistic differences. These differences impact on the nation building project in Cameroon. The communities that are artistically imagined by the playwrights often invoke a shared past or a cultural essence. The playwrights' projects seek to re-write the Cameroonian history from below, or recover the experiences of those who have been hitherto hidden from their history. They manifest a desire to articulate the standpoint of the downtrodden and to enable the "subaltern to speak".

From a Postcolonial standpoint the two playwrights project attempts to reinterpret and redefine the post-reunification Cameroonian nation. For Butake and Besong to realise

their imaginings of a Cameroonian nation, they engage their characters in actions and interactions that enable them "to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity", as postulated by Gilroy (1993:19). A national memory or rather a memory which creates a national identity is subject of Ernest Renan's essay "What is a Nation?" which remains a fundamental text on the subject. For Renan "a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle" and for all its cults, "that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory, this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea" (1990:19). This is the post-reunification Cameroon nation which is represented in the playwrights' possibilities of dramatic art form. In fact, the selected plays could be read as narratives that challenge the nation. Therefore, this drama, like any other literary genre, "had to do with not what texts mean but what they are made to mean by dominant critical views, which are then enshrined in educational systems" (Loomba, 1990:84).

Current debates among Anglophone Cameroonian writers, critics and elites stress the "intrigues, fraud, manipulations, betrayals, double standards and dictatorship" (Ambe 2007: 7) as handicaps to the nation-building project. Thus, the two playwrights' engagement with this project concerns, as Ambe further postulates, the "political domination and subjugation, of colonialism and neo-colonialism and of the search of identity and self-determination". In attempting to mimic the structure of the nation, the plays under study are revealing: they reflect these major issues against which Anglophone Cameroon writers react with increasing militancy. The overall argument here is that Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays participate in the formation of the nation by mapping out Anglophone Cameroonians' shared experiences. In doing so, they

subvert the ideological interests of the West and the Cameroonian ruling class that have long conditioned the relationship between literary imagination and nation building.

In the introduction to his seminal work Pakenham (1991: xxiii) observes that "The Scramble for Africa bewildered everyone, from the humblest African peasant to the master statesmen of the age". Africa in its pristine nature in 1880 first attracted the interest of five European powers in the name of Commerce, Christianity, Civilisation and Conquest. Pakenham further highlights that

> the Scramble gave Europe virtually the whole continent: including thirty new colonies and protectorates, 10 million square miles of new territory and 110 million dazed new subjects, acquired by one method or another. Africa was sliced up like a cake, the pieces swallowed by the five rival nations— Germany, Italy, Portugal, France and Great Britain (with Spain taking some scraps) — and Britain and France were at each other's throats. At the center, exploiting the rivalry, stood one enigmatic individual and self-styled philanthropist, controlling the heart of the continent: Leopold II, King of the Belgians (p.xxiii)

From this quotation we are given ironic "philanthropic" reasons that pushed the colonial powers to extend their territories in Africa. Many historians and politicians got puzzled as to why this "undignified rush" to Africa. It is from then that many scholars and critics started to theorize and approach from different angles the issues related to the colonial puzzling enterprise and agenda. The main concern here was how the scramble of Cameroon affected its society and how this generated linguistic and political tensions that became a source of the current post-reunification malaise in the nation-in-building.

According to Bill Ashcroft that post-colonialism does not mean "after colonialism" and that it had begun from the moment of colonization. It is thus concerned with the worlds which colonialism in its multiple manifestations confused, disfigured and distorted,

reconfigured and transformed. The effects of colonization are felt from the moment of the first colonial encounter and post-colonialism constitutes as its subject the way colonised societies adjusted and continued to adjust to the colonial presence. Ashcroft further emphasises that "post-colonialism exists*".* In other words the West continues to manifest its domination and influences in different manifest shapes: as an economic presence or a controlling cultural and economic authority, to exercise its influences in Africa's multiple lives, etc. For many in Africa, independent nations should ideally be identified by their unique and authentic cultures but in practice there are few places anywhere in the world which can claim to have remained pristine. We live with syncretism and post-colonial theory addresses this fact. In his indictment to colonialism Butake (1996) mentions that

> ...the colonial experience for the Africans in general and Cameroonians in particular was a very traumatic and psychologically, unnerving calamity. Such early and renowned African writers as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, […] have treated in a most vivid manner the calamitous iniquities inflicted on African peoples. […] All of them without exception treat the theme of colonialism in negative terms and their attitudes towards it are that of violent opposition because colonialism was destructive (p.24).

An analysis of many post-colonial African writings shows this destructive force of the colonial enterprise. Anglophone drama in general, and in particular the playwrights' reaction to the legacy of colonialism, support the argument that this drama articulates a network of experiences and visions to offer an engaged critique of the union of the two Cameroons and the subsequent post-reunification nation building attempts. The playwrights demonstrate a strong attachment to their history, which include colonial heritage and their integrity as leading light for their people who had been deprived of the basic right to citizenship.

3.2. Tracing the Origins: The Role of Myth and History in the nation building project

Dorfman (1993: 8) has written that "there may be no better way for a country to know itself than to examine the myths and popular symbols that it exports to its economic and military dominions". Myth and history are close kin inasmuch as both explain how things got to be the way they are by telling some sorts of story. In this analysis I explore a myth of origin (as presented by Bole Butake in *Family Saga*) that led to self-rediscovery and reconciliation as it went back to the Cameroon nation existence before the arrival of the imperial forces that scrambled the country. The myth in the play *Family Saga* by Bole Butake enables me to answer some questions that inform the problem of this thesis: how do Butake's imaginaries represent the Cameroonian nation within the confines of the "Anglophone Problem"? What, in this play, constitutes the "Anglophone Problem"?

In line with Jan Mohamed's "Manichean Allegory" the two supra-layers of the present Cameroonian nation can be understood as reflecting a binary opposition: the other and the subject. This binary opposition was a concern of many anti-colonial and post-colonial critiques. The post-reunification Cameroonian literary landscape is rich with many interpretations of the constructions of the insider and the outsider or simply who an Anglophone or a Francophone is. Butake's and Besong's plays are preoccupied with uncovering the ways in which these binaries work in Cameroon.

All societies give ample evidence of myths that had been transmitted from one generation to the other. Myths are nurtured and transmitted as the societal cultural heritage. In trying

to understand the function and meanings associated with 'myths' Hans Blumenberg's as read in Abrams (2009) argues that:

> ...the function of myth is to help human beings cope with the inexorability of reality and the course of events—a need that is not outmoded by scientific advances and rationality; and that myth is best conceived not as a collection of fixed and final stories, but as "a work"—an ongoing and ever-changing process that is expressed in oral and written narratives and involves the diverse ways in which these narratives are received and appropriated (p.206).

The quotation above instructs that myths serve to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives. Butake's *Family Saga* traces the origins of the Cameroonian nation through histories and myths that serve to explain the complexities and paradoxes inherent in the formation of the nation-state. This has also been a concern of Bhabha when he writes that "nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully encounter their horizons in the mind's eye". Bhabha's idea here is that the nation as an "imagined community" exists as narrated and that existence is ephemeral, temporal and transitory. Thus the creation of a nation is always a historical process which brings up to light deeds of violence that take place at the origin of the political formation. In this case, it explains certainly what happened in the attempt to establish a national identity and culture in the post-reunification Cameroon.

History is an important concern to Butake and Besong because it is through it that the post-reunification Cameroonian nation-state and the inherent ethnic divisions can be well understood. But for Butake myths are from a historical perspective. It is through myths and history that the playwrights revisit the role of the western imperialism and how the

present Cameroon nation-state was made in the image of the colonizer. Moreover, Butake's mythic representation enables me to have an examination and analysis of the linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity of Cameroon. The author's explanation of the Cameroonian present situation with myths translates the feelings of cultural identity and pride that Cameroonian people have in a society typified by ethnic diversity, shared cultural beliefs and language. But Butake's representation of the Cameroonian nation within the mythic possibilities is obscured by his nationalist spirit which, unfortunately seeks to place his own country in an 'immemorial past' where its arbitrariness cannot be questioned.

In Butake's *Family Saga* the stories that constitute the mythical origins of Cameroon transcend individual personal experience and identity. The native myth is reformulated to accommodate contemporary reality and open a way to self-retrieval, cultural recollection and cultural security. This mode of liberation ultimately rejects the logic of western politics with the rhythms of native ritual and the god. The problems facing his characters are of a collective nature and therefore need a collective exploration towards the mythic vision. This seems to be consistent with Wolin's remarks, cited in Cochran (2002: 425) that "the identity of a political society revolves around the myths and stories that its citizens remember and retell about themselves".

Kamala doubts about his true identity in the new deed of agreement and wants at any cost to discover who they really are. He announces his indignation and is still in search of his true origin. It is until the whole family has discovered who they really are that the reconciliation process that has been initiated will be possible. He shares the same views

with his own daughter, Sawa who insists on going back to the far past and discover their origin:

> Because we don't even know who we are na? […] But what about our grand-mummy and grand-daddy na? That is the only way to know our identity na? Who are we and how we are family with Kamalo na? Who are we na? Where did we come from before all these problems fell on us na? It is important for us to know our family story na? (p.56).

Again in utilising the possibilities of theatre practice as research, Butake uses his characters, specifically Kamala, when he sends out his children — Ngong and Sawa — to the community, to the archives and books, to find out their past as well as that of community. It is the narratives that they recollect as 'mythic' in character that are used. Kamala proposes this:

> We have to go back into the whole community and ask the elders of the clan about our history. We have to look into our history books and diaries kept by people who are known of telling the truth; especially priests, philosophers, travelers and even soothsayers (p.57).

The characters' identity—and thus that of the Cameroonian people as a whole—is still unclear and false for them. That is why there is an urgent need to revisit it in order to discover the truth and maybe understand the stereotypes associated with it. The performance of this invented myth of origin; Odhiambo (2008: 8) argues, "does not only arouse their consciousness, but also seems to liberate Kamala and his children from their culture of fear and silence." Because knowledge is power, Kamala has decided first to send his two children — Ngong and Sawa —to find out who they are for a purpose and with a particular notice:

> I asked both of you to go out and find your family story. Because if you don't know where you are coming from, you will never know where you are going to. Or you will always take the wrong direction (p.63)

If Kamala wants his own children "to know where they are coming from" this means that he wants them to discover their origin, their true identity and above all their ancestry, which here may be historical or mythic. Kamala himself does not know who, in actual sense, he is. That he was told he is a twin brother to Kamalo is even worse. The two brothers have a lot of differentiating traits, be they physical, moral and even biological. But the historical explanations that they were given of how they came to be a family with Kamalo were not convincing, a historical ancestry appears to them as distorted and therefore not a choice here. They rather need a mythical explanation of their true origin. Among other roles of the myth is explanation of what scientific knowledge cannot. Therefore, Sawa and Ngong believe that where their history has failed to satisfy them, myth will necessarily succeed. The mythical exploration enables them to chart out the right course of their life.

Butake uses myths and history to explain the cultural diversity, linguistic asymmetry, and ideological discrepancy between Anglophone and Francophone Cameroons about who they really are. The colonial history of Cameroon shows that the two major factions that constitute the Cameroonian superstructures resulted from the different imperial dominations. But one can imagine that the very populations that today see themselves with the lenses of Anglophone and Francophone identity had been there before the advent of the British and French. Butake thus re-imagines the origin of the Cameroonian nation by revisiting the myths that function as catalysts to the whole Cameroonian's consciousness. In this project Butake corroborates Renan (1990) who argues that

> Nations in this sense of the term are something fairly new in history. Antiquity was unfamiliar with them. Egypt, China and ancient Chaldia were in no way nations. They were flocks led by a Son of the Sun or by a Son of Heaven (p.9).

From this quotation Renan confronts the realities of the concept of nation and nationhood as they are lived. The present nations worldwide are a creation of modern man for political and economic purposes. In their mythical discovery, Kamala's children come back with impressing results which they present to their father as enacted in the play performance. It is Sawa who presents them first:

> Grand-mummy is a goddess na? The people say that one day she emerged from the smoking volcano of Mount Kamanda. That is why they call her Kamanda na? She can never die because of her extreme beauty and wealth na? (p.63)

The search motif as a dramatic technique enables the playwright to trace the birth of the Kingdom of Kamanda. Further, the play explores the collateral damages affecting the kingdom: invasion and rape by foreigners and the ensuing conflict between its children is a parody of the colonial history of Cameroon and its post-independent challenges. Since the post-reunification Cameroonian nation has been problematic to represent, the writer chooses to use a mythical exposition to capture the ideological and historical functioning of the binaries discussed above. In effect, the plays can be interpreted within the "Manichean dichotomy" in order to put bare the complexities that explain the origin of the Cameroonian nation. In fact, this nation that Butake's play interprets is "a historical result brought about by a series of convergent facts" (Renan, 1990: 12). The playwright revisits the past in order to rewrite the Cameroonian history marked by ethnic tensions and turbulences. In this project of national, cultural and historical venture Butake's *Family Saga* is preoccupied by the false spirit of reunification. In addition he uses mythic memory in order to achieve real reconciliation and unity. In unravelling the history of post-colonial Cameroonian identities, *Family Saga* brings the difficulty as to the rationality of the "Anglophone Problem". Butake paints dramatic responses to the politics

of national formation in Africa and Cameroon in particular. The dialogic formulation of the dramatic vision of the post-reunification Cameroonian nation is dealt with in the fallowing section.

3.3. The Cameroonian Nation in the Selected Plays: Representations and Controversies

Although I have defined the concept of "nation" from a literary and political perspective, it is important to assess how Bole Butake and Bate Besong corroborate, contest or validate it in their imaginaries. Indeed the playwrights grapple with the question of nationhood in Cameroon. Revisiting and relocating this notion within the discourses of "Anglophone Problem" and Post-colonialism then becomes crucial. Imagining or narrating the nation became the concern of many postcolonial writers and critics especially in the mid-20th century. The national state, national consciousness or nation-ness became an overwhelming concern because the boundaries or borders delimiting one national state from another had become unclear and questionable. This meant that the concept of nation appeared to be something inscribed in the mind rather than determined by geographical boundaries. It therefore became important for writers "to reflect on this disturbance especially as the nation and its narrative form could inform each other in a complex reflective way" (Ashcroft *et al* 1995: 118).

The main form of crisis manifested in Butake's and in Besong's selected plays is that of nationhood. They grapple with this crisis and how it could be contained. Read within the framework of Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as an "imagined political

community", I argue that Bole Butake and Bate Besong use the vehicles of memory, history and imagination to dramatize the ironies of nation building in Cameroon. With this in mind, I demonstrate that it is colonialism, neo-colonialism and the post-reunification poor leadership that led to the immediate emergence of the fragmented Cameroonian "nation". Consequently, there are evident cracks on the edifice of this "nation" right from the beginning of its creation. These cracks inform the fragility of "nation-ness" that typifies Cameroon today.

Almost all the existing literary genres have been used to narrate, imagine and represent the nation. But our focus here is on how drama as a genre can also be deployed in the project of nation formation and representation. Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's selected dramatic imaginaries represent the post-reunification Cameroonian national identities and develop discursive strategies to understand the issue of nation-state. Their plays are important because their form and theme contribute to the creation of a specific discourse of nation. They also illuminate for us the many problems that the Cameroonian nation confronts in its emergence. In their envisioning of the Cameroonian nation the playwrights paint an ideal picture of what the Cameroonian nation ought to be. Odhiambo (2009b) for example observes that Bole Butake's vision of the Cameroonian nation is romantic:

> though Butake credibly depicts, within the dramatic structure, the problems that militate against the realization of the sense of nation-ness, his own vision of nation-ness remains ever romantic— utopia, so to speak. This is because his own pronounced desires for national unity seems to lead him to some kind of utopia(n) vision (p.171).

Butake's vision of the post-reunification Cameroon nation may be romantic, but in a sense, this can be a way out to terminate the tensions between Anglophones and Francophone. What he proposes as interethnic marriages brings out the idea of unitary spirit that transcends the linguistic and historical differences. In this light, I perceive in Butake's dramatic presentation an indisputable role to play in redrawing the boundaries of the nation through his narrative. This narrative obviously is informed by memory and history in which the playwrights' nationalism is a trope for such things as 'belonging', 'bordering', and 'commitment'. That nation obviously springs out of many socio-political and historical turbulences that the narratives seek to redefine. That is the reason why Butake's soft tone, through forum, playback and intervention theatre aspires to transform the cultural and linguistic borders in Cameroon into open borderlands, that is, broad new spaces that unite the many different Cameroonian communities.

In political science, nation is often used synonymously with state or country to refer both to the territory, government and the holder of sovereignty which shapes the fundamental norms governing a particular people. Renan (1990 18-19) underscores this when he says that a nation is "a spiritual family, the outcome of the profound complications of history; a spiritual family, not a group determined by the shape of the earth". On his side Anderson (2006)argues that a nation is

> "… an imagined political community— and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow— members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (p.6).

Of course, a nation is only what it is when people living in it can represent themselves as members of that nation. Here I mean that the members have a collective attachment to

and acceptance of that concept of their nation as a way of identifying themselves to it. This process of identification moves back to the common origins and beliefs that are behind this concept of nation, for example the history and myths that justify this representation.

Family Saga recalls the complicated history of the present day Cameroon Republic with its resultant nationhood crises. Butake does that with some metaphorical names that remind the different forces that have played roles in the colonial and post-colonial Cameroonian experiences. In a mythical narration we are informed that a Goddess named Kamanda emerged from the mountain and gave the nation its name. The mountain in question here is Mount Cameroon and Kamanda stands for Kamerun, the name that Cameroon was having before it was colonised by Germans. In the play Yaman, Fiekafhim and Bakingoom represent Germany, France and Britain respectively—European powers that colonised Cameroon. Because after the defeat of Germany during the First World War Cameroon was divided between France and Britain with France taking two thirds of the territory, the two brothers in the play, Kamalo and Kamala stand respectively for Francophone Cameroon and Anglophone Cameroon with Kamalo as the bigger brother and Kamala the smaller brother. Ngong and Sawa, Kamala's children represent the two English-speaking regions of Cameroon – the North West and the South West regions. The "deed of brotherhood" is metaphorically used to refer to the 1961 Plebiscite in which Southern Cameroon under the United Nations supervision chose to join East Cameroon instead of Nigeria as a way of gaining its independence. The "Court of Deeds" is undoubtedly the United Nations Organization.

Crucial to the history of Cameroon is what has come to be known as the "Anglophone Problem". This problem is the central axis of most of Bole Butake and of Bate Besong's plays and other writers such as John Nkemngong Nkengasong, Victor Epie Ngome and Hansel Ndoumbe Eyoh. According to Nkengasong (2012), the "Anglophone Problem":

> ...is characterised by various forms of resistance to the marginalisation, assimilation, dictatorship and fake democratic practices which have, since the so-called independence, hindered Anglophone Cameroonians from having control over themselves and their destiny (p.2).

The Anglophones denounce the fact that they are considered as strangers in their own country. They regret that the reunification did not bring them what they expected. Nkengasong goes further to explain that "the French colonial policy dominates national life and therefore consciously (or unconsciously) annihilates the socio-cultural, economic and political culture of Anglophones, acquired from their experiences as members of a former British colony" (2). Once the so-called union between the two Cameroons started to raise questions and that the oppressed Anglophones wanted assistance from the former colonial master (The United Kingdom), they got ridiculed that it was their choice. In the play *Family Saga* Kamala is in search of why he is considered as a stranger in a family he believes is his own. His twin brother Kamalo has appropriated alone all what is the family's welfare. The justification he gives is that it is what his father says. Kamala decides to go and consult his own father who retorts:

> **BAAKINGOOM:** You chose your brother against my better advice. […]. You made your choice. You take responsibility for it.
>
> **KAMALA:** Yes, father. I made the choice because it was the best. Everyone in the court said it was the best. And you stood there by me. You signed the Deed of Brotherhood as witness. As my father. You stood by me when Kamalo and I shook hands and embraced each other. (p.20)

This conversation between a "father" and his "son" ironically explains how the union between the two Cameroons was achieved but with hidden agenda. The so-called "brotherhood" was later on changed into a deed of "bondagehood" as it is revealed in the following conversation between Kamala and Kamalo:

> **KAMALO:** You belong to me. That's what my papa says. If you do not like it here, you can go elsewhere. That's what my papa says.
>
> **KAMALA:** All right, I do not like it here. I am taking my things and going elsewhere. Where is the deed of brotherhood that we both signed? I need my share of the resources.
>
> **KAMALO:** You mean the deed of bondagehood? My papa is keeping it.
>
> KAMALA: Keeping what? Your papa is keeping what?
>
> KAMALO: The deed of bondagehood that you signed.
>
> **KAMALA:** Brotherhood
>
> […]
>
> **KAMALO:** Bondagehood! Stop wasting your breath. That's why I conceive, you execute. Period. (*Removing a document from his jacket*). Here's a certified true copy, signed and sealed by papa himself.

The terms and conditions of the deeds of brotherhood between Kamalo and Kamala pose confusion. From the very beginning of the play, we are presented with a verbal confrontation which reveals the lack of goodwill to accept the family contract. In fact Kamalo sees the agreement as a form of exploitation while Kamala still holds that it is brotherhood. The reunification in Cameroon that is dramatised here is built on falsehood. As a result, the newly formed family entity is, but a mere lie. In order to fit in the purpose of this study, this family quarrel is equated to the post-reunification controversial Cameroonian nation. This idea of nation in this context echoes Simatei's (2001: 24) observation that it "cannot cohere because it is internally ambivalent, marked as it were by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of its people". The kind of nation

that the play represents therefore revolves around some cultural identities of a minority people in a union with another cultural identity of a majority people. In this unified nation the minority group is seeking first the right to exist as full peoples, not as appendages in the union. In connection with the Cameroonian history, the minorities' claims are reminiscent of the Anglophone Cameroonians to exist as full citizens of Cameroon and be treated equally like the other partners, the Francophones. This is implicitly the major concern of Besong when he writes *Beasts of no Nation*. Ambe (2007:120) argues that in the play the setting and nature of the character drawing are deliberately built to provide a clear picture about the polarized nature of Ednuoay. On the one hand we have the Night-soil men, Cripple and Blind man, described by the playwright as "*the doomed carriers of mountains of fetid waste of the Ednouay city council"*(p.82).

The dramatic development of *Beasts of no Nation* enables us to experience essentially the stateless status and physical, material and depersonalisation of the oppressed characters pitted against insensitivity of their leaders. The doomed in the play are claiming for professional identity cards. This is symbol of recognition as full citizens. One without the card cannot claim their citizenship:

> **CRIPPLE:** They want their identity cards.
>
> **OTSHAMA:** (*dramatic*) What is a professional identity card, eh? What is a mere piece of paper?
>
> [...]
>
> **CRIPPLE:** (*parodying*) Money to print identification papers? We have tightened the economic belt to the last centimetre. (134-136)

The Night-soil men, Crippled and Blind, despite their physical deformities have been given a "job" which they are doing very well. However, they are undergoing a

psychological trauma which results from the refusal of professional cards. Their job is to carry shit. The image of carriers of shit is very important here because it is metaphorically used to refer to slavery. As mature people, the recognition they are claiming would allow them to enjoy the rights and obligation that any citizen would have in their own nation. However, despite the fact that they have been claiming for the card for years and years and toiled for it so confidently by carrying excrements, they are told to go on enjoying the fresh air produced by the working environment.

Characterization in the two plays, *Family Saga* and *Beasts of no Nation* enables us to understand the post-reunification Cameroonian society that is composed of two major factions as presented in the plays. On the one hand we have the leaders who enjoy all the rights and oppress the downtrodden who are not recognized as citizens and thus only given odd jobs. Besong alludes to the way Anglophones are given minor positions in the highly centralised Francophone dominated country. This denial of their rights to citizenship is accelerating their demand of secession as observed by Awasom (2003).

> The threats of the disintegration of bilingual Cameroon are real, if we are to go by the activities of Anglophone pressure groups in Cameroon, and the radicalism of the Anglophone Diaspora in the United States, who express their "secessionist" views on the Internet in the SCNC forum. But the situation can be reversed if genuine decentralization of power, in the direction of federalism, is introduced, and Anglophones are constitutionally guaranteed equal status with Francophones in all spheres of national life (p.114).

Cameroon Anglophone marginalisation has led to many dissenting voices manifested through petitions to the United Nations Organization, the holding of two All Anglophone Conferences and the emergence of a separatist group – SCNC (Southern Cameroon National Congress) determined to declare the independence of Southern Cameroon if

need arises. The degree of the frustrations of Anglophones in Cameroon is summarized in the declarations made at the two conferences held in Buea and Bamenda in 1993 and 1994 respectively.

The reunification process (or what Butake dramatises as "deed of brotherhood") was meant to guarantee equal ownership of the national wealth. The Anglophones agree that they are not treated as such. This therefore has created the "Anglophone Problem" Consciousness. Thus the Anglophone problem has embraced the domains of politics and economics where Anglophones are systematically ostracised. This is the core of nationhood crises in Cameroon.

From the beginning of the play *Family Saga*, the tension and conflict that exist between the two major linguistic entities in Cameroon are demonstrated by the disagreement between the two major characters, Kamalo and Kamala. But Butake converts this disagreement into an issue that needs to be debated on in order to find a negotiated solution. Butake's dramatic structure here is opposed to the idea of separation of the two Cameroons as is the case with Besong. At the time of publication of these plays, there were pressure groups in Cameroon that were claiming for separation. According to Ambanasom (2004), the first ever All Anglophone Conferences took place in Buea and Bamenda. The Anglophones crystallized their grievances against the Francophones and enshrined them in the *Buea and Bamenda Declarations,* both of which threaten to separate the English-speaking section of Cameroon as an independent state if certain conditions are not fulfilled.

The other cultural differences between the more than 250 tribes in Cameroon are manifested in the play through the discrepancies of manners as well as the opinions of Ngong and Sawa. Evidently nationhood in Cameroon is at risk. In his foreword to *Betrothal Without Libation*, Butake himself admits that "the theme of inter-ethnic marriage in the cyclorama or backdrop of prejudices is still relevant today as it was more than two decades ago" (5). Butake is mindful of "the nation's composite nature" where distinct individuals are constituted as one within one nation. He further reminds us of his concerns in writing drama: "right from the outset of my first steps in creativity, I was concerned about Cameroon as a nation, rather than a conglomeration of tribal states with individuals who were ready to get at each other's throat just because they were from another cultural background" (5). This is obviously what he does in *Betrothal without Libation*. In the social universe of the play there is a conflict which denies marriage of people from different tribes. Mr. Eyong is informing his in-law to be, Fointam Ngong, about the problem he himself got when he was courting his wife:

> I know what I am talking. Because when I was courting Elissa's mother I got hell from her father. He swore that he wouldn't let his daughter marry a Nyangi. With my father it was not a problem because my mother is Bakossi. I wonder if your people will take it kindly (p.15).

Mr. Eyong knows because he has experienced a problem of being accepted to marry from a tribe that is not his. Nyangis in this play are associated with some stereotypes that discriminate them from the rest of the society. This discrimination still exists since when Fointam takes Elissa to his parents he also gets the same treatment. Bakossi people, young and old, have bad impression about the Nyangis. Before Fointam reaches his family, Simbong, a park collector announcing drivers' destinations gets surprised that

Fointam is bringing a wife to a village of people who do not share her ethnic belonging. Simbong is astonished to hear that Fointam's wife-to-be, Elissa, does not speak their language (as an identity marker): "Doesn't she? You mean she grew out of Kom or what? Even then, some parents must be terribly careless. *Not to teach their children our language*" [Italics, my emphasis] (35). Here the playwrights' engagement with "language" issues echoes the French and English languages conflicts in Cameroon. In other words, Butake is fascinated with healing the discrimination, as Brennan (1990: 48) would call it, "on the basis of linguistic distinctions considered to be inviolable and absolute". In fact, people who do not speak French in an Anglophone area (and vice versa) are always considered as strangers, outsiders and thus are enemies to be discriminated against. This marriage problem that fascinates the playwright alludes to the current question of nation building between Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians.

Simbong is so deceived that he does not understand Foitam's behaviour: "Is that true? And she is your wife? Stop deceiving me. You book people are very daring" (35). The "book people" Simbong is talking about are the intellectuals in his ethnic group. However, these are the same people Butake uses to bring about the social changes he aims at. These "book people" are mainly the young generations in whom Butake has his hope because they do not attach any importance in ethnic stereotypes. These among others in the play are Mr. and Mrs. Eyong, Fointam, Elissa and Sama. All of them have reached a certain level of education. The presentation of such characters in the play suggests that, for Butake, the tensions between the Anglophones and the Francophones in

Cameroon can be dealt with by the intelligentsia. In this sense this play fits well in Bhabha's idea of "(C) ounter-narratives of the nation (that) continually evoke and erase its totalising boundaries—both actual and conceptual—disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essential identities" (1990: 24). However, this idea of boundaries established in the name of identities reminds us of the central argument of "What is a nation?" a lecture delivered by Ernest Renan at the Sorbonne in 1882. His argument is to deny any naturalistic determinism of the boundaries of nations. According to Renan these boundaries of nations are not dictated by language, geography, race, religion, or anything else.The essential identities in the context of Cameroon have to do with who you are in the reunion so that you can enjoy the privileges offered by the nation.

For his nation building project to succeed, Butake has hope in the category of the educated population. And to make this come out clearly, he creates a dramatic atmosphere whereby the illiterate and literate, old and young express their diverging views and opinions about inter-ethnic marriage. In fact when Fointam gets home and tries to introduce Elissa to the Ngongs, the five wives of his father get disappointed as well. At first sight, they could predict Elissa's ethnic group. Her father's name Bobe Eyong "does not sound Bikom" (44). So she is an outsider who does not have any place among the Bikom. Without hiding their bitter feelings, they scorn at Fointam in these terms: "why do they go and carry women from so far off when we don't know what to do with girls in here? How is she going to speak to us now that we can't speak grammar?" (45). From all indications Fointam has betrayed his tribe and thus cannot receive any blessing. However, for Butake's purpose to be achieved, the dramatic actions must be well thought

of: Fointam has to transcend the barriers established by his tribesmen and alone decides to marry without his family's libation. Instead of Fointam's family, the couple receives blessings from Mr. Eyong and their wedding is officiated. They later on become prosperous. They beget children, a lot of animals and crops. More interestingly, before the play closes, we meet Fointam's father— through an envoy— pleading for forgiveness.

Butake deploys reconciliation as a tool for dramatic aesthetic and socio-political engagement in post-reunification narratives of conflict in Cameroon. It is on this note of reconciliation, and this is the writer's intention in this play, that Fointam makes pronouncements of powerful words: "Above all, we cannot build this nation on tribalism and partisanship. I have forgiven my people."(76) Therefore if Butake's play claims to have succeeded in bringing unity where it is not actually there, his task in imagining the Cameroonian nation is then one "of reclaiming community from within boundaries defined by the very power whose presence denied community (Brennan, 1990: 58).

After examining the shortcomings of colonial and tribal boundaries that brought divisions and tensions among the different groups that constitute the Cameroonian nation state after independence, Bole Butake has tried to imagine new borders for the communities – borders not based on physical or geographical, real or imagined landmarks but on communal values such as solidarity, sacrifice, compromise, hybridity, national consciousness and above all, the will to live together as only Cameroonians.

Most of Butake's plays resort to history not to assign blame but rather to offer opportunity for reconciliation and renovation: "Nothing can be hidden from the face of the sun!/History can never be changed or forgotten" (*Family Saga*, 82). For him history is therefore only important for remembrance. It has to be remembered simply as a starting point for something new, hence the project of nation building or the relocation of colonial borders. In this sense *Family Saga* can be read as a spectacle designed to remind citizens of the chronic dishonesty and abuse of power which colonialism had bred in generations of native politicians in Africa. *Family Saga* inevitably, Odhiambo (2009b: 3) would argue, invites a close attention to that whole world-view, which encompasses, in a historical sense, his (Butake's) dramatic imagery and the allegorical figurations. Furthermore, Odhiambo observes that

> ...historically, Cameroon initially was an estate of Germany, then known as German Cameroon. In the post-World War I period, its identity was to change radically, when it was partitioned arbitrarily and shared disproportionately between the new imperial masters, Britain and France. This resulted in the formation of two entities: an Anglophone minority and a Francophone majority. The two distinct entities, differentially defined by their respective masters' tongue, operated unilaterally until the signing of the accord of reunification, which would later face severe difficulties given the very different cultural ideologies and heritage(s) that each had been bequeathed by the respective colonial master.

It is in this historical background that the question of nationhood/nation-ess within the confines of "Anglophone Problem" can be well approached. Butake uses the allegory of nationhood through a historical myth that engages his characters in delving into old historical narratives that define Cameroon as a nation as was demonstrated above. After a long trajectory of discoveries (of bad experiences and wrongdoings) and self-examination (both at the individual and collective levels), the past enables for the characters to reach some agreements which will produce a promising future.

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the historical and mythical presentation of the "Problematic nation" enables Butake to celebrate the Cameroonian oneness and unity that have been a core value since time immemorial. It is this unity that can liberate Cameroon from its crippling legacy of French and British imperialism. Butake's new borders are based on an imagined union in brotherhood. In fact, it may not be a biological brotherhood of the kind but a union that recognizes the differences. Stage direction of the first movement of the play *Family Saga* is the playwright's presentation of the differences of the two "brothers". It is a presentation that highlights the fact that the two are not one and the same, morphologically and biologically:

> Kamalo, tall and fat and wearing a three piece suit, is laughing in an easy chair drinking and smoking and listening to a Bikutsi tune which is very loud. Kamala, a diminutive man in a workaday jumper, enters from backstage. He is thoroughly angry. He turns down the volume of the music

The idea of difference between the so-called brothers already comes out clearly from the beginning of the play. It is emphasized and proved to be true when the two brothers agree on a search for their identity to prove whether they are truly brothers. Their physiological appearance indicates that the two are not the same. While Kamalo is tall, fat and wealthy; Kamala is a too small man who, because of his being exploited, cannot even entre in the shared estate from the front. He appears from the backstage to express his anger and hunger to Kamalo:

> **KAMALA:** Kamalo why are you so greedy? What happened to my share of the provisions? Why can't you ever be considerate. How many times must I remind you that there are two people living on this estate?
> **KAMALO:** Papa came.
>
> **KAMALA:** Which papa? You think you are the only one with a papa? Why must your father pest us every time and always taking what belongs to me? And you won't

> even sweep out the barn and repair the shelves in readiness for the next harvest (p.8)

Kamala and Kamalo may be presented as "twin brothers" but they are conscious of the fact that they have different fathers. What annoys Kamala much is that Kamalo is lazy; yet his father still comes to empty the barn that the former has filled. At this juncture, Butake wants us to link the present post-reunification in Cameroon with the colonial experiences. The obvious differences between the two brothers metaphorically represent the geographical boundaries drawn by colonialism in Cameroon where we have one for Anglophones and the other for Francophones (though as the play progresses we come to discover that none of these is bearing any sustainable historical and mythical justification). The research motif as a tool to discover the relation between the two "brothers" has the end result that the obvious differences are merely constructed. These can be effaced not physically but in the people's imagination through elements of brotherhood— tolerance, selflessness and invention. But for this to be successful it entails the agencies of sacrifice and will— Kamalo has to accept the "force of argument" and not "the argument of force". The celebration in a form of communal performance of the result of the investigation plunges the whole family into a "liminal" area of experience— a courageous act that aims at changing the patriarch Kamalo and perhaps redeems mankind. By writing a history of the Cameroon as a full community Butake is in part involved in forging the two Cameroons into one nation. Such a project requires, outside the political sphere, implanting the idea of nationhood in the citizens of the different regions. According to Gellner (1984: 168), nationalism is not the awakening of nations to consciousness but rather it invents nations where they do not exist. His idea is that the concept of nation should precede the fact of nation. Such a formulation is promising for

the project behind *Family Saga*. It indicates that Butake's fusion of different histories into one federated history could indeed be a precursor to nationhood. Seton-Watson (1977: 5) on his part remarks that "a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they have formed one". In relation to the play then Seton-Watson's idea suggests that if all that is wanted to form a nation is an idea and the people to accept it, then there would seem to be nothing preventing the formation of the Cameroonian nation as imagined by Butake. Using elements of poetry, music, dance, song, narrative, mime and influences of Western and local folk traditions; but undergirding them with personal experiences, Butake tries to weave new ties of brotherhood in Cameroon as a response to the tragic happenings of the past and their effects in the present. This will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters.

3.4. Identity Crisis: Reconstructing the Past, Deconstructing the Present and Imagining the Future

In this study I use the term identity to denote a set of personal and behavioral characteristics which define an individual as a member of a certain group. Based on race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture people distinguish themselves from other groups and form their understanding and pride in who they are. However, as is the case in Cameroon individuals may possess more than one cultural identity as a result of historical events (e.g. colonisation), geographical and social mobility and their desire for belonging to a particular community. This section discusses the question of identity crisis in the post-reunification Cameroon. As a matter of fact one of the problems in Cameroon is the identity question, that is, identity based on cultures inherited from the last colonial forces

(Britain and France)**.** While the politics of identity in the majority of cases has been predicated on primordial historic/ethnic communities, the Anglophone community in Cameroon joins the rare cases of the world in a politics whose very basis can be traced back to the colonial reshaping of the political configuration. The problems of identity within the modern Cameroon nation-state and its persistence are a concern of Bole Butake and Bate Besong in their dramaturgies. They make a particularly strong case in affirming the existentiality of an Anglophone identity crisis in Cameroon because there has always been denial by successive Francophone regimes of such an identity (with the subsequent problem). Here it is important to remind us that in Cameroon the concept Anglophone is on the one hand mainly political. On the other hand it is more ethnic, cultural and regional than simply linguistic. With the current sociolinguistic and political state of the country which makes a primary distinction between Anglophone and Francophone parts, the attachment to English and French languages as icons of linguistic identity is always made prominent. But more so, being Anglophone (or Francophone) in Cameroon becomes so close to having another ethnic identity as observed by Wolf (2001: 223); "the feeling of unity is so strong that 'being Anglophone' denotes a new ethnicity, transcending older ethnic ties."

The past can be rendered intelligible only if some selection is made, around some focus. As we have discussed in chapter two above one of the roles of a myth is to make history intelligible and meaningful by selection, by focusing on a few bits of the past which thereby acquires permanence, relevance and universal significance. In the plays under study the distant past is made alive to suggest a better future for the Anglophone Cameroonian community. Through the myth of origin Butake in *Family Saga* retells the

past by applying modern historical thinking in the guise of common sense to a mythical, non-historical tale. At the end of the play, Kamalo in acknowledging his unforgivable mistakes, makes this pronouncement: "Nothing can be hidden from the face of the sun! /History can never be changed or forgotten. The truth has at last come out!" (82) This truth is the discovery of the true origin and identity of the two brothers, Kamalo and Kamala. Before the self-discovery research Kamala and his children conducted about "Who they are", their identity was not known and if so, was often misinterpreted. Thus the exploration into the mythic past enables them to understand the present state of their true identity.

At the beginning of the play Kamalo and Kamala seem to be unaware or too detached from their historical background. That is why the playwright deliberately allows them first to reconstruct their past while projecting them in the future which, in a sense is a transformation of the present. For many postcolonial African dramatists, the past is the mirror of the present. A case in point is Francis Imbuga (1976: 65) whose protagonist, Jusper, laments his dismal life in these words: "We have no future until we see it in the past. That is the only time we may know we once had a future". Like Jusper, Kamala's present has to be destroyed and replaced by an imagined future which is created in the image of the past. Structurally, this is made possible by the movement of the play from the timelessness characteristic of myths to the contemporariness of the myth in the play:

> Once upon a recent time, in the land of Kamanda, the people woke up from their peaceful sleep with a jolt because a loud rumbling coming from the direction of Mount Kamanda. […]Never before had the people set eyes on a woman of such exceptional beauty and wealth. Never before had their forebears shown such concern for them by sending a goddess in the form of this exceptional woman of beauty and wealth as witness of their love and concern for the well being of their living (p.76).

To project the future of the nation in building, Butake reinterprets first the past, a past which is brought closer to the present by the use of the time expression "once upon a recent time". That expression— and not the common "once upon a time"— is deliberately used by the playwright to suit his purpose of reconciling the past with the present in order to project the future. The "exceptional beauty and wealth" that the story-teller refers to is the physical and cultural beauty and wealth of Cameroon before the advent of colonialism. In fact, being a coastal country it is reported to have many minerals which attracted the colonialists.

The essence of Butake's plays is the unraveling of his expression of a need to belong to an environment of peace and mutual understanding. In a keynote address at the opening of the second conference on Critical Perspectives on Cameroonian Writing at the University of Buea, Butake starts his speech by this remark: "I will begin my discourse by showing proof that I know who I am" (19). I do agree that a writer's identity must be sought in his/her writing. Then Butake's works could rightfully be viewed as a dramatic exploration of the nature of the self. His plays in particular reflect national elements which influenced the relationship between Anglophones and Francophones in Cameroon. But the question of 'Who am I?" is instrumental in the playwright's construction of characters in that he frequently manipulates their roles to project aspects of Anglophone Cameroonian's life and their ideals. His fashioning of an ideal identity for himself needs to be done to re-examine the identity crisis in his work. The strong affinity that he has with the characters he creates emerges in his efforts to depict an ideal world of existence,

a "universe seen through the eyes of small, individual life dramas" as Head (1990: 77) would call it.

I concur with Butake's dramatic imaginary and how he presents characters who reflect their own 'life dramas'. In effect in his quest for his identity in a majority Francophone dominated nation-state, Butake's plays reflect the identity crisis in Cameroon but also personal and internal tribal tensions as a member of the Noni tribe, which is the minority in the Bui Division where he was born (for more details see Butake, 1996). Though a minority tribe, Butake reveals further that "Noni people never hesitated to proclaim their separate identity and even went as far as submitting a memorandum to the United Nations Organisation in New York" (19). However, Butake's characters in most of his plays embody but the same attitudes as his immediate people of his native village, Bui. Indeed, Kamala and Kamalo in *Family Saga* seek for a unified family. The same applies for Fointam and Elissa in *Betrothal without Libation*.

However, contrary to Butake, Besong is also concerned with the lost Anglophone identity. To regain it he chooses to use revolutionary characters that mimic the past with an aim to understand the post-reunification Cameroonian state of political affairs. Many of his characters and events to which he refers, come to life in the world of the plays. This world itself, the 'creative setting' is complete and vital enough to contain the actions of the plays and shows them in full perspective. For example in *The most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* he provides the reader with a broad historical time and personalities that constitute the characters who assume the roles of the leaders in their post-colonial period. The characters in Act I Scene I role-play fawning part members and stooges who

praise their oppressive leaders. The issues they enact relate to the dubious political rhetoric which ensured the continuous reign of the leaders at the time. The characters point out that, at that time, it was legislation not through parliamentary debates, but "through bribery and coercion", law and order "through banditry and piracy" (9). Besong is dramatising the whole judiciary system that was known in Cameroon at the time as "Benevolent Touracracy" (10). In effect this was a system of governance based on the "benevolent" wishes of the country's leader at the time.

The characters later on move from the role of party stooges to represent the role of the leaders in their "post-political era", and then situate the time of the action. As Badjidka says it was in 1972, a time he immediately tells his companions he does not want to be reminded of, because of a certain agreement signed between them then. This is probably the same agreement Butake dramatises in *Family Saga* and that was discussed above. This agreement came to suppress the Anglophone identity and Toura accuses Badjidka to have been directly active in the process. However Badjidka gives credence to the remark when in a fleeting moment he conceded his role in the dubious agreement:

> **Badjidka:** What had I in common with the peasant Anglophone suppressed minority slobs scratching a life out of very tough ground of your Re-unification, Comrade Toura? Babacracy preached Big Man Chop. Big Man Cho, Anglophone Quench! (p.11)

In this excerpt the dramatisation of the Anglophone Cameroonian identity is done by moving backwards and forwards into the history, past and present, of Cameroon. In the subsequent scenes of the play we have a dramatisation by Toura and Badjidka (the lepers) of Toura and Badjidka (the politicians) as retired politicians looking back at their acts and

political history. In fact, their past does not dissolve into the present but is reinterpreted in a form of a dramatised flashback to make it more alive and meaningful.

Butake and Besong's plays reflect a 'quest for identity', an identity that is free from the colonial and neo-colonial oppression; an identity that is achieved by breaking away from the values and norms of the Francophone dominant culture. Such development towards self-realization and self-assertion towards Anglophones realities is called, in Ngugi's words, a process of "decolonising the mind" towards a sense of self-worth. However, in trying to do so Butake strives to create controversial characters that belong to an Anglophone identity but more often than not transcend the barriers imposed by their tribal and ethnic confinements, as was discussed in the previous section. Therefore, in pursuing this quest, the playwrights employ melodramatic forms as vehicle for exploring the self. Watts (1989) points to a:

> [writer's] means to find a balance between [himself) and the outside world and investigate tensions between subjective and objective way that orders our whole life....through wrestling with images of [his] past life and resolving [his] relation to the self that exists at the time of writing, [the writer] is able to search out and assess [his] inner standing and thereby come to terms with reality (p.114).

Watts here makes two important points: that finding a 'balance between one's subjectivity and objectivity' is fundamental to the process of identity. In trying to find this balance Butake and Besong use a methodology that enables the characters to rebuild or reconstruct their denied identity. The literary orientation in these plays sprouts from their close scrutiny and consideration of the present identity conflict between the Anglophones and the Francophones in the post-reunification Cameroon.

The plays are a dramatic engagement with identity politics in the evolution of the Cameroon nation. They are critical interventions or commentaries on that identity evolution and were more importantly concerned with how external dynamics imposed by the European colonization had introduced new identity concepts in the process of Cameroonian historical reconstruction. The linguistic identities create a classification of groups in dichotomous terms of superiority and inferiority. The multilingual nature of Cameroon (although officially termed and treated as bilingual in French and English) and its corresponding multiethnic complexity (with over two hundred and fifty identified ethnic groups) fuel the constant confusion that the ideal Cameroonian goes through as to where to lay the pledge of his identity. Of course in the building of a given identity, the linguistic component is of vital importance because as Giles and Coupland (1991: 107) postulate; culture, for instance, "could be viewed as derived from, if not constituted in, communication and language practices". On such a platform, therefore, where should the Cameroonian identify himself/herself? With the foreign English or French languages? With his/her native language or with both? These questions are of great importance to the understanding of the identity question in Cameroon since its independence. It is perhaps in this perspective that the playwrights had launched their crusade with the hope of accurately reinterpreting the meandering images, and in that process offer a realistic picture of the contemporary Cameroonian identity crisis.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed at analysing how Bole Butake and Bate Besong imagine and represent the Cameroonian nation within the possibilities offered by dramatic form. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that on the one hand the Cameroonian "Anglophone

Problems" takes roots in the colonial enterprise that scrambled the once united Cameroon nation. On the other hand, in the plays under study, colonialism cannot constitute a justification of the present identity and leadership crises in Cameroon. Through the vehicles of memory and imagination Bole Butake and Bate Besong attempt to revisit and reconstruct the histories of their imagined societies but which in a general sense reflected the experiences of Cameroon nation building crises. Using elements of myth and history, but supporting them with personal experiences, Butake tries to weave new ties of identities in Cameroon as a response to the tragic happenings of the past and their effects in the present. The two playwrights indict colonialism and independence nationalists as responsible for present day identity and leadership crises in Cameroon. More often than not, in their attempt to creating characters who are the makers of their own histories, Butake and Besong confront the subjects and the worlds that have produced them. The subjects are empowered in fighting for their rights, engaging negotiations and dynamics of power and resistance. The following chapter resituates Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays into their tempo-spatial relations that give them meanings. The questions of "Anglophone Problem", the identity and leadership crises place them into their tempo-spatial contexts.

CHAPTER FOUR

(RE) SITUATING BOLE BUTAKE'S AND BATE BESONG'S IMAGINARIES IN THEIR TEMPO-SPATIAL CONTEXTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter builds on the idea that the plays contain tempo-spatial relations that define the Francophone Anglophone identity politics in Cameroon. In this chapter, I examine the literary landscape of the selected Anglophone Cameroonian drama as shaped by the authors' depiction of time and space. More specifically this chapter resituates Butake's and Besong's imaginaries within the temporal-spatial undercurrents that give them meanings. The concern of the state of the nation by Cameroonian Anglophone creative writers has become urgent especially because of the characteristic political upheavals after reunification. In fact there is a sound malaise among Cameroonians against the political governing structures, but Anglophones' sentiment is different. They thought that if they had not united with the French-speaking Cameroon, things could be different. The plays at hand appeared at a time when the Anglophone Cameroon literary landscape was filled with a number of other creative writings which were represented in different unequivocal terms the politico-linguistic anxiety. It is against this background that the chapter's central concern is based. In trying to understand how the development of the Cameroonian nation is affected by the passage of time, I also highlight important aspects of text analysis and how they are closely connected with spatial-temporal text structure. The concepts of time and space are very crucial to understand Butake's and Besong's political positioning and the nature of the nation their plays suggest.

4.2. A Chronoscopic Drawing: the use of time and space in the plays

The relation between time and space in literary texts has been a central problem in criticism and theory. In the following discussion time implies lived historical time as well as temporal dimensions of the various events in the plays. Space in the present context would be understood primarily as a complex of natural, physical, economic, political, administrative, and demographic structures that function as conduits for "Anglophone Cameroon" literature and its reception and which gradually can be made possible on full development of the literary field. In this study, however, it does not not imply a deterministic and narrow understanding of geographic space, but assume that space is one of the chief factors in literary culture's distribution and dynamics. These aesthetic contexts display an important richness of temporal-spatial representation, a richness that the playwrights attend to in such a way that their imaginaries capture well the "Anglophone Problem" and the subsequent nation building problems.

The concepts of time and space have a complicated history as they belong to basic categories of philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, linguistics, art. One of their important notions is that of chronotope, introduced by Bakhtin (1981: 84) and which is referred to as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that is artistically expressed in literature". From this perspective the plays prove to be replete with many orientations toward the past, present, and future time that greatly complicates the spatial-temporal character through the imaginations. For instance, an overarching theme in Besong's plays is that he does not only engage with the discourses of the reunification process, but also goes further to respond to the contradictions and ironies engendered by

the process and what came to be known as the "Anglophone Problem" in Cameroon. Therefore it is important to analyze his cultural politics and consider his plays as zeitgeist writings.

As noted above, Bakhtin is using the term chronotope to express the inseparability of space and time. He has not only made a detailed analysis of literary time in texts belonging to different genres, but has introduced the term, which he understands as a formal-substantial category of literature. In the same lines of ideas, I first examine how, in the selected plays, time condenses, compresses and becomes artistically visible. Further analysis has been done on space as a literary concept which is confronted by the term used in its original context. However, I am conscious that the popularly used metaphor of "text as space" raises questions in relation to narratology (and dramaturgy) and scientific approaches to textual analysis. As a matter of fact, whereas space is being intensified, it is being drawn into the movement of time, plot, and reflects the post-reunification Cameroonian history in the dramatic universe of the plays.

Morever, a reading of the play *Beasts of no Nation* offers a chronotopic presentation of time and space in the very first lines of the story: stage directions at the beginning of the play indicate how the characters' place and time are interrelated:

> Narrator, priest-like, stands like a statue by a lavatory. The stench in the lavatory stands in the theatre like the pangs of the S.A.P (Structural Adjustment Program). One of the night-soil men sits on an empty bucket. He is asleep besides his Night-soil equipment (p.8.5)

The lavatory as a place where the first scene of the play is moving is meaningful, again the reference to S.A.P (Structural Adjustment Program) is very important as a spatio-

temporal element. In effect, it is reminiscent of the 1980s in Africa, a time when many structural governance changes affected the lives of citizens. The relation between the time (S.A.P) and space (filthy city of Ednouay) is very important. They are associated with the economic crisis, the denigrating type of job the Night-soil men are given the stench and decay, both physical and moral, in Ednouay. In relation with Bakhtin's theory of chronotope, such a place and time are characterized with "emotional-evaluative intensity" that gaives deep meanings of the play to the reader-audience. Real historical space and time are intertwined in the plays through the articulation of real historical persons in such a time and space. This is consistent with Chambers (1994) when he states that:

> History comes to us not as raw, bleeding facts but in textual production, in narratives woven by desire (for truth) and a will (for power). What are transcribed and translated are traces, residues, shadows and echoes […] there is no obvious clarity to be narrated but rather a continual sorting through the debris of time (p.16).

Chambers' idea of the role of history to inform literature constitutes a journey motif back into the past to confront the memories and secrets that weigh heavily on the present of the author. Since space and time cannot be defined independently, in order to create an artistic chronotope in the plays under study, the spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. The many stage directions in Besong's plays indicate that he is concerned with realistic times and spaces as a dramatic deployment. In fact, in *Requiem for the last Kaiser* for instance, stage directions act as simplifiers to the audience/reader's understanding and interpretation of the complex reality of Agidigidi. In that particular play, the locations and times appear as a record of physical and historical elements that attempt to lay bare the levels of reality in the post-

reunification Cameroon. First, the play functions as a direct response to the processes and trends in Cameroon's decolonisation. It also fictionalizes Cameroon's recent history and politics into a dramatic text. Iduote, the Presidential Palace in Adigidigi where the incidents of the play unfold is a corruption of Etoudi, a neighborhood of the real presidential residence in Cameroon. The same corruption of places, names are done in *Beasts of no Nation*. The story takes place in Ednouay, a city in Ewawa nation. Ednouay becomes Yaounde when read from right to left. The instances make it easy to narrow down dramatic actions and references in the fictive Agidigidi and Ewawa settings to actual realities on the physical Cameroonian stage.

In *Beasts of no Nation* the playwright refers to SAP (Structural Adjustment Programme): "*The stench from the lavatory stands in the theatre like the* SAP *(Structural Adjustment Programme).* (85). In fact, by the end of the 1970s, many sub-Saharan African countries were in serious economic difficulties including high inflation, unmanageable balance of payments and fiscal deficits. To address these financial and economic problems, international and bilateral donors urged and sponsored massive reforms, which, instead of bringing about positive effects, has been less successful (Umali *et al*, 1992). Similarly, the plays bring out issues that the politico-economic arena of the 1970s onwards has significance in the life of the post-reunification Cameroonian nation. For instance the words such as SONARA (1), CENER, Lac Nyos (64) and ONCPB, STABEX (68) in *Requiem for the last Kaiser* are real references to existing government owned companies that were mismanaged in the 1970s in Cameroon. The reference to these companies indicates the entrenchments of Akhikikriki's politics and overted lust for materialism. The mismanagement of these companies also indicates how Agidigidi is being taken

backwards by the same people who are supposed to promote socio-economic development. The regime in power creates conditions in which the ordinary citizen questions the leadership. Therefore this theatre is to serve as a provocation on the possibilities of reconstruction and restoration.

However, as mentioned above, Besong's characters and events in the plays do not leave any room for such a hope. Not only do the government leaders manifest extreme totalitarianism and dictatorship, but also the church institution is no different. In *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, Evangelist Amougou Absalom Atangana, the church minister in Agidigidi is the epitome of the same evils committed by the government. In fact, instead of being an embodiment of moral and spiritual values, the church has transformed its holy mission to the service of the despots of the country. In the "second fragment of the scene", Woman says that the mission of the Pastor in Agidigidi is basically hypocritical, materialistic and corruption: "Openly dine and wine with those who decreed famine for the peasant…is a willing appendage of capitalism and the staunchest ally of those who treat our workers the way they treat their ex-ploughs!" (11-13). The role of the Christian religion and its hypocrisy/mockery is also the concern of Butake's *The Survivors* whose *And Palm Wine Will Flow* is a sequel:

> ***Father Leo*:** I have converted most of the pagans in this village except the mad Shey. He is always talking about sacrificing to his lake god.
>
> **Fon:** He will never be converted, Father. He is the priest of the lake god just as you are the priest of the Almighty God in heaven.
>
> **Father Leo*:*** How dare you, Fon! How dare you make such a comparison! In spite of all my efforts? In spite of all that I have done for you? You even dare to make reference to idols in my presence?
>
> **Fon:** Sorry, Father. I am very sorry, Father. Very, very sorry, Father. It was a slip of the tongue.

[…]

Father Leo: […] But you know we, Europeans, are always hungry for knowledge and more knowledge. (10-11)

The idea in the above presentation is that the settings in the two plays remind us of the period when Cameroon was transacting from the colonial to the post-colonial time. This is a crucial period when the leadership was still under the yokes of the Christian influences and most of the times, the religious leaders' fingerprints were seen in the many misdeeds in the country.

The story in *Beasts of no Nation* is complex in both its thematic and semantic concerns. The events unfold in Ednouay, a fictional city and which has the real spatial-temporal world of the characters. Each new scene of the story starts with description of one of the protagonists of the story, the physical environment, and the moral and psychological conditions, among others. In this particular play Besong entrusts the narrator (character) by using the first person point of view ("I – here – now") to tell about something which has been told earlier and is still then; that makes exposition of events more trustworthy. In addition, according to the play the literary time is compressed. For example the interval between Otshama's appointment in and his sudden death is very short. There is a short time when he is a night-soil man like others. He is only shown when he is already usurping his power which eventually costs him his life before the play ends. The action of the plot unfolds against very broad and varied geographical and temporal backgrounds. The problem with the chronotopic time of the play is that it does not have an elementary biological or maturational duration. At the play's outset, the playwright only engages the Night-soil men and the narrator in a kind of discussion about their unknown fate. In the

progression of events and scenes the Night-soil men keep on making reference to their past and future (which is not mediated by the present) until it is revealed about their awaiting fate by Lazarus Otchama. Such a form of time in which they experience a most improbable number of adventures, and eventually the time of Otchama's ascension and downfall, is neither measured off in the play nor does it add up; it is simply days, nights, hours, and moments clocked in a technical sense within the limits of each separate happenings. In the particular play, Besong attempts to sum up the long and hard history of Cameroon into a really short time period, which he magnifies with radical attitudes about the union between the two Cameroons. The curious "philosophy of history" has the effect of handing over the settling of the different historical experiences that the Anglophones have lived in with reference to real time sequences.

The title of the play (*Beasts of no Nation*) prepares the reader to understand that the men are not to live long, and that they are only beasts who belong nowhere. Their situation of hopelessness and gloom is clearly presented to the audience in time sequences. In the play there are lots of nouns, adjectives, adverbs and word combinations denoting time, that is, parts of the day, and days of week. I have tried to come up with a small part of those examples (all from Act I, "Parabasis"):

> You have never been ignored in a subterranean cell **for two nights**...
> **Today** every Ednouayan should decide whom he will serve.
> Eat and drink for **tomorrow** you shall die.
> Come **now**, and let us reason together.
> …and the white-collar looters did a job to keep the audit alumnae occupied for **the rest of the next ten centuries**…
> What future is there in carrying night-soil? I worry about this **every day.**
> Realize that you have offended Ednouay with your life by refusing to carry night-soil **yesterday**.
> There are five laws to avoid **the hour of the curfew**.
> So that food will be plenty for all by **the year two million five hundred A.D**.

These time expressions indicate either a fixed point in time or a period of time in the present, the past and the future. However their functional-semantic category of temporality and category of literary expression of time has some differences. First temporality in the play is created owing to the use of tenses and aspects, including lexical indices of time, forms of indirect moods, and combination of the infinitive with modal verbs. Literary time in the play is modeled with the help of a set of interrelated means belonging to different levels: composition, lexical system, different types of repetitions, stylistic devices. The temporal nominators (adverbs, nouns as well as their combinations) belong to lexical means of expression of temporality and the prepositional-nominal groups and subordinate clauses with corresponding meanings belong to the syntactic means of spatial and temporal relations. The temporal correlation of these elements with their extra-linguistic reality is very crucial for the interpretation of time variability.

The correlation between the time indicators in *Beasts of no Nation* raises a fundamental question: “Do people from this story have any future?” The answer to the question lies in the temporal structure of the text. A simple consideration of the tenses in the story (predominantly the present and the past) shows that these people are doomed; neither do they have a future nor speak about it. The very few references to the future are unbelievable (for instance the year two million five hundred A.D) or indicate a future characterised by hopelessness (Eat and drink for tomorrow you shall die). The whole set of these tenses in combination with adverbial and nominal temporal groups serves one purpose: to create an effect of poor living conditions of the mass of the people. For example Otshama while threateningly addressing the night-soil men says this:

> **OTSHAMA:** Do you know that he can order your execution, *today, now, this week* as a subversive element? (136).
> He'll order torture with regret. He'll act hastily. (…) I swear by this hand! (137)
> (*exits, threatening)*

Otshama is the right hand man of the Ruler and is in no way different from him. The way he addresses his former fellow night-soil men indicates the extent to which their life is in danger. In fact their past, present and even future is characterised by a series of hardships. This can be understood from the sequential presentation of adverbial temporal expressions *today, now, this week,* which indicate the present and the future tenses. Otchama's pronouncements reveal torture, and terror. with an effect of creating tension in the dramatic progression of the play. Hopelessness, gloom and instances of torture reflect their contribution of the same effect.

Time in *Beasts of no Nation* is both one dimensional and poly-dimensional, dynamic and static, and is compressed and prolonged. In the plays, the use of foreshadowing and flashback, enables us to differentiate literary time from real time. The literary time then is displayed in a specific way in accordance with Besong's style. However there is a strong connection between the temporal structure of the play, the literary time and the plot development. The story in the play has a simple plot and Ednouay, the place of actions, is an imaginary city which remains static throughout the play. The playwright deliberately contains the whole scenes of the play in the particular city fraught with problems, tensions and stench. But the play's complexity is bound in a set of times that actually carries the meaning. Besong's expression of time thus indicates his world outlook, his literary trend and the figurative interpretation of the post-reunification discourses. As

discussed above, in the play the real time can be understood from the dramatic possibilities of plot dynamics, characters, retrospective show of past events ("flashback") and description of events to take place in some future time ("foreshadowing") and parallel existence of several times and places.

In subsequent plays and on the same time axis, Besong talks about events that have taken place in the past– historic events, and mixes them with present ones. For example the incidents in *Requiem for the last Kaiser* are set in the postcolonial Cameroon, but the dramatic action moves back and forth in episodic form from the politics and maneuverings of the politicians before independence and Federation in the 1960s, through the unitary state in 1972, and then to the present day neocolonial usurpation of power. Expressions like 'Anglais-Biafré, Pseudo-Biafrans' (43), 'Anglos are themselves traitors and slaves, 'Always at war with National Unity and Integration' (40), 'Terrible Babatoura regime' (44), 'Mitterand's dream, a model pupil' (38), among others, are familiar since they refer to realities outside the text. This in fact is consistant with Pavis (1982: 132) who argues that "to understand a text, it is not to visualize or imagine the realities of which it speaks but to link it to the discursive practices in which it is rooted". In fact, there is a close linkage between the fictive realities of the text and the actual realities in the broader society.

Uncomfortable with post-reunification Cameroonian uncertainty and distrustful disorder, Besong resorts to non-linear chronology and a conception of a spatial-temporal framework where meanings and references take back the audience to historical figures and events of the recent past in the world at large. For instance, *Beasts of no Nation* and

Requiem for the last Kaiser are artistically enriched with a plethora of reference to names of historical figures such as Mandela, Jefferson, Lincoln, Le Pen, Chirac, Mao-Tse-Tung, Mousa Traore, Manuel Noriega, Marx, Lenin and Stalin. This mode of writing has an effect to communicate either repulsion or attraction on the audiences/readers. It goes on with the reference to real world historical events like Hiroshima-Nagasaki atomic bombing, Robben Island, Separate Amenities Acts in South Africa, among others. These historical events express the view that the playwright is one who remembers thoroughly; who can reproduce accurately what takes place and what is spoken. Most importantly, one relies on him to place all events and episodes in some order. These aesthetic contexts display an extraordinary richness of temporal representation, a richness that Besong does well to attend to.

In *Betrothal without Libation*, Butake also juxtaposes time and space in such a way that they refer to real historical events around the reunification process in Cameroon. In the play the characters, the dramatic action, the dialogue and thematic accent are interpreted within the framework of a socio-historical and dialectical reality. The play is about an interethnic marriage that Butake deploys in such a dramatic way to find out a solution to the tensions and conflicts between the two factions in the post-reunification Cameroon, i.e., Anglophones and Francophones.

Historically that play can find meaning if placed in the context of the reunification process in Cameroon. The time and period covered by the play refer to events and a period of time which complicate the historico-literary process. From the beginning of the play when Fointam and Elissa are planning their marriage, up to the time of fears and

anxieties expressed by many characters from both sides of their parents, friends, and family members; the playwright sums up the long trajectory of the reunification project in Cameroon in a single dramatic presentation. In Brechtian terms, presenting such a problem is not sufficient; a play must engage the audience in a dialogue and try to educate the audience about an important issue.

In the chronotopic presentation of the characters in the play one senses a faith in the indestructible power of man in his struggle with nature and all inhuman forces. However, like in the abstract-alien world of the Greek romance, Fointam functions as an isolated and private individual deprived of any organic connection with his own village, his own social group, his own clan, even his own family. He does not feel himself as part of it all. He is a solitary man, lost in an alien world. In fact, despite the fact that the marriage pronouncement does not find the approval and blessing of his parents, he decides to marry Elissa.

The conflict that the playwright dramatizes here is not the affair of the young generation only. The generation of the old also constitutes a worrying obstacle. In fact, the plot development covers a long period of time and involves both generations. It is not only an issue in the village (Fointam and Elissa's native villages) but also in the city. So, to change the situation, it requires one to rebel against the established wrong mentalities. Thus the time and space that constitute the subject matter in this discussion are used by Butake to enable us to understand easily the issues at hand. In other words, the ethnic conflict as dramatised in the play reminds us of the conflicts between Anglophones and Francophones in the post-reunification Cameroon.

4.3. Ironical and Historical Parodies: Interaction between the Past and the Present

To understand the nature of the relationship between history and present as it exists in the Post-colonial Anglophone Cameroon and returns in the use of drama, it is useful to glance at the cultural problems and historical contradictions with which the country has had to deal since it came into contact with the colonisers. The past and the present are generally conceptualized as dimensions of experience and it can be questioned whether past processing must affect decisions about the present and whether present processing affects decisions about the past. This discussion focuses on the nature of the past/present relationship established and mediated through the plays of Bate Besong and Bole Butake. Moreover these plays are concerned about ironical and historical parodies that lie at the foundation of the stories, and which are brought to the fore mainly through dramaturgical expressions as well as a narrative structure.

In this section I analyse the different relationships between Cameroonian past and present which Besong and Butake's plays encompass, and how those relationships are also established through the use of the dramaturgical tradition. In other words the dynamics between the past and the present which are constituted by Anglophone Cameroonian drama seems to indicate a dynamic relationship with the country's future that the playwrights envisage. However, the nature of the relationship between past and present that is mediated by these plays differs significantly in each of the two playwrights' engagements, and therefore a difference in the key function of drama can be discerned. This exploration of Besong and Butake's plays leads to a better understanding of the use

of the contradictions in the nation building projects attempted by the two post-reunification regimes.

In terms of literary time and plot development, Besong's plays are poly-dimensional and dynamic. They capture a relatively long period of leadership crisis in the post-colonial Cameroon. An important aspect of his plays is that there is a progressive aesthetic and thematic evolution (although this will be discussed in detail later). In his earlier plays he blames the French and Francophones for using their imperialistic weapon to thwart the development of the Anglophones and their culture. For example in *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* Besong lays his emphasis on the post-colonial administrative and political elite's failure to satisfy the desires of their people. Later on his satire targets the Anglophones who had allowed themselves to become doormats and docile servitors all in a bid to secure an anonymous and ceremonial government appointment. This is the case of Chef Otshama Lazare in *Beast of no Nation* who used to be one of the night-soil men and gets promoted to a higher position in the government. Therefore, Otshama is presented as an Anglophone Cameroonian "bridegroom" who was conquered by the Francophone government. Besong refers to such behaviours as they were frequent during the post-reunification period where impatient Anglophones changed camp and political ideology to collaborate with the Francophone regime. When Otshama's fellow night-soil men start claiming for their professional identity cards, he furiously scorns their request:

> **CRIPPLE:** They want their identity cards
>
> **OTSHAMA:** (*dramatic)* What is a professional card, eh? What is a mere piece of paper?

NARRATOR: Had Aadingingin's appetite been smaller, the whole history of Ednouay would have been different. (*pause*) The priesthood profaned. The ark of God take.

OTSHAMA: Comrade Aadingingin makes no mistakes.

NARRATOR: The comrade mayor-in-thievery who makes no mistake does not usually do anything.

OTSHAMA: You'll be strangled in six stages with a noose of thin wire in Yoko. (p.134-135)

Otshama, a former night-soil man, is quickly transformed into a faithful messenger of the oppressor for whom he is at any cost ready to die. He has easily ignored his past and wants to remain to power because his present is not delightful. So he fawningly changes into a loyal servant to his Master: "As you please, Your Eminence. I shall do exactly as Your Highness commands. To the last iota." (140) He now turns back to his former fellow night-soil men. In fact, through Otshama, Besong is critical of the post-reunification political confusion in Anglophone Cameroon when some intellectuals who were afraid of the regime's oppression looked for refuge in the same government as a way of protecting themselves and their own interests. Earlier in the play, the Narrator, the authorial voice, had warned the night-soil men of their passive spirit as it appears in the conversation between the Narrator and the Night-Soil men:

THIRD: We've got a job

NARRATOR: What kind of job?
THIRD: We are night-soil men, aren't we?

NARRATOR: Are you serious?

THIRD: Of course, I am.

NARRATOR: You may say you are not bitten by a serpent, neither are you sick of the crisis nor do you lack anything. Let me put to you that S.A.P has already bitten you, and you have no future; you are ready to die. (93)

The Night-Soil men's past and present situation gives them no hope for a better future. It is important here to note that Besong's references to the night-soil's men hopelessness opens up a room for the reader to peep into the post-reunification period where history is made manifest. As discussed above, Otshama's portrayal and the narrator's views enable us to understand many facts about Ednouay outside the chronotopic time where all history is present simultaneously.

Similarly in another play by Besong, *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, one of the protagonists, Badjika, who has secured a position in the government, pours scorn on his people. In the first episode of Act I, Badjika and Toura role-play party members and stooges who have made allegiance to their leader to serve him whole heartedly. Later he is seen assuming the roles of the same leaders in a kind of reminiscence. It is then later realised that it is a period of time when legislation is not through parliamentary debates, but "through bribery and coercion", law and order "through banditry and piracy". The mood of the play in this Act is ridiculed in the whole judiciary and legislative instruments in the postcolony. The system is humorously referred to as "Benevolent Touracracy" (10), which simply means a system of governance based on the "benevolent" wishes of the country's leader at the time. To make the ironical presentation meaningful to the audience-reader, the protagonists quickly move out of the role of party stooges to play the role of the leaders in the "post-political era", and then situate the time of the action. According to Badjika it is time which is still haunting him and that he does not want to be reminded of because of the role he played in messing up the country. In a form of reminiscence he suddenly recollects one of his most arrogant but treacherous speeches to

his constituency, which at the same time underscores his greed, docility and betrayal of the cause of his people:

> **BADJIKA:** (*as Rt. Hon. Wisdom Badjika)* I don't have any account to give you because I didn't owe you anything….it is to the Tireless Defender of Pan-Africanism, His Excellency El Hadji Dr. Toura Adu ibn al Sallah that I owe this post as long as he wants me to keep it. If I talk to you Anglofools it's because I want to. You have no right, no power over me… YOU NEVER WILL. (p.26)

Like Otshama in *Beasts of no Nation*, Badjika is another stooge who has accessed to the position of power because of his allegiance to His Excellency El Hadji Dr. Toura Adu ibn al Sallah. Through mimicry and parody as dramatic tools, Besong's concern is the political betrayals and ironies that characterised some Anglophone Cameroonian elites after reunification. Badjika, now as the ex-politician, turns to them to explain his reasons for his actions: "You must admit that anyone who clawed his way to the top in the Touracratic Political Jungle will prove a most formidable and slimy opportunist…So I exist…That's all" (26). The first person narration here clearly discloses why Badjika has betrayed his fellows: it is for his survival that he has to secure his life and position. In addition through the characters of Badjika and Toura, one understands that people experience multiple aspects of time in their lives. There is the lived time of one's daily existence, the time of memory (our own personal memories and the memories recounted to us by the persons around us), and there is the time, often at odds with conscious, lived time, of our unconscious mind, a time of dreaming, involuntary memory, and repressed drives. At any given moment in our lives, people operate at the intersection of those multiple temporal modes. Any one moment in our history we are provided, in terms of memory, influence, and orientation toward both past and future, with multiple

experiences of time and therefore complex modes of representing and recounting experience.

In fact, these plays can be identified as surviving examples of the function of literature as history. They initiate the arguments of how dramatists remember history that has persisted to the present. As such, drama becomes a discourse on memory and history, where on the one hand memory can be understood as an exercise in nostalgia, where the past is made present, modified, parts of it excluded or celebrated in order to make the past work in the present. History, on the other hand can be viewed as a continuum consisting of a past, a present, and a future that are inseparably linked together. Finally, literature (or in a narrow sense drama) participates in the process of shaping collective memories and of subversively undermining culturally dominant memories by establishing counter-memories. Perhaps a more enlightening idea would be Edward Said's in *Culture and Imperialism* when he comments on the influence of history in literature as follows:

> Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in the interpretations of the present. What animate such appeals are not only disagreements about what happened in the past, uncertainly about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions about influence, about blame and judgment, about present actualities and future priorities (p.3).

Said tacitly brings in the question of whether memory could really bring about a factual representation of history. I posit that there is a fundamental relationship between drama and history as modalities of the narrative activity and process. In this vein the Anglophone Cameroonian's turbulent and fragmented history, linked with the past, is a necessity in both drama and culture. A closer look at the way in which the past is approached through the use of the dramatic techniques discloses how Besong merely

does not preserve the past but actively employs and calls it upon in it order to establish a strong and fertile connection between past and present. In many of his plays the protagonists live like complete strangers who are not able to communicate their problematic situations. This presentation suggests some kind of absurdity in their situation. Besong's plays under this study present the kind of existentialist paradigm of existence. He oftenly makes reference to the theatre of the absurd philosophy and mode of production. My argument is that the reference to this mode is paramount in the construction of a base on which the nation building project could make an attempt to ground itself when facing contemporary and future challenges.

In the plays under study Bate Besong deploys a mastery of history that gives him a kind of imaginative drama from his own life and society, enabling him to process as drama not only the memories of the Cameroonian people's post-reunification society but also highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of this society. However, Besong's manipulation of history through memory and representation raises some questions: does the process of memory represent the turbulence of the society or is it the author's fragmented self or notion of reality? Does it effectively challenge political structures and ideology or merely create nostalgia for a lost "Anglophone identity"? In this venture, it is again important to highlight how Besong's plays fall within the conventions of the theatre of the absurd.

The theatre of the absurd is a term which usually is referred to as 'type of drama' which dominated West-European literature between the years 1940-1960 and is most often

associated with the names of famous writers, such as: Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter. Esslin (1977), first explains what the difference between traditional theatre and the theatre of the absurd is:

> If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold the mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerism of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflections of dreams and nightmares; if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings (p.21).

Since, the linear development is absent; there is no typical resolution, or culmination in a classical meaning of those words. In most of Besong's plays, there is a multiplicity of the ways in which his memory interferes with his own creativity. In fact, as discussed above, there is evident desire in the playwright to recreate the details of the authoritarian regime in the country and proffer an account of his past in the plays, which is revealed through his manipulation of imagery, figurative language, setting and characterization. The characters in the plays through speculation, mimicry and parody, diffuse the truth of the whole issues. Each person's identity and roles are refracted through others. Elements of imaginative, ideological, cultural, social and political practices and experiences are received from different characters.

Besong does not use chronology as an ordering, organizing principle. Time does not seem to move, and his characters exist only in the time of their reminiscences, where there is no linear order of events. As Act I gets to its end, we encounter with Toura and Badjika in the play (now playing the roles of lepers) when he gets plunged into history,

again recreating the characters of Toura and Badjika the politicians and leaders of their people. This time their focus is on the incident about Unification:

> **TOURA:** (*rising from his 'throne' parodies Sheikh Toura*). It is time (*coughs*) to abandon the dialectical ambiguities of the Bamenda Congress of the KNDP under certain troublemaker, Jua, and embrace the only valid and effective ideology— Planned Unification on Equivalence under Benevolent Touracracy (p.25).

And in later stage direction Toura and Badjika appear as signing the deed: *Toura fraternises, Badjika brings the "Big Book" of Referendum before Toura, rising from his "throne", they both sign the "Big Book" of Toura-UNIFICATION (28).* And they banter, confer, laugh and gloss over Cameroon's unification incidents and the rhetoric of that event. The events of the present are mixed with events of the past. It can be concluded that Besong's technique in linking the present Anglophone situation with the past by reminding the victims into their present fate plays a big role. With such presentation it is possible to argue that the concept of time and space functions much like aesthetic conventions. This mode of writing disorients the reader in both time and space, as Besong's plays obsessively replay scenes and dispenses with traditional plot lines and structures. That stands out to be another feature of the theatre of the Absurd in which there is the absence of Aristotle's unities of place, time, and action. In effect, the theatre of the absurd usually distorts all the dramatic rules described in *Poetics*. Absurdist drama does not need to be attached to one realistic scene, it seldom needs any stage props at all; the actions become distorted, and time changes its primary function. Esslin (1977) gives us a comprehensive characteristic of what he believes as theatre of the absurd could be:

> While the play with a linear plot describes a development in time, in a dramatic form that presents a concretized poetic image the play's extension in time is purely incidental. Expressing an intuition in depth, it should ideally be apprehended in *a* single moment, and only because it is physically impossible to present so complex an image in an instant does it have to be spread over a period

> of time. The formal structure of such a play is, therefore, merely a device to express a complex total image by unfolding it in a sequence of interacting elements (p.394).

Hence, as time depends on unreal images it becomes deformed and often marked by its absence. For the characters in these plays, time is not to be counted or referred to as some reality, but simply to pass or fill with irrelevant actions. In the plays under study, Besong's memory and imagination recreate a painful present. By inserting the history of the 1980s-1990s into the political and economic realities of the fictional society, the playwright recollects his memory in order to express his disgust with the political climate of this society. He appropriates those stories, thereby castigating ethnic, cultural and political discrimination.

In the reading of the plays, I finally posit that the dramatisation has an important role for the characters in the untangling of their troubled pasts. The characters turn to a certain aspect of the reminiscences in an attempt to make sense of the past and its hold on the present. For example in Act I of the play *The most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, there is Toura and Badjika (now as lepers) who are plunged into history and express their reminiscences of the ironies of the reunification process in Cameroon.

In normal life circumstances there is no going back in time, but the relationship with the present time is complicated. However, the past can still be lived in the past through reminiscences. In the quotation above, Toura continues to adapt by living in a present time while surrounded by devices that transport him into parallel realities simultaneously unfolding for him and Badjika (the lepers). The past is brought closer through

reminiscences as their remote channel changers indicate, or rewinding and fast forwarding for them, so that the present moment is filled with rapid simulated movement in multiple directions. This proves the healing function drama might have at a thematic level, and subsequently, within the Anglophone Cameroonian culture. That is to say that the turn to controversial historical parodies by the characters to help them in dealing with the past is indicative of the potential of drama to "heal" the past—or at least to provide the space to do so—beyond that which is contained within Anglophone Cameroon literature.

In Acts II and III, Badjika and Toura's dominating parodies and reminiscences relate the atrocities of Escadron Bakary Yaro Amichive. The former lepers (now playing the role of politicians) reenact the past through memories and experiences concerning either the Foumban Conference of 1961, or the Plebiscite of 1961, or the Referendum of 1972, or other backdoor to negotiate settlements with the French and the past revolutionary spirits of the country's leaders before independence and Reunification in actual Cameroon:

> **Badjika:** (*"labels" the palling booths-then stands back to guide and instruct the "voters"*) Do you prefer free speech, open election and government by the political party of your choice, or—do you hold—and this is what you must hold as your infallible doctrine—a totalitarian state à la mode Stalin police rule, and the supreme dictatorship of the He-Alone Party? (*They exchange meaningful glances, Toura after a second of indecision, casts his vote for the obvious option. And through intrigue, coercion and outright brutalization; the "National Sheep" toe the emerging Nero's iron line…*). (p.64)

The reenactments in this quotation are a deliberate ironic cluster in which they are enveloped and rendered. The whole system in the society presented in this particular play is messed up. As discussed in other acts there is total fear, torture, persecution, corruption, gloom, inactivity, among others. This mode of narration that is similar with

Samuel Beckett's enables us to go backward and forward into the past and present in order to put to the fore the political contours in the history of the Cameroon nation formation. If the retrospection and prospection are on the same time axis in the play then, it creates the impression of a wave and they produce time axes combination**:** one of the axes is real time (with reference to dates and events/happenings in the history of the Cameroonian nation). On the other hand, the narrator constantly comes from the past into the future and vice versa. The tow characters are thus carried into different time frames thanks to reminiscence and thanks to reference to real dates and events in the past or blending of past times in the present, which is an indication of chronological landmarks as discussed above.

Consequently, strands of history allow the reader to examine the Cameroonian past. The playwright combines a first-and second person narrative of parallel lives and national realities, creating links between history and dramatic narrative. The ideology articulates the view of many Anglophone Cameroonians who believe that there are a lot of intrigues in the vote that put together the two Cameroons. Badjika's simulacrum of the voting system was reminiscent of the 1961 plebiscite as was organised by the UN to grant independence to Anglophone Cameroon. That the past is omnipresent in Besong' plays, this suggests that the people in Cameroon still have versions of this story. Perhaps the playwright's tale and motive are to depict the challenges and complexities of identity and belonging in the post-reunification Cameroon.

In the play *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* this historical reminiscence trope also enables Badjika to recall how he serves his Master with confidence and

dedication. He recalls how he used to subjugate all opposition and dissenting voices. He would announce on the provincial radio station some faked subversive reason, such as: "they refused to salute the national flag on 20th May" in order to justify the extermination or incarceration of whomsoever happened to be the victim. After the deed, he would, as the most yielding stooge, report the "mission accomplie" to his master: "messiah, they are in the local Brigade Mixtes Mobile, BMM Political Scavengers!" (29), and his master, Toura would recommend that the victims be kept permanently at the incarceration centre: "Let them decay permanently in the see-saw. Crush them in the Cement-tanks of Kondegui." (p.29)

Finally, it is important to mention that Besong's dramaturgy is concerned with truth and with linking the past to the present, shying away from what Hutcheon (1989:73) would describe as "the tensions that exists between the pastness (and absence) of the past and the presentness (and presence) of the present and… between the actual events of the past and the historian's act of processing them into facts." For example the characters in *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* have to deal with a restricted present situation which results into troubled or even traumatic psychological legacy. Dramatisation often helps those characters to find a way out of their troubled situations, or at least make some sense out of them. Through dramatic techniques such as role-playing, improvisation, or dialogue they appear to create personal freedom within the strict confines posed by their history—be it a personal confining legacy or a collective one, such as the politics of reunification and neo-colonialism.

In subsequent Acts the playwright presents the leader Amichive exercising extreme totalitarian power which eventually costs him life. In his attempt to hunt the "secessionist" and "subversives" he is mistakenly shot by one of his "gorilles" and bleeds to death. In the process of trying to rescue him, Toura and Badjika, his malleable stooges plead to the people to donate blood as "a good will gesture". But the innocent civilians who have suffered the pangs of Armchive's brutality and terror cannot donate. Instead, despite his humble cries of "Help! Help! Help!" they pray that he ends up like any other decomposing corpse on the roadside: "Satan block his nyash!" [*May he die and go to Hell*]. However, the death of Amichive could not change many things since the victims of his brutality have not devised any strategy to end his life and change their plight. They are presented as still passive characters and we still regret that there is no revolutionary action on the part of the victims.

As demonstrated above Anglophone Cameroonian drama accepts and gestures towards the difficult elements of the past and foregrounds the use of the past in a dialectic relationship with the present. Hence, it would be wrong to posit that Anglophone Cameroonian literature reflects a state of melancholy, for its relationship with the past is far more complex and the understanding of the present is subject to the memories of the past. Reminiscences of the past are necessarily acts of the memory. The historical events that are represented in the dramatic actions, however, can be viewed as a continuum consisting of a past, a present and a future, all inseparably linked together. Considering the prominent place the dramatisation takes place in the writing of each of the plays discussed above, these relationships with the past which are mediated through the dramatic elements in the texts can be seen as indicative of Besong's main attitude

towards the past. This emphasizes once more that the use of dramatic possibilities goes beyond aesthetics and politics, and that it reflects the Anglophone Cameroonian culture's worldview.

4.4. Expanding space for the Centre: The Politics of Imperial (Re)-domination

The economic and political conquest of Cameroon is accompanied by cultural subjugation and the imposition of an imperialist cultural tradition whose effects are still being felt today. This imperial domination is still manifested in the use of colonial languages to foster identities which have come to be the source of the socio-political and economic conflicts. These are tensions particularly surrounding an encounter between English, French and indigenous languages. Here the question one asks is: are the languages meeting on terms of equality and independence? This is reminiscent of Ngugi (1993: 49) whose alternative view is that "the equality of the encounter between languages both in the past and in the world today […] has been determined by the presence or absence of independence and equality between the nations involved". Thus Anglophone Cameroonian postcolonial drama in general, and Butake's and Besong's in particular, is an interrogating dialogue with history, an attempt to transcend the boundaries of political, economic, social, and cultural alienation maneuvered in by the dominating nations or, the centre. In fact colonialism in Cameroon influences an art in which France and Britain are still playing implicitly or explicitly a central role. In *The Empire Writes Back* Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffith (1989) accentuate the categories of "dislocation and displacement" which fueled the tension between the colonial imperial "center" and the colonized at the "margins." The two playwrights of my concern, Bole

Butake and Bate Besong, erect themselves as the ever-present visionaries whose mission is to negate the excesses of the former colonial masters' languages hegemony.

At this juncture, I first have to recall one of the objectives of this study, which is to examine how, in the selected plays, divisions and tensions on the basis of the colonial languages help foster the former colonial masters' imperialism. This is so because there dramatised centres in the plays that still exercise cultural, political, and economic domination. The project of nation building cannot be realised because it is already inspired by what Chatterjee (1993) perceives as 'modular' forms of imagining it. According to him:

> If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity (p.7).

The post-colonial world idea of nationalism as an essential move towards modernity is already 'colonised'. Chatterjee reminds us that the idea of nation or nationalism, if not alien to the post-colonial world, suffers from external influences. Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's project of imagining a post-reunification Cameroonian nation seems to suffer from the 'modular' forms of representing it. This among other things includes the ethnic tensions that are based on the official language spoken as is highlighted in Chapter Three above. The Anglophone Cameroonian identity emanates from the experiences lived by these people, hinges on the impact of language and colonial heritage. In the Cameroonian context, language is salient at three dimensional levels: Standard English, Pidgin English

and the ethnic languages. In the plays under study, there are frequent use of these languages:

> So my dear frog-
> Brother wack
> And burn
> This damnbrubah Ednouay
> Dear frog-
> Brother wack
> And burn
> This damnbrubah Ednouay. (*Beasts of no Nation,* 101)

> "…I'll be in politics till I die. I give small bouai power. One small bouai power…shege dan banzaar…I go come dey. Ma'a ding Sonara money…Oweh, money mbeng. Wa ding money? Bebele zamba'a…(*Requiem of the Last Kaiser*, 2-3)."

These excerpts can be taken as parables of the relativity of ethnic difference and its relevance to individual identity-constructions. Such an approach does not rule out the possibility of context, analysis and diagnosis but shifts the focus of analysis. In other words, in Butake's and Besong's revisionism the downplaying of indigenous history, colonialism, and, to a certain extent, sociology is concomitant with the highlighting of the dichotomous relation between the communal and the individual. The former are only of interest as they elucidate the condition of the latter. By introducing a mixture of languages the playwrights' aim is to explore the role of culturally heterogeneous spaces. As Jameson (1986), observes, "genres are essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a cultural artifact" (p.106).

The language problem as an artifact is a leading principle in Butake's and Besong's plays. Butake (2013: 6), argues that "culturally speaking […] the Anglophone Cameroonian operates at three parallel and crisscrossing levels: the ethnic, home or local

language level, the Pidgin English level and the Standard English level". Perhaps that is the reason why most of the characters in his plays are endowed with the capabilities to use those linguistic levels. For example in Scene Four of the play *Betrothal without Libation*, the conversation between Fointam and the Salesman is in two languages: Fointam uses both English and Pidgin and the Salesman use only Pidgin English. However, because of Butake's vision the two are able to understand each other. Paradoxically, it seems that Elissa does not speak throughout. She and Sama make use of Standard English only.

This difference in language usage does not hamper communication or social interaction and this is the kind of harmony that Butake strives to build up at the family level and the nation at large. To create this harmonious society in the play, Butake uses characters with different approaches to this question of the language usage: in the subsequent scene, Simbong cannot figure out how Fointam has decided to marry a wife who does not use the language of his ethnic groups. For the people in the village, language loyalty is an important tendency in the formation of identity.

Simbong and Fointam's different approaches to language issues in their communities is Butake's engagement with the crucial question of how Anglophones and Francophones recognise English and French respectively as identification mechanisms as opposed to their ethnic mother tongues. However, what Ako (2009:2) observes that in Cameroon today "using English or French has become a cultural choice rather than an indicator of one's ethnic or provincial origin" is much more meaningful. The plurality of language in Cameroon is again underscored by Fanso (1999) who admits that upon reunification "the

official language of Anglophone culture is English although the English-based pidgin becomes the domestic lingua franca, operating side by side with the different mother tongues of the Southern Cameroons" (285). However, the use of English, Pidgin English and ethnic languages has ushered in a new ethnicity, transcending their ethnic allegiances towards a common consciousness: that of being Anglophone.

Cameroon is a bilingual country with English and French as the official languages, and very multilingual in its wealth of traditional languages. In addition education in Cameroon is based on the policy of bilingualism as stated by Echu (2004):

> the policy of official language bilingualism constitutes the main core of Cameroon's language policy. Article 1 paragraph 3 of the constitution of 18 January 1996 states that the official languages of the Republic of Cameroon shall be English and French, both languages having the same status. The state shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country (p.5).

Upon reunification, the Cameroonian Constitution recognized both English and French as "equal" languages. However, in reality the two official languages do not have an equal official status because the French language is more used in Cameroonian administration institutions than the English language. The French language is also spoken by the majority of Cameroonians. Ngugi (1993: 49), studying the impact of the colonial masters' languages on the African soil, observes that "every language has two aspects. One aspect is its role as an agent that enables us to communicate with one another in our struggle to find the means for survival. The other is its role as a carrier of the history and the culture built into the process of that communication over time". In multilingual Cameroon, 247 indigenous languages live side by side with English and French (the two official languages) and Cameroon Pidgin English (the main lingua franca). While the two official

languages of colonial heritage dominate public life in the areas of education, administration, politics, mass media, publicity and literature, both the indigenous languages and Cameroon Pidgin English are relegated to the background. This persistent disregard of indigenous languages does not only alienate the Cameroonian child culturally, but further alienates the vast majority of Cameroonians who are illiterate (in English and French) since important State business is carried out in the official languages. These colonial languages constitute the "centre" that more often than not has suffocated the "marginal" languages.

In this discussion I interrogate the relevance and supremacy of the French language and Francophone identities in the post-reunification Cameroon, and argue that these have given an opportunity for the empires (former colonial masters) to expand their cultural domination, power and space in the post-colony. In *Beasts of no Nation* for example, the Night-soil men, who have been claiming for their identification cards to no avail, are still convinced that their salvation is to come from the former colonial masters, ironically referred to in the play as "friends": "Our friends will help us … Our foreign friends will help us!" (94-95). Once again, Ntufam Egu Eku, one of the characters in another of Besong's plays, *Once upon Lepers*, ironically refers to the centre, the "Frenschii" in these words:

> **NTUFAM EGU EKU**: (*Suddenly snarls*) Ungrateful citizens! (*in an unfriendly manner to the audience, his eyes growing suddenly hard*)
>
> Ungrateful people!
>
> Ungrateful people! How can you
>
> Speak ill of our elder comrades;
>
> Civilized Frenschii…? Ungrateful and Stone age animals! How dare you intend

To rubbish our *mokhutabag* allies,

Frenschii?

I say to myself (*pause*). How dare you?

Can we import

Wine technology and evian water
Without the import licences of
Frenschii?

Can we trade or buy palaces in the casualty I.M.F. *nyama nyama* market

In Nice and on the International *jaw-jaw*

Without the legal tender, the almighty power

Of Frenschii? Come on.
Admit it! (13)

In this particular play Besong lends his mouth to Ntufam Egu Eku to ironically interrogate independence of Cameroon. Ntufam convinces his citizes to admit that their country is still dependent in many ways on the Frenschii (a corrupt form of the word 'French') in order to realise some projects like establishing processing companies or organizing international trade. Yet, in reality the country (perhaps Cameroon) has been independent (so to speak) for more than half a century. At another level, Besong is strongly grappling with not only Cameroon economic dependence but also the former colonial masters' languages domination after the reunification of the two Cameroons. In fact French and English present themselves to be the dominant official languages and languages of superstructure identities at the expense of the other indigenous languages which have been thwarted and relegated to the margins within the nation-state. In this relationship Cameroon independence is at a loss and risk since the imperial powers (France and Britain) have held captive its cultures.

This expansion of the centre and its hegemonic power can be interpreted in two senses. One is the position that English and French languages have played over the indigenous languages in both territories during and after colonisation. The other is the influence and implications these languages have to a multiplicity of cultures in Cameroon. In a plural society like Cameroon the reunification project has failed because genuine 'unity' and 'integration' cannot be imposed. As Ngugi (1993) asserts the assumed location of the centre of the universe in the West is what is termed Eurocentrism, an assumption which developed with the domination of the world by a handful of Western nations:

> Eurocentrism [says Samir Amin in his book of the same title] is a culturalist phenomenon in the sense that it assumes the existence of irreducibly distinct cultural invariants that shape the historical paths of different peoples. Eurocentrism is therefore anti-universalist, since it is not interested in seeking possible general laws of human evolution. But it does present itself as universalist, for it claims that imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time (p.16).

As it comes out of this quotation, some Western nations have proclaimed themselves as the owners of a universal and universalising culture which must be imitated by the rest. However in Cameroon the cultural universalisation process by the centres is not a mere "imitation" since it is imposed. France and Britain imposed themselves as the dominant social strata that defined the historical paths of Cameroon. In his plays Besong is critical of this power which till to date is exercised by the centres.

The language question in Cameroon can be traced as far back as the colonial period, a period characterized by language conflict between the colonial administrations on the one hand and missionaries on the other. For Cameroon today, the issue at stake is basically

that of grappling with its highly multilingual situation, resolving the national language issue, while effectively coping with the official language bilingualism option as well as its implications. In this context the neo-colonial powers in Cameroon have transformed the society into ethnic groups that still cling to the former colonial masters' language and culture. In this study, I view this in terms of a cultural domination which is still rampant in Cameroon after more than half a century of independence.

Butake is also concerned with the prevalent form of foreign domination in *Family Saga*. Even though the Deed of Brotherhood is signed between Kamala and Kamalo, the latter (representing the Francophone Cameroon) but still dependent on the former colonial master:

> **KAMALA**: Yes, father. I made that choice because it was the best. Everyone in the court said it was the best. And you stood there by me. You signed the Deed of Brotherhood as witness. As my father. You stood by me when Kamalo and I shook hands and embraced each other. You gave me your blessing. His father wasn't even there. Today he can't finish a sentence without reference to his papa. 'That's what my papa says. That's what my papa says' is the interminable refrain… (p.20)

The bond that is forcibly established at colonisation is still there in Cameroon, half a century later. This is what it means by the term "father". Kamala's psycho-social background is neo-colonised and as such one is not expected of him to be as independent-minded as Kamala. Even if Kamala is granted full independence, he is still under parental authority. His "father" still dictates what to do and there is no way Kamala can disassociate from him. However, in the presentation Butake seems to say that Anglophones in Cameroon are a people that can stand strongly without depending on Britain for aid. Through Kamala's portrayal in his addresses to Kamalo, especially the

very frequent repetition of the phrase "That's what my papa says" as in the following conversation:

> **KAMALA**: […] What makes you think my father abandoned me? And who is the ingrate between the two of us? This estate belongs to who?
>
> **KAMALO**: To me. *That's what my papa says*. I took pity and brought you into this beautiful estate. *That's what my papa says*. That's why I conceive, you execute. Period. *That's what my papa says*.
>
> **KAMALA**: That's what my papa says. That's what my papa says. Are you a Ngoma record with scratches on it? And what do you say?
>
> **KAMALO**: *That's what my papa says*.
>
> **KAMALA**: And what do you conceive?
>
> **KAMALO**: *That's what my papa says*.
>
> **KAMALA**: And I execute?
>
> **KAMALO**: *That's what my papa says*. (10-11) [Italics, my emphasis]

The long colonial encounter between France and Cameroon created ever dependent elites who always look back to their "papa" even after independence. In the excerpt above the conversation between Kamala and Kamalo is self-explanatory. Whatever is done in the relation between the two parties is decided by France and the Francophones in Cameroon do not even believe that they could run a simple administration in the Civil Service without the so-called expert directives from France. Butake (1993) still admits this form of dependence of the Francophone Cameroonians on France:

> Even today, when a francophone tells you he is going home he is thinking of Paris and that is even the basis of this Anglophone-Francophone divide because the francophone is still terribly attached to the colony while the Anglophone isn't. The francophone has simply turned around and colonized the Anglophone Cameroonian. He is colonized by France and he colonizes the Anglophone (p.16).

However even though Butake seems to blame the Francophones only, Anglophones themselves are still in the same bondage imposed by the colonial heritage. They still identify themselves as Anglophones and not in the name of their own ethnic identities. Besong calls this in *Beasts of no Nation* an "Anglo-faith" (95). It only serves to undermine the deep and rich traditional heritage which offers them a variety of identities. While still identifying themselves as Anglophones they are, according to Ngugi (1993: 49), "elevating the language of the conqueror". The implication is that the elevated "language of the conqueror" has undermined Cameroonians' cultural rich heritage and alienated the citizens. This appears in many spheres of their lives as Jua and Konings (2004) rightly argue that:

> Anglophones…have particularly opposed the change of name of Victoria, a coastal town named after Queen Victoria […] into Limbe, the name of a river that flows through the town. This renaming of localities in Anglophone Cameroon has often been presented as a government attempt to promote what Mobutu has referred to in Zaire as *"authenticité"*. […] Anglophone nationalists have re-introduced the name of Victoria during political liberalization (p.619).

From the above quotation, it is obvious that the landmarks of the imperial powers are still available in both Cameroons and are still safeguarded (now by the indigenous Cameroonians) in the name of maintaining "authenticity". According to the Anglophones Limbe River, even though it is a physical and meaningful element to name with the geographical location, it cannot replace Victoria, a colonial legacy. Changing it would mean erasing all indelible marks that serve an authentic Anglophone identity. In resisting the change to the name of the location, the Anglophones are entrenching the centre's power and space. Anglophones feel that their "authentic identity" is being Anglophones, not their indigenous ethnic belonging. In such circumstances, both so-called Anglophones

and Francophones in Cameroon have the greatest pleasure to see themselves through the lenses of their former colonial masters. But according to Ngugi (1993: 18) there is urgent need to move "the centre to correct the imbalances" as observed since colonisation. This imbalance is still rampant in the whole life of the Anglophones and Francophones. The discrimination and oppression visited onto the Anglophones is based on the medium of expression used. A glance back to the history of the continent informs the audiences that the boundaries imposed by the Berlin Conference to arbitrarily share Africa did not take into account the ethnic communities. Thus members of the same communities were separated and fell into either French colonisation or British.

The question of languages and the position they occupy among the folks is very crucial. Interestingly the language spoken gives them identity. At the surface level, Butake seems to engage the characters in the identity tensions caused by their different local languages. In *Betrothal without Libation*, Butake's character has this to say:

> **SAMA**: […] They live in a world where everything that is foreign to the clan is not only suspect but outright unacceptable. The only good thing is that which comes from the tribe (p.29).

However, as discussed above, at another and deep level, this translates into the language problems in Cameroon and the subsequent Anglophone and Francophone identity crisis. In the same play, Simbong is blaming Fointam for planning to marry a wife who does not speak Bikom, the language of her husband's ethnic group. Since Fointam is from Bakom, he is expected to marry a wife who speaks also Bikom, the language of the centre, according to Simbong. Butake in an interview with Nfah-Abbenyi sees the 'Kom' as a language in which early education in the colonial era was given: "There are also languages such as Kom, Lamso, in which the children are encouraged to start school" (3).

This means that within the centre, there are also other centres, and within the margins, there eventually are other margins.

The central axis within this relation between the centre and the margin is that there is always a struggle in which the centre wants to push the margin to the periphery. In its resistance, the margin sometimes loses and becomes assimilated as is the case in Cameroon where English and French languages occupy the centre, that is the official languages of instruction, of administration, of commerce, trade, justice, and foreign communications and more than that, they have served as identity markers. This implies that these are the only languages of power, though generally spoken by the minority within each of the two regions that make up the country. The majority of the working people in Cameroon retained their local languages or use Pidgin English (a blend of the vernacular and the official languages). Therefore the majority of the people are excluded from the centre stage since they do not have mastery of the languages of power. They are also excluded from any meaningful participation in the life of their nation as a whole. In linguistic terms, the ordinary citizens are completely uprooted from their cultural life and are tied to the West. This explains partly why national identity is still based on official language affiliation rather than on traditional ethnic belongings. This prevailing form of domination of the colonial over the pre-colonial legacies implies a form of neo-imperialism. In connection with this Billig, as quoted by Jua and Konings (2004), strongly argues that:

> Anglophones are daily reminded of their national identity and homeland in language, in individual and collective experiences, and in Stereotyping. They tend to perceive themselves as different from Francophones and are equally categorised and treated as "others" by Francophones, manifest already in the

> constant use of "we" and "they" in everyday speech for designating or delineating each other's homeland (p.625).

The identity tensions in the post-colony, as seen by Billig highlight the extent to which the imperial forces keep in bondage the Cameroonians. It is still so even half a century after independence. According to Djockoua (2009: 50) "the genesis of the octopus centre in Cameroon is colonisation that enables the French colonisers to establish their centrality in opposition to indigenes' marginality". The centralization politics that continued even after independence is reinforced by the one-party totalitarian politics that characterised the two successive regimes. As a reminder, Jua and Konings (2004:626) argue that re-unification in Cameroon aimed at "eradicating bipolarization generated by linguistic and cultural differences; it sought to create "uniformity" in the ten provinces that make the country". The relation between the two Cameroons becomes the centre and the margin where Francophone Cameroon, with its centralised power in Yaounde, continues to push the Anglophones to the margins. However, this relation can be differently perceived if we consider JanMohamed's (1995: 216) idea that "within the centre there are many centres and also within the margin, there are many margins". The people on the margins are the poor communities in Francophone Cameroon that are not favoured by the highly centralised nature of the politics. This is the reason why the centres are to be moved away, in order to allow space to the margins and participate in affairs of the nation. The same is true among the Anglophone Cameroonians. As demonstrated above, for the reunification process to achieve its momentum, some Anglophone elites contributed to silence fellow opposition voices. To succeed in the post-reunification discrimination politics the regime, in the name of the "New Deal", also uses Anglophones for "national integration". They accept to betray their fellows in order to have access to state resources,

which otherwise they have been denied. This justifies why the margin always strives to reach the centre while the latter resist, as Mbonyingingo (2014: 42), argue that in the context of the post-colonial Cameroon "the farthest from the centre one is the more excluded or discriminated".

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed at relocating Butake's and Besong's imaginaries within the time and space that produce their meanings. The main argument is that Butake's and Besong's plays are well understood if we place them in their particular temporal and spatial contexts that turn around the Anglophone Problem, Cameroonian independence and the post-reunification discourses. After reunification in Cameroon the regime and public institutions often attempted to construct a national consciousness as part of the nation-building project. They are, therefore, engaged in an impressive reinforcement of Anglophone and Francophone identities. The former colonial languages and the Cameroonians identities in line with these languages still prove that the so-called independence has failed. The other advanced argument in this chapter is that the supreme power and space given to the former colonial masters is a form of imperial (re)-domination. In an attempt to redefine these identities Butake and Besong deal with their culture's past: their drama is used to make the integration of the past in the present possible so that the characters— and the Anglophone Cameroonian community as a whole—can resolve the suppressive presence of the colonial masters and move on. The relationship between the Anglophone Cameroonian and his "authentic identity" is thus a difficult one, but through literature, and with the aid of drama, the playwrights attempt to rework it through the problematic representations of the characters and values they stand

for. The playwrights treat the neo-imperial domination in a more preservative way; that is to say that the use of drama in Anglophone Cameroonian literature is the desire to restore in writing the past the Anglophone Cameroonians were once denied, and to create a genuine interaction between past and present that will eventually produce a better future. Finally, Butake's and Besong's drama are not concerned with making the past less dominant but rather with making it more present. For the issues discussed above to be more meaningful, it is important to look and the stylistic integrity of the plays. This is succinctly done in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF BUTAKE'S AND BESONG'S STYLE AND VISION

5.1. Introduction

Apart from scrutinizing the selected plays both on a formal and thematic level, this chapter seeks to compare and lay bare a possible evolution in Butake's and Besong's style of writing. To that end, some critical literary and thematic concepts are made explicit to examine how the playwrights envision the post-reunification Cameroonian nation. It further analyses how they stylistically represent the "Anglophone Problem" within the possibilities of their dramatic imaginaries. In terms of style, this chapter examines how the playwrights have used dramatic strategies to (re)present the "Anglophone Problem" within the post-reunification discourses in Cameroon. I also analyse how the "Anglophone Problem" has imposed a particular deployment of the dramatic and stylistic form and structure, by looking at the elements of drama that enable it to participate in the project of post-reunification Cameroonian nation building.

To achieve the above objectives it is important to look first into features of African oral literature that are frequently used in the plays such as proverbs, riddles, local languages expressions, music, dance among others. In addition the two playwrights are compared in their stylistic engagements which raise some key questions: how do Bole Butake and Bate Besong use dramatic possibilities to challenge dominant constructions of national identities in their plays? Or in other words, one would like to know this: Is there any perspective of a progressive, different or similar creation of agency in the characters across the plays in the nearly three decades of their writing careers?

Because of the hard historical and political experiences the Anglophone Cameroonians have passed through, there is a psychological or emotional upheaval that is felt in the tone the playwrights use in narrating the post-reunification Cameroonian nation. In their diverse ways, the playwrights have different visions of this nation and they do so by intertwining history (present and past) and drama. In actual sense the plays not only deconstruct that history but also reinvent versions of a Cameroonian nation by linking personal ideologies with the dramatic possibilities of nationhood. Thus this chapter explores the different perspectives from which Bole Butake and Bate Besong present the problematic of understanding the "Anglophone Problem", an erstwhile controversial issue. Put it differently this chapter investigates the playwrights' convergences and/or divergences in their dramatic strategies and ideological inclinations.

5.2. Aesthetic Expressions of the "Anglophone Problem" in the Selected Plays

Good drama or theatre is understood as an artistic form that gives additional excitement to the writer's vision and thematic concerns. Butake's and Besong's aesthetic investment consists of dramatic techniques to raise awareness of an "Anglophone Problem" that has been thwarted by the two successive Francophone dominated regimes. This section is concerned with formal elements or stylistic and dramatic possibilities that make the playwrights' visions clear. In other words, I analyse how the "Anglophone Problem" has imposed a particular dramatic aesthetic that enables the playwrights to express adequately the paradoxes of the post-colonial Cameroonian nation.

In order to grasp the different levels of meanings in Butake's and Besong's dramatic development, it is necessary to link them to the sociological and historical issues that influence their writings as they are discussed at length in Chapter One of this thesis. This

discussion focuses on the works' formal attributes, judging by their language aesthetics and styles of writing. By language aesthetics, I want to investigate for instance how these plays make use of the full range of traditional theatre elements which are blended to create loose but still theatrically appealing dramatic structures or the extensive use of improvisations. The language in Butake's and Besong's plays is decorated with proverbs, dances and songs, riddles, myths, folktales and folklores. This use of aesthetics is the language pattern of African orature in general and is also used by the contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian drama. This style serves the role of reviving cultural icons and tradition through for example the use of drums and music.

In *Beasts of no Nation*, Besong makes use of musical entertainment as indicated in one of the stage directions: "(*Narrator is transfixed by song from background. Unclear are the wordings, but solo and chorus soon come in clearly and swell the stage—from off*", 129). The play *And Palm Wine will Flow* ends with a musical entertainment as well. When the tapper comes back from destroying the Fon's palace, we are given in the stage direction that he arrives ("playing a rhythm on the gong and moving into the audience", 114). The use of music in theatre has a very different effect in the sense that it breaks the flow and/or development of a particular scene or the play in general. Accordingly, this break gives the audience the opportunity to reflect on what they just havewitnessed. The use of music is also applied to break the emotional involvement of the audience and to create a contrast to the content of the words or the play.

Music and drums are important in the African oral tradition. In the plays under study one can say that the Cameroonian society is musical because the musical instruments find ample expressions in all the major events in the plays be it festivals, rituals, initiations and other ceremonies. The traditional music is embedded in drums. In theatre the music, for example, is not used just to heighten, proclaim, and illustrate the text but to set forth the text: the music takes the text for granted and takes up its own attitude. In Bole Butake's play *And Palm Wine will Flow* stage direction at the beginning of the play indicates how the whole scene is decorated with traditional elements that serve for a V-effect purpose by the use of a variety of rituals and ceremonies:

> The sacred grove of Nyambom, characterised by an elaborately decorated pot, nshan wong, in which libation is poured to the gods. Elsewhere in the grove are a number of masks, also elaborately decorated with dark fibre or cloth, thus making them easy to be used as disguised by various characters in the play. Other prominent features of the grove are a gourd and a sacred gong. All action takes place in the same place (p.88).

This opening of the play indicates that the whole performance is in a form of dramatised rituals. This is a vital element of the traditional society where the play is set. Virtually all human societies perform certain rituals at certain times in connection of man with the unseen world. Rituals are also the basic matrix of every religious concern including the contemporary religions. In the same play we are told that Shey Ngong, the protagonist, "moves over to the sacred pot from which he takes out sacred horn and pours some wine into it from the gourd" but "his invocation is interrupted by the rising sound of distant music and a loud applause and ululation" (89). All these rituals are performed while the Fon is conferring power to his stooges. The performers in these rituals make use of masks in order to fulfill the purpose of the play as given in the many stage directions in *And Palm Wine will Flow*: "(Gwei flees while Tapper emerges from Kibaranko mask amused,

104), Shey Ngong (To Tapper indicating Kibaranko mask, 108), Kwengong (Emerging from mask, 111). The central focus of Butake in this play is an attempt at capturing the ritual phenomenon of a traditional society in the late hours of its transition to history by virtue of the European invasion. According to Bukenya (1987: viii), these elements become dramatic "when they are organised and enacted in a pattern of concentration which compels us to watch and which reward our watching with a contribution to our experiences." Because of the artistic maturity displayed by Bole Butake, we find the most explicit deployment of rituals as an organizing principle used to open a people's collective consciousness at a crucial moment of their historical development.

Related to ritual and music performance is song as another dramatic technique that is frequently employed by the playwrights. The use of songs is meant to complement certain aspects of the story. Songs in the selected plays perform very useful structural functions. For example Sawa in *Family Saga* suggests that they in unison sing a song of unity that they were taught by their father when they were still young:

> **Chorus:** In one family, in one family, in one family
> We can change the whole world
>
> **Solo:** Dear children, my children, in one family
> We can change the whole world
>
> **Solo:** Dear Sawa, dear son Ngong, in one family
> We can change the whole world
>
> **Solo:** Kamalo, dear brother, in one family
> We shall change the whole world
>
> **Chorus:** In one family, in one family, in one family
> We can change the whole world. (73)

As it appears in the stage direction it is Kamala who leads in the singing before all of them in the stage direction. This performance accepts the audience to 'come in' and again, they quickly feel impelled to take up an attitude towards what they see. But this attitude should be a considered and therefore a relaxed one at any point. In fact, as a collective performance this song demands active participation of all the people invited to the evening function in which the family saga of Kamanda is being revealed. This whole scene immediately alienates the audience and bombards the audience with a different image and message of what they have just witnessed. According to Brecht (1978)

> songs are no longer auxiliaries to text, reinforcing it— they stand alone or in opposition. Songs are not used to heighten emotion at moments of climax; they serve as commentaries, generally leading to a V-effect— thus they may be wry and humorous or songs may satirize popular sentiment (p.92).

In the same play, what Brecht (1978: 6) calls "alienation techniques" can be found in the representation of the text on stage, the use of music, the text itself, the design and even the approach to acting and characterization. All these elements are combined to constantly remind the audience that they are sitting in a theatre, witnessing the representation of specific events. The effect of this is to bring about a collective healing process which eventually is needed by both the oppressed and the oppressor. That is why Kamalo and his father Fiekafhim are present and Sawa, the initiator of the expiation project and now acting as MC/IMPRESARIO, pleads their participation also as he announces the course of events:

> Your Excellency Uncle Kamalo, the one who conceives, it is a great pleasure for us of this small community of father, son and daughter, to welcome Your Excellency to sample the great variety of folk dances which we have enjoyed preparing over the last few days for the up-coming visit of our most distinguished visitors, their Excellencies Uncle Kamalo, the one who conceives and his papa Fiekafhim. [...]Folk-dancing is therefore a community experience and is, consequently, participatory. The entire community participates in the singing and

> dancing. We will plead the indulgence of Your Excellency Uncle Kamalo to kindly do us a favour of active participation, even if it is just the nodding of the head. (p.75)

The song technique that Butake uses here shows that the problem at hand is a communal one. To find a solution it needs the whole community's participation. Interesting enough here is the way the MC requests the guests of honor to join in the performance while it has been prepared to correct them. The persistent reference to Kamalo as the one who conceives works effectively on his psychic dispositions and brings him to recognize his mistakes and is eventually brought down to participate in the performative healing ritual. This folk dance performed in such a way indicates that the community as a whole, despite their differences, has shared tradition and history. This reinforces Butake's idea of the force of argument and not the argument of force and that after all, there is no difference between Kamala and Kamalo.

As argued above, Butake's dramatic narration takes the form of a project in which everyone in the nation is involved: the powerful and the powerless, men and women, the leaders and the masses of the people. To make this project successful Butake is guided by his idea that "nations are not built by words but by the positive acts of men and women" (*Betrothal without Libation*, 6). In this light, he employs theatre workshops, such as forum, intervention and playback theatre to involve all the different entities that constitute the nation. In this way there is emphasis on Forum Theatre techniques as was developed by Augusto Boal as part of his 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. Forum Theatre empowers the audience to actively explore different options for dealing with shared

problems and motivates them to make positive changes in their own lives. It encourages people to find solutions, through debate that is action led rather than purely verbal.

In *Family Saga*, Butake employs Forum Theatre techniques which enable him to create a sense of empathy between the two major components of the Cameroonian society in their different opinions. In addition Forum Theatre techniques enable him to create learning opportunities and give voice to those who do not have one or cannot defend themselves. But before we delve much into these matters, it is very important to ask this question: "how does the playwright explore the possibilities offered by Forum Theatre in negotiating the politics of nation building and identity in the post-reunification Cameroon?" These are techniques aimed at reminding the audience members that the performance on stage is indeed part of their own experience. In the foreword to *Family Saga*, Butake says that this play:

> is a creative demonstration of the methodology [him] and [his] associates have developed and used in the process of these workshops held with the people at the grassroots on problems affecting them directly with their communities. They participated actively in the story creation process as well as acted in the plays that were collectively created and films that were made. (p.6)

To achieve this Butake has taken his characters back to a traditional Cameroonian setting where problems have to be resolved through active participation of the very people. But at another level, the techniques constitute a strategy to prompt the actors and audiences in a superficial dichotomy. This has the symbolic meaning that the conflicts between the Anglophone and Francophone communities are also superficial.

Finally, by using Forum Theatre techniques, Butake also creates opportunities to his audience to discuss difficult issues in the open that they would otherwise be uneasy about in personal life. In the open and in fictitious settings, the audience in most of Butake's plays takes ownership of issues and their solutions. In *Family Saga* for example, after collectively debating the challenges and identifying the real problem in their family, at the end of the play Kamalo is motivated to avoid similar behaviour of his own that he has been unconscious of before. In reaching such consensus, Butake instructs us that the position and views of dissenting minorities are of the utmost importance. Such consensus, however, does not necessarily imply unanimous agreement or even reconciliation of differences, but rather recognition of differences, suspension of disagreement and charting of a way forward, in spite of the differences. Thus, Forum Theatre techniques enable the minorities to stage their grievances in order to engage in self-promotion behaviours.

Again in this particular play Butake exploits an aesthetic opportunity as he incorporates traditional art form into his drama. He seems to be working within the existing situation of performing art in Cameroon, that is, such form and content as traditional dance, music, praise poems, masquerades, rituals as well as the established performance situation— the given actor—audience relationship. This blended artistic form enables the playwright to address effectively the complications that inform the "Anglophone Problem". My argument here is that Butake's plays constitute a form of dramatic exploration that provokes understanding and learning, devising possible coping strategies to assist a group or individual in investigating possible solutions to particular oppressions or challenges.

These possible solutions, among others, are the instigation of dialogue for mutual understanding of what constitutes the paradoxes of national identities. Boal (1979: 13) underscores this when he says that Forum lets people "explore other personas, other ways which give [...] more power in a situation. It is to learn another form of behaviour if it will help [...] out of [...] oppression".

To address effectively the contradictions brought about by the "Anglophone Problem", Butake and Besong adopt another important strategy that is related to the mixture of language(s) used. The two playwrights aptly enrich their engagement with the "Anglophone Problem" by frequent use of Pidgin English and an admixture of French and other vernacular languages in the interaction between the characters. But the focus is rather on the tensions created out of the two peoples in relation to their colonial experiences and thus the two languages, i.e., French and English. Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 4) in their study of languages in formerly colonised societies rightly point out that "the history of a language is a function of the history of its speakers, and not an independent phenomenon that can be thoroughly studied without reference to the social context in which it is embedded". In this context, I argue that colonisation in Cameroon has determined particular patterns of interaction between the colonisers and the indigenous populations as well as the particular kind of economic structure that is now in place. In relation to this Anchimbe (2007: 1) asserts that:

> colonialism and its eventual admixture of languages and peoples did not affect only colonised peoples and regions but also the colonisers: it changed speakers' allegiances to the languages they spoke or were thereafter made to speak; it modified rights of ownership to languages that spread beyond their original national boundaries; and ushered in layers of sociocultural behavioural patterns whose origins could be traced to the several groups that came into contact (p.1).

From this we deduce that to some lesser or greater extent the former colonial masters' "ownership" of their treasured languages have also been put into troubles since their languages have been sailed overseas. The new users of the languages have appropriated them and have full rights over their usage. The wide range of use of Pidgin English in the plays is a deliberate strategy by Butake and Besong to subvert the power invested in the former colonial masters' languages. The Pidgin English can be understood as a form of "mutilation" of the colonial language and thus its full appropriation by the indigenous users.

The Cameroonians' identification with the foreign languages that represented (colonial) oppression and utilising them as dominant forms of materializing the differences indicates to what extent the former colonial masters' languages have power over indigenous languages. My argument here is that this can be interpreted as the continuing imperial domination in the postcolonial Cameroonian nation. It is important to recall here that the very root of the "Anglophone Problem" is the fact that the label "Anglophone" (or "Anglofous" as pejoratively used in the selected plays) refers to a form of discrimination whereby the user of English is seen as a stranger or the "other".

Perhaps a more apt definition by Nkwi (2004) would be much more meaningful here. In fact, he defines an Anglophone as

> an indigene in Cameroon whose first foreign and European culture is Anglo-Saxon and whose first problem is that of identity within a cultural milieu which is 85 percent Gaullic (Francophone). The second problem is that of language, and the third equal opportunities with his/her fellow Francophone counterpart (p.187).

This definition is suitable to the arguments raised above but the problem is that it limits the Anglophone to his linguistic identity. As I shall demonstrate it, the "Anglophone Problem" that is a major concern in this study is not a problem about languages. The marginalisation that the former British Cameroonians undergo does not affect the only speakers of English. This is so because there are so many people in this region who do not speak English as there are also some people who speak French. The same is true for the Francophone part of Cameroon. There are people who speak English or both but who are not affected by this marginalisation.

However, Butake's and Besong's reference to French and English languages in their dramatic imaginaries is twofold: allowing the characters to admix with French reduces the magnitude of the tensions between the two linguistic groups. This can further mean that the writers' intention is to lay bare the Cameroonian Francophones' discrimination and oppressive politics in place, as in this song by Blindman and Cripple in *Beasts of no Nation*:

> I fit bury
> One thousand million
> For my ceiling
> I fit bury *même*
> Ten thousand for my ceiling (p.103)

This song ironically parodies the swindlers of the nation's funds. And the use of the word *"même"*, that can be translated as "even", indicates the extent to which looting the country's wealth is increasing and done without any worry of being arrested. There are many linguistic approaches that have paid attention to the emergence of hybrid languages, new varieties of European languages and the general patterns of speech peculiar to these areas. A closer analysis of the Pidgin English in the selected plays shows

that colonial subjects in Cameroon have woven the linguistic and cultural mixes brought about by colonialism into the fabric of their daily existence. These mixtures constitute a normal part of life as it appears in the conversation between Simbong, the park collector and Fointam. Butake in the play *Betrothal without Libation* wants to insist on the hybrid nature of the ethnic conflict in Cameroon:

> **SIMBONG:** I leffam say na you one get motor? (*to Fointam*) Are you going home with Naiwan? (*to Elissa)* Naiwan come this way and sit in front.
>
> **FOINTAM:** She does not understand Bikom.
>
> **SIMBONG:** Doesn't she? You mean she grew out of Kom or what? Even there, some parents might be terribly careless. Not to teach their children our language (p.35)

Simbong is surprised to hear a fellow Bikom is marrying a wife outside of the ethnic group. He is more obsessed by the fact that she cannot speak Bikom language and sees this as carelessness. It is relevant to note that people seek their identities only when they get in contact with other groups. Homogenous populations generally do not question, reassess or restate their identities. This happens generally in heterogeneous communities where groups of people need to build boundaries around themselves to secure what they consider makes them peculiar.

In the context of the play above language is the most privileged marker of identity. Except the fact that Elissa does not speak the Bakom language she otherwise "looks exactly like a Bakom girl" (27). Physical or moral traits are not as important as the language spoken. Inasmuch as it shuts non-group members out, it could be interpreted within heterogeneous violent and competing communities as stigma for excluding its speakers. In this particular context, the Bakom see *their* language as superior to *other*

languages and therefore are surprised to see how other people do not take the advantage of learning this privileged language. There is a meaning that we get from the writer's portrayal of his characters in this tension.

At the surface level, Butake seems to engage his characters' anxieties with the local languages divergences. However this dramatic simplification has other layers of meaning. If we consider this as a Cameroonian issue we can argue that the playwright's concern is the complex problem between Anglophone and Francophone speakers. Even though the English and French are alien languages in Cameroon, they have also been superimposed on a mosaic of over 250 African languages and dialects. We cannot nevertheless ignore the fact that this question of languages in the contemporary Cameroonian context is dissipating into a more hybridizing new trend. And Butake is convinced that the old and new generations have to work hand in hand so that Cameroon is a "tribeless nation" as illustrated in this conversation between Elisa and Fointam in *Betrothal without Libation*.

> **ELISSA:** Yes, his mother is Bakossi. And my mother is Bakweri. And you are Bikom. And our children, when they grow up, that is if we ever have them, might get married to Metta or Bamileke or Duala people. What a family!
>
> **FOINTAM:** It may seem strange but I like it that way. If everyone in this country did like your grandfather, and us, this would become a tribeless nation. And we will have gone a long way in solving some of the numerous problems that are plaguing this country (p.20)

The writer's use of the different ethnic groups in this quotation does not only refer to the traditional ethnic groups in Cameroon but more significantly to the superimposed structures, that is, Anglophone and Francophone ethnic groups of the country. Again Butake's view here is that inter-ethnic marriage practices can be an answer to the many

ethnic problems in Cameroon. Even though the root of the "Anglophone Problem" carries with it a linguistic identity, if Anglophones and Francophones come together by virtue of marriage, the problem of ethnic discrimination can be resolved. This reminds us of Anchimbe's coinage *linguabridity* that refers to Cameroonian children who are brought up speaking English and French without being able to draw the lines between their belonging to either the Anglophone or Francophone identity groups to be considered a group of their own. They do not switch identities as the adults do, are not involved in linguistic victimisation as the adults, but are simply expressing part of who they are. These are realities of such postcolonial communities in which two ex-colonial languages (French and English), given their national and international currency, have become first language of children and young adults. This has been a concern of many a Cameroonian contemporary writer. For instance, Alobwe'd Epie fictionalizes this in his novel *The Death Certificate* when he refers to this category of Cameroonians as citizens of the eleventh province (while Cameroon has normally got only ten administrative provinces). In fact, this approach of the language question in camerron from a dialectal manner suggests a "liminal space" or third space forged by the writers in order to seve as a meeting point where the tensions can be mitigated.

From the above discussion we can argue that an important linguistic outcome of colonialism in Cameroon was the emergence and/or consolidation of new mixed languages—principally Pidgins. Pidgin English can be defined as a variation of English language, characterized by multiple syntactic errors. This variation of English language is spoken by some Anglophone Cameroonians and predominantly by the uneducated in the African society. It suffers from syntactic, phonological, and morphological errors because

of the speaker's little or no exposure to the rudiments of the language. This can be substantiated in the "Song of the Prodigal" in *Beasts of no Nation*:

> Goat di chop
> For place weh
> Dey be tie him
> […]
> If I die
> I go come back
> If I quench
> I go come back (p.100)

In the above song, the language is characterized by multiple deviations from the original rudiments of English language as postulated by the British. However, the use of this language is deliberately employed by Besong to show the hybrid national identity of Anglophone Cameroonians. However, having attributed Pidgin English to many West African societies, its usage authenticates it as another African language that subverts the colonial hegemony. In fact the language consists of mixed codes that cut out portions of the ex-colonial language combining them with other languages in a bid to create a code that suits values of its speakers. Thus this makes the group a complete entity within the bigger linguistic group(s). That notwithstanding, the questions one asks are: do speakers, especially of Pidgins, identify with them as identity markers? Do these languages provide them the identity avenues necessary for both social esteem and socio-economic survival? Do they feel themselves in the fold of the term 'language'? In the case of Cameroonian Pidgin English, for instance, as Doh (2005: 6) argues, speaking only pidgin qualifies one for a non-literate, low class citizen. This is in disregard of the fact that, Pidgin English is the only non-ethnic language that links people of all origins. So speakers generally do not identify with it but rather switch to other linguistic identities (English or French) that carry higher social esteem or provide more lucrative survival sources.

The plays that constitute the object of this study make also use of many stylistic devices that appeal to the attention of the reader-audience. In *Family Saga* for example, in his quest for national integration, Butake is in search of an avenue that can resolve the conflict between the Anglophones and Francophones in his country. Before the play comes to its end, the antagonistic parties come to a settlement and accept that "the force of argument is better" (83). Sawa and Kamalo perform a final scene that, as the stage direction indicates (Taking his hand and lifting him to his feet), shows that there is still hope for Cameroonians to live harmoniously as a single nation.

Sawa and Kamalo's reconciliation indicates that the healing process has been successful and Kamalo confessed from the bottom of his heart. That is why this time they are going to discuss the problems they face in a "circle" to find a solution. The concept of circle is here meaningful. While in a circle, all the participants are given equal position. This is the technique privileged by forum theatre to create an avenue of common ground where problematic issues are discussed. Sawa's suggestion to sit together deconstructs the idea at the beginning of the play of the "deed of bondagehood. Between Kamalo, conceiver, and Kamala, executor."(14) Kamalo who used to uphold that "might is right" and that everything can be achieved "through the argument of force" (14) is finally completely transformed: "Now I agree with you that the force of argument is better" (83). The language of this plays does several things at once: it defines characters, aids the mind's inner eye by supplying and extending the sensual images through which what is said is palpably registered. A look at the names of the characters in the play can reveal this: the

metaphorical names like Kamanda, Baakingoom, Yaman, Fiefkafim. create an attractive aural effect which will compel the audience to attend to what is being communicated.

On his part, Besong in *Beast of no Nation* frequently uses the Holy Bible from which he extracts verses that make the masses see the source of their problems, raise their awareness and instigate them to protest, and even castigate them if they do not want to adhere to his pleas**:**

> If I find in Ednuoay two righteous Directors then I will spare all the place for their sake.'…. 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil-frog, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking who to devour.

The effect of these biblical allusions is to instill a revolutionary spirit among the audience. In fact, as Seino (2005: 343) observes, "where there is oppression, the language of the oppressed faction will obviously be the language of revolt in their writings". Besong's language usage in the biblical allusions translates the antagonisms between the Anglophone Cameroonians and the Francophones (referred to as the "devil-frog"). Far from being a mere revolutionary call for the masses, it also functions as a verbal attack that devilfishes the Francophone leadership system. Besong is constantly aware of the masses, whose life conditions are not good and need to be changed by the use of the faculty of thought and action. His effort to make the audience interested in their life conditions is an expression of his political purpose.

The use of repetitions is another important stylistic device in the play *Beasts of no Nation*. Besong portrays Ednouay as a society in which the masses are being marginalised. By using many kinds of repetitions, the playwright succeeds in bringing to

light the malpractices and decadence in the society. In addition, the use of the repetitions contributes in educating the masses. In effect, by repeating these elements, he succeeds to have them stamped into the minds of the suffering night-soil men, thus nurturing in them the desire to protest. This is signalled by the following repetitions by the First Night-Soil man: "Give us freedom" (87, 88 & 89); and "Set us free" (96 &102). The Night-Soil men use these short imperative forms because they believe that through the middleman—Narrator—their cry can be channelled to the authorities in Ednuoay. The repetition of these structures is a manifestation of their strong desire to be freed. It also shows the intensity of their demand and emphasizes the message of liberation through revolt. Many repetitions with the same effects are found in the text-play: "open rebuke is better than secret love" (95 &97); "blood is thicker than water but money is thicker and sweeter than blood" (106 & 122). Narrator is like the Saviour because he has succeeded to open up the eyes of the masses, so that the latter can see what they are going through. Through these repetitions, Narrator is representing the people and prescribing what they should do in a bid to better their situation.

But the dramatic engagements that Besong uses can be explored if we place them in the current use of some modern and post-modern dramatic techniques. In fact, his theatre can be approximated to Brecht's Epic Theatre which was so influential that it became reference to the postmodern theatre. Brecht (1965) mentions that:

> The actor expresses his awareness of being watched. The audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is to appear strange and even surprising to the audience…The performer's self-observation; an artful and artistic act of self-alienation, stops the spectator from losing himself in the character completely… Yet the spectator's empathy is not entirely rejected.

> The audience identifies itself with the actor as being an observer, and accordingly develops his attitude of observing or looking on (p.92).

To discourage the audience from identifying with the character and so losing detachment, the action must continually be made strange, alien, remote, and separate. To do this, Besong uses those devices that preserve or establish this distancing. When any such device is employed successfully Brecht calls the result a V-effect. Brecht's Epic theatre is often characterised by a deliberate absence of the cause and effect relationship between scenes and occasionally appearing as though there is no plot at all to speak of. Similarly, the postmodern theatre is characterised by, among others surprise, inactivity, fragmentation, distortion, distancing, symbolism, multiple set scenes, play-within-the play, and disappearance of both the individual and collective heroism. Thus, there is no structured story that the playwright is telling since he only dramatises human beings in action, by presenting them in fragments.

At the very beginning of the play *Beasts of no Nation* stage direction presents the characters in a state of surprise, inactivity and we do not happen to follow the focus: *(The Night-soil men run in and throw themselves at Narrator's feet who welcomes them in dumb-show).* Later on we are given these details: *(Narrator looks at the First Night-soil man. The First Night-soil man looks at Narrator. Without a trace, Narrator returns to the audience)* (87). And whatever Narrator tells the First Night-soil man, he keeps on repeating only one sentence: "Give us freedom!" (87) Such a style of writing has many justifications. It is reminiscent of the V-effect as postulated by Brecht. Narrator is "speaking the stage directions out loud and addressing the audience direct". With such

presentation Besong attempts to demystify the basic elements which comprise a confused social or historical situation in Cameroon.

The V-effect technique is also employed in the play *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*. The characters alienate themselves by role-playing actions that are not normally theirs. Badjika and Toura are normally beggars/lepers. But all of a sudden, we meet them playing the roles of politicians. It becomes difficult for the reader to distinguish them in the course of the play. However, through the V-effect techniques, the playwright familiarizes them to us through stage directions such as *"Now playing the injured party", "They simulate or masquerade El Hadji or Orator Methuselah", 'They mimic fawning Surgeon General", "They sign the big book of Unification".* In this case we have them as both actor and character in the play.

Besong borrows also from the modernistic writing traditions where the artist is breaking away with the old tradition and abandons the purpose of style of earlier European civilisation and culture. As a modern writer he questions and rejects all interconnected concepts such as unity, coherence, homogeneity, harmony and totality in favour of abstractions and fragmentations. In relation to this mode of writing and representation in literature, Barry (1995: 84) has argued that the "artist finds a most appropriate representation in fractured forms". This form of representation is also characteristic of most of Besong's writings and it can partly be explained by the fact that the historical situation from which he draws his inspiration is yet to be coherent. Thus the form and ideology of his plays are bound to carry contradictions and confusions of the time.

Narrator in the play borrows from the Gospel of John in The Holy Bible to capture the grimness the masses are facing: “Verily verily I say unto you” (94). This biblical allusion aims at calling upon the masses to believe what Narrator is saying. He is in another way instilling in them the desire to air their grievances rather than merely believe that what the authorities tell them is the gospel truth. The playwright captures well the grimness when Narrator unequivocally declares to them, “there is no future for you (97)”. With this the first Nightsoil- man seems to get up from his slumber and immediately echoes Narrator’s words, “there is no future for me” (97).

The following complex comparison “Blood is thicker than water but money is thicker and sweeter than blood” (106) comes to reinforce the authorities’ quest for only wealth and not the people’s welfare. In fact, the comparison money, blood and water are placed in a descending order on a vertically graded scale. Blood (understood here as a human relationship) is incongruent with the quest for wealth (money). The second part of the comparison “money is thicker and sweeter than blood” strongly suggests that the oppressor in Ednouay considers money to be more important than the people. This is supported by the fact that the mayor’s budget for a year is equal to the Nightsoil-men’s salaries for five billion centuries (111). When the Nightsoil-men cannot even afford their basic needs, the oppressors buy “plenty plenty pajero motor car for this heart of dragon crisis” (110).

Therefore this modern style of presentation in the above discussion insinuates lack of faith, nothingness, emptiness, bestiality and quiet desperation in a world where nothing seems real, where man confronts nothing else but absurdities. This style suggests the use of the fragmented forms which, as I have argued above, are characteristic of the post-modern era in which Besong writes. Also the use of such forms and styles, finally, is clearly related to Besong's abandonment of the divine pretensions of authorship implicit in the omniscient narratorial stance. He is inspired by the trends in the many literary traditions of post-modernism which can be approached to that of Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett and Jean Baudrillard. Ambanasom (1994) has the same view when he argues that

> ...in Bate Besong, we find a playwright with an obvious innovatory dramatic technique….whose plays do not fit squarely within what Martin Esslin describes as traditional drama with its well told story or well conceived plot, well depicted characters, fully developed themes or high sense of dialogue (p.59).

Indeed Besong in most of his plays merges the traditional and modern dramatic techniques. As Ambanasom observes, Besong is highly innovative stylistically. His plays can hardly fit within any given form of dramatic literature. His plots are akin to Samuel Beckett's, underscoring the inanity of human existence. In fact he is concerned with the rhetoric of betrayal and the tone of disillusionment which come to constitute the writings of the post-reunification Anglophone Cameroon period and also the general intellectual discourse of the time. This is explained by the fact that the reunification of the two Cameroons did not succeed to solve problems, but rather created more. To dramatically represent those problems Besong captures the emptiness, grimness and futility of the human condition in an imagined post-reunification Cameroonian society. Most often the characters function as simulators or imitators of the actions of their oppressors as a way

of ridiculing the latter. In this sense these characters are "the product of a utopian conceptualization of the national liberation struggle" (Neal, 1990: 23). That is why we find many of his characters giving a graphic dramatization of the disheartening politics of their oppressors.

At a stylistic level the playwrights demonstrate their also close attachment to their tradition through the use of proverbs. Proverbial expressions and wise sayings are one of the integral strong-holds of the traditional Cameroonian orature and they are still of great significance in the present day society. These expressions are used to instruct, teach and correct the society as a whole. The use of proverbs in Butake's and Besong's play is very profound and intelligent. The proverbs in the play achieve different purposes of scolding and advising. For instance there are many references to adverbial expressions in *And Palm Wine will Flow,* which demonstrate how Bole Butake is so keen to his society's oral traditions. He uses a number of proverbs that are deep in meaning as they depict the confrontation between the Fon and Shey Ngong:

> **Shey Ngong:** I am going to the grove. My obligation is to the gods of the land. My duty is to the gods. Not to the Fon and palm-wine.
>
> **Voice:** Swallow your words, Shey! *The cockroach does not call a fowl for a wrestling match. It is a foolish rat that argues with a cat*.
>
> **Shey Ngong:** So I am the rat? I am the cockroach? You knave. *A gorilla can do nothing to an iroko tree*.
>
> **Voice:** Eh? You are an iroko tree, are you? I see you want to wrestle with the father and owner of this land of Ewawa. [Italics, my emphasis] (88)

The use of these proverbs drawn from the traditional wisdom of the Cameroonian society, which the characters represent, indicates how serious the confrontation is. In fact, the Fon is a respected and feared leader, "the father and owner of this land of Ewawa" and is not

supposed to be confronted the way Shey Ngong is doing. The whole dramatic confrontation between the Fon and Shey Ngong is over power. The former incarnates the national power while the latter is an embodiment of the traditional forces. Shey Ngong's spy who has been to the meeting and witnessed how the Fon was mad on Shey Ngong (because he refused to attend the public meeting) comes back "so agitated like a monkey that has missed the hunter's bullet" (90). The Fon is ready to eliminate anyone who wants to oppose his power. That is why the Fon's emissary is surprised to see how Shey Ngong is ready to challenge the Fon. He warns him that he "will be hearing from the palace before the sun goes down" (88). This does not change his determination. He rather retorts: "Away you fawning stoogeing dog! Away to your lord and drown yourself in palm-wine." (89). More so for Shey Ngong, the Fon "is the pig who knows only the hunger of its own stomach" (91) and not a leader who is concerned with the grievances of his people. These indigenous proverbs and other stories in Butake's plays explain the world in a way which may be alien to an outsider readership. However, the use of anthropomorphism in the proverbs is understood in the terms which are at the disposal of the indigenous culture, in this case the world of spirits and demons. This indigenous belief in an animistic universe as portrayed in the plays is peculiar to the Cameroonians.

Another stylistic device that is dominantly used in Butake's plays is the invocation of supernatural powers, incantations, and traditional rituals. This can be explained partly by the fact that the "Anglophone Problem" is so complicated that to understand or treat it requires supernatural forces. The use of dances and songs as stylistic aesthetics is important in the role played by these performative skills. In fact, as the audience is also concerned with the problems that are being dramatised out, they have opportunities to

join in and sing and dance with the actors. Again, the implications here are that the problem is so complicated that it requires the commitment of the whole society to stand as one person.

In *And Palm Wine will Flow* for instance he uses spirit possession as a dramatic device to foster the concept of belief system in his society. The many references to masks, supernatural powers, Shey Ngong the Chief Priest, the Kibaranko spirit and the Earth-goddess have a good effect to the celebration of aspects of Butake's oral tradition. This extensive rich repertory is successfully used in the play as a springboard to dramatic awareness. In addition, the playwright's drawing on his oral tradition is to create an effective medium of communication where the various aspects of orality help to establish a common ground of understanding and shared knowledge between the writer and his audience. The audience therefore becomes an integral part of the creative act and can discern the relevance of textual materials from the people's beliefs and practices.

All these dramatic techniques demonstrate that Anglophone Cameroonian drama's attachment to the folk's culture. Butake deliberately aims at re-creating the human society via the exposition of human experiences, religious beliefs and socio-cultural motifs of that society within the imaginative framework of arts. For example in his *Family Saga*, Butake focuses on the myth of origin and the associated images and symbols:

> **STORY-TELLER:** Once upon a recent time, in the land of Kamanda the people woke up from their peaceful sleep with jolt because of loud rumbling coming from the direction of Mount Kamanda. They rushed from their houses and watched in awe as fire balls and smoke rose from the tip of the mountain. As they watched the molten lava flowing slowly down the side of the mountain, they

> soon discerned a human figure, a female human figure in sparkling golden wax wrappers and rich jewels glittering all over her. As the apparition strode confidently and authoritatively towards the people they all fell on their knees and, raising their arms in supplication, implored Kamanda, the Goddess Kamanda, to shelter them from the wrath of their ancestors. (p.75-76)

Butake's representation of indigenous Cameroonian reality accounts for the mythopoeic quality of alternative ways of structuring that reality. Mythopoeic here means that the story told tends to create or recreate certain narratives which both parties take to be crucial to their understanding of their world. The key expression from this quotation is "once upon a *recent* time" that the story-teller starts the mythical narration with. It is important here to highlight the deliberate use of the adjective "recent" to show that though it is a myth, it is not about an immemorial time in the past. In fact, this particular myth is about a recent past that is known by all the members of the audience. Normally myth is the phenomenological shape of the raw material upon which the dialectical image works in the production of historical consciousness, the people 's ideological consciousness; in other words, to naturalize thinking driven by the reification of commodity culture. But Butake employs the concept of myth to describe a contemporary Cameroonian history.

The use of myth in *Family Saga* produces a body of criticism that systematically estranges the ideological thinking of the origin of the ethnic divisions in contemporary Cameroonian society and its repercussions. Butake' idea in the mythic exploration can be rendered meaningful in the context of postmodernism's questioning of epistemologies. However, such truth becomes problematic. The myth has a totalising claim as to the truth-value of the ethnic question in Cameroon. The myth narrative here should be understood as the colonial discourses about how the two Cameroons came to be put

together (the Deed of brotherhood). The myth of origin is thus a subversive narrative and authoritatively re-appropriates the truth. In fact it functions as a local and private history which is moved to the centre of critical attention, and those marginalised and discriminated against are endowed with a voice. The colonial experience history is not regarded as flawed only because it is inflected by a particular undermining position, or discredited because it uplifts a small ethnic community. The mythical representations of the hitherto neglected Other (understand in the play Kamala) are celebrated. An attempt is made to see the Other in his/her own right and no longer instrumentalise him/her for the construction of a frivolous identity.

In more simplistic terms, I can conclude that through this mythic representation Butake attempts to bridge the divide between the Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians. This myth of origin of Cameroon as a nation exposes the ethnic division ideology as false consciousness. The audience is provided with a collective thought inherent in myth to be exploded into dialectical thinking as a means of producing dialectical truth out of mythic thinking. The origin of Kamanda is an attempt to transform ideological consciousness not through an attack from without, but through an estrangement, from within.

5.3. Agency in Butake's and Besong's Drama

In this section, I discuss how the playwrights create agency in their respective dramatic universes. This is an approach that enables the characters to make decisions that directly affect the direction and/or outcome of their experience, i.e., the characters assume the role of "actors". My interest here is whether the playwrights create believable agents or not. Agency means that the characters enact the role of actors by manifesting through

revolutionary actions, desires, intentionality that lead to the desired changes or their "illusion of life." In Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's drama actions are of course dependent upon time, place, but the crucial question here is how the actors participate in the process of change. What is common in Butake's and Besong's plays is that the characters know what to expect from the world. But the other crucial question one may ask here is: how are they actively made to feel in control of the situation or else are they encouraged to form their own goals and act on them?

To answer the above questions, one needs to do a crosscutting investigation of the dramatic agency in the plays. From all indications, an overall observation is that it is in both playwrights' most recent plays that we come to see an explicit form of agency. In fact, in these plays, the previously silenced or marginalised subjects are given a voice by first experiencing the hardships, confronting the situation and later on by taking revolutionary actions. However, the stories in the plays combine agency and intention, but this opens an important question: Where do the desires come from that agency satisfies? Perhaps we can suggest that by simply understanding their world and fate this can encourage the characters to form goals, and eventually to start actions that can change the course of events.

From the foregoing, we now focus on how the oppressed subject becomes a central concept in the plays. By centering their plays on the oppressed and finally empowering them with courage to change their fate, the playwrights are predicting some better future

for their society, no matter the time and cost. In the play *And Palm Wine will Flow*, we read this:

> **Tapper:** The Fon has seized the palm-bush. His watch-dogs are there now. They beat me severely. My clothes are tatters.
>
> **Shey Ngong***:* You are no cow to brush away the flies from your body with your tail.
>
> **Tapper*:*** Eh? But I did. I scattered all the pots and calabashes and the Fon fled. Shey, the Fon ran for his dear life. I am telling you, Shey, the Fon is a man and he ran for his dear life. The Fon ran, Shey.
>
> **Shey Ngong***:* Was he in the bush? My ear does not follow your tongue.
>
> **Tapper:** He was not in the bush, Shey. How could he? However, he ran for his life and I split the throne in two.
>
> **Shey Ngong***:* What are you talking about fellow? A goat in the den of a lion? How did it happen?
>
> **Tapper***:* I don't know, Shey. But the goat drove out the lion from his den and set the place on fire. (p.107)

For the first time in his dramaturgy Butake is developing a revolutionary aesthetic geared towards raising the consciousness of his audience. In fact, the quotation above constitutes a mass awareness, mobilization and awakening to the realities of dictatorship, which is the main concern of the play. The Fon had abolished all the traditional institutions established to help him to rule. From the moment he was brought in to power, he started abusing it: "As soon as he smelled, tasted and felt power, he turned against me. The disease that will kill a man begins like an appetite" (106), complained Shey Ngong. It is identifiable in this play that there is a realistic situation in which the Chief Shey Ngong is posited against the immoral Fon. It is very interesting that the same Fon is never brought into the play. From the beginning of the play, we know about him from what his messengers, what Shey Ngong's men say about him, and what they do in the palace. We

come to meet him only at the end of the play when he is cursed to death by the Earth Goddess. His messenger gives us a picture of what happens in the palace when the Fon is being attacked by Kibaranko:

> **Messenger:** As I was saying, Shey, we were all in various stages of drunkenness when suddenly we heard the howling of Kibaranko and saw the Fon's wife and children running in total confusion and fear. That was the signal for each man to save his head. The Fon staggered from his throne and fell. When he saw that all his notables were all running he cried for assistance. 'Save me from his wrath or I am dead. Save me, I say!' It was only then that Nformi Nyam and Nformi Eleme turned back and dragged him into the inner chambers blocking the door behind them (p.106)

This report from the messenger indicates that the corrupt Fon has already been dismissed from his throne. The powerful image of the Kibaranko is used as an intermediary between two conflicting forces but the resolution is exactly brought through the intervention of the extraordinary power of the Earth Goddess. At this juncture, we may interrogate the revolutionary nature of the kind of play Butake dramatises. He does not empower his characters with physical capabilities to confront the dictatorship of the Fon. And the final remark by Kibaranko that "the affairs of the land shall be decided by all the people in the market place" is but utopia.

In the same way, the revolutionary nature of Besong's plays is his presentation of the bitterness and woes of exploitation that the Anglophone Cameroonians suffer at the hands of their counterparts the Francophones. Besong's plays are also an attempt to dethrone oppression and enthrone equity and an egalitarian Cameroonian society. In reality his revolutionary plays function as a protest against and a denouncement of oppression manifested through exploitation and other principles and practices of social injustice employed by the dictatorial regime in place. In the play *Beasts of no Nation* Narrator

informs us to what extent brutality, oppression and violence have been institutionalized at the national level:

> **NARRATOR:** (*expansively*) Now, what are you trying to suggest to me that I did not know? (*to audience*) Since some were chopped to pieces with machetes, after the soldiers have done their duty and wiped out the dreamers, and the white-collar looters did a job to keep the Audit alumnae occupied for the rest of the next ten centuries— it is then I said to me: whoever goes under it is not going to be me….(*to the N.S.M fiercely*) You rejected my hospitality because of your unbridled greed and quarrelsomeness. Afraid that you might be silenced by a shot in the back of your head, now like maimed swines, like defeated frogs that must howl and howl. Now like stone aged men, like castrated cowards on the run of the eve of the anniversary of the Ceiling Bank who failed to secure a fat and regular payment in their Swiss accounts; now like stone age frogs not given to dynamic action or great thinking, you have become illogical to the point of idiocy. (*pause*)Now I'll show you all the parameters of power. A hero goes to war to die (p.95-96).

The play dramatises outright brutality, bestiality and terror to offer a general critique of the socio-political and economic atmosphere of Ednuoay. The scene above indicates that there is total chaos and no hope for the suffering characters in the play. The repetition of the phrase "now like" emphasizes the passing of time, that is, the Nightsoil-men have learnt from previous experiences and today they have continued to behave in a senseless manner that can be likened only to maimed swine, defeated frogs, Stone Age men, and castrated cowards. This is quite nauseating and should make the oppressed know that to be afraid to fight for your right is cowardice and that they will never have freedom if they do not fight for it.

To make his revolution obvious in the play, Besong starts by presenting a dysfunctional society with many of the characters featuring physical disabilities. The physical disability draws attention to the revolutionary vision in the world of the play, since common everyday activities require a certain effort and more time under such circumstances as it marks a discontinuity, a break with regard to our view of the kind of nation Besong

imagines. The generalised dysfunctionality of the characters becomes particularly ineffective since it remains unexplained. To present a dysfunctional world of the oppressed without comment, and simply present it as a given, makes the presence of such characters all the more disturbing.

The dysfunctional body is central to Besong's plays: we have a crew composed of Night-soil men whose job is only to carry buckets of excrement, Blindman, and Cripple. All of them are passively demanding "FREEDOM" (102). What is central to most of these instances of disability and bodily dysfunction is the way in which the origin of their ailment remains unexplained. However surreal and striking it may be, the dysfunction is never expressively negotiated in any rational way. What seems surreal and strange to the audience hardly seems to occupy the characters who are themselves affected.

However, the phrase "Give us" as frequently used by the Nightsoil-men such as in "Give us freedom" (110), "Give us money" (110) and "Give us professional identity card" (110), indicates that the once disabled masses have taken into account Narrator's advice to stand and fight. Through Narrator, Besong is focusing the reader's attention on the disabled characters by showing them in the process of revolution through physical violence. Baudrillard's ideas on this kind of violence as laid out in *Simulacra and Simulation* are very useful in this context. Thus, he claims that only through violence, the reality of the body (and, therefore, our life) can be recovered out of the all-encompassing simulation that is now our reality. According to Baudrillard (1997)

> there is violence necessary to life – whether suffered or inflicted. The violence of ritual, the violence of work, the violence of knowledge, the violence of blood, the

> violence of power and of the political is good! It is clear, luminous, the relations of force, contradictions, exploitation, repression! (p.156)

This idea of violence is overarching in Butake's and Besong's plays. For instance before the play *Beasts of no Nation* comes to its end, we meet the Night-soil men storming Aadingingin's office with buckets full of excrements as a way of protesting against his refusal to grant them their identification cards. In *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, the subtitle "A Drama of Conscientisation and Revolution" already suggests that the incidents in the play deal with the masses' awareness of their situation of injustice and oppression. This situation is therefore transformed into a revolutionary struggle which is achieved through self-realisation. We eventually meet the masses of the people engaging into violent actions to dislodge the power-drunken Kaiser of Agidigidi to the point of killing him. Agidigidi's ruler, H.R.H. Baal Njunghu Akhikikrikii is heard speaking from a coffin and his speech is not only terrorizing but also full of demagogy and provocation:

> By decree number one million ninety-ten…ninety-ten (*pause*). I'll get them where I want…(*A spitting noise*). Take these journalists off and torture them…I am the Consciousness, the Tempo and the Heart-Throb of Iduote…The He-alone and Guide (*short pause*). I am the One-Man-Band…I am the Universal Pedagogue and Pointing-Rod… I am in all places at the same time…Je vous ai compris. I'll tax them for the air I provide…I'll be in politics till I die. I'll give small buai power. One small bouai power…shege dan banzaar, …I go come dey. Amot za'a di money. Ma'a ding Sonara money…Oweh, money mbeng. Wa ding money? Bebele zamba'a…La tricherie, la demagogie, la traguerie…all mixed together, le vendalisme….all cooked together. Then you know me! Essamba! Essamba! Essamba! (p.2-3).

The message from this speech is a representation of the reality in Agidigidi: corruption, tribalism, assassination, falsehood, vandalism, demagogy, are the order of the day. Above all the ruler defines himself as a super-human. The totalitarian system is composed of a clique of criminals who resemble Akhikikrikii. Etah-Major Andze Abessolo is presented

as the enforcer of Law and Order. His revelations about the oppression he inflicts onto innocent civilians create a sense of horror among the audience. Besong uses dramatic monologues to depict the terrifying situation in Agidigidi. It is this oppressive spirit characterizing the regime that pushes Ngongo, the revolutionary character to organize a rebellion. He is seconded by such typical characters as Woman, Student, Poet as Mandela, Gambari and Akonchong who symbolize a collective and revolutionary vision. The strong team leads a successful revolution and we can get a picture of the whole scenery from the stage directions given in the play:

> Drumming. Voices from outside resume from a frenzied rhythm. Cheering from the tumultuous crowd from off. Drumming. Purposeful singing, marching from off. (67)
> Outside the marble shrine, the collective will of the people is firmed into a revolutionary blade. The Miracle looks at Brother Abednego Amagou Atangana, Atangana looks back at him unhappily. Akhikikrikii picks up the loaded pistol of the fainted ambassador and points it into his own mouth…Once there is a deafening explosion inside the Marble Shrine. Workers, Poet, Woman, etc. force their way in. Down! Music. The end (p.71).

The team of the oppressed has dedicated the cause of liberating themselves from the shackles of oppression and bastardization. The liberators have now restored "Power to the People" and they intone this song:

> **Voice of Woman:** Go down; thief Akhikikrikii Njughu with your Government without justice or you'll know me when I get you!
>
> **All:** We want nothing. We have come to hear you die. Only your blood can cleanse this land.
> **Voice of Poet:** Your Government has always been above the people. You've reached the pinnacle of a slaughter and desolation where you mocked the memory of the slain. The people are above Government!
>
> **Voice of people:** Mandela! Freedom! Mandela… Power to the people! (p.70)

The achievement of the oppressed people is an indication that they have been sufficiently awakened to the point of action. Their revolt bears fruit as the Voice of the people

responds by doing the right thing, ousting the unscrupulous government. Giving the oppressed people such an active role in the resolution of the crisis becomes Besong's way of laying the foundation of a palpable revolutionary posture against an evil system. This open revolutionary spirit that Besong dramatises in these two plays has gradually matured unlike in *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* where the oppressed are merely presented as "troglodytes wallowing in misery". Similarly, as discussed above in Butake's *And Palm Wine will Flow* the Fon is ousted from his palace by physical violence in order to dethrone oppression.

From the aforementioned I can conclude that Butake and Besong are dramatists of revolt since they not only realistically and critically capture the post-reunification Cameroon in its political, social and spiritual essence but, actually lay the basis of a future of hopes and possibilities through the actions of the oppressed in these plays. The revolutionary overture here lays the foundation of a developing revolutionary offensive towards the betterment of the society. However, the playwrights' projected solutions to this plight differ to some greater extent.

On the one hand, Butake's vision of the Cameroonian nation is generally transcendental. In fact he undertakes a reconciliatory project in order to build a harmonious Cameroonian nation. This is predominantly engaged with in his later playwrighting: *Family Saga, Betrothal without Libation,* and *The Rape of Michelle*. However there is a need here to emphasize that in his earlier plays —*And Palm Wine will Flow, The Survivors, Shoes and Four Men in Arms* and *Dance of the Vampire*— Butake privileges the use of force and

violence as the means to bring about the change. From this the observation is that Butake has changed his style of writing from a violent revolutionary perspective to a more reconciliatory engagement.

On the other hand, Besong's vision is always pragmatic and more radical. Besong's radical vision is for secession of the two Cameroons. Besong seems to suggest that Anglophone Cameroonians should not continue begging to be part of a union/confederation that has already pushed them to the periphery. This comes out clearly in *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*. There is a need to "break the chains that hold them in bondage" and "choose the side of the long suffering people of Agidigidi (Anglophone Cameroon)". He insists that the Anglophones do not have any place in La République in his other two plays: *Beasts of No Nation* and *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*.

In an attempt to find out the playwrights' dramatic creation of agency among their characters, we can note that Butake's characters appear to be more dedicated (but from a reconciliatory gesturing) and that Besong's are mostly passive, or not actively dedicated to change their plight, so to speak. In fact this passive nature of the oppressed characters seems to run across many of Besong's early plays. For example in *Beasts of no Nation* the Night-soil men keep on helplessly claiming for their national identification cards but we do not see them devising any strategies that can enable them to change their situation. Thus this play is not very successful in terms of agency. Agency here means the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of the characters' decisions

and choices and the thrill of exerting power over enticing materials. For a play to fit into revolutionary art there is need to engage with characters' commitment to change their plight, their daily limitations and defeat the forces of their dehumanisation. However, we can say that in Besong's dramaturgies there is a gradual agency, though it is still to some lesser extent passive in *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* and somehow timid in *Beasts of no Nation*, but more frontal in *Requiem for the last Kaiser*.

The play *Requiem for the last Kaiser* deals with the conscious development of the spirit of collective resistance against marginalisation and exploitation of the people by a highly repressive ruling bourgeoisie. With collective forces the masses have been able to push to the margins from the centre which they have been occupying. This particular play is Besong's open expression of his revolutionary artistic vision. He endows the masses with a sense of commitment as they are acting toward their liberation. This reminds us of Fanon's (1965) assertion that:

> When a people have fought for their national liberation, they will allow no one to set themselves up as liberators. They show themselves to be jealous of the results of their actions, and take good care not to place their future, their destiny or fate of their country in the hands of a living god (p.126).

Here Fanon's view is that once the masses have realised that their destiny is in danger, they should not surrender or fold their arms. Instead they take actions that lead them to their liberation. In Besong's *Requiem for the last Kaiser* the people have to confront a ruthless regime represented by H.R.H. Baal Njunghu Akhikikrikii, who hopes to reign eternally, even from his coffin. In his palace of Iduote he is aided by an unscrupulous cast of policy enforcers and fawning praise singers: Etah Major Andze Abessollo, in charge of the police and the army, and thus responsible for "law and order" in Agidigidi; Holy

Prophet Amougou A. Atangana, the church minister, who uses his Holy Mission to give credit to Akhikikrikii's disastrous politics, and Harl Ngongo, the presidential journalist, who will destroy truth and raise falsehood to state art. There is also Ambassador Cracker Crookster and Swiss Banker who are the President's men; they represent the neo-colonial presence in the state of Agidigidi.

On the other hand, there are a number of characters who stand in for the victims of the Agidigidi state exploitation and oppression. These are: Woman, Student, Leader of Market Women, Poet as Mandela, Akonchong and Gambari, Workers, Market Women and Soldier. These constitute themselves into a powerful resistance force and finally uproot the tyrant and his entire clique around him. In the finale, the tyrant's stooges surrender to the defensive force of the masses of the angry people. The Kaiser is left alone behind with the only alternative as to kill himself. Abessollo who used to be the right hand man of the Kaiser advises him, at the end, that a minority can never win a war against the well founded aspirations of the collective majority:

> Njunghu, you can't go against the will of the people: the voiceless, the mangled, the wretched and the deceived, whose strength lies in their unity. Theirs is the only victorious and invincible party enjoying a complete monolithic unity. (*Yawns tiredly*). They are divined majority, the steel of Revolution! (*Pause*)…It is a battle of the entire nation against the dark force of tyranny, tribalism and greed, which we represent (p.69).

Abessollo has realised that the power of the people is more important than the brutality practiced by the ruthless regime he has unscrupulously served. The literal confrontation with the past, the elimination of Akhikikrikii, makes an end to the masses' oppression which began with the denying of their basic rights. Besong in this particular play engages the characters in an open struggle for their rights. Unlike his two other plays in this study,

this one is successful in terms of agency. Normally a play succeeds to create agency when the oppressed are forced to enter a particular situation or context and they put hands together to discover the facts of that situation in order to remedy it. The people in this play have enough facts with which they make immediate decisions to change the situation. This eventually ignites them to integrate the present into their lives, and they want to be the right owners of their destiny: they know what the relationship with the past can be like, and they recognise the need to turn away from it at times, despite the fact that Akhikikrikii and his clique want to keep on enjoying it.

In Butake's plays there are two forms of agency. As discussed above, Butake's vision is that of dialogue and reconciliation. The first form of agency is found in two of his plays: *Family Saga* and *Betrothal without Libation*. The characters are dedicated to bring about some positive changes but through dialogue and mutual agreement. In this project they first agree on the problems facing them and devise strategies that can bring the two parties to reconcile. The reconciliation process can be understood here as a win-win form of agency.

The second one is the same as the agency discussed in Besong's plays. In *And Palm Wine Will Flow* the main character confronts oppression, an unjust use of power by the Fon who maintains it by a threat of force. In the play, the Fon is a pleasure-seeking ruler who does not care about his people. His entourage is composed of stooges, bootlickers, and flatterers. All these fawners render honor to the Fon because of the many favours he "generously" distributes to them. In fact, some of them are promoted to higher positions

of authority and nobility; others are given unmerited advantages. But besides and more importantly, the Fon is feared because he tortures and brutalizes those who want to challenge his rulership. Butake puts the Fon in confrontation with a group of engaged women who are headed by Shey Ngong, the Chief Priest of Nyombom. To magnify on this indignation Butake lends Shey Ngong spiritual values which make him an epitome of supernatural powers and the pillar of moral values. From the very beginning of the confrontation, we can see that the two forces are diametrically opposed. Shey Ngong is critical of the Fon and strongly opposes him and his life-style. As an embodiment of moral values, Shey Ngong scornfully turns down appeals made to him to pay respects to the Fon.

Later on as the play develops to its climax, we are presented with Shey Ngong's consequence of his arrogance towards the Fon. He seizes Shey Ngong's wives' farmlands, which are now given to Kibanya. The latter had been recently promoted to a higher position of nobility. The Fon's decision cost him his life. Shey Ngong worships his gods and ancestors who react promptly because they cannot allow their worshiper's land to be consecrated by an immoral and mediocre dictator of the Fon. The Earth-goddess vomits her wrath to the Fon and the whole land is cursed with a destructive spiritual drought which lays the Fon's Palace bare. Though the Fon is endowed with his power, he cannot resist Shey Ngong's supernatural power. Before the play comes to its end, the Fon has taken refuge and surrendered to the will of the women who force him to drink poison concocted to end his life. His death means the end of the Fon's ruling tradition. Henceforth the village will be ruled by a council of elders led by Shey Ngong

who will himself be replaced as soon as he shows any sign of disrespect to the will of the people.

Even though many of the ordinary people got killed and oppressed by the Fon, those who dared resisting him got empowered from above and overthrew the oppressive force. It is true that they are oppressed, but someone who is victimized is not the same as an oppressed because victims do not fight back. The oppressed confront a problem, analyze what is happening and take action to change their situation. We can argue that Butake enables the oppressed to be aware of their situation first. Then they communally work together to face their oppressor and they become victorious. The play expresses the need for people with the moral conviction to keep up the fight against the forces of evil. And Butake's message can be summarized as a call for collective efforts to better their life conditions. If this fight is carried out with courage, conviction and determination, the result will ultimately be victory because the forces of good will always win and triumph. However, this is valid for a "younger Butake" playwright. The other "older Butake" does not privilege such kind of revolutionaly agency as discussed above.

For the playwrights' agency to be successful, there are always two blocks of characters in confrontation: the category of the ordinary citizens (or those whose rights are often violated) and the category of the leaders. In Besong's play *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, like in *Beasts of no Nation*, the first category of characters are drawn from the downtrodden citizens. We have the lepers, who are described as people who have lived as "robots" throughout. They live in constant stress and without any

profession. The torturous and difficult existence they have been living in is further exacerbated by the ruthless brutality of the so called Law Enforcement Official, Yaro Amichive. He is similar to the Fon in Butake's *And Palm Wine Will Flow* in many regards. Both are ruthless and torturous rulers. They are feared. Badjidka in *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* states this about Yaro Amichive: "if I hear he is coming, I'll kill myself before he gets here" (2). In this particular play, Yaro Amichive is referred to as a "master" while the rest of the oppressed characters are "colonised slaves", leprous and outcasts in their society. However, the common fate for both Amichive and the Fon is that they are mercilessly killed by the very people they have oppressed.

Badjidka and Toura are the two principal characters in the play. Dramatic action and dialogue do not, however, concentrate on these two characters for what they are, but through them, with the techniques of parody and flashback, the playwright recasts them into several other roles. They would go back into the history and politics of the Cameroon Republic in the 1960s, and take the role of the leading politicians of the two Cameroons at the time, and then work their way to the present in order to explain the reason for their present state as lepers. In *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, Besong builds his play on the reminiscences of the history of both the pre-independence and post-independence Cameroon. In most of his plays, this issue comes out outstandingly. In fact, it is not only the issues of the colonial past and the struggle against it that he writes about, he also portrays the continuous neo-colonial presence, which he thinks dispossesses, overwhelms and alienates the masses from their system of governance. In his theory of

reconstruction Chapman (1996) has recommended that in writing about the process of reconstruction in literary works

> the past, even the near past, should not be consigned to the dustbins of history, but would need to be continually recovered and re-interpreted as usable, in the search for new canonizations derived from African challenges and demands (p.427)

For Butake's and Besong's characters to be able to change the present situation, they first and foremost have full grasp of the past. However the playwrights' views and representations of history seem to be rather static and undialectical. For example in *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, in trying to recreate the Cameroonian history past, Besong does not clearly bring out those forces that contributed to that history, and thus creates an elusive world. The dramatic imaginary does not give us some clear visionary dimension (like Butake) that should lead to a positive redefinition of the world of the oppressed. But it is so unfortunate that we rarely see them initiating actions that can change the situation positively like Butake's characters do. Butake's characters like She Bo-Nyo, Shey Ngong in *Lake God* and *And Palm Wine Will Flow* respectively, or Woman and Student act towards the betterment of their conditions. Besong's later play *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* grapples also with a sound revolution but does so by only setting down what happened, showing things the way they are, without necessarily stating how they could be and it becomes the task of the audience or reader to discover the hidden possibilities, choices or alternatives at their disposal and make sense of this material.

5.4. The Worlds of Bole Butake and Bate Besong

This section examines how issues of form and theme come together to elaborate the ideas as well as social visions of these playwrights and the societies they come from or write about. Form and content are often intertwined in works of social realism such as the ones selected for this study. Their thematic treatment as well as aspects of the dramatic design, namely, the strategies used to produce the complexities and intrigues of the Anglophone Problem have been discussed above. We are interested in examining how form and thematic development as two major indexes of drama are treated in the plays under study. Specifically, how do these two indices, in the hands of the selected playwrights, contribute to the aesthetic and formal treatment of the "Anglophone Problem", nation and nationhood and related issues?

Besong has always upheld the view that it is the duty of an artist to provide moral direction and vision to the struggles of the exploited people. Through his various essays, novels and plays, he has often focused on contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian politics, the exploitation of the people by the ruling class and their fight for freedom. This reminds us of Ngugi's commentaries on the role of an artist when he says:

> Like all artists, I am interested in human relationships and their quality. This is what I explore in my work. Human relationships do not occur in a vacuum. They develop in the context of ecology, economics, politics, culture, and psyche. All these aspects of our society affect those relationships profoundly. These aspects are inseparable. They are connected. The most intimate is connected with the most earthly. As an artist you examine the particulars to explore the interconnection of phenomena to open a window into the human soul. The material of life opens out into the spirituality of human life. (Ngugi's *Interview with M. Pozo*, 2004)

A committed writer makes a careful scrutiny of the social evils, which are repugnant to him and to his people. Creative artists never hesitate to invite others to listen to them and

subject their works to the scrutiny of their people. As discussesd above, Butake's and Besong's art is committed to the people, to revolution and transformation. It contributes to revolutionary change and it preserves everything that is good for humanity. Thus, by recording the ills in society, it remains on the side of the oppressed.

To begin with, as a creative artist, Butake is dedicated to the advocacy of certain beliefs and programs especially pertaining to his own Anglophone Cameroonian community. His beliefs emanate from his sense of moral fervor, conviction and righteousness. In Butake's dramaturgy we find that he records the exploitation of the majority at the hands of the minority during the post-colonial Cameroon. His sensitiveness and his concern for shaping and molding his community is reflected in his fictional works which delineate the exploitation and its consequential effect on the lives of the masses. His three plays— *Family Saga, Betrothal without Libation,* and *And Palm-wine will Flow*— deal with the period of social, political, and economic turmoil in Cameroon. They also openly explore the detrimental effects of the politics of reunification and neo-colonialism. They are about Butake's criticism of the post-colonial Cameroon, the reunification process and its aftermaths and finally the neo-colonial forces. In fact, there is also an overt attack on the regimes of the time covered by the plays.

Besong also, to some lesser or greater extent, is concerned with the same issues like Butake. In most of his plays, Besong is vigorously dedicated to the cause of Anglophone people in La République. The settings and themes of the plays demonstrate vividly his bitter criticism of the reunification project and the neo-colonial treacheries. In *The Most*

Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie, although the playwright fictionalizes the names and places in the dramatis personae, one can easily notice that they have a lot in common with real incidents and actions that took place in Cameroon in the 1980s. In a form of memories, the characters that play the roles of the politicians relate these events to historical events during Cameroon's colonization and decolonization. The playwright's focus is on the hypocrisy, corruption and misuse of power by politicians and stooges who put the country into a state of total despair. In his analysis of the same play Tangwa (1996: 166) describes it as one that satirises former president Ahmadu Ahidjo and former Cameroonian National Assembly House Speaker, Solomon Tandeng Muna. This is evidenced by the stage direction in the prologue where the playwright begins with what can be called, in Brechtian terms, *Verfremdungseffekt* (*Estrangement/defamiliarisation*). In fact the two characters announce to the audience that what they are doing is not the reality. They are just playing out something that has nothing to do with what is real:

> **Badjika:** (*to audience*) In fact this is a three-act play.
>
> **Toura:** (*inclines his head, smiles down conspiratorially*) Il y a trois personnages principaux dans cette pièce. Dans le dernier acte, le héro est assassiné (5). [*There are three principal characters in this play. In the last act, the main character is assassinated*]

This is unusual for the actors to make this announcement. But the technique itself has some effects on the audience. They are aware from the beginning that what they will be watching will be a simulation of aspects of some reality around them. However the development of the play from Acts I, II, to III shows us that now the characters are rather proving to what extent what they disclaimed as reality in the prologue is rather being disclosed and extended into a somewhat physical world. In fact they seem to be

concerned with life and actions/events that the audience can easily represent in their immediate social, political, and economic environment. The play's thematic development turns around such issues as fear, terror, embezzlement, political betrayals and manipulations, resignation, cannibalism and overt violation of human rights. This is reinforced by the nature of characters that constitute the play: blind, lepers, beggars, politicians, policemen, soldiers, prison guards, surgeon. This can imply that the playwright is aware that the political incidents that are dramatised may cost him his life or imprisonment as the regime in place does not want any such criticism. That is why, and perhaps paradoxically, the play itself displays instances of brute force and intimidation that are the order of the day during the post-reunification period in Cameroon.

At another level, both Butake's and Besong's plays dramatize corruption and power struggle between the dictator-state and the people. In the play *And Palm-wine will Flow*, Butake's characters, especially the women, appear violent and irrational if considered as an isolated incident unrelated to its surrounding context; however, their act is more revolutionary than irrational and criminal because it is a well-organized plan in pursuit of a particular political change. The Fibuen's political engagement is necessitated as is Shey Ngong's who dares to confront alone "The Wise One! Father of the land! Founder and Guardian of Ewawa! …" (102) and he does not understand "How the whole land can be afraid of one man" (103). Before the play turns to its end we see how the revolutionary act led by women ends up in the death of the Fon:

> Die and deliver the land from the
> Abominations of drunkenness and gluttony
> […]

> Die, Fon! So that we may think!
> The people need your death to think!
> Die! Die! Die! (p.110)

The women make the Fon drink urine and he dies of this "liquor from the viginas" and is brought to "feel the power of power" (110). This revolution in a form of 'abomination' may be equated to terrorism. Hutchinson (1978: 18) gives a definition of revolutionary terrorism:

> is part of the strategy of insurgents who are attempting to gain political power through the overthrow of an incumbent government; thus it has to do with fundamental political change. Terrorism used for this purpose is not an isolated event or a string of random deeds, but a series of deliberate, interrelated, premeditated actions.

The description of the murder of the Fon means that despite its violence, the terrorist act is directed only at the Fon who had seized power and misused it causing "abomination to the land". He had himself used state terrorism.

Similarly Besong's play *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* dramatises the immorality of the political leaders of his time, how they used coercive measures to oppress, torture and deny rights to the citizens. The play's title gives us an idea of a terrifying atmosphere: "a talkative zombie". He also brings to the reader's attention the leaders' betrayals and opposes them to the masses' unfulfilled expectations. The world of the play is that of hopelessness and total despair, a world characterised by evil and political buffoonery. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, Besong lays bare the political history of the nation-in-building by confronting the past and the present in such a way that the characters move backwards and forwards into their memories, reviving the corruption, oppression, betrayals, and political manipulation practiced by the post-reunification regime in Cameroon.

The plot of Besong's plays essentially involves a ruler who is presented as an oppressor, a dictator and does not want to leave power. For example there is Aadingingin in *Beasts of no Nation,* Akhikirikii in *Requiem for the Last Kaiser*, and in *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* there is Amichive whose atrocities cost him his life because of lack of blood. In fact Amichive is shot and fatally wounded in one of his hunt-downs missions of "secessionists" and "subversives":

> **Badjika:** (*as Toura the leper*) In trying to purify this peace-loving nation of Secessionists, this grave and unfortunate tragedy was enacted?
>
> **Toura:** (*as Surgeon General with an embarrassed smile*) Comrade, in the National Service.
>
> **Badjika:** (*cocking his head as Badjika the leper*) In chasing the dragon a hunter became the hunted (p.48)?

This scene, apart from being the most meaningful moment of the play, it appears also to be the most terrifying one. He eventually dies, is buried, but keeps on talking ("A talkative Zombie"). He seems to possess vampiric qualities. So did he ever die? Near the horrific finale of the play, Amichive screams: "Help! Help! Help!" Amichive's deathbed outcry suggests first his reputation as a man-eater. Secondly it indicates that his violence on his subjects is not unlike that of cannibals which is a typical metaphor for the post-reunification Cameroonian leaders. Through the portrayal of Amichive we can say that Besong is beating the post-reunification authority at its own game. But a more realistic argument is that Amichive may have been mistaken for dead. In effect he luckily manages to revive thanks to some regenerative forces that he incarnates or after his death another such oppressor is likely to emerge since after all, the situation has never changed. Either way, the line between life and death is a fine one in this particular play which can

be said to squarely belong to the Gothic tradition because of its stark yet mysterious chronicling of torturous scenes, its startling imagery, and its horrific finale. It is therefore possible to say that Besong adopts Gothic tropes and stylistic effects, weaving them into his own writings, but the extent to which those choices are in earnest is still to be established.

Finally, both Butake and Besong problematize the "Anglophone Problem" by linking it to the past and allegorize the reunification process by constructing dramaturgies of great return. To highlight on the effects of the putting together of the two Cameroons, the characters have to go back to the far past where life was not difficult. They then come back to the near past where three forces (colonisation, the reunification and neo-colonisation) have contributed together to bring about the present imbroglio. To some greater or lesser extent, both playwrights agree that the reunification, however, does not grant the Anglophone Cameroonian people a new life. Since the reunification has not brought the kind of life conditions they expected, there is an urgent need to redefine the conditions of this reunification, either by a peaceful resolution (this is at least Butake's inclination) or simply by completely dismantling the reunification provisions (Besong does not hide with this).

5.5. Butake and Besong's Visions of the Cameroonian Nation

According to Roland Barthes (1993) literary texts are timeless; they are universal and transcend history: the historical context of their production and reception has no bearing on the literary work which is aesthetically autonomous, having its own laws, being a world unto itself. However this model seems to gloss over the fact that an historical

context of a literary work – the circumstances surrounding its production– is integral to a proper understanding of it. I thus contend that the understanding of the post-colonial Anglophone Cameroonian drama must take into account the undercurrents that produce it. This was done in detail in Chapter Four of this study. Butake's and Besong's (re)presentation of the "Anglophone Problem" and their visions of the Cameroonian nation are important in this chapter. In fact, they are two playwrights, grappling with the same problem, writing for the same people and in the same period but with different visions. Therefore I attempt to answer some key questions: as artists, what are Butake's and Besong's visions about the Cameroonian nation as revealed by the possibilities of their dramatic strategies? In the presentation of their different visions, is it still possible to repair the divided nation? Or is there any possible way in which a single Cameroon nation can be built despite the (neo)-colonial constructs and controversial post-reunification politics?

Butake and Besong's play texts are produced within a specific historical context which can help us to understand their visions and how these are interwoven within the dramatic settings and structures. From their thematic structures, these can be considered as (social)-realist plays since they provide imaginative representations of specific historical moments, events or periods. In terms of both social content and aesthetic form, social realism, as Hallam and Marshment (2000:32) remind us "is distinguished by the attention it pays to characters who usually figure as background presences in the generic mainstream, those marginalised by virtue of their social status". Hallam and Marshment's argument is that social realism approximates reality; that is, to show things as they really

are. However, in Butake's and Besong's dramatic world, the audience's appreciation of what is 'real' is always dependent on what has emerged previously within the socio-political environment of Cameroon. Their influences are necessarily heterogeneous and they cannot be merely judged on their plays' relation to what one may consider 'real' life.

In addition this chapter interrogates the ways in which the playwrights present, understand, evaluate and use contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian socio-political environment to produce narratives around the question of nation building within the confines established by the "Anglophone Problem" discourses. I discussed in Chapter One how the "Anglophone Problem" is a very controversial issue, not only from the political arena, but also among creative writers and critics. The reunification between the two Cameroons and its derivative "Anglophone Problem" are most often at the centre of the literature and discourses that emerged in Anglophone Cameroon since the 1980s. The post/reunification Cameroonian nation is for some a failed union or marriage, for others ceded to exist when the constitution that established the union was abolished by President Ahidjo, and for many others still needs to be redefined.

The many discourses around the reunification question in Cameroon converge on one issue: that the union between the two Cameroons created an imbalance in the two cultures and widened the gap between the minorities and majorities. In the domain of art, these discourses can actually be situated first within the frames of social-realism as discussed above. They also fall under the realms of post/modernism which, according to Morawski 1996: 8) "reveals the striving to endow humankind once again with its lost balance of

spirit, to deprive rationality of its absolute value". In using the two approaches Butake and Besong are able to revisit and redefine the social, political, and linguistic complexities that inform the "Anglophone problem". In rethinking relationships between the colonial languages and their effects on the current politics, both playwrights engage in the process of revising the post-colonial Cameroonian history and constructing meaning.

To begin with, Butake's envisioning of an ideal unified nation in the two plays *Family Saga* and *Betrothal without Libation* offers possibility for the people to come together and form one stronger society despite their differences of language, culture, world view and past experiences. In *Family Saga*, Sawa who has suffered from the rape and oppression by Kamalo, makes a powerful pronouncement about how the tensions in their family can be resolved in order to create a harmonious society.

Despite the gravity of the situation, Sawa is convinced that Kamalo acted out of impulses and was manipulated from outside. The rape metaphor in this play refers to the exploitation Anglophones have suffered in the reunified Cameroon. Kamalo, the signpost of Francophone Cameroonians' leadership after reunification, feels guilty of his ignominious acts and looks back for forgiveness. Here Butake's vision of how the hard experiences between the Anglophones and Francophones in Cameroon can be managed is that of creating a "liminal space" for understanding and reconciliation. In fact, from a realist-socialist point of view, Butake is a "unificator" and not a separatist (like many of his contemporary Anglophone Cameroonians).

Furthermore, Butake's dramatic imagination enables the minority class to negotiate a common ground on which all their differences can easily be discussed. These differences are, among others, about power struggle, domination and/or majority-minority relations. By conferring power to the powerless and the discriminated (represented by Sawa in the play) Butake corroborates Homi Bhabha's idea of a "liminal space", which is his critique against a nationalist vision of a homogenous nation. Perhaps a more appropriate concept that can correctly capture Butake's envisioning is Bhabha's (1996: 201) use of "subaltern group" to refer to "an oppressed minority group whose presence [is] crucial to the self-definition of the majority groups". For Bhabha, the subaltern social groups are also in a position to subvert the authority of those who have hegemonic power." In the two plays Butake imagines a nation (as an extended family) which has not really fallen down. For him, there is still a way of assembling the different fragments in order to build a stronger society. In effect, the vision of a unified Cameroonian nation dominates *Betrothal without Libation* and it is captured from the very beginning of the play. The playwright correctly reveals in the foreword to the same play that:

> The theme of inter-ethnic marriage in the cyclorama or backdrop of prejudice is still relevant today as it was more than two decades ago. Perhaps, it is even more interesting that, right from the outset of my first steps in creativity, I was already concerned about Cameroon as a nation, rather than a conglomeration of tribal states with individuals who were ready to get at each other's throats just because they were from another cultural background (p.5).

The development of the play is about inter-ethnic marriage. Elissa, a Nyangi secondary school leaver falls in love with Fointam, a Bikom university graduate. The choice of characters and what they stand for is very meaningful here. Elissa's parents are presented as modern and think beyond their ethnic belonging. Indeed, the father is Bakossi and her mother is a Bakweri. Upon learning this Fointam makes this pronouncement:

> It may seem strange but I like it that way. If everyone in this country did like your grand father, and us, this would soon become a tribeless nation. And we will have gone a long way in solving some of the numerous problems that are plaguing this country (p.20)

Though Fointam wants to marry Elissa, a wife from a different cultural background, his parents are still closed to themselves. They do not tolerate any marriage outside their ethnic group. But as the play progresses Fointam definitely decides to marry Elissa "without libation". He eventually gets cursed by his own parents but since this curse is unjust and pronounced out of anger and unfair treatment, it does not in no way harm the newly married couple. Instead their family prospers and, for Butake's vision to be brought to its term, Fointam's parents recognise their mistakes. They have to look for forgiveness and reunification with their son and his family that has separated for a long period of time. Therefore, despite the differences in worldviews Butake's vision of the Cameroonian nation as an extended family in the image of Fointam's insinuates that there are still possibilities of redefining the reunification.

The nation that Butake envisions in these two plays is however different in *And Palm Wine will Flow*. In fact his vision changes from that of reconciliation and negotiation to that of revolution and use of force to claim what otherwise is denied to the citizens. Perhaps this is because the political turmoil of the 1990s does not leave the playwright any sign of hope for a peaceful unified Cameroonian nation. In fact in its transition to a multi-party democratic system, much of the Anglophone Cameroonian literature of this period is concerned with the question of political oppression and violation of human rights by the Biya regime. However Butake's vision in most of his plays necessarily

addresses questions concerning the relationships between the (neo)-colonial processes and the concepts of unification, identity, and nation.

Unlike Butake, Besong's thematic focus is inclined more on the portrayal of the terrifying, the painful, and a common insistence on post-reunification Cameroonian disillusionment. As a revolutionary playwright, he carefully observes the panoramic view of his society and dramatises it as it is. He exposes his society's filth, decay, contradictions and conflicts with a view to presenting a true picture of it as he does in *Beasts of no Nation*. Socialist realists believe in the inevitability of change, but Besong simply depicts and presents his society the way it is without necessarily suggesting ways of how to change the situation. However, the sense of dismay with which he confronts corruption and ethnic divisions in the new post-independence regime in Cameroon is strong. He gives a critical indictment of the failure of the new state to provide opportunities for the low class. He sums up the generalised corrupt nature of the regime in this biblical allusion:

> If I find in Ednouay
> Two righteous Directors,
> Then I will spare
> All the place for
> Their sake. But
> They have left undone
> Those things which they ought
> To have done
> And they have done
> Those things which they ought not

To have done (p.94-95)

With a bitter tongue, in this excerpt Besong refers to God's revelation to Abraham about the people of Sodom. In the Holy Bible God told Abraham that He is going to destroy the city of Sodom because of the evil deeds of the people. In this play the city of Ednouay is compared to Sodom and the implication is that all the people in positions of power are devilish, corrupt and the narrator, in a priestly tone, warns the ordinary citizens never to trust their leaders. Besong lends to the characters a memory in which the past is made present. The characters relay what they have seen, heard and experienced. He thus employs the resourcefulness of history to interrogate it although at the same time this history is elevated.

In *Beasts of no Nation* Besong depicts a nation in total moral decay. He is allergic to treachery and betrayal and spares no effort to criticize in bitter tones leaders who betray their people. It is in the last scene of the play that he deals directly with filth and shit, creating even a nauseating mood among the audience. Stage direction in the last section of the play is clear:

> Action takes place by the lavatory. Sound of defecating terrors before twilight hour. Lights should shift to lavatory: Brooms thick with excrement. Pails of human waste, brownish, yellowish, grayish or black matter intestinal products of an inebriated society waiting to be carted down. Odour of human faeces hangs thick in the air despite the rigorous application of several tins of carbonic acid (p.126).

This toilet diction and image of excremental and fecal matters in this scene insinuate the arrogance and aberrations of the leaders of Ednouay. Besong expresses the frustration

many citizens of the post-reunification state felt at the hands of an authoritarian regime. Importantly enough, before the play comes to its close, the night-soil men, carriers of excrement and without any identification card, use their "buckets full of excrements" (141) to storm Aadingingin's office. One may be tempted to take this as a revolutionary act but unfortunately, we do not see any successful action done to oust him. Instead, Aadingingin uses his pistol to kill Otshama while the night-soil men flee away. The play closes with Aadingingin's victory and thus terror and oppression remain.

Besong's vision and understanding of the issues that help to represent the post-reunification Cameroonian nation is different from Butake's. In fact, from the beginning of Butake's dramatic career, his vision of the Cameroonian nation and its problems is dramatised from a social perspective where instinctive feelings are preserved, where man is seen either as a fixed point or a process and where social being determines thought. In fact, in his plays under study there is a kind of evolutionary determination which takes human beings for granted. However, from a Marxist critical theory, we can posit that the issues he dramatises put man at the centre of inquiry to insinuate the national problems. It is in his later plays, *And Palm Wine will Flow* and *Dance of the Vampire* that his vision matures to resemble Besong's whose confrontation between the ruling class and the masses of the people is evident.

However, a general common feature of Butake's and Besong's plays is that they privilege the masses of the people and give them power to subvert the authority and oppression. Here it is important to elucidate how the two important theatre practitioners go about

provoking and involving their audiences. In other words, there is need to highlight the ways in which the audiences are "ushered into their real world, with attentive faculties" through the deliberate and carefully constructed set design and visual presentation of the performance. Like the German playwrights of the 1930s who were seen as the "breeders' of the proletarian world revolution" (Zortman, 1984: 2), Butake and Besong are revolutionary playwrights *par excellence.*

African revolutionary art is a product and depiction of the socialist literature. The distinguishing characteristic of the works of these writers are the underlying socialist ideas. Markov (1978) writes that this kind of literature:

> came into being at the dawn of the working class movement at the time when the spread of Marxist ideology and socialist enlightenment were the order of the day and when the key task was to organize the working class (p.21).

The social ideology identifies alienation as the major factor responsible for the crisis inherent in the human society. He sees alienation manifesting itself in many ways in the social, political and economic structure of the society. To the social writer, exploitation is a facet of alienation. He therefore objects to the exploitation of the working class. From a social-realist point of view, Bole Butake and Bate Besong give a picture of the demeaned Cameroonian past and present. Their revolutionary dramatic art form emerges from the crises of reunification and neo-colonialism in Cameroon. The two crises are historical contradictions that breed a lot of socio-psychological, socio-political and socio-economic crises in the past and contemporary Cameroonian society. It is thus through drama or theatre as a creative art form that Butake and Besong are able to lay bare these historical

contradictions, and create awareness. Szanto (1978) talking about Brecht's theatre sees that this form of theatre

> …demystifies relationships between individuals and institutions, individuals and individuals, institutions and institutions, so as to show first the nature of passion and economic and social laws, and second to demonstrate methods by which human beings can control both themselves and their institutions (p.78)

Szanto's observation contains the idea that theatre deals with social, political, and cultural problems. In facing the dominant social and political order, for example, this theatre tries to "empower" or "transform" the society that is immediate to it. This is reminiscent of Augusto Boal's "theatre of the oppressed", a work that clearly uses a lot of Brechtian principles. Similarly in the foreword to his *Family Saga,* Butake reveals his "conviction that theatre is almost an indispensable tool in raising people's awareness on certain societal issues" (6). Thus characters in the same play are in pursuit of their true identity and thus embark on a self-discovery journey:

> **SAWA**: You cannot know everything na, daddy? That is why you sent us to look for the family story na? Nobody can know everything na?
>
> **KAMALA**: You are right, Sawa. Even a newly born baby is knowledgeable in its own way. That is why we must tap all the human resources available to us in order to increase our knowledge of ourselves and our surroundings (p.65).

This self-discovery journey motif is very important in Butake's vision of how the oppressed can bring about their desired change. For the characters to challenge the abuse of power in place, they must first understand who they are and the roots of the life's conditions they are in. Sawa and Kamala, the oppressed in the family, are thus elevated to the level of knowledge or understanding about whom they are and their surrounding social environment. Therefore Butake is seen as a "soft revolutionary playwright" who is of course preoccupied with a peaceful resolution of the conflicts engendered by

exploitation and oppression. This move finds expression in Ngugi's (1986) articulation of the necessity of such an engagement:

> The aim is to devise an education system that not only gives people a true knowledge of their relations to nature and other men, but which imparts a culture that embodies a consciousness, an ideological world outlook and value system that is a complete negation of the imperialist culture, value system and world view (p.98)

This role that writers claim appears to be problematic. But if we consider the role played by their literary texts, we can say that they educate and create awareness about issues which constitute basically the problems of the low class people. The plays under study aim at raising awareness on the paradoxes of nation building and the reunification project in Cameroon. Perhaps it is the writers' belief that once the oppressed have this whole outlook and worldview, they can easily "negate" any form of exploitation. It is this same aim that Butake's play *Family Saga* is fulfilling because at the end of the play the oppressor (Kamalo) is tamed and brought to confess his sins and eventually asks not for forgiveness, but for appropriate condemnation if ever there is one with equal measure. This similar dramatic technique appears in Besong's *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* when the ruler, Armchive, in his final agony, makes appeal for assistance from his people that he had been oppressing. A confessional tendency is not, in itself, fundamental to the creation of a social realist text; however, it is here certainly relevant to the fact that both Butake and Besong have been motivated to create the type of judgmental and sentimental drama.

In addition Butake's and Besong's plays use social realism in an attempt to reconstruct a lost Cameroonian national identity. They do so by combining issues of identity, power and conflict. They select realistic details from ordinary life, and their plays chronicle the

fate of an impotent silent majority. They have a vision of better life for the oppressed. In this sense the playwrights are understood as humanists because human concerns like politics and history remain largely foregrounded in their works. For example, in Butake's *Family Saga*, history is reworked on through a mythic representation. His appeal to the past becomes a useful tool in the interpretation of the present. He does so by laying together the disagreements about what happened in the past, uncertainty about whether the past really happened or if it continues in different forms.

Butake believes in drama as a tool of social transformation but only if all the people act as one person, independently of their differences. His drama creates changes in economic, social, and cultural relations among the people. In fact, from time immemorial the interface of drama with the society has consigned its activities to more relevance in influencing human social behavior and the transformations of human thought and reason. More specifically, Butake's and Besong's drama does so through the redefinition of its theory and practice as an instrument of social enlightenment and transformation. Among all other literary genres drama is the most naturally close to reality and life situations. Indeed while Aristotle asserts in his *Poetics* that drama is "an imitation of an action," Cook and Okenimkpe (1983: 4) affirm that it is "a fluent expression" of the "actor's whole being" (ix). Its performative values give it active capacity as a pragmatic cultural practice. Cameroonian postcolonial drama, thus, is influenced by the socio-economic and cultural values at work in the mangled relations of the masses and the state under colonialism and the Reunification. In the play *Family Saga*, the song performed during

the rehearsal of the performance intended for His Excellency Kamalo insists on a communal move:

> **Chorus:** In one family, in one family, in one family, in one family
> We can change the whole world.
> **Solo:** Dear children, my children, in one family
> We can change the whole world.
> **Solo:** Dear Sawa, dear son Ngong, in one family
> We can change the whole world.
> **Solo:** Kamalo, dear brother, in one family
> We can change the whole world.
> **Chorus:** In one family, in one family, in one family, in one family
> We can change the whole world. (p.73)

This vision of change that is a concern of every member of the society is a guiding principle in most of Butake's plays. Ako (2009:2) has the same view about Butake's plays when he argues that "the dramatist is convinced that there can be national integration and harmony, and that the nation as an extended family will develop and prosper if the values of love, mutual respect, sharing and hard work are cultivated". In fact, Butake believes in the power of the low class but if only it is supported by the top leadership.

Another element that puts the two playwrights' visions closer is their visions of women and their role in the nation building project. Bole Butake and Bate Besong establish patterns of female representation by creating exceptionally strong female characters. For example Besong goes farther to call one of his major female characters "Woman" and shows her as an educator of the masses, a revolutionary leader, and a combatant of foreign exploitation. Both writers reveal a new vision in which women become the initiators of change: both describe different strategies for the women to negotiate power in the gender-biased societies. However, the two playwrights have different views on

how the same women negotiate and exercise their power. Besong's Woman uses her knowledge of the evils of the ruling government to form a political movement against it. An interesting thesis on Butake's plays about empowering the woman has been done by Nkealah (2011) and can provide more details about these issues. In effect, she observes that the women in the plays use their bodies as a site of resistance against male complacency.

Finally, in order to successfully imagine and represent a Cameroon (divided) nation, Butake's and Besong's plays effectively employ Brecht's V-effect (or *Verfrumdungseffekt*) formula as a dramatic strategy. According to Brecht, the role of a play is to raise the entire mind of the audience to the very height of revolutionary action. This revolutionary spirit in the characters, as argued elsewhere in this thesis, is not satisfactory. According to Crow (1983), the "audience's indignation" is aroused as "vice is seen punishing virtue," while truth and innocence are being submerged (45). This creates high spirits and can psychologically persuade the audience to take revolutionary action against the forces of discrimination, oppression, and exploitation. For example, Butake's dramatic world in *Family Saga* captures a feeling of indignation that pushes the oppressed to act. After years of Kamalo's oppression (supported by his father Baakingoom), his confession at the end of the play indicates to what extent the oppressed have become conscious and taken action. It also implies that virtue will always win over vice, no matter how long this may take.

By using the V-effect tropes, Butake believes that the Anglophone problem will definitely find a sustainable solution. Therefore in *Family Saga* and *Betrothal without Libation,* the playwright invites both parties, i.e. the Anglophones and the Francophones, to put what they share in common as Cameroonians above what differentiates them. It is true colonisation created divisions, a situation that was later on exacerbated by the post-reunification polity, but there is still the Cameroonian nation to safeguard since it constitutes the only object of value for both parties.

On the other side Besong's revolutionary drama functions as a protest against and denouncement of oppression manifested through exploitation, tribalism, and other principles and practices of social injustices used by the practitioners of colonialism and neo-colonialism. His plays expose the bitterness and woes of oppression. *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie* for example grapples with the hypocrisy, corruption and the problem of handling power by the politicians like Yaro Amichive. Besong dramatises these vices from the political marriage and the contradictions and confusions in the unification of the two Cameroons. In his subsequent play *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* there is a deliberate conscious development of the spirit of collective resistance against such evils. The protagonist in the play, Akhikikrikii has been usurping his power but the victims are not ready to endure the sufferings they have been subjected to. The author awakens the masses to a true realisation of their situation so that they can rise and fight for their liberty and freedom. In a sense we can rightly argue that their aim is to dethrone oppression and enthrone equity and an egalitarian society. However, it is important here

to understand how the two playwrights present their views of how this revolution should be brought about. As Ngongkum (n.d) rightly observes:

> both writers had more or less been concerned with simply delineating an essentially dystopian society in their first published plays. With the evolution of post-independent Cameroon however, both playwrights go beyond a mere presentation of society to a questioning of it. There are even indications that something can be done about its inherent contradictions. This is the basis of a revolutionary vision that is substantially developed in their subsequent plays (p.1).

Butake and Besong's revolutionary visions have known a gradual development in their writing careers. From the publication of their first plays one can notice a change of tone about what they envision as a Cameroonian nation. However, though Ngongkum traces their evolution from a dystopian society to the questioning of it or even the revolutionary aspect of their visions, these have developed in different directions. In fact, as argued above, while Besong preaches separation of the two Cameroons, for Butake a unified Cameroonian nation is still possible. And for him this can be done through inclusive dialogue and reconciliation. For Butake, and this is the subject matter of two of his plays studied here, the problem of nation building in Cameroon is not the internal divisions and tensions between Francophones and Anglophones. In an interview accorded to Odhiambo and Nkealah that is found in Nkealah (2011) Butake, asked about where he stands in the "Anglophone problem', his answer is uncompromising:

> (I thought that I should give an answer once and for all, and that's my answer. I think that breaking up or separation or whatever is not the answer. The problem is not even the Francophone counterpart. My problem is not even the Francophone Cameroonians. My problem is the ruling elite because it is those people who are making it seem as if the Anglophones are being marginalized in terms of the appointments that they give to Anglophones, in terms of the kind of things that they do, in terms of how they look at them, you know. So I do not blame the Francophones. Francophones are very, very nice. I have good friends who are Francophones. I think that it is the ruling party in Cameroon and more especially the President of the Republic who is perpetuating this injustice against Anglophones (p.246).

As a social-realist creative writer, Butake sees the problem that faces Anglophone Cameroonians beyond the "Anglophone Problem" discourses. His concern is the ruling class (Francophones as well as Anglophones) that more often than not magnifies the marginalisation of the Anglophone Cameroonians. However and despite this assertion, Butake's plays are informed by and inform about the "Anglophone Problem". In fact, as argued in Chapter One of this thesis, like many of his contemporaries and the new generation of Cameroonian writers, they are mostly concerned with the problems of leadership and good governance as the root cause of the problems of the Cameroonian nation. And the "Anglophone Problem" as a whole is a denunciation and a campaign against these issues. However, we can rightly say instead of campaigning for a separatist discourse that was the order of the day in the 1990s in Cameroon, Butake rather generally captures the politics of self-aggrandizement practiced by the post-independent Cameroon elite who gravitate towards the state and use it to achieve personal economic and social power at the expense of the masses. Of course Besong also does so but he spices his plays with the idea that Francophones and Anglophones are inherently different and thus should not share the same nation.

At an individual level, the two playwrights can be differentiated on how they engage with the "Anglophone Problem" and how they imagine the post-colonial Cameroonian nation. In his reading of Butake's plays *Betrothal without Libation* and then *Family Saga* Odhiambo (2009b) observes this:

> …what makes Butake's vision, to be romantic, is the contradiction in the complex nature of tensions and anxieties that he dramatizes as obstacles to the realization of the sense of nation-ness, and the simplistic resolution(s) proffered within the realm of the dramatic fiction (p.162).

However, one can say that Butake's dramaturgy has known a conscious progression towards greater optimism and the revolutionary, especially with *And Palm-wine Will Flow*. And unlike him, Besong's radical vision is shared by a number of his contemporaries such as Victor E. Ngome's *What God Has Put Asunder,* and Alobwed'Epie's *The Death Certificate*. The radicalism observed in these Anglophone Cameroonian writers and more so in Besong's revolutionary drama suggests a set of problems around the representation of nation and national identity that cannot be easily reconciled.

5.6. Conclusion

Creative imagination is one pathway by which a people or culture presents itself to the world. Butake's and Besong's dramatic production puts together form and content due to a number of aesthetic elements that enable them to address correctly the "Anglophone Problem" and the question of nationhood in Cameroon. One of the distinctive features of this study is that the two playwrights have been placed in dialogue with each other to examine the stylistic and thematic integrity of their respective plays. In their diverse ways, the playwrights engage with the question of nationhood within the confines of the "Anglophone problem". In the course of this discussion, I showed how the plays' aesthetic integrity best unifies the experimental and the traditional, the modern and the post-modern in such ways that the blends fascinate the reader. Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays have been discussed in this chapter from a visionary, stylistic and thematic comparative standpoint. The argument was that the two are playwrights of the same generation and are writing about the same "Anglophone Problem" in Cameroon but

have different visions of the Cameroon nation. Their criticism of the post-reunification abuses earned them as much admiration from the public as well as trouble from Cameroon's authorities. Their literary targets have included governmental corruption, socioeconomic exploitation, and the reunification politics in Cameroon. I finally showed that the two playwrights treat the "Anglophone Problem" with different cures. On the one hand, Bole Butake's treatment is soft, reconciliatory and transcendental. In the discussion, it was observed that his plays fall into the realm of the in-between. They explore the border between the self and the Other, between giving voice and remaining silent as well as between the centre and the periphery. Butake's texts are located at the intersection between story and history, between the fictional and the factual as well as between realism and the representational character of all art. On the other hand, Bate Besong has always maintained that the Anglophone creative writer, to quote Ngwane (1993: 35) "must arouse his Anglophone constituency from the apathy and despair into which it has 'sunk' and transform his writing into 'hand grenades' to be used against Francophone oppressors". Besong's cure is thus as hard as the problem he vigorously grapples with.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Imagining or narrating the nation has been a key concern of many postcolonial writers and critics especially in the 20th Century, addressing issues such as, the national state, national consciousness or nation-ness. This thesis has looked at how Post-colonial Anglophone Cameroonian dramatists grapple with the "Anglophone Problem" in their imaginaries. This is an identity dynamic which impacts on the nation building project in the multicultural and post-reunification Cameroonian society. This problem is basically a problem of marginalisation and representation of the Anglophone Cameroonians in the largely post-reunification Francophone-dominated nation-state. The analysis has focused on six text plays: *Family Saga, And Palm Wine Will Flow, Betrothal without Libation* by Bole Butake and *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, *Beasts of no Nation, Requiem for the Last Kaiser* by Bate Besong.

First I discussed the "Anglophone Problem" in Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's dramatic imaginaries. As such I have looked at historical perspectives that inform Anglophone Cameroonian literary landscape and how it emphatically represents this problem and the reunification complexities in Cameroon as central concerns of the post-colonial Cameroonian drama. It has been argued that the playwrights engage with the post-reunification nation building ironies and contradictions that are the results of the putting together the two Cameroons. I have thus drawn attention to how Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's plays have been used as tools of imagining a different Cameroon nation. In this endeavour, I have demonstrated how the selected plays constitute what can

be called liberation writing because of the revolutionary ways in which the playwrights represent and imagine, of course in their different ways, this devided Cameroonian nation. Thus I explored the interconnectedness between dramaturgy and politics in Anglophone Cameroonian drama by highlighting the post-reunification malaise that is resented by writers in general, and in particular by Bole Butake and Bate Besong. It has been shown that Bole Butake and Bate Besong are revolutionary playwrights whose dramatic engagement gestures towards the idea of nation-building project which was timidly "idealised" by the previous generation of writers. The period during which the selected plays were published is, Ngwane (2009:3) would say, "a season of committed Anglophone literature" in which "the Anglophone nation had found a voice in the writers leaving the problems of the entire nation in the hands of born-again democrats".

I have demonstrated how the playwrights engage with the "Anglophone Problem" and envision the Cameroonian nation within the possibilities of their dramatic representations. Given the fact that the two playwrights explore issues of nation, nationhood, reunification under the umbrella of the "Anglophone Problem" in Cameroon which are the variables in this thesis, I have shown how their dramatic imaginaries grapple with these issues in order to provide alternative solutions to the socio-political crisis in Cameroon after independence. Indeed, dramatic artform becomes a site in which the playwrights articulate their concerns about the state of post-reunification Cameroon nation. I realise that the playwrights link drama to history in an attempt to raise to the ground the reunification epistemologies and also connect them with the Cameroonian institutions.

Secondly, what stands out from the analysis is that the "Anglophone Problem" is central in the writings of the second generation of Anglophone Cameroonian writers to which Bole Butake and Bate Besong rightly belong. In other words, contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian writings cannot be detached from the political environment which influences them. The playwrights have been put in dialogue with one another, i.e; the comparative approach has been very useful. From this perspective, I have been able to assess how the "Anglophone Problem" is differently dramatised in the plays. Even when Bole Butake considers oneself as being above the foreign cultural binary or dichotomy of Anglophone and Francophone, the leadership's inability to address fundamental questions on the state of the Cameroonian union, especially its failure to implement the federalism policies that reflect the law of equal standards, continually impose a revolutionary parochial language on his plays. Like Bate Besong, his writings about the particularities of one component of the nation are indeed a patriotic act towards healing the wounds of the reunification process.

Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's writings majorly link the contemporary history of Cameroon with the fact that Anglophone Cameroonians are a people apart. To some lesser or greater extent, Bole Butake and Bate Besong are two of the most representative writers of this cause. Their drama thus emerges as Anglophone Cameroonian literature that reflects the frustration, grievance, protest and conscientisation to revolutionary changes in the 80s. In the plays, especially in Besong's, there are specific political considerations of Anglophone marginalization. It is proven that after the abolishment of

the federated state in Cameroon, there emerged an "Anglophone" literary engagement with the agenda of creating an "Anglophone Cameroon" consciousness. The selected plays become very important in the emergence of an Anglophone and nationalist consciousness in contemporary Anglophone Cameroonian literature. In the course of this analysis I thus focused on how the "Anglophone Problem" is differently perceived and represented in the selected dramatic imaginaries. It is found that there are elements of the past which magnify the "problem" and these emanate from the colonial encounters. Butake's and Besong's dramatic imaginaries, in a more engaged artistic genre, grapple with the root problem, which is the reunification between the two Cameroons.

It has been realised that Butake engages with the "Anglophone Problem" with the idea of "togetherness". Indeed, not only in *Family Saga* but also in *Betrothal without Libation*, he preaches dialogue, mediation, and forgiveness in order to build a strong unified Cameroonian nation. The conflicting situation between Kamalo and Kamala at the beginning of *Family Saga* does not wait long to resolve into a participatory reconciliation. The "force of argument" prevails over the "argument of force" and the two families agree to turn a new page of their life in order to build a new and stronger family. In addition, despite the fact that Fointam and Elissa belong to different ethnic groups, this does not constitute a problem for them to form a prosperous family. *Betrothal without Libation* was seen as Butake's allegorical masterpiece for peace and reconciliation in the divided Cameroonian nation. The overall argument is that, for the young generation of Cameroonians, to come to terms with the "old" rivalries built on ethnicity, interethnic marriages can be one of the sustainable alternatives. This is an extended metaphor to the

bigger identity issue of Anglophones and Francophones in Cameroon. The mingling, common sufferings and shared experiences of these two communities consitute a "liminal space" where Butake's hope lies and where a "tribeless nation" is forged.

On his part, Besong's plays are structured in a form of confrontational dramaturgies involving two different and unequal forces. This technique creates a shared feeling of revolt among the oppressed. From *Beasts of no Nation* to *Requiem for the last Kaiser* to *The Most Cruel Death of the Talkative Zombie*, Besong's radical position is steadfast. He strongly supports the idea that the reunification of the two Cameroons in 1961 put together two different historical, cultural, political and economic entities. The subsequent machineries by the two successive regimes exacerbated the marginalisation of the minority Anglophone Cameroonians. Therefore, the latter should not be forced to remain in a union where they do not feel comfortable.

Thirdly, in this study I find that Anglophone Cameroon playwrights assume a deeper Anglophone Cameroon identity that reflects the particular socio-cultural, politico-economic and historical worldview of the people of their geo-political territory. Bole Butake and Bate Besong imagine and represent this identity within the possibilities offered by their dramatic art form. Indeed, evidence from the study showed that the questions of "Anglophone Problem", the identity and leadership crises can be well understood if we place them into their tempo-spatial contexts. In the course of this discussion, I showed that on the one hand the Cameroonian "Anglophone Problem" takes roots in the colonial enterprise that scrambled the once united Cameroon nation. On the

other hand, it has been proven that, in the plays under study, colonialism cannot constitute a justification of the present identity and leadership crises in Cameroon. Through the vehicles of memory and imagination Bole Butake and Bate Besong attempt to revisit and reconstruct the histories of their imagined societies but which, in a general sense, reflect the experiences of Cameroon nation building crises. Using elements of myth and history, but supporting them with personal experiences, Butake tries to weave new ties of identities in Cameroon as a response to the tragic happenings of the past and their effects in the present. The two playwrights indict colonialism and independence nationalists as responsible for present day identity and leadership crises in Cameroon. More often than not, in their attempt to create characters who are the makers of their own histories, Butake and Besong confront the subjects and the worlds that have produced them. The subjects are empowered in fighting for their rights, engaging negotiations and dynamics of power and resistance. In so doing the playwrights focuse on the ironic and historical parodies that aptly justify the interaction between the past and the present happenings in the politics of nation building in Cameroon. More specifically this thesis attempted to show how the development of the playwrights' imagined Cameroonian nation is affected by the passage of time and space. This was successfully done by highlighting how such important aspects of text analysis and how they are closely connected with spatial-temporal text structure.

Fourthly, it is proven that in the selected plays divisions and tensions on the basis of the colonial languages help foster the former colonial masters' imperialism. To do so, I analysed the texts by first relocating Butake's and Besong's imaginaries within the time

and space that produce their meanings. The argument developed here was that Butake's and Besong's plays are well understood if we place them in their particular temporal and spatial contexts that turn around the Anglophone Problem, Cameroonian independence and the post-reunification discourses. I gave an intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in the selected plays. An in-depth analysis of the play texts revealed that after reunification in Cameroon the regime and public institutions often attempted to construct a national consciousness as part of the nation-building project. However, in lines with what Chatterjee (1993: 6) calls "modular forms", many post-colonial writers' claim of nationalism seems "to be *a-political* movement much too literally and much too seriously". That is perhaps the reason why the plays under study engage in an impressive critique of Anglophone and Francophone identities and suggest the reinforcement of the bilingual status of Cameroon, which at the same time is a result of the imperialistic "modular forms".

Through Bole Butake's *Family Saga* and *Betrothal without Libation* these issues were discussed. It has been found that the former colonial languages and the Cameroonians identities in line with these languages still prove that the so-called Cameroonian independence has failed. The argument developed here was that this supreme power and space given to the former colonial masters is a form of imperial (re)-domination. In an attempt to redefine these identities Butake and Besong deal with their culture's past: their drama is used to make the integration of the past in the present possible so that the characters— and the Anglophone Cameroonian community as a whole—can resolve the suppressive presence of the colonial masters and move on. The relationship between the

Anglophone Cameroonian and his "authentic identity" is thus a difficult one, but through literature, and with the aid of drama, the playwrights attempt to rework it through the problematic representations of the characters and values they stand for. The playwrights treat the neo-imperial domination in a more preservative way; that is to say that the use of drama in Anglophone Cameroonian literature is the desire to restore in writing the past the Anglophone Cameroonians were once denied, and to create a genuine interaction between past and present that will eventually produce a better future. Finally, Butake's and Besong's drama is not concerned with making the past less dominant but rather with making it more present.

From a stylistic perspective, investigations have been done on how the "Anglophone Problem" has imposed a particular deployment of the dramatic and stylistic form and structure that enable drama to participate in the project of post-reunification Cameroonian nation building. During the discussion, attention was particularily made on the artistic strategies used by the playwrights to grapple with the "Anglophone Problem". This was successfully done by analysing the alternative solutions Bole Butake and Bate Besong envision in order to build a post-reunification Cameroonian nation in their dramatic forms. It was realised that creative imagination is one of the pathways by which a people or culture presents itself to the world. Therefore, Butake's and Besong's dramatic production puts together form and content due to a number of aesthetic elements that enable them to address correctly the "Anglophone Problem" and the question of nationhood in Cameroon. One of the distinctive features of this study is that the two playwrights have been placed in dialogue with each other to examine the stylistic and

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Bole Butake's and Bate Besong's criticism of the post-reunification abuses earned them as much admiration from the public as well as trouble from Cameroon's authorities. Their literary targets have included governmental corruption, socioeconomic exploitation, and the reunification politics in Cameroon. Evidence from the study demonstrates that the two playwrights treat the "Anglophone Problem" with different cures. On the one hand, Bole Butake's treatment is soft, reconciliatory and transcendental. In the discussion, it was observed that his plays of fall into the realm of a theatre of the in-between. They explore the border between the self and the Other, between giving voice and remaining silent as well as between the centre and the periphery. Butake's play texts are located at the intersection between story and history, between the fictional and the factual as well as between realism and the representational character of all art. On the other hand, Bate Besong has always maintained that the Anglophone creative writer. Besong's cure is thus as hard as the problem he vigorously grapples with. What is common of the two playwrights under study is their commitment to changing their societies and the urgency

with which they feel this need. They each bring into their dramaturgy stories that are at once ordinary and symbolic, but whose message cannot escape us. As engaged playwrights, they have surely become the spokespersons of the silenced people, fighting to seek and negotiate identity for their Anglophone Cameroonian community. In all the cases, one common feature is that both of the playwrights have been involved in struggles against the ordinary citizens' exploitation, human rights abuses, and neo-colonial forces.

The study has finally opened up debates around the "Anglophone Problem" and how it is grappled with in post-reunification Anglophone Cameroonian drama. As has been mentioned, focus on the aesthetic aspects of this drama is important, but to look at the function it plays in educating the society allows one to pursue investigations with a wider range of plays from the region which has not attracted the attention of many scholars. In addition, interested researchers can endeavour to do a comparative investigation of the post-colonial identity representations in the literary production from both Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonian writers. For example, a research can be conducted to explore how Francophone Cameroonian writers like Ferdinand Oyono and Mongo Beti, the most emblematic writers of the first generation fictionalized the dictatorial nature of the post-independence regime. This can be done in relation with how the contemporary generation of Anglophone Cameroonian writes back, from a post-modernism perspective; the many political moves taken by the Francophone regime consolidated it into a monolithic dictatorship that gave birth to the current "Anglophone Problem".

POST-SCRIPTUM

By the time I completed this research, Cameroon was still facing a vanguardist resurrection of the "Anglophone Problem", which was the central concern of this work. In fact, even though the crisis has roots in the colonial era demands for Anglophone Cameroon independence or what was termed secessionist movements had deemed down for almost the last two decades. However, after more than half a century of independence there are still tensions between French-speaking communities and the Anglophone minority. These have existed for decades, at times –and again – leading to regional calls for secession. Since the end of the year 2016, many newspapers in Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces – the Northwest and Southwest – report incessant claims by Anglophone Cameroonians to have been discriminated against since reunification in 1961. They say that the central government privileges the majority French-speaking population and eight other regions. Amongst other things, campaigners complain of being treated as second-class citizens, marginalisation in the education and judicial system, of lack of representation in government, a perceived lack of returns from oil extracted from the region, and the erosion of Anglophone identity. These grievances have been simmering since the 1990s, when the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) was established with the aim of "restoring" the independence of West Cameroon. But this discontentment has resurfaced and intensified recently, though the emphasis today has been on demanding a referendum on federalism rather than secession.

Following the demonstrations in the English-speaking region of Cameroon, from November, 2016 many schools were closed as tensions between the Francophone and Anglophone regions escalated. The English speaking regions say they are being

politically and economically sidelined by the Francophone government. To silence the demonstrations the government made recourse to “ghost town”, internet shutdown, suppression of journalists, and arrests of activists. As a result, the SDF opposition issued a four-page special resolution condemning these and other violations, including the heavy militarization of Anglophone regions and the internet shutdown. In that letter, the SDF appealed to the African Union and the United Nations to help with Cameroon’s Anglophone crisis.

We hope that the current government is going to work out the issue by setting out negotiation mechanisms in order to privilege the “force of argument”, and not “the argument of force” as was the preoccupation of Bole Butake in one of his plays discussed here. We can also hope that Bate Besong pledge for a separation between the Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonians will, above all interests, be given priority in order to bring about peace and tranquility in Cameroon.

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