



RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER

2395-2628(Print);2349-9451(online)

Vol.2. 2.,2015

AN ANALYSIS OF THE METAPHORS OF POWER AND EMERGING SOCIAL ISSUES IN  
TWO KENYAN PLAYS "INHERITANCE AND THE HUNTER IS BACK"

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the metaphors of power and how such metaphors are performed and manifested in selected dramatic texts by Kenyan writers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study specifically examined how Kenyan dramatists transform the power-charged political field coupled with change in Kenya into drama. Therefore, the study stemmed from the need to subject the formal and informal elements deployed by most of the Kenyan playwrights to a more comprehensive analyses, and to interrogate their contribution to the dramatization of the metaphors of power in Kenya. The study, therefore, undertook to examine the dramatic ingredients that have made it possible for the metaphors of power in the Kenyan society to be expressed in drama. Specifically, the study delimited itself to two plays, namely *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Hunter is Back* by Dennis Kyalo. The study utilized the Sociological Theory and Stylistic criticism to investigate its concerns. The concept of power presupposes that there are those who wield power and those over whom power is exercised in society. However, over time and as society changes, the power barons also change tact in their attempt to cling on to power. Subsequently, the Sociological Theory was used to analyse the relationship between power and change in society. Stylistics criticism was employed to unravel the dramatic elements used by the playwrights to articulate the metaphors of power and change in the selected texts. The study was library based owing to the textual nature of both its primary and secondary sources. Therefore, a textual exegesis was conducted from a close reading of both primary texts and secondary sources guided by the study objectives. From the study, it is clear that the two playwrights have addressed the metaphors of power in the contemporary society in their dramatic works. They underscore the negative metaphors of power such as oppression, exploitation, dictatorship, bribery, abuse of office among other issues which come about as a result of abuse of power. However, they identify positive metaphors of power in form of fairness, justice, democratic leadership, and sensitivity to the people's plight, responsiveness among other issues that come as a result of good governance. Therefore, it is clear that, in their vision, the two authors are speaking for the oppressed, the exploited and the abused in the modern African society.

**Keywords:** Metaphors, Power, Emerging Issues, Kenya, Plays, *Inheritance*, *The Hunter is Back*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Foucault (1990), in *The History of Sexuality*, argues that power “pervades the entire social body” or is “omnipresent”. Therefore, all social life comes to be network of power relations. According to Foucault (1990): Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relation immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization: as process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens or even reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies (p. 92-93)

Foucault’s observations resonate well with the operations of power in the contemporary Kenyan society. In any society, power cannot be isolated from those who practice it and from the subjects. As such, artists, in this case the playwrights, being members of society, cannot escape the discourses of power in the very society that they live but find themselves sucked into the mix. Therefore, artists get involved in either supporting or taking up arms against the practice of power in society.

Artists seek to demonstrate how power is manifested in their works of art. They show how the practice of power in society affects the general citizenry and how changes in the perceptions towards power by the citizens or members of society result into changes in the normal practice of power in the society. On their part, therefore, playwrights also dramatize the nature of power in their works of art. In this regard, the study sought to investigate how metaphors of power and change are dramatized in David Mulwa’s *Inheritance* and in Dennis Kyalo’s *The Hunter is Back*. The reading of these selected texts was guided by Foucault’s conceptualization of power in society. The study sought to demonstrate how the metaphors of power and change in *Inheritance* and *The Hunter is Back* map the Kenyan situation at a particular time in history. From Foucault’s multifaceted conception of power, the study sought to draw an important understanding in the reading of the plays as a reflection of the contemporary society in Kenya.

In a similar fashion as Michel Foucault, Achille Mbembe, in his “provisional notes on the post-colony” illustrates how power operates in post-colonial Africa. According to Mbembe (1978), the post-colony is actually characterized by a plurality of sorts so much so that “identities are multiplied, transformed and put into circulation” (p. 3). He puts it more succinctly thus:

...we need to go beyond the binary categories used in standard interpretations of domination, such as resistance v. passivity; autonomy v. subjection, state v. civil society, hegemony v. counter hegemony... These oppositions are not helpful; rather, they cloud our understanding of post-colonial relations (p. 3).

Fabian (1990) also makes important reference to the Congolese 346 idiom that “power is eaten whole” (p. 16), which is an expression of the truth regarding the practice of power found in many parts of Africa. On his part, Francois Bayart (1993) invokes “the goat eats where it is tethered,” (p. ix), in reference to Paul Biya’s Cameroon and “I chop you chop” (p. 89) as happens in Nigeria. These are some of the statements that reflect the metaphors of power in post-colonial Africa. As such, the reading of the selected texts in the study was an investigation of how the metaphors of power are depicted in Kenyan drama.

On the one hand, David Mulwa is a versatile playwright and actor who has acted and produced plays such as Wole Soyinka’s *Kongi’s Harvest*, Francis Imbuga’s *Aminata* and his own *Redemption*. He is a renowned schools and colleges’ drama festivals adjudicator whose dramatic talent has also been exploited by the media. He has featured on TV programmes like KBC’s “Reflections” and in movies like “Dangerous Affairs” and “Behind Closed Doors”. The various criticisms levelled against Mulwa notwithstanding, both as a writer and actor, the study sought to examine how he depicts metaphors of power and change in his plays, particularly *Inheritance*. On the other hand, Dennis Kyalo is an upcoming playwright and *The Hunter is Back* is his first publication.

The study investigated how the two playwrights depict metaphors of power in their works as portrayed in the contemporary Kenyan society. The practice of power in Kenya is a critical issue of interests to

political analysts, literary critics and writers alike.

#### **Philosophical Underpinnings: Literature and Society**

Scholars such as Carrol (1980), wa Thiong'o (1972), Wellek and Warren (1965), Ngara (1985) as well as Selden (1988) posit that African literature is functional and places society at the centre of any literary activity. In this regard, literature is viewed as both a product and a representation of the social realities in Africa. In this way, from a sociological perspective, the selected texts for the study were read against the social situation which determined their creation and functionality in society.

Wellek and Warren (1965), in *Theory of Literature*, observe that "Literature is an expression of society" (p. 94). This assertion depicts that the two critics embrace the notion of the relationship between art and society. Further, they depict that there is a close relationship between society and the writer in the sense that society does not only shape the writer's views but also influences them. The two critics posit that "the social attitude and ideology of a writer derive from both his literary and extra literary sources" (p. 97). Thus, ongoing discourses in society shape the writer's mind and hence his/her literary output; a product of his social experiences is sanctioned by these discourses in society. In this regard, the social surrounding plays a significant role in the construction of a text.

On his part wa Thiong'o (1972), in *Homecoming*, argues that the writer is a product of an actual social process. He observes that "Literature as a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity embodies, in words and images, the tensions, conflicts, contradictions at the heart of a community's being" (p. 5). wa Thiong'o's postulations affirm that Literature emanates from society and the major role of the writer is to persuade or influence feelings, attitudes and actions of the audience either directly or indirectly through his/her work of art.

Carrol, in an article entitled *The African Writer*, as cited in Chinua Achebe (1980) notes:

That modern African writer has an organic mandate to be the eye, ear, and sensibility of his society.

The modern African writer is thus called upon to continue the long tradition of the traditional carver, dancer, sculptor and seer; whose role is essentially communal, functional and utilitarian (p. 21).

This observation indicates that the African writer is mandated to work for his/her community. The writer must endeavour to express the realities in society in relation to his/her experiences. In the process, the writer helps to perpetuate the great tradition like other writers in the society.

On the other hand, Selden (1988), in "Literature and Life", in *The Theory of Criticism: From Plato to the Present*, points out that "Major literature does not work directly by expressing ideas or attitudes, but by embodying an experience of life in a form and diction necessary to convey experience" (p. 490). This observation foregrounds the discussions regarding African literature implying that a reading of such literature is informed by the creative impetus behind it. A proper understanding of the text is, therefore, necessary before any meaningful interpretation of the work can be conducted.

#### **Critical Literature on David Mulwa's Works**

Critical analyses of Mulwa's writings include the works of Kimaro Hugholin (1995) and Chacha N. Chacha (1986) both of whom have examined Mulwa's play *Mwongozo wa Buriani* in terms of its thematic concerns, setting, language and style as well as characterization. Chacha N. Chacha has also done a similar analysis of Mulwa's other play *Ukame*. The analyses are primarily tailored to help secondary school students understand the plays. Similarly, Alembi uses Mulwa's play *Redemption* as an example to analyze the elements of drama in his book *Appreciating Drama*. None of the critics above have analyzed any of Mulwa's plays in terms of metaphors of power and change in Kenya.

Karanja Wahu (YEAR?), in her MA thesis on *An analysis of Tragicomic Techniques in Selected Plays of David Mulwa*, has examined the nature of the tragicomic techniques and how they are manifested in Mulwa's *Redemption*, *Clean Hands* and *Glasshouses*. Unlike Mulwa, there exists no literature regarding Denis Kyalo's *The Hunter is Back* or any other of his writings.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The study utilised the Sociological Theory and Stylistic criticism in its investigation of the metaphors of power and change in Kenyan drama. The Stylistics criticism was used to explore the dramatic elements

employed by the playwrights to depict the metaphors of power in their plays. On the other hand, the Sociological Theory helped the author to link the metaphors of power to change and how members of the society perceive the whole enterprise of power. The two theories were applied in an integrated approach and in effect determined the nature of the research.

Stylistics criticism is based on the study of style as used in literary expressions and their effects on the audience. It attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular linguistic items and choices made by authors in their works of art to bring out certain meanings in the society and foreground certain issues that affect society. Wellek and Warren (1942), in *Theory of Literature*, argue that although stylistics bears a close relationship to linguistics, it is possible to simply identify it with poetics or general theory of literature since it includes additional areas, which are not under a linguistic or stylistic approach. Such areas include plot, themes, characterization and motif among other stylistic features. Further, the two critics stress the necessity of thorough grounding in general linguistics as a prerequisite to an understanding of stylistics.

Emmanuel Ngara (1982), in *Stylistics and the African Novel*, posits that Stylistic criticism is concerned with the aesthetic aspects of literary works of art. Stylistic criticism takes cognizance of the fact that a work of art must be objectively analyzed, interpreted and evaluated in terms of an aesthetically sound set of parameters, and that any student of Literature should be trained to take stock of these parameters if his/her study is to be satisfactory and intellectually challenging. Ngara (1982) further notes that the aesthetic parameters that Stylisticians are concerned with are mainly of a linguistic nature. He observes that criticism based on sound aesthetic principle will forever be useful because even though it may be overtaken by a more satisfactory theory, it will form a basis for further developments. In his discussion of stylistic criticism, Ngara (1982) refers to the linguistic idiosyncrasies that characterize individual writers thus: "We are not merely concerned with what is idiosyncratic about a writer but equally with the effect of his manner of his presentation and with the relationship between language and content" (p. 35).

Accordingly, Ngara postulates that Stylistic criticism puts a greater emphasis on a writer's use of language in which the critic identifies distinctive features and other idiosyncrasies of the author and tries to account for the author's choice of these features. The present study thus examined these individual idiosyncrasies in the plays *Inheritance* and *The Hunter is Back* and sought to show how the authors depict metaphors of power and change in the Kenyan society. Moreover, the study sought to demonstrate how the idiosyncrasies helped in the realization of the authors' social vision.

According to Ngara, a student of general linguistics is concerned with linguistic description, with the analysis of the various levels of language: the phonetic, the grammatical, the lexical and semantic levels whereas, a Stylistician will engage the principles of general linguistics to identify the features of a variety of idiosyncrasies of author(s). Additionally, a Stylistician also uses the principles of general linguistics to identify the features of language, which are restricted to particular social contexts, and to account for the reasons such features are used and when and where they are used.

Leech and Short (1981), in *Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, state that a study of style is rarely undertaken for its own sake but that critics do so because they want to explain something: the relationship between language and artistic function. They note that the motivating questions are not so much "what" as "why" and "how". From a linguistic angle, the question is: "why does the author choose to express himself in this particular way?" From the critics' viewpoint, the question is: "how is such and such an aesthetic effect achieved through language" (Leech & Short, 1981, p. 13). The study, therefore, focused on the "what", "why" and "how" of how language and style influence the dramatic output of playwrights.

Chapman (1973), in *Linguistics and Literature*, postulates that Stylistics views art as an author's way of appreciating his own environment. In that process, an author could employ language in such a way that he either applauds or criticizes what happens in society. The two plays selected for the study owe their antecedents and inspiration to the social experiences in the society encountered by the authors. These experiences are drawn from the authors' immediate environment and they manipulate language to render them to the members of the same society. This implies that the author is as cautious as the playwright is in his

use of readers. However, beneath his cautious use of language, Chapman (1973) underlies various manipulations of the linguistic choices and the dramatic items in depicting and articulating these social realities to their readership. Therefore, the study investigated the dramatic elements and features of style used in *Inheritance* and *The Hunter is Back* in order to foreground issues of power and social change.

Stephen, in *English Literature*, observes that the interpretation of style can be carried out in relation to the author, or to the sociological, historical and biographical features. The study viewed the two playwrights as being motivated by the society as well as their own creativity and imagination in order to articulate their experiences. This indicates that in an attempt to unravel various stylistic choices in the two selected plays, the study paid close attention to the society that the dramatists are addressing. In this way, the study was able to demonstrate why particular stylistic items were deployed in the selected plays for the study.

On the other hand, the Sociological Theory posits that Literature draws its material from society and manipulates them through language. Language provides the communicative impetus in Literature. Further, the Sociological Theory observes that Literature emerges from society and has a social function to fulfil in the very society. It is in this light that the study examined metaphors of power in the selected plays as literary ingredients and products of the society. The tussles regarding who inherits the reins of power and when to take over power in the plays is a common phenomenon in contemporary Kenyan society. This study, therefore, examined the selected plays from a sociological perspective as reflections of social realities inherent in the society.

The Sociological Theory is hinged on the interpretation of Literature from the premise that it essentially has societal importance and has a social function of storing and transmitting the values of a given society. Its proponents premise that Literature occurs only in social context, as part of a cultural milieu. It is in this light that the study examined the two plays as culturally inspired texts within the social milieu of power and social change. The conceptualization of power in the Kenyan society by Kenyan dramatists engenders critical attention.

Wellek and Warren (1942), in *Theory of Literature*, demonstrate that Literature has a sociological function in relaying the social issues assailing humanity. They observe that "... large questions raised by literary studies are, at least ultimately or by implication social questions of tradition and convention, norms and genres, symbols and myths" (p. 95). Therefore, the study attempted to link the issues relating to power and change in the plays to the Kenyan society as a whole. The study sought to show how the authors' perceptions are aimed at changing the normal practice of power in the society in an era of globalization and technological advancement.

Kenneth Burke (1971), in "Literature as Equipment for Living," in *Critical Theory since Plato*, argues that pieces of Literature should be approached through their statements on society. He observes that Literature is a social commentary. Thus, both *Inheritance* and *The Hunter is Back*, being works of art, should be viewed as tailored towards fulfilling certain roles in society. The study thus examined the two plays as a means through which the authors express their concerns over issues affecting society. Particularly, the study focused on how the two authors depict metaphors of power in the two plays as a manifestation of the social realities in the contemporary society.

Harrington (2004), in *Art and Social Theory*, argues that pieces of art can serve as normative sources of social understanding in their own right (p. 207). He posits that there are several methods of regarding art from a sociological perspective and considering the sociological element that underlie art. Therefore, art is inevitably full of references and commentaries on the present day social aspects such as power plays and social changes.

### **Plot Overview**

#### ***Inheritance***

The play *Inheritance* revolves around power and leadership in Kutula republic. The play is set in an imaginary African state. The action of the play begins in the pre-colonial period in the Kingdom of Kutula, ruled by a traditional ruler, King Kutula XV. The King commands a lot of loyalty from his subjects and is recognized as the symbol of unity and harmony in the society, despite the fact that he rules Kutula republic as he wishes. The

more reason as to why there are clear guidelines on the smooth transfer of power from one King to the other. The people have a lot of regard for the hereditary leadership which ensures that there is no power vacuum in the leadership of their republic.

In the story, the King is resistant to the advent of colonization and Whiteman's domination in the land of Kutula – a position that puts him at loggerheads with the British Empire. He leads his people in a rebellion against the whites and their activities in the land. He is, therefore, seen as a threat to the British Empire. The Queen's representative, Governor Thorne MacKay, and Bishop Manninger are so concerned about King Kutula's leadership that they hatch up a plan to deal with him. They plan to install a king who can easily be manipulated by the colonial administration in their zeal to achieve their vested interests in the land of Kutula.

Their plan to overthrow King Kutula XV succeeds through the use of the King's son - Lacuna Kasoo. Lacuna Kasoo kills his father and later assumes the kingship of the land. After taking over the reins of power, the young King Lacuna Kasoo becomes arrogant, gullible and selfish. He rules with utmost highhandedness and in total disregard of the rules of the land. Under Lacuna Kasoo's leadership, the country is plunged into the dark abyss of dictatorship, greed and materialism, misuse of power, violence and gross violation of human rights. King Lacuna Kasoo transforms into a cruel leader and, together with his cronies, they plunder the colony and grab resources at the expense of development and welfare of the people. This disillusiones the people who felt betrayed by the government.

Issues such as neo-colonialism and the dependency syndrome among African states are also brought out in the play through characters such as Daniel Goldstein, Robert Rollerstone and King Lacuna Kasoo. King Kasoo becomes a puppet of the western countries which give loans to the Kutula republic but end up being stashed in his bank accounts while the masses suffer and languish in abject poverty. In the end, King Kasoo is deposed by a people's revolution which is devoid of bloodletting and violence. The play ends with the colony turning a new leaf as a new popular leader is endorsed by the people. The new leader, Princess Sangoi, vows to get the country back on the right track.

#### ***The Hunter is Back***

*The Hunter is Back* is a play whose events span a period of two decades. The play is set in an imaginary community in Africa. The play opens with two women, Naomi and Maneno, on stage expressing their displeasure over their families' lifestyles. The two women are lamenting on the life they lead since the life is unsatisfying, oppressive, miserable and retrogressive. It is a life that is characterized by male chauvinism, patriarchy and gender imbalance. Women are portrayed as disadvantaged weak subjects, oppressed by their male counterparts and the patriarchal structure, and are subject to various sorts of manipulation by the male gender. Women forced by these circumstances to make sacrifices to fend for their lives and families, a situation that entraps them more in the patriarchal order. For instance, due to poverty, Taabu leads a loose life to make ends meet. Eventually, she ends up contracting a strange disease that the villagers call a curse but Jeremy, the doctor, diagnose as HIV/AIDS; condemning her to more suffering.

The entry of Chief Sivu marks the anticlimax of the play as it heralds a turn-about in the lives of many characters in the play. The chief comes into the fore when Rita and Ngumi are involved in a serious conflict. On the one hand, Ngumi wants to marry off Rita to Mzee Tumbo so that he can get money to execute his plans. On the other hand, Rita is opposed to the marriage on the basis of age and how Mzee Tumbo treats his wives. Rita sees Ngumi's actions as mere fantasy. Rita goes to the chief for help. However, instead of listening to Rita, the chief throws her out of his house. It emerges that he does this because he has been bribed by Mzee Tumbo. The chief is hypocritical, cruel, arrogant and corrupt. Fortunately, Rita manages to escape from the marriage through a scholarship which she secures for further studies.

Half a decade later, Rita returns to Chamaland having completed her studies, self-actualized. She initiates various development projects in the community and campaigns against the abuse of basic human rights. Rita manages to bring light to Chamaland using her knowledge and experience abroad. She not only gains respect and admiration from the people but she is also able to restore their hope in life and better their living standards through the projects she initiates. However, not many acknowledge nor laud her efforts. The chief especially feels threatened by her actions and thinks that she was poking fingers into his leadership.

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Towards the end of the play, the chief's conspiracies against Rita are exposed and Rita is crowned chief of Chamaland in recognition of her efforts and development record.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The study investigated how metaphors of power are performed and manifested in the selected plays as a reflection of the Kenyan society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It examined how Kenyan dramatists not only transform but also dramatize the power-charged politics and social changes in their social surrounding into drama. The study, therefore, examined the various stylistic features deployed by selected Kenyan playwrights and interrogated their contribution to the dramatization of metaphors of power and change in Kenya. Specifically, the study explored the metaphors of power as they are depicted by David Mulwa (2004) in *Inheritance* and Dennis Kyalo (2010) in *The Hunter is Back*.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The study adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive research aims at gathering information that illuminates relationships, patterns and links between variables and then the researcher reports the findings. Kerlinger (1969) points out that descriptive studies are not only restricted to fact-finding, but may often result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and a solution to significant problems. Descriptive research design involves analysis and interpretation of data. Descriptive research design is useful when collecting information on social issues such as was the case in the study. The research design was used for two main purposes: to describe the context of metaphors of power and change in the two plays and to analyze and interpret various dramatic elements deployed by the two playwrights in depicting these metaphors of power in the two plays.

The study employed an in-depth analysis of metaphors of power and change in the text, which involved offering explanation and interpretation of the texts governed by the objectives of the study as its analytic technique. Systematic content analysis was used in describing the nature of power and change in the two plays as a reflection of the realities of society. The primary texts for the study were selected through purposeful sampling. The choice of the two texts was informed by the author's knowledge of Kenyan drama and a thorough reading around the area of study. Before settling on the topic and text for the study, the author conducted an investigation of various Kenyan playwrights and their major contemporary preoccupations.

The primary data for this study was collected from a thorough reading and analysis of the primary texts. Guided by the objectives of the study, the primary texts were read and re-read in an attempt to gather enough data for analysis and interpretation. Library research involving the reading of Secondary texts was undertaken. Texts and scholarly works relating to the area of study were also reviewed. Relevant materials focusing on language, style and social concerns were also reviewed. Besides, Internet research was done to complement information that was gathered from other sources.

The primary and secondary data collected was examined and analyzed in line with the objectives of the study. Data analysis was based on the conceptualization of power and change in relation to the social contexts in the texts. Therefore, through content analysis, a comprehensive synthesis and interpretation of data gathered from the reading of the primary texts together with the secondary sources was undertaken in order to come up with a coherent final study.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **Interplay of the Metaphors of Power in *Inheritance***

In the Mulwa's play *Inheritance*, the interplay of power revolves around the people of the republic of Kutula, the three Kings of Kutula and the style of leadership as well as the foreign colonial powers. The different faces of power that Kutula undergoes put the country in economic strain, disillusionment and despondency from the masses. These changing faces of power and the accompanying social changes constitute the metaphors of power in the play.

##### ***The People's Power***

In the prologue of the play, the way King Kutula XV wields power over his subjects is revealed. His is a referent power as he is able to attract his subjects and build a strong loyalty base. He is a charismatic leader

who is obeyed at will by his people because he supported meaningful developments for all the citizens and valued social compactness of the land of Kutula. His power is geared towards the good of everyone in the country. This explains why he is opposed to the Whiteman's domination in the land as the latter sought to loot the country of its resources and benefit his motherland in the West.

At one point Governor Macay pretends to wonder how the people can be so loyal to their leader despite his style of leadership. He says "I don't know whether I'll ever understand them and their infernal allegiance to their leaders....why is it that we civilized leaders can't command such loyalty? Why?" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 6). King Kutula's power is revealed in the way he is able to lead the people in the rebellion against the whites in the land. The governor summons him to the palace in a bid to convince him to put an end to the violence visited upon the whites but the king is adamant. The Governor and Reverend Menninger are fully aware of the king's power so much so that they must hatch up a plan to bring him down through his power hungry son, Lacuna Kasoo. King Kutula, therefore, dies at the hands of his son because he could not relent from his vows to protect his country and her citizens. The King is portrayed as a patriotic leader who is revered by the masses. Menninger says of Kutula XV "This rogue zebra may yet lead the pack out into the fields and render sleeping lions powerless. Yes he has a bold, searching and dangerous mind" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 15). This means that the white colonialists recognize the native king's power.

#### ***Exploitative and Oppressive Power***

The exploitative power of the British Empire over Kutula colony is exhibited in the way the white rulers conduct their activities in the land. They claim to have brought civilization to the Africans, built schools, hospitals, roads, churches and employment but in actual sense they are the ones who benefit their countries as they repatriate the profits made back to the West.

Exploitative power relies on influence and manipulation of others. The British use their influence to exploit the resources of Kutula republic for their own benefit back at home. First, it uses its influence to get rid of those who stand on its way. For instance, the British government uses the influence of power to instigate a coup that results in the death of King Kutula and the coming into power of his son, Lacuna Kasoo. This is carried out solely because the colonialists are able to easily manipulate the power-hungry Kasoo to play to their tune and support their agenda in Kutula.

Oppression is another key aspect of exploitative power. The oppression of the Africans by the Europeans is also the hallmark of their power in the land. Thorne claims that, "Africans cannot be controlled without a whip" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 3). He does not consider Africans as human beings to be treated kindly and in a humane manner. He asks, "How the devil does the colonial government office expect me to effect overseas development with the whip under my bed?" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 3). He despises the benevolent leader of Kutula, King Kutula, and considers him backwards and primitive.

#### ***Misuse of Power***

King Lacuna Kasoo heavily relies on coercion and dictatorship in his leadership. He oppresses the people in order to achieve his own selfish interests. He uses his powers to enrich himself and his cronies. He grabs whatever comes his way; land, money - which he stashes in foreign banks - and excessive affluence. Moreover, his leadership is characterized by arbitrary detention and assassination of those who stand in his way of power. He is also a moral reprobate who uses his power to seek self fantasy.

Further, King Lacuna's uses his power to build the dam at the Bukelenge valley despite people's opposition to it. All the streams that lead to the valley are diverted into the dam making the valley dry. Consequently, many people suffer as they are forced travel long distances to fetch water from the dam, which is the only source of water. This project is tailor-made to show king Kasoo's commitment to what he calls "practical development" even if the people suffer in the process. Tamina laments their desperate situation brought about by the lack of easy access to clean water (Mulwa, 2004, p. 20). This shows the extent to which Kasoo can go to exercise his coercive power over the people in order to gain whatever he wants. He uses the dam project to seek political mileage and public image before the white colonial masters at the expense of scores of people.

Ruthlessness also characterizes King Lacuna Kasoo's leadership. King Kasoo ruthlessly deals with those

who express dissent over his bad leadership. He does not stomach any kind of criticism on his style of leadership. He is characteristic of those African leaders who took over from the colonialists in the post-colonial Africa, and adopted oppressive styles of leadership. They became dictators and subjected those who never tore their line to severe torture. In the play, Bengo, the activist, is thrown to the dungeon for challenging the dictatorial tendencies of King Kasoo. Bengo is outspoken against the way Kasoo is plundering the public coffers by stashing away money in foreign banks. Judah Zen Melo is also sacked from government, beaten senselessly and denied all privileges including his property – land, cars, coffee farms - just because he refuses to collude with the King to “silence” his brother Romanus Bengo. Through his power, King Kasoo makes sure that his crony, Councillor Chipande, is the only one with a license to farm coffee and make people like Tamina to work for him because he cannot “compete with peasants”.

On the day of the coronation, the people grumble that they are crowning the wrong king after King Kutula XV died. Princess Sangoi admits that many people disappeared on that day just because Lacuna Kasoo stamped his authority over those who opposed his leadership in the land of Kutula (Mulwa, 2004, p. 41). The family of Judah Zen Melo is plunged into abject poverty under the King’s orders. To compound on the problems that the King subjects Tamina’s family to, Lulu, their daughter, is also sent away from school due to lack of fees.

As soon as he takes over the reins of power, Kasoo orders everyone to attend the ceremony to commemorate the death of King Kutula XV. He appoints Princess Sangoi as the Minister for Reclamation and Remedies and orders her to criss-cross the country and commands everyone to attend the ceremony. Princess Sangoi says “My brother rules by springing surprises on unsuspecting citizens...” (Mulwa, 2004, p. 41).

In the same vein, Lulu, the leader of the children dance group, is ordered to attend the ceremony and afterwards she is compelled to entertain the king ‘privately’. The customs demand that a virgin girl should hand over the crown to the King and entertain him the whole night long. Lacuna Kasoo uses his powers to molest the girl all in the name of tradition. He even has the guts to declare, “customs must bow to national emergencies...I must sit, both buttocks, on the seat of power...” (Mulwa, 2004, p. 57). The girl is detained in the palace for refusing to entertain the King and instead opting to dance with a foreigner, Robert Rollerstone, during the ceremony.

The manifestation of King Kasoo’s power is also seen in the way his cronies treat people. They are arrogant, boastful and cruel to the people. Additionally, they amass a lot of wealth from the government and live in affluence at the expense of the populace. Councillor Chipande and Councillor Malipoa represent the king’s inner circle that helps him in exerting excessive power on the people. They all collude in mistreating the people. Councillor Chipande, for example, orders the attendants saying, “That’s how we treat them. Summary statements keep them in place. Then you get production” (Mulwa, 2004, p. 61).

In order to fulfil some of the conditions laid down by the foreign financiers on the loans they gave, the King uses his powers to drive people away from the Bukelenge valley in order to create space for land to be given to the financiers. The valley dwellers are forcefully evicted to Samuka plains in a matter of two weeks’ time. The king vows to carry on with the plan despite the advice and opinion of the leaders of the valley. The people are forced to bear the brunt yet the loans that were advanced to the country never benefited them; they instead went to the pockets of the powerful few. The forceful eviction triggers a revolution as the people seek to retain their land in Bukelenge Valley. Lacuna Kasoo has the audacity to order his commander of armed forces, Meshak, to kill those who are opposed the project.

Judah Zen Melo is killed by a machine he is operating after the decree of maximum speed of quadruple production is put issued. The order is one of the harsh conditions put forward by the foreign financiers. The king, through his powers, orders that the directive be effected immediately in order to spur speedy production to enable him settle the debts he owed the financiers.

### ***Economic Power***

Economic power is also brought out in the play through the foreign influence represented by the foreign financiers, Daniel Goldstein and Robert Rollerstone. The western countries give out loans to African states but these loans usually have strings attached. The countries that receive such loans must play to the

whims of the loaners. The financiers lay out conditions that must accompany the loans and failure to implement them will result in stringent measures being taken. For instance, upon failing to pay the financiers, King Lacuna Kasoo is compelled to adhere to the conditions they give out because of their economic power. For fear of economic sanctions, the King goes ahead to implement some of the conditions which include driving out people from Bukelenge Valley and leaving the land to the financiers; cutting down on expenditure; quadrupling the production speed; decreasing wages and increasing hours of work among others.

Such conditions are akin to the popular Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) that were imposed by International Monetary Fund (IMF) on African countries and which saw many losing their jobs and cost of living going up tremendously. Foreign countries impose these sanctions on African states because of the economic power they wield. This has led to impoverishment of already poor nations as a result of too much debt. Those African countries that have been able to cooperate have suffered heavily from the so-called syndrome of dependency on the west.

However, the playwright expresses hope for the oppressed majority as the people's power is seen at the end. The populace is able to engage in civil revolution devoid of bloodshed in order to overthrow the dictator, King Lacuna Kasoo, together with his government. The King along with his cronies are arrested and are set to face the law for crimes they have committed. The people's choice leader, Princess Sangoi, is installed on the throne and promises a better future for the people of Kutula.

#### **Metaphors of Power in *The Hunter is Back***

##### ***Subverting the Traditional Order***

As the playwright depicts, the traditional order pervades the system of governance in Chamaland. This system of power is characterized by the oppression and subjugation of women in the society. For instance, at the beginning of the play, we see Naomi and Maneno lamenting the oppressions they are facing due the excesses of power that is vested in their husbands by tradition. In this society, women are not supposed to oppose anything that their husbands decree them to. They are expected to submit fully to the wishes of their husbands without question. Thus, the traditional order weakens the women in society as it privileges the place of men.

Further, the traditional order vests a lot of power on the chieftom. The chief's powers is also not contestable in this society. Thus, the chief's decisions are considered final in the community. Because of this, Mzee Tumbo bribes the chief to overlook the young girl Rita's plea not to marry the old man. This shows the negative effects of absolute power being accorded the traditional chief in Chamaland. As seen in the play, the chief's ruling is not negotiable, hence Rita has no choice but to abide by the decision made by the elders, in this case, as proclaimed by the chief, to marry Mzee Tumbo – a man supposed her grandfather's age. Therefore, after the chief's decision, Rita is grabbed and the wedding ceremony is hurriedly prepared against her desires.

The traditional order perceives the woman as a source of wealth. The woman is seen as a commodity to be sold. This is evident in Act 2 Scene 1 where Ngumi fantasizes on how he will become a wealthy man once he marries off Rita to Mzee Tumbo. He is out on a mission to ensure that Rita gets married whether she likes it or not. To ensure that the marriage goes through without any hitch, Mzee Tumbo bribes the chief and Ngumi. He bribes the chief with ten thousand shillings so that he will not listen to Rita's plea. On receiving the bribe, the chief uses his power to shut Rita up and ensure that the wedding ceremony goes on as planned.

However, this traditional order is subverted when the women in Chamaland choose to rebel. Rita is at the forefront in contesting the traditional forms of marriage. She refuses to get married to Mzee Tumbo and goes to the chief to seek help in order to avert her impending marriage. Unfortunately, the chief takes a bribe and, therefore, turns a deaf ear on her pleas. Nevertheless, Rita is able to escape and avoid marriage to Mzee Tumbo through a scholarship.

Rita is not yet done in contesting the traditional order. She is not only openly opposed to her benefactor Ngumi's decisions over her but after the completion of her studies, she returns to the village where she wages war against the traditional order. The chief, the embodiment and custodian of the traditional order, feels threatened and is later overthrown by the people. In his place, Rita takes over, bringing an end to the

established traditional order.

Besides Rita, Naomi, Ngumi's wife, is also against the traditional order. She does not support her husband's decision to marry Rita off. Naomi is reportedly uncomfortable with her husband's dealings with Mzee Tumbo. She openly condemns Ngumi's decision to marry Rita off to Tumbo and even tells Ngumi to stop rejoicing for the wealth she will get from Rita's marriage. Naomi tells Ngumi to count her out of such a practice. She even plays a pivotal role in helping Rita to escape from the ceremony after getting a scholarship. Her actions bring to an end the traditional marriage order.

### **Contesting Oppression and Dictatorship**

Oppression is also depicted in the play. The rich such as Mzee Tumbo oppress the poor and the helpless. The chief also oppresses his servants like Kito. Under no circumstance do we hear the chief appreciating anything what Kito does; he rather complains and quarrels him time and again. When Kito asks for his pay, which he has not received for months, the chief yells back at him claiming that he (the chief) knows when to pay Kito and does not need to be reminded.

Rita is oppressed due to her poor circumstances. Ngumi wants to marry her off to Mzee Tumbo whose wealth influences all and sundry. Ngumi cannot wait for the opportunity to amass more wealth. On the other hand, Rita has no voice in her predicament, not even in the presence of the chief, who has been bribed by Mzee Tumbo. The power of wealth rules over the chief's integrity as he falls for Mzee Tumbo at the expense of Rita's rights.

Mzee Tumbo is depicted as an extravagant man who marries and divorces willy-nilly because he is rich and can use his wealth to get whatever he wants. No one is bold enough to question him because he is a tycoon. Poor village girls end up getting married to him because their parents cannot match Mzee Tumbo's wealth; some parents are in fact eager to get a share of his wealth.

Besides oppression, dictatorship is rife in Chamaland society. Dictatorship is the form of government in which absolute power is exercised by a leader; it can also be viewed as absolute imperious or overbearing power. The chief is a good example of a dictator in the play. For example, when Rita complains that as government, he is supposed to protect the rights of every member in society, he gets angry and wonders which government she is talking about because he is the government. His dictatorship is also evident in the way he handles his servants. Kito, chief's servant, has no opinion in whatever the chief thinks, says or commands. He addresses Kito thus: "do you know who I am? Can you stand my wrath? Every tom dick and harry calls me the chief of Chama. My tentacles spin far and wide forming an intricate web that you are unlikely to survive."

Men in the play are also portrayed as dictators in the manner in which they handle their families. Their family members are not expected to question or point a finger at their decisions. This is in the frost relationship between Naomi and Ngumi. Naomi is never at ease in the presence of Ngumi. She is afraid of him and never questions his decisions. Furthermore, she cannot openly confront him but expresses her displeasure in form of gossips with her sister Maneno.

However, oppressed individuals in the play are averse to contesting all the forms of dictatorship and oppression. For instance, Kito runs away from the chief's palace because he cannot take it anymore. Rita narrowly escapes from getting married to Mzee Tumbo. When the people feel that they are fed up with the chief's dictatorial leadership, they unite together and stage a bloodless coup. They thus bring an end to his dictatorial and oppressive leadership and appoint Rita, a woman, to rule in his place. In this way, they are able to restore fair, just and democratic leadership to their society. Their hopes and aspirations are restored.

### **Celebrating Women's Redemptive Roles**

Redemption occurs after a successful struggle or a quest to bring to end something that subjects many to a state of suffering. In the political setting, redemption happens when people get a leader who ends the misuse of power, dictatorship, corruption and oppression. Redemption is usually epitomized when a figure rises up from among the people to be the saviour and restore order, peace and prosperity from injustice and oppression.

In the play, Rita stands out as the people's saviour. She goes overseas for further studies and acquires

knowledge and then comes back to the community to make a difference. Upon arrival at the village, she embarks on a mission to transform the community attitudes and practices towards women, power, wealth and politics. She does this by initiating various community development projects and championing campaigns for human rights, since in this way, she hopes to enlighten her society. Moreover, she comes up with several projects such as the water project becomes very successful and saves the lives of many people, especially women who have had to go for miles in search for water. Additionally, she is able to secure funding to boost the implementation various developmental projects she has in mind for her people.

Rita does not only concentrate on the development projects but she also condemns the abuse of human rights by those in power. She constantly confronts the chief and his sycophants such as Ngumi and Tumbo on the issue of abuse of power. Her constant attack on the chief's system of governance creates tension between her and the chief to the extent that he (the Chief) incites the youth against her. However, his actions do not redeem his tainted image in the eyes of the people. Rita's role and leadership style in society is socially redemptive. The people are able to see, feel and live her vision. Through her, the writer shows that women are capable of bringing the much needed change in society. Further, the author shows that women are better managers and are not blinded by power as well as leadership responsibilities. With these, he has given the woman a greater and superior position to that of man.

Rita as a leader is depicted as being sensitive to the needs, hopes and aspirations of the people. She is democratic and she often consults the people. Besides, her judgments and decisions are logical, fair and in tune with the wishes of the people. She breaks the barrier of discrimination and impunity by those in authority. With this regime the corrupt and senseless leaders are convicted and charged within the law, which must be upheld at all times. Rita's conceptualization of power is evident in the play. In her confrontation with the chief, she tells him that it is his duty as deemed by the government to protect the rights of every citizen. To her, being in power implies being a servant of the people. Her knowledge of power is grounded on the need to protect the rights of the citizens unlike the traditional system which is tied to the protection of the customs and beliefs of a people.

Other than enlightening the community on their various human rights, Rita also employs the knowledge she acquired to interpret various phenomena and natural calamities like diseases. She uses scientific methods to explain the occurrence of diseases. She, for example, explains to the people that what Taabu is suffering from is not a curse as a punishment from the gods, as many in the village supposed. She explains to them that Taabu is suffering from HIV/AIDs, a disease which is sexually transmitted. Rita also tries to explain to the people other natural phenomena like global warming as arising from the careless of industries and also the result of deforestation. Through Rita's activities and enlightenment roles, the playwright foregrounds the idea that educating a woman is synonymous to bringing light in to the society.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The two playwrights have addressed the metaphors of power in the contemporary society in their dramatic works. They underscore the negative metaphors of power such as oppression, exploitation, dictatorship, bribery, abuse of office among other issues which come about as a result of abuse of power. However, they identify positive metaphors of power in form of fairness, justice, democratic leadership, and sensitivity to the people's plight, responsiveness among other issues that come as a result of good governance. Therefore, it is clear that, in their vision, the two authors are speaking for the oppressed, the exploited and the abused in the modern African society.

The two plays also represent the two author's personal experiences and conception of the historical realities present in their society today. Metaphors such as the oppression, exploitation, dictatorship, bribery, fairness, just and open leadership, among others spring from the authors' experiences and desires as a result of their interactions with good and bad types of leadership in their society. All said and done, by choosing to dramatise these issues and giving poetic justice to the oppressed in their plays, the two authors depict their vision and commitment to see the restoration of proper channels of acquisition and use of power in society.

Since the study was limited to the metaphors of power in the two plays *Inheritance* and *The Hunter is Back*, it is recommended that, perhaps, an examination of how an individual writer such as Mulwa depicts the

metaphors of power in his works can help demonstrate clearly his social commitment. The study also recommends that a similar study should be conducted but on other genres such as the novel, poetry and the short story with a view to exploring how contemporary Kenyan writers confront issues affecting humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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