

Alienation and Identity Outrage in Post-Colonial Anglophone Cameroon Literature. Aspivakian Reading of Bate Besong's the Banquet: A Historical Drama

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Abstract:

Besong's the Banquet: A historical Drama, journeys us mentally into Spivak's post-colonial antic 'Can the Subaltern Speak? The playwright provides us with a deep insight of a subaltern people devastated by the ills of alienation and loss of identity, reducing them to nothing more than objects, depicting a life of suffering, misery and despondency. The play represents man's alienation from a hostile society, revealing the trauma of existence, as well as, the inevitability of death. The subaltern lacking identity and individuality of his own compromises his right to peaceful and lawful existence and remains subscribed to the educative dictum of 'rats living amongst cats'. The pivotal argument pursued in this paper is therefore, predicated on understanding alienation and identity issues in post-colonial Cameroon from the ideological standpoint of Spivak's essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. This is accomplished through a methodical foray of the play *The Banquet*, by Bate Besong, which aims to portray how Spivak's great rhetoric is a reflection of the Cameroon society. The agony of the 'Cameroonian subaltern', nurtured by the dialectics of history is a compelling agenda for the writer whose writing must depict the conditions of his people, expressing their spontaneous feelings of betrayal, anger and protest and like the playwright argues, such writing must convey with remarkable force the moods of the Anglophone Cameroonian (subaltern) caught in the assimilating –nightmare of Sisyphean existence (Besong, 1993). The subaltern in Cameroon remains haunted by rootlessness, aloofness and a growing sense of isolation, which fires-up a feeling of not belonging and loss of identity. The experience of these feelings can be physical, mental, religious, psychological, political, social and economic. The paper's logical argument rests on history as the pillar of identity and whose erasure can become a source of anarchy in any society when it is warped.

Keywords: Alienation¹, Identity², subaltern³, Bate Besong⁴, asymmetrical power⁵, Spivak⁶

1. INTRODUCTION

Anglophone Cameroon literature expresses a people's collective predicament within a given social universe with which the writer stands in dialectic relationship. Its literature is by and large fairly new and like all things in their youthful stage, it is obsessed with a curiosity for the past and a zeal to create the future. Writers see themselves as the spokesmen of their people, and the Anglophone Cameroonian writers have taken it upon themselves to lead the struggle to overcome alienation of Anglophones within the Cameroon general identity which has led to the desire to reassert and restore their loss identity, to create as it were a past, a present, and a future for their people. But before any feeling of roots can be engendered in any society, it is necessary to understand one's history. The subaltern in Cameroon remains hunted by rootlessness, aloofness and a growing sense of isolation, which fires-up a feeling of not belonging and loss of identity. The experience of these feelings can be physical, mental, religious, psychological, political, social and economic

When the minority Southern Cameroonians attained political independence by joining the majority East Cameroonians to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon, they were full of optimism. But this optimism was short-lived. The minority Anglophones did not imagine that, soon after their liberation from colonial rule, they would be re-colonized by the majority Francophones and be denied full citizenship in their new country which relegated them to the position of second class citizens. This ascribed second class status has created internal rifts and tensions between Francophone and Anglophone Cameroonians which has crystallized into what has come to be known as the "Anglophone problem" and which have found expression in issues of alienation and loss of identity and has seriously interrogated the notion of the Cameroonian nation. Hence, the issue of alienation and loss identity has become dominant themes in post-colonial Anglophone Cameroon literature. This is the central theme which runs through the plays of Bate Besong as a post-colonial Anglophone Cameroonian writer.

Essentially therefore, the Anglophone Cameroonian writer is in part pre-occupied with a general quest for roots and beneath its fictional characters lurks a sense of alienation and loss of identity as a unifying theme that establishes a connecting thread in its literary repertory. Identity defines a people and their common destiny which is traced back to their historical roots. History therefore, is the key to a people's national and cultural identity which gives them a sense of self and place and the consciousness of this is brought to us via literature. Butcher (1922) taking a cue from Aristotle, defines arts as the fictionalization of history. Corroborating Aristotle's view, Besong (1993) argues that, a writer without a sense of history is like a sparrow without wings, an Aesopian lion without claws or teeth, for a writer must be the source of the living truth.

Cameroon is made up of two nations lumped together in one with different colonial legacies which came into a union in 1961 at the Foumban conference. The identity of the two entities (English and French speaking Cameroonians) cannot claim their foundation to a common past, which has long become a point of contention ever since they unified to become one nation. The years preceding the unification of the two Cameroons has ushered-in a disequilibrium which has helped legitimize an asymmetrical power relationship between the minority Anglophones (subalterns) and the majority and dominant Francophone segment of the Cameroon society as the hegemonic power holders.

In post-coloniality therefore, subaltern refers to persons who are socially, politically and geographically outside the hegemonic power structure (Spivak: 1995). This paper denotes subaltern as an oppressed group of persons (Anglophones) suffering under hegemonic power domination of a ruling elite class (Francophones) that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history as active individuals of the same nation (Gramsci, 1929-35).

Following the disproportionate power interplay, the Anglophone bourgeoisie and intellectuals have, like subalterns without voices or agency for action, failed to speak up for their people which has resulted in a subjective identity for the Anglophones as well as their alienation from public space in their society. In the context of colonial production therefore, the subaltern cannot speak given his subjective identity. This paper appropriates the post-colonial theory to support argument on alienation and subjective identity of Anglophones as conditioned by the diverse historical origin of the two Cameroons, and as levers that foster subalterneity, fictionalized in Besong's *The Banquet: A Historical Drama*, a play which recreates in artistic terms, the historical past of the Cameroon society.

Alienation is a timeless phenomenon which is not new to humanity from the genesis of creation. It is a topical issue fundamentally important, especially when discussing modern social relations in every society. As a term that subscribes to various applications, it thrives on a bi-polar variance of inability to realize oneself and man's self-realization. In an attempt to bring its relevance to bear in contemporary discourse, this concept has been given several scholarly dimensions.

Ogungbesan (1979) as cited by Elegba Florence Adedaja (2010:36) in 'Social relevance of African Literature to the promotion of social values', explains that, Alienation is a much abused word in the intellectual circle. According to him, alienation was derived from *alios* which means 'another' in Latin, while the developed *forms alienus* means belonging to another country and *alienatus* means estranged. Commenting further on the word, he said:

The word, alienation thus bears the constant notion of being

and feeling a stranger, an outsider. Hegel gave the term a philosophical currency in the early 19th century, by using it to denote what he considered to be a characteristic feature of modern man, his sense of inward estrangements, of more or less conscious or aware that the inner being, the real — was alienated from the —me the person, as an object in society (Elegba, 2010: 36).

Anglophone Cameroon literature is therefore, replete with themes of alienation and loss of identity and writers like Epie Ngomevictor, Bate Besong, Nkemngong Nkengasong and others serve as voices that are articulating these themes in their writings. The chilling effects and agony of Southern Cameroonians is well captured in Bate Besong's article on "Anglophone Cameroon Literature: Literature in the seasons of the Diaspora", which explains that:

The agony of the Anglophone Cameroon question is compounded by the endless uncertainty as to whether they would ever be an end to it. Writers are inspired by the adversity of their day. So must we. There could be no better test. There could be no better way of quantifying such human suffering. Could we draw from the memorable lines of the Jacobian-born African-American poet Claude McKay's "If We Must Die" to provide succor? Perhaps a word of caution is still necessary... (Besong, 1993:17)

The adversity of the day in the Cameroon nation, as Besong, insinuates in the foregone, is shrouded in alienation which has led to loss of identity. Indeed, nothing can be more annoying than looking in to a mirror and instead of seeing self, one sees a distorted image that fails to associate both object and image as one. That sense of self is not developed in a vacuum but within multiple contexts which are variants that can trigger people to rise up for self-definition. And nowhere in society can people simply wake up and decide to act in a certain way without any triggers. Historical, sociological, anthropological, political and geographical explanations are more often needed to make sense of a people's life choices and patterns of relational behavior, which also serve as identity markers.

In Anglophone Cameroon literature, alienation and loss of identity has become a very important issue for debate. Cameroon as a nation has since the early 1961 fostered a fragile unity between two entities: This unity is between La Republic du Cameroon which in today's geographic spread out, is made up of the eight French speaking Regions of the country and Southern Cameroon made up of indigenes of the South West or North West Regions. These two parties inherited different colonial legacies traced to both France and Britain.

'Who am I and where do I come from' are prophetic words of the great American writer W.E.B Dubois who once noted that the problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the colour line, the problem of roots, the questions as to how far differences relating to race and roots will be made the basis of denying to over half the world, the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization. The question of 'who am I and roots' therefore, cannot be ignored by a writer, especially in Africa's post-colonial environment because of the artificial fabrication of boundaries by the west, that are today what Besong describes as the 'lake Nyos time-bomb of history'.

Besong's protest literature is therefore not an accident but rather emanates from the nature of his background as a member of the subaltern group in Cameroon(Anglophones) and his understanding of the limitations imposed on the Anglophone by the verdict of historical shifts, which has vested a segment of the population with hegemonic powers over the 'Other'. As a socio-political tapestry "*the Banquet*" expresses alienation that has led to loss of identity as an inherent struggle of Anglophones in a dominant Francophone led neo-colonial Cameroon. Being a revolutionary writer, Besong has through both fiction and nonfiction illuminated the problem of class exploitation, alienation, loss of identity and State repression in his society. As poet and dramatist, his sensitive mind serves as a

laboratory of diagnosis of his society. The range and depth of his sensibility appears to be derived and strengthened by his knowledge of ancient classics, with references to Greek classics, American and English classics like Spencer, Dryden, Milton, Bretch, Shakespeare, and Chaucer and others.

2. ALIENATION AND LOSS OF IDENTITY IN THE UNIVERSE OF *THE BANQUET*

In *The Banquet*, Besong appropriates the theatrical techniques of historical flashbacks and flash-forwards to reveal human cruelty, betrayal and engineered homicide as a strategy to suppress the issue of alienation and identity of 'Southern Cameroonians separatist agents' in the universe of the play. His pursuit of the theme of alienation and loss of identity in the *Banquet* combines the political didacticism of a 'living past' with the need to promote a revolutionary resistance for the future. Besong's 'insinuation is that the obstacles of loss of identity are not permanent and can be overcome by a collective resistance. The actions of the play constitutes a developing monument to the freedom struggle which ruptured in the early nineties following the convening of the all Anglophone conference held in Mount Mary hospital premises in Buea, Cameroon, which brought to the attention of the government issues concerning Anglophone marginalization in Cameroon and the need for redress.

The play opens with historical flash backs on the activities of the 1961 plebiscite which Southern Cameroonians voted to reunite with French speaking Cameroon. The prologue of the play constructs and foreshadows the impending turbulence, gun fires, arrest and torture of Southern Cameroonians who are considered subversive because of their secessionist tendencies and through this macabre atmosphere the apocalyptic voice of the first premier of the Southern Cameroon and leader of the Cameroon Peoples National Congress (CPNC) Dr Emmanuel Mbella Lifafa Endeley on the question of the plebiscite is heard.

3. E.M.L ENDELEY:

The association of the Southern Cameroonians with Nigeria has been to the best interest of Cameroonians. The territory has advanced from a province in the Eastern Region of Nigeria to a full-self-governing Region, with a separate House of Assembly, Government and premier (...) if we remain with Nigeria, we have a right to appeal to the Federal Supreme court in Lagos, and from there to privy council in London, which hears appeals from all Common wealth countries. This system ensures that every case is given a fair trial (viii)

The final word is followed by lightning and thunder as an omen that beholds the danger ahead. The atmosphere through *the Banquet* is tense and saturated with sadness, as if the whole land and people are mourning. Shrills of voices, squalling and groaning as trepidations are common place. Events in the play are speedy and actions are swift. The play comprises several movements forward and backward into history which must be viewed as a single movement. Though the unity of time, place and action has not been respected but the action of the play as a whole can be seen as breaking the barrier between formal and informal time, so that the past and the present flow into one another following its filmic technique. There is character impersonation, merging of characters and reflections of history emphasizing complexity, repression of a segment of the society (Southern Cameroon) in search of their roots, betrayal, inter-relationships of people and events.

The *Banquet* is suggestive of Besong's mature understanding of the role of history in African literature and of his own role in the re-writing of Cameroon's history. In regarding a writer as the conscience of a nation, Besong in the play draws our attention to see history within the last fifty years as the story of resistance to a horizontal re-colonization and to neo-colonialism that confiscates the identity of Southern Cameroonians and therefore make them susceptible to alienation and its dangers, as well as, the cloning and construction of a segment of that society as subalterns. Flaunt between the living past, present and the future, the play is dense with allusion to historical personages, pre-empting success for the separatist Southern Cameroonians.

Subalterneity in the Cameroon society is nurtured by the dialectics of history and like Ngugi told an interviewer in 1969, the ideal African novel would embrace the pre-colonial past, the colonial past, and the post-independence period with a pointer to the future. From the beginning of *the Banquet*, the playwright deliberately mixed fictional names with those of historical characters, in an attempt to heighten the illusion of fictional reality as seen in the prologue of the play where we hear the voice of Fon Achirim bim of seven Kata Bafut who takes us down memory lane:

3.1. Fon Achirim bim

We rejected Dr Endeley and his CPNC party because he wanted to take us to uneke-egbu Nigeria. If Mr. Small John Ngu Foncha and his graffi KNDP want to take us to Ahidjo's French Katakata Cameroon, we shall also run away from him. Awawa Nigeria is water- But- haba! French East Cameroon: Maquisaland is FIRE! (xii).

Fictitious characters like Arreykaka, Um Ignace, Akoko, Mbozo'o Obadiah exist giving action to real situations thereby intermixing history and fiction as the fictional characters intermingle with historical characters and events to give the play its living breathing format. In his earlier play, *Beast of No Nation*, (1990) historical allusions are vague and inaccurate. However, after *Beast of No Nation*, Besong seems to have given more attention to history unimpeded by blinders like his integration into the Cameroon civil service. This is amply portrayed in *The Banquet*, (1994) a work of imagination that purports to contribute to the revision of Cameroon history and which can be regarded as essential to the liberation of his own part of the country (Southern Cameroon) whose independence has been confiscated by the re-colonization legacy perpetrated by la Republic du Cameroun on a partner sovereign state, turning them to subalterns without voices or agency.

The purpose of such collocation of historical and fictional characters is to make his Anglophone Cameroonians audience reflect on their place in the continuum of history which has generated identity crisis as well as their marginalization as a people. His constant probing into history is a pointer to the fact that the past becomes usable if suitably constructed and equally provoking the understanding of his Anglophone audience that, the past is neither dead nor irrelevant to the searcher who seeks the roots of the present in the past. Ideologically, his attack on the rottenness of Cameroon as a neo-colonial state, goes beyond what is accepted in fiction to sometimes a chronicling of history, giving us polemics as basically a question of balance and his concern that, we should not miss a detail, which sometimes results in a dominating and intrusive authorial presence.

The characters in the play are drawn from three different societies which include French men, French Cameroon and Southern Cameroon and are characterized by differing social perspectives. There is Omnes Crataux, a French ambassador in Yaoundé who wears a monocle and carries a scabbard, Arreykaka, is a grave digger who has made across-over and feels integrated into the Francophone devices of checking the activities of those styles as separatists from Southern Cameroon.

There is equally the Takemnbeng collective, a group of elderly women who are seen as the helpless victims of human self-destruction. Sorrowfully, they are seen drown into mayhem by those in total control of power and resources. Of course, they wait helplessly for any 'Moses' who can rescue them from their predicaments but to no avail. Like in the *Beast of No Nation*, the lowest rung of characters are the Takemnbeng women collective, the grave diggers like Akoko and ArreyKaka who were later co-opted to the side of the hegemonic power holders (Francophones). There is the upper class made of Um Ignace, Rohoboam while the supper class is evidently accorded to Omnes Crataux, the French President. The playwright presents the lower rung of this society as people caught in the throes of captivity and of modern man's cannibalism.

Arreykaka, UM Ignace, Rohoboam and other characters of the play portray the rise of a parasitic national bourgeoisie class capable of betraying and willing to betray the nation in order to build a neo-colonial state that favors international business. *The Banquet* therefore, chronicles both the destructive capacity of colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as, the individual and collective resistance to these forces. As an aspect of exploitation, the play reveals how French conmen own landed property, stock shares, discount houses, palatial homes and how they have destroyed the Cameroon forest in

their greedy exploitation of Obeche, iroko and other durable forest timbers. This racket equally extends to other resources like cocoa farmers profits, SONARA oil money and Cameroon civil service incomes which will continue to pass through circuits like 'Carrefour du Development'. Listen to them.

3.2. AMB

For reasons of protocol, you may promote yourself field supreme president marshal before the cock crows at dawn. Meme en France!

3.3. MBOZO'O:

Mene en France (enthusiastically). As you wish, your Excellency, your Excellency, if it be mother France's sacred pleasure to market all our oil fields and forest reserves. Golden Walnut, iron wood, Ebony, Black Afara, Obeche, Good timber, I assure you.

In x-raying the Cameroon society through *The Banquet*, one can draw from Franz Jakubowski (1936) who made a critique of Hegelian idealism by advancing his stand point thus:

Modern socialism' is in content, primarily the product of the class antagonism existing in modern society between possessors and non-possessors, wage workers and bourgeoisie and on the other hand, of the anarchy of the class ruling with its roots deep in economic facts (1)

This is a clear picture of the playwrights society as the possessors of resources are the alienated who are sidelined, marginalized and more often tormented for what rightly is theirs.

The theme of betrayal in modern literature often exposes the dishonest and contaminating foundation of personal and historical relationships. In *the Banquet*, Akoko and Arreykaka are Anglophones whose betrayal to their Anglophone brothers is widely noted because they are used as minions of the devilish gang of robbers called government. UM reports that chief Justice Nyo'o wakai and Barrister Sama were shot and attacked with acid and some Takemnbeng women were battered to death with lengths of iron piping but Arreykaka trivializes it by saying:

3.4. ArreyKaka

Asegle! (...) The vulture eats the sacrificial lamb without any consequences. The cockroach is anxious to dance, but will the cockerel allow it? (Voice change) I think you go jorrop for die.

Social and economic alienation as seen in this play is a direct cause of betrayal. The danger of betrayal as experienced in Besong's earlier work, *Beast of No Nation* epitomized and conveyed to us in the character of Otshama Lazare and the erudite narrator-scholar on the pernicious 'Anglophone problem' is devastating. In both plays therefore, the playwright created characters that are meant (tainted) to project the theme of betrayal in the collective struggle of the Anglophone to overcome rootlessness (subalterneity). Co-opted major characters in both plays participate in betrayal. Arreykaka like Otshama in their different ways betray their Anglophone stock and cite with the oppressive 'Other' to molest and even kill. Clearly therefore, alienation presents itself in post-colonial Cameroon as the result of a divided society which enables us to see the destructive roots of colonialism in the play.

The betrayal and execution of those considered separatist Southern Cameroonians is as a result of colonial violence intended to suppress the people and their right to self-determination. This excruciating aspect of the play is revealed as an attempt to suppress identity by employing human cruelty that totally invades the climate of the play. In blind loyalty to colonial intrigues, the grave diggers seems to pride themselves as homicidal lunatics who are indifferent about corpses as well as the separatists Southern Cameroonians who are targeted for mass killing.

Matumanbuh, (1997), notes that there is a smooth blend of horrible actions, pitiable and monstrous characters and a frightfully barren setting in the play, which as dramatic elements, help to intensify the charged impact of the gory atmosphere. *The Banquet*, communicates across time and space from its setting in the early nineties Cameroon, the play speaks to us in 2017 about the reality of a society caught up in the calamity of injustice, dehumanization and doom unleashed to the oppressed people of Southern Cameroon(subalterns) who are presented as people in captivity in the play. In writing *The Banquet*, Besong excavates a misrepresented segment of Cameroon history, reconstructing it

imaginatively, even resurrecting Endeley Mbella Lifaka, Fon Achirimbi II, and other patriots as heroes of the Southern Cameroon people.

The play conveys the lamentations of a people who have lost the 'gold' of their life (identity) and are in search of it. At the Kondengui Maximum security prison, the grave diggers sing to awaken their consciousness of the consequences of such historical fracture. Listen to these grave diggers:

The Road after Foumban;

This is the road after the Foumban

Bazaar

We will lock you up in windowless coaches

Made in Jean Foccarh

Cobra- infested Quai d'Orsay

This is the Vichy

Abattoir

We set for you, after

The Foumban Bazaar

Where

You will go down

On your knees

Before lance Corporal

Omnes crataux

Hatchet- man

For mantown

Sarajevo

Cement tank, only

Lately returned from

Dieu bein plus

A wretched

Beast

This is the handman's road

After the Foumban Bazaar (3)

The song of the grave diggers takes us into the heart of history at Foumban (1961) where the collective identity of the Southern Cameroon people was compromised and buried. Attempt at regaining that identity in the universe of the play, met with a killing spree of those styled Southern Cameroon separatists and subversive elements; a dark picture of colonial brutality. The conflict of the play is rooted in history where the Mbozo'o Omnes crataux, Rohoboam Kitterano and Gendarme Gorillas incarnate as tragic characters sentenced to their respective fate by the chastity of history. *The Banquet* story resonates our minds today where Francophone neo-fundamental ideology still instigates the assimilation of Anglophones. This explains the reason why the play opens with a couple of French military paratroop commandos vowing to bring iron law and order as well as deletion of undesirables. This scene and the entire play is a connecting thread of evocative attempt to suppress identity by subjecting a segment of the society to despicable human conditions. It is an imprisonment of human essence and conscience.

Women in the play are portrayed as active revolutionary agents who complement the effort of male freedom fighters in wrestling alienation and identity. Though many African playwrights present women as hapless victims in the hands of men and society in general due to Africa's patriarchal posturing, Besong, in *The Banquet*, rather portrays women as the active ingredient in the socio-political transformation of their society. The Takembeng woman and the Cameroon Belle are determined to transform their society positively as they equally participate in the revolutionary

struggle in search of their roots. The playwright elevates women from the observatory pedestal to a participatory pedestal in the struggle.

A revolution of any sort normally brings change to the political and social system of the affected society. It can affect the people and the entire society in one way or the other. The Southern Cameroon secessionists and separatist are presented in the play as freedom fighters while the Takemnbeng women collective are active supporters of the course. They make their first appearance to the stage with a revolutionary dirge, singing with drum rhythms accompanying flute music thus:

4. TAKEMNBENG WOMEN

Women: (Singing) Ten alien eyes

Cannot be compared

With one's eyesight

Ten alien eyes

Cannot be compared

With one's eyesight

Another woman: (singing) the eyes that have

Beheld the ocean

Can no longer

Be afraid

Of the Lagoon

Eyes that have

Behold the ocean

No longer have fear

For the Lagoon

All (singing): We do not use

For leprosy

The herbs that are

Meant

For Lhasa fever

We do not lick

The hands

That are soaked

In gore

And blood

The hyena looks

In vain

At the tortoise

The lion looks in

Vain too

The hyena and the lion

Cannot do eyes that have beheld the

Ocean any harm (6)

The revolutionary spirit which women exhibit in *The Banquet* emphasizes unparalleled solidarity. Their revolutionary arsenals in the play are songs, proverbs and riddles which are employed extensively and thereby giving the play its local and traditional background. This is amply demonstrated in Act II scene I where a lone female is heard shouting:

People of Southern Cameroon origin, rise up like one man

*against France! Death to KITTERANO! Damnation to all
French lackeys in Cameroon! Up with those who urge us to
take hold of our own levers of history! Our future lies in our
own strength in our own capacity, our industry, in our courage!!
Up with people- oriented power. (19)*

The curtain of the play drops with a concluding epilogue by the Cameroonian Belle giving more signification to the collective power of women in the Southern Cameroon struggle to rid their society completely from alienation and identity crisis in spite of the horrifying atmosphere created by the oppressors and confiscators of identity. The playwright paints a picture of female bravery as we encounter women whose dehumanizing society instead made them resilient, assertive, courageous and resolute in the desire to fight oppression and social injustice in their society, which are imports of alienation and identity.

The Banquet is replete with 'odd talks' used by the playwright as signifiers of alienation and identity. This is because a language based approach of a text offers us a valuable analytic and critical method for explaining context. It has become an axiom in discourse stylistics that the study of non-routine patterns of communication such as those manifested in *The Banquet* can inform the routine and unexceptional in interaction. In addition to the despicable picture of the play therefore, the playwright employs what can be styled 'odd talks' as alienation and identity signifiers to reinforce audience comprehension.

As a first stage in the development of a model of 'odd talks', the importance of context as a determinant of interactive patterns need to be reiterated. As pillars that help to enforce alienation and identity concepts in the play, Besong, uses cognitive metaphors such as 'le Biafres', 'Anglos', 'Anglo- Biafres', 'Separatist Biafres', 'dissident Anglophones', 'tombo-drinking Southern Cameroonians', 'L'ennemie dans la maison' etc. These are markers that can help us to form a clean picture of the twin concept being investigated in the play.

The nomenclature of Anglophone in the play bears links with history as a political coinage which was adopted after the Fouban conference of 1961 to denote the English speaking people of Southern Cameroon in the Union with French speaking Cameroonians. Going by that denotation, the French speaking Cameroonians equally became known as the Francophones in the Union. These cognitive metaphors are used derogatorily against the Anglophones to define their origin and consequently exclude them from certain positions in governance. From a contextual perspective, 'L'ennemie dans la maison' as a provocative utterance constitutes part of the identity violence meted against the Anglophones which consequently leads to their alienation. These metaphors conjectures them as traitors, people not to be trusted, people of a different stalk, people with a different orientation, different ideological perceptions that contrast dominant Francophone ideology, people with a strange and unwanted spirit, who are subversive in their actions, separatists in the world- view, subalterns and above all complicated in the way and manner which they conduct themselves.

Um, a character purposefully created by the playwright to exhibit the tenets of Francophone excesses enters into a conversation with another character, Arreykaka and both are convinced that the source of the motivation that fires-up the secessionist spirit amongst Southern Cameroonian is because they have drank from the dangerous knowledge embodied in the works of Wole Soyinka. His line utterance gives evidence thus:

*Um (inclines his head, then fires into the air)
Secessionist! They read his books
Poisonous... wasps... in the abominable
Cult of 'AS'. Blood attracts shark, you know
In 'AS', and in the abominable cult of Rem'...*

Taking cognizant of context in the study of discourse as a strategy, structural analysis of discourse seeks to explain in a relatively idealized way, how in *The Banquet*, questions predict answers, statements predict acknowledgements and request predicts reactions. From this perspective, the playwright employs different interactive tactics at specific points during a sequence of talks.

The Banquet ends on a positive note in favor of those struggling to reclaim their identity. Shortly before the Banquet which held in the presidential manor, an officer who presents himself as Agulaba from Ogormokmor, an imaginary village in the play, makes an open confession informing the audience of how he was one of the kingpins of torture in the concentrated torture camps of Kondengui and others, as he bears his mind out in the following lines:

4.1. Officer

*... I tell you this -i ran the torture camps – in the end,
we never win. We have never won! (On a philosophical note)
the people show a capacity to eat whatever
We cooked for them in our jail and crematoria but isn't it
Certain that with all our amour and Dien Bein phu
Sjamboks; it is impossible for us to eat what the people
cook should they dress human gore for us in cauldrons?*

The playwright through the officer in the play speaks to us about a people with a resilient spirit, whose courage soars above Mount Kilimanjaro in East Africa. All Anglophones co-opted to ill-treat, torment, betray and even kill their fellow Anglophone pale into insignificance following the admonition by the officer.

4.2. Officer

I have return again to the human community (voice rising with joy) No longer a lifeless dummy, no longer repudiating myself, abandoning myself to the point where I cease to affirm my IDENTITY; I am now a human being. I am no longer a lifeless dummy operating on the engines of terror.

The officer set his dress on fire and runs after the semi victorious Takemnbeng women saying a wind has arisen. Meanwhile pandemonium suddenly erupts at the Banquet with all scampering into different directions. This end signifies a failed attempt of colonial brutality to triumph over the identity of the people of Southern Cameroonians as can be conjectured in the play. The playwright achieves his trajectory using a Belle, whose sympathy for the travails encountered by the Takemnbeng women collective, singled her out as a freedom fighter for the course of Southern Cameroon in the play standing up for their identity and fighting alienation, the Belle bears a message from the revolutionary woman of the play while concluding the epilogue.

... 'this is the moment to reflect about your place in history. The fire of freedom in Africa continues to glow. Do not turn your back on the truth' (52).

This is an identity message intended to interrogate our consciences on the Anglophones identity as a people. The concept of alienation has gained its popularity in *The Banquet* because of the historical and socio-political trends of the play which are rooted in Marx's dialectic materialism which stresses economic determinism as an index of social struggle. In his economic and philosophical manuscript of 1884, Marx laid bare the estrangement of men from an oppressive society. Historically therefore, Marx and Hegel, developed this concept in their own perspective.

The problem of alienation is a major problem of any class divided society where one section of a society has to be exploited for the glorification of another segment of same society. Therefore, in the society created in *The Banquet*, the playwright projects alienation through markers like exploitation, power, money, human need which forms the basis of Marx's theory of alienation.

Marx believes that, we cannot talk of alienation and freedom in human society without understanding the concept of man, because, nature, freedom, society and man himself are inseparable concepts in a consistent philosophical system. Marx's intention and concern is to build consciousness in a manner that, there should be no exploitation so that man can experience himself as truly human. In this direction therefore, Marx writes: 'The essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations'. From this view, we can properly

advance the significance of Marxism through man's social relations which can be possible through the role of the masses in social development and society transformation.

The progress of every society depends on its masses. In this connection A.P Sheptulin as quoted by Shodhganga (2007) writes:

The masses are made up of those classes and social groups whose labour ensures society existence and development. These are in the first place, the working people who can create material goods, the scientific and technological intelligence related to the production process, the workers in the service industries, scientists, those working in the field of culture and art and those who are engaged in the upbringing and training of the rising generation (4).

In the views of Marx, the foregoing reveals that society depends on the individual as an agent of action. Marx's referent points to man's importance in the spinning wheel of labour as a major productive force responsible for the production of wealth in society. In *The Banquet*, we see clearly how neo-colonial La Republic du Cameroon leaders serve as compradors (middlemen) with their Western allies in the exploitation of their people and society. The people are alienated from ownership of their own resources which constitutes the wealth-base of the nation as well as being alienated from their benefits in the productive process. We are touched to the spine, when Kitterano's voice is overhead saying that France of the 21st century would be made up of neo-colonial La Republic du Cameroon resources or else there will be no imperial France. His voice is heard thus:

4.3. Kitterano

We consider la Republic du Cameroon as indispensable to the enhancement of the international states of France (...)
I will not let myself be isolated, locked in a corner or knifed in the dark (utters a ghoulis moan) Agulaba!
All forest resources, cocoa, farmer's profits, SONARA oil money and Cameroonians civil servants incomes will continue to pass through circuit like 'Carrefour du Development'.(20)

Elsewhere, same character acknowledges, that French conmen are threatening to submerge Cameroons economic wellbeing by owning landed property, stocks shares, and discount houses and carrying out a wanton destruction of the forest. Through such exploitation and the eventual destruction of the environment, man and nature are put at jeopardy, for, as Alexander Spirkin, in his book *Dialectic materialism* writes.

Man is constantly aware of the influence of nature in the form of the air he breaths, the water he drinks, the food he eats and the flow of energy and information... human history offers any number of examples how environmental conditions and the relief of our planet have promoted or retarded human development (23)

Alienation therefore, helps in the total underdevelopment of a people as is reflected in the pauperized nature of the Takembeng Women, gravediggers and the separatist Southern Cameroonians in the play. Again, it is inescapable in any society where there is unequal power relation because the hegemonic power holders must obviously dominate those at the fringes of society (subaltern). Rohoboam Kitterano, Omnes Crataux, French red berrets, Gendarm Gorilles, Mbozo'o Obadiah are all power wielders whose use of power fosters alienation in the play which works at the detriment of the oppressed class of people.

In his submission, Mihaela Dumitrescu (2001) in 'Modernism, Post-modernism and the question of identity', discusses the importance and relevance of identity in contemporary society with respect to the demonized Other, that enables us to circumscribe and consolidate our identities. Illuminating further on the views of Mihaela, Omolola Ladele (2009), in 'Reconstructing identities through resistance in post-colonial women writing: A reading of Ezeigbo's *The Last of the strong ones*,' notes that, issues of identity are germane in the present-day dispensation of constantly reconstituting politics, gender identities, personal, national and international relations, especially as identities are understood rationally. Her argument on identity stretches to proof that identity issues have today become accentuated in the light of changing patterns of re-terrorization and globalization. In *The Last of the strong ones*, Omolola, directs attention to New Historicism and cultural critique, with an attempt to define the indices of identity that circumscribe the lives of African women especially within the present day post-colonial matrix.

The problem of alienation and loss of identity in Cameroon overlap one another and it is not possible to look at the 'subaltern problem' in Cameroon without running into the two concepts. For as it stands, it is the systematic erosion of the Anglophone identity in the Francophone-Anglophone equation that leads to the dilemma of the Francophone Other. This explains why the concluding epilogue of *The Banquet* touches down on the people's historical antecedent, interrogating them on their place in the continuum of history in the union of the two Cameroons.

5. CONCLUSION

Viewed from the perspective of post-coloniality, the Anglophone Cameroonian anguish of a subaltern people is a matter of binary oppositions (self/other) triggered by successive layers of colonial damage meted on Anglophone consciousness by the hegemonic power holders (Francophones) and which has become compelling for the subaltern to speak out on the paradoxes that have ordered his/her experiences by articulating that anguish so as to minimize chances of misrepresentation.

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