"Tempers unchained": politics and meaning of pre-independence Papua New Guinea drama

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"TEMPERS UNCHAINED": POLITICS AND MEANING OF PRE-INDEPENDENCE PAPUA NEW GUINEA DRAMA

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Regis Stella
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INTRODUCTION

Colonialism has always had a dramatic impact upon traditional societies. Not only does it alienate and dispossess indigenous peoples from their cultural provenance but arrests their intellectual growth so that they view their own cultures as necessarily inferior to Western cultures.

It was essentially in response to colonialism that pre-independence Papua New Guinea drama and writing in general emerged. The introduction of Western education (especially tertiary education) made Papua New Guineans aware of their exploitation and subjugation by a foreign power and at the same time raised their consciousness that it was not right for them to be oppressed by a foreign power.

Generally the anti-colonial reaction manifested itself in various themes. For example, cultural nationalism, the quest for self-determination and political independence, culture clash, search for identity and so on. They addressed the reaffirmation of traditional social, cultural and political institutions which colonial discourse had denigrated and rejected.
The main argument in this thesis is that pre-independence Papua New Guinea drama was essentially a political statement rather than an end in itself. That is to say, it emerged basically as an implement to denounce and combat colonialism and agitate for political independence.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one provides a context within which and against which pre-independence drama emerged. Here I briefly provide a historical overview of colonial rule in Papua New Guinea with its racist, discriminatory attitudes and practices of Europeans in colonial Papua New Guinea. Then I try to put this into a theoretical perspective in order to show the patterns of colonial discourse informing the drama it provoked.

Chapter two focuses on Western education and the role it played in Papua New Guinea. I suggest here that it was an "eye-opener" it made Papua New Guineans aware of their exploitation and stimulated opposition. Then I discuss the themes of some pre-independence plays to substantiate my argument that they are basically political statements.
Then I bring in brief comparative examples to show that Papua New Guinea is not Sui generis, an isolated case but that what happened pre-and post-independence is isomorphic with what has taken place elsewhere in the developing world.

In chapter three, I look at some immediate post-independence plays. I note that these plays' thematic concerns do not change significantly from the pre-independence plays though they are gradually broadening the base of their social critique.

I do not draw a distinction between radio plays and stage plays, plays written in English and plays written in Tok Pisin or published plays and unpublished plays. I've placed all these plays in one pot as my major concern in this thesis is the subject and theme of the plays.

Finally, we must bear in mind that drama is only a portion of the corpus of Papua New Guinea literature which flourished prior to independence which includes poetry, short stories, novellas, essays and so on.
CHAPTER ONE
CONTEXTS WITHIN WHICH PLAYS EMERGED.

Apart from tracing the historical background of colonialism in Papua New Guinea, the main function of this chapter is to provide a context within which pre-independence Papua New Guinea plays emerged.

Working from the premise that pre-independence Papua New Guinea plays were essentially political statements, I will try to answer the question of what gave birth to such plays. The question will be answered by providing examples of the negative aspects of Papua New Guinea colonialism against which the plays reacted, for example the discriminatory laws and regulations introduced by the colonial governments and the general racist prejudices of the Europeans towards the indigenous peoples. The most notable feature of the plays under discussion is that they all emerge just before the attainment of political independence. As such, they are directly engaged in the phenomenon of colonialism.

Furthermore, I will also be engaged in a brief theoretical discussion to explain the basis of many of the racist and discriminatory attitudes displayed by the Europeans. Brief mention will also be given to a few avenues which made it possible for these plays to be published.
Definitions of colonialism vary. For some, the concept means the "holding and ownership of colonies or the treating of another country as though it was in fact a colony". For others it means "the condition of a subject people and is used exclusively of non-European societies when under the political control of a European state or the USA." In this thesis, I shall thread together the above definitions so that colonialism in my usage will mean the domination, exploitation and subjection of one society by another by means of extending social, political, economic and cultural control and influence. This domination also involves what Ngugi calls "mental indoctrination": the arresting of the peoples' intellectuality, so that their worldview is discarded as necessarily inferior to a European outlook. Furthermore, the mental habits of a colonised people are conditioned by European epistemology.

The process of arresting the people's worldview was in fact an integral part of colonialism because this was viewed as a necessary part of the process of control and subordination. Under colonialism, there were deliberate attacks on the value of local culture by missionaries, patrol officers and school teachers. The traditions and cultures of the people were altered significantly and in many cases disintegrated. Most often new (social) institutions and practices replaced the old.
While the general patterns of colonialism were similar across the globe, the various local practices gave rise to different colonial experiences. Indeed, Papua New Guineans did not experience the bloody colonialism of, say, West Africa or The Congo. This does not mean however, that the degree of colonial impact on the lives and cultures of Papua New Guineans was less severe.

The heterogeneous patterns of colonial experience and the character of colonialism can be attributed to a number of factors. One obvious factor is the different in motivations and aims of the colonising powers. For the two colonial powers which ruled Papua New Guinea (viz, Britain, subsequently Australia and Germany) the former was prompted by political/strategic reasons and the latter by economic concerns. When Australia took over from the two colonial powers, it generally followed the British model of colonialism.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF COLONIALISM.

The intrusion of colonialism into traditional Papua New Guinea societies has been documented as beginning in the 1500s**, starting with the Portuguese and Spanish explorers. The name Papua for example was given by a Portuguese, Jorge de Meneses, who called the country "Ilhas dos Pupus".
In 1545 a Spanish, Ortiz de Retes called part of the northcoast of the mainland "Nueva Guinea," because he thought it looked like Guinea in Africa.\(^5\) Torres and Prado, sailing west from Peru in 1606, wanting fresh food and water, landed on Mailu island on the Papuan coast.\(^6\) Prado's account of their encounter and confrontation with the people which Whittaker\(^7\) describes both in her words and Prado's, needs to be reiterated here because it provides one of the earliest "accounts of a combination of benevolence and ruthlessness."

.... upon the natives not responding to their signs of peace, the Europeans felt they were "losing time by treating them with further consideration. They knelt down, and saying a Santiago (an attack with an invocation of S.James)...and they pressed on, shooting as they fled." After the slaughter, the besieged natives - about three hundred of them, and mostly women and children - came down the hill. Prado says he was sorry to see so many dead children they were carrying in their arms. He selected fourteen boys and girls of from six to ten years, and carried them off to Manila where they were baptized "to the honour and glory of God."

The above example is just one of the many which took place prior to and after the imposition of colonial rule. The annexation of Papua and New Guinea by Britain [on behalf of Australia] and Germany respectively in 1884 stipulated the protection of the lives of the "native" population as one of their policies. The famous Commodore James Erskine's
speech at the proclamation ceremony of British New Guinea as a Protectorate, whilst it avows to protect the indigenous people against the likes of Prado and Torres is nevertheless a superficial statement uttered with much superciliousness and paternalism:

It has become essential for the protection of the lives and properties of the native inhabitants of New Guinea and for the purpose of preventing the occupation of portions of that country by persons whose proceedings unsanctioned by any lawful authority, might tend to injustice, strife, and bloodshed, and who, under the pretense of legitimate trade and intercourse, might endanger the liberties and possess themselves of the lands of such native inhabitants, that a British Protectorate should be established over a certain portion of such a country and the islands adjacent thereto.  

In practice, however, this idea of giving protection to the indigenous people was bogus. It was rather for self-interest that imperial powers annexed such territories.

Germany’s idea of colonisation was "the improvement of the soil, its resources, the flora and fauna but above all, of the inhabitants for the benefit of the economy of the colonising nation which is obliged to give its better methods." Germany’s colonial rule of German New Guinea differed significantly from that of Britain because initially Germany gave the mandate to the firm Neuguinea Kompagnie to run the colony on its behalf. But after the company incurred astronomical financial losses, it handed back the administrative affairs of the colony to the Reich.
Germany continued ruling its colony until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, when Australia occupied German New Guinea. Previously, Britain had handed over the administrative affairs of British New Guinea to Australia after the proclamation of the Papua Act in 1906.

When Australia took over German New Guinea, it administered the two colonies separately. The former German colony subsequently became a mandated Territory of the League of Nations (afterwards the United Nations). It was only in 1945 that the two colonies became jointly administered, firstly by the Military administration, then under the Australian civil administration.

Upon the official imposition of colonial rule in Papua and New Guinea, the colonial administrations of both colonies proceeded at once to introduce and make laws and regulations, most of which were discriminatory, racist or paternalistic in nature and practice.

Theoretical Illumination.

The making of laws and regulations which were racist and discriminatory in a social setting like Papua New Guinea is comprehensible if we view it in the terms of JanMohamed's analysis:
...the colonial mentality is dominated by a manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotions, self and other, subject and object.¹⁰

The polarity of such dichotomies is always present in the colonial world. Most often Europeans have stereotypical assumptions about indigenous people as biologically and intellectually inferior, whose position is at the bottom of the social ladder. This kind of Eurocentric bias is not new but as old as history. Referring specifically to colonial Papua New Guinea, Amarshi and others¹¹ point out that the Europeans'

...common stock of assumptions included a collective belief in the pre-eminence of the white race and the universal validity of the techniques and institutions which had created that superiority, a confidence that "backward" peoples were not capable of governing themselves in the complex conditions set by the modern world, and an assurance that the interests of "responsible" colonisers were in no fundamental way incompatible with those of their subjects, but rather formed the decisive element in a beneficially reciprocal relationship out of which the "native" would in the long run derive the benefits of civilization.

Much has been written to challenge and disprove these Eurocentric preconceptions and biases by Third World Writers. Theorists like Frantz Fanon, Wilson Harris, Homi Bhabha just to name a few, have come up with theories strongly refuting colonial discourse. Bhabha in particular proffers profound insights into how the West falsely discerns and represents the indigenous peoples. Thus, his
ideas can be employed as a basic paradigm in our discussion here to illustrate and elucidate the basis of many of the discriminatory laws and regulations made by the two imperial powers in Papua New Guinea and moreover, the general racist prejudices and attitudes exhibited by the Europeans towards the indigenous peoples.

The specific colonialist practices in Papua New Guinea were very much influenced by a general Eurocentric bias and to a lesser degree xenophobia falsely substantiated by the testimony of science. All these amounted to the recognition of what Bhabha calls "cultural otherness". This recognition of otherness is always a product of fantasy and paranoia re-enforced at the moment of encounter by what Fanon calls the epidermal Schema. This is basically the identification of otherness/difference by means of the skin colour: You are black, therefore you are inferior, evil, savage, other, and so on. Thus, the negative, derogatory adjectival tags placed on the indigenous people become a stereotypical identification. An instance of the notion under discussion is found in Sir Hubert Murray's statement when he once stated that "no attempt should be made to give the Papuan anything in the nature of Higher Education. He is inferior to the European and if, we wish to avoid trouble, we should never forget this and look upon him as a social or political equal".
The above statement only shows the ambivalence of colonial discourse in which as Ashcroft\textsuperscript{14} and others tell us:

The dominant discourse constructs otherness in such a way that it always contains a trace of ambivalence or anxiety about its own authority.

In a colonial setting like Papua New Guinea, colonial power and colonial discourse in their effort to maintain hegemonic control and authority always recognize and acknowledge the colonised people as inferior to the Europeans and therefore different. However, while this is the case, colonial discourse in order to effect control over them must simultaneously have sufficient identity with them\textsuperscript{15}. As obvious in some of the examples I shall provide in this thesis, the (re)cognition/acknowledgement of the colonised Other is constructed/defined out of the Europeans archive of "the self" but at the same time the European must recognize the Other as different from them\textsuperscript{16}.

Colonial discourse as Bhabha asserts is essentially based on the process of ambivalence i.e, the European is not sure where to place the indigene in the social setting. Sometimes the "native" is a good worker and at other times he is a stinking liar. According to Bhabha:
It is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures, informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization, produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed [Bhabha, 1986:148-149].

From the European perspective, otherness is fixed and much of the discrimination against the "natives" is dependent on this notion of "fixity" [Bhabha, 1983:18]. By this, it is meant that the perception and depiction of the indigenous people is viewed as static and unchanging.

While ambivalence may be a central factor, there are other factors which help to shape the perception of the Europeans. One which is almost always overlooked is xenophobia. These factors which construct the biased perception and representation of the indigenous people because they emanate from the Europeans' mentality and cultural ambience compel people to judge and discern the "natives" against the Eurocentric cultural matrix.

The practice of categorising Europeans as missionary, patrol officer, trader etc., is in reality an artificial one, undermined by the fact that most Europeans in the colonial
world perceive the indigenous peoples through the common spectacle of Eurocentrism "tinted" with biases and false assumptions. It is only true to say that Europeans have "many faces", for in spite of the categorization, they share the basic assumptions about the indigenous people.

So far I have provided a brief historical background on the colonial intrusion in Papua New Guinea and a theoretical explication of how the Europeans discern the local people and the autochthonous cultures especially in a colonial situation. Such a colonial discourse laid the basis for the actual racist and discriminatory practices and attitudes of the Europeans in Papua New Guinea and provided the ground for and sometimes the structures of writing by local people which sought to redress the colonialist view of the world.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF COLONIALISM.

The imposition of colonial rule in Papua New Guinea has had a colossal impact on traditional societies. At the time of the official imposition of colonial rule, these societies were self-contained and self-sufficient, organised in such ways that they maintained a status quo which, while it was
"characterized by perpetual tension and conflict between competing groups,"¹⁷ it was almost never threatened or disrupted by a major external force such as that of colonialism. The social structure and organisation of these societies disintegrated. Others were altered significantly. Many aspects got lost, whilst others took on new set of meanings.

The famous Administrator of Papua, Sir Hubert Murray whilst he championed many reforms in favour of the "natives" administered a long list of racist discriminatory laws.¹⁸ Thus, it is true to say that one of the major "nutrients" which prompted anti-colonial sentiments was the making of laws and legislation which were discriminatory against Papua New Guineans. In his important study of race relations and colonial rule in Papua New Guinea, Wolfers¹⁹ provides vivid accounts of a combination of paternalistic and discriminatory legislation and practices of the colonial governments and Europeans in general, in Papua New Guinea. As he points out "...the primary aim of all colonial administration in Papua New Guinea until the 1960s was neither development nor preparation for self government, but control"²⁰.
Some examples of these discriminatory laws are as follows: Papua New Guineans were not allowed to wear clothes on the upper part of their bodies. They were not allowed to live in towns, although they were permitted to work and go to gaol there. All local labourers were required to be indoors by 9.00 pm; and all singing, dancing, etc., was to cease at 9.00 pm. Local people were not allowed to trespass in the towns' swimming pools. No "native" could attend entertainment with Europeans. Sexual intercourse between a black man and a white woman was prohibited, but a whiteman could have sexual intercourse with a black woman and literally get away with it.

Because of the belief by many whites that "people in primitive societies were more animal in sexual matters than people in sophisticated ones... it gave rise to the White Women's Protection Ordinance of 1926."²¹ According to Wolfers²² "when first enacted... the White Women's Protection Ordinance was the legislative product of anxiety, of doubts projected from the insecurities of Europeans upon the Papuans, rather than of social need." Inglis²³ points out that it was a "piece of legislation discriminatory in its provisions, harsh in its penalties and startlingly out of character with Murray's native policy."
On so many occasions, Papua New Guineans had become victims under these laws. Their experiences have been fictionalized by Papua New Guinean writers in order to bring out the evils of colonialism. For example, John Kasaiwalova's short story "The Magistrate and My Grandfather's Testicles" is a fictionalized account of the jailing of his grandfather (a paramount chief) by the Trobriand Magistrate, Mr Whitehouse for refusing to "line". Meakoro Opa's story "He took the Broom from Me," is concerned with the racist attitude of Europeans and so on.

The laws we have so far looked at were primarily British/Australian and were instituted in Papua, only later in New Guinea. A significant difference which existed between the policies of Britain (later Australia) and Germany was in the penalties imposed. For example, the aim of German "native policy was simply to convert uncivilized stone-age men into docile but energetic workers". To do this, recalcitrant groups had to be pacified by means of punitive expeditions. The penalties imposed by the German administration were far tougher than those imposed by the British or Australians. On the other hand, "the regulations governing the New Guineans' lives under German rule were less restrictively protective and interventionist in character than their Papuan counterparts."
When the Australian army took over German New Guinea in September 1914, additional regulations were introduced apart from all the legislation, rules and Ordinances it had brought along with it, from Papua. For example, local people were forbidden to use garden seats and "other conveniences provided for the public". Under the labour Ordinance of 1922, it required the "native" to build his "hut at least one hundred yards from any road or street, and fifty feet from any European dwelling." Sports were to be played only in specially proclaimed areas and separate seating for local people provided at public entertainment areas. In 1934, New Guineans were not allowed to ride bicycles in Rabaul.

So far I have concentrated only on the discriminatory legal practices of the two colonial powers. This is because they provide the most glaring evidence of colonialism which educated Papua New Guineans were to condemn later on in the decolonisation period. There are other ways, however, in which Europeans discriminated against Papua New Guineans. Here I have in mind the parts played by the Christian missions and the general racist attitudes of the Europeans.

As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, missionaries were the first in most cases to penetrate the traditional societies. As Chowning asserts:
...of the outside influences... the most consistent, in some respects, have been those of the Christian missions. In many areas, missionaries began their work well before the local people had been brought under any sort of outside control....

But the extensive contacts between the missionaries and the local people were not all peaceful. Missions enacted the assumption that European culture was superior and therefore it must be imposed upon the "natives" in order to civilize them. In so doing they destroyed traditional cultures most often unnecessarily and "as an institution they combined with the colonial governments and foreign economic interests to enforce discriminatory legislation."

There are many examples to substantiate the above point. Nigel Oram\textsuperscript{32} for instance, points out that once missionaries judged the customs and practices of the local people as contrary to Christianity, they were relentless in their opposition to them and in many cases, people got suspended from church membership. Hempenstall\textsuperscript{33} has also documented instances in which missionaries acted contrary to the Christian teachings they propagated. He notes a particular case, where a missionary was responsible for ill-will against the mission:
The worst was that of the Reverend Weber who was responsible for the permanent ill-will against the mission at Siar.... Suitably convinced of his mission to civilize and discipline the New Guineans, he once described himself as 'a policeman on my right side and only on the left a missionary.'

Another notable example is that of the famous Reverend George Brown who led a punitive expedition "to demonstrate to the Tolai that Europeans were strong and intended to stay." Nelson also cites an example where in 1915:

...the Reverend J. Flierl protested when private employers were forbidden to whip their labourers: "For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? The natives are mere children and some of them are very naughty children."

The first Papua New Guinean writers have written about their mission origins and experiences. In fact most of them have mission origins. They attended mission schools, from primary up to secondary schools. Leo Hannet for one, was a seminarian until his dismissal. As recently as 1973, he recalled:

What really upset me in Rabaul was the discovery that priests themselves were not free from racial prejudices. At the time there were two cinemas in Rabaul, one for the natives and one for Europeans.
The fathers, trying to be liberal, I suppose, occasionally took some of the light-skinned students to the European cinema: the Gilbertese, some Papuans and one or two Tolais. We Solomon Islanders were told that we were too black! But we did not only have two different cinemas, we also had two different Masses: one for Europeans and one for natives. I remember that once a Papuan came into the European Mass, and he was literally chased out of the church by the Australian priest, who incidently was a member of the Legislative Council.

The above are only a few of many such examples of missionaries sharing the false assumptions of the European society.

The statement of Ngugi, whilst it refers specifically to Kenya, is rightly applicable to our context. He says:

Christianity, whose basic doctrine is the equality of man, was an integral part of the colonialism which... was built on the equality of man, and subsequent subjugation of one race to another.

But even more than this contradiction, the coming of the missionaries set in train a process of social change at times involving rapid disintegration of tribal set-up and framework to which people could cling....

Ngugi’s statement is validated by the fact that cultural imperialism was an inextricable part of alien rule because conformity with the norms of white society was seen as necessary to the process of subordination.
In the broader colonial society, whether one was a missionary, a colonial official, a trader or a planter, most Europeans subscribed to the view that the "natives" were "intellectually and morally underdeveloped, if not biologically inferior." Even Sir Hubert Murray thought lowly of the local people. But when a Papuan fully ordained priest, Father Louis Vangeke returned from Madagascar in 1937, he modified his views and stated:

My own opinion...which probably coincides with that of most of the European residents of Papua, is that Papuan and European overlap: that is I think that the best Pauans are superior to the worst Europeans, but that Europeans as a whole have an innate superiority over Pauans....

SECOND WORLD WAR AND BEYOND.

It was not until the Second World War that the colonial order began to change: a great transformation began in Papua New Guinea. Lawrence suggests that the war had two profound effects. Firstly it put a stop to European Imperialism and secondly it initiated a new kind of mutual awareness among different people, when many people, Europeans, Americans, Pacific Islanders etc., were flung together.

It was during this time that many of the Europeans' assumptions were proved wrong. In many cases, Australian soldiers encountered Papua New Guineans in situations where the latter demonstrated skills which the former lacked.
In Vincent Eri's novel *The Crocodile*, we are made cognizant of such social relationships though in a fictionalized form. An example of the kind of appreciation the Australian soldiers had for these Papua New Guineans is the now famous poem by Sapper Bert Beros "Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels".

While we acknowledge the significant impact the Second World War had on the social relationships between Australians and Papua New Guineans especially in dismissing some of the European misconceptions, much also remained unchanged. This is because the encounter was mainly between Papua New Guineans who were directly involved in the war and Australian soldiers who came and went. Moreover, the war context does not provide much room for such trivialities as racial discrimination (between allies, anyway!).

After the Second World War, the old colonial structure changed. Despite this change many of the colonial officials etc., remained and continued to maintain the racist and discriminatory practices. The laws and Ordinances remained in force and this time covered German New Guinea. It was not until 1958 that most of these discriminatory legislations were repealed. The crux of the matter is that, one can repeal these discriminatory laws but in practice habits die hard. In fact, Australia resisted changes which challenged the colonial order right up to the closing stages of the colonial era. However, one factor
which the Australian government acknowledged was its sense of debt to Papua New Guineans. As Griffin and others point out "the sense of debt, widely felt in Australia, made Australia politicians look for more generous policies in the post-war period..."

With this in mind, the Australian government reluctantly shifted its stand to an emphasis on education and development. Moreover, there was mounting external pressure especially from the United Nations and the World Bank for Australia to accelerate development and prepare the country for political independence.

PAPUA NEW GUINEAN PLAYWRIGHTS AND ANTI-COLONIAL SENTIMENTS.

Having focused on the colonial (dis)order, I’d like to turn to the world of the first Papua New Guinean playwrights whose plays will be discussed thereafter in this thesis.

Most of the first Papua New Guinean playwrights... were born between 1942 and 1950 and no doubt they all heard from their parents and others about the coming of the whiteman and how he "treated them like pigs" and so on. However, they themselves grew up in the midst of colonial rule and had direct colonial experience. Kirsty Powell describes the world of the first Papua New Guinean playwrights as a:
...very different world from the world of grandparents or parents to whom the Whiteman first came.... The White man was an old story by the
time they were born, and none grew up without a
knowledge of kiaps, policeman, traders and
missionaries. There were bitter memories of some
of these representatives of the colonial world
(pp10-11).

The paramount difference between the first playwrights and
their parents is that the former were the first to have
attained tertiary education and in their position were able
to see and comprehend their exploitation and oppression by
the colonial governments. In fact most of the first Papua
New Guinean plays were written by students attending the
University of Papua New Guinea which opened its doors in
1966 and Goroka Teachers College.

Papua New Guinean playwrights saw their exploitation and
oppression manifested in a number of ways. First and
foremost was the reluctance of the colonial government to
grant them basic political participation and the right to
self-determination and eventual political independence.
Furthermore students vigorously resisted the general racist
attitudes and practices of the Europeans towards Papua New
Guineans. The destruction of their traditions and cultures
was also a factor in their endeavour for decolonisation.
There is another important point to make about the playwrights and other educated elites of Papua New Guinea at that time. That is, in spite of being trained in white ways to inherit white structures of control, they were simultaneously being denied the privileges of all of this until they were "ready". Thus, they were given a voice and consciousness to protest the system they were eventually supposed to uphold. And so the creative writing movement in higher education becomes part of this gradualist movement toward national self-determination on the one hand and "containment" on the other.

The plays would not have materialized if there were no publishing outlets. In fact the anti-colonial feelings would not have found their way into the forms of plays if it was not for Ulli Beier who conducted the first Creative Writing classes at UPNG which provided the basic literary techniques in the art of playwriting. In many ways, it is true to say that Ulli Beier was the catalyst of Papua New Guinea Writing. He was not only a teacher but a skilled editor and knew how to go about publishing these writings. He, with the assistance of a few others started Kovave and subsequently Papua Pocket Poets. Later on the N.B.C., with Peter Trist at the helm adapted and dramatized some of these plays and stories for radio.
In conclusion, the negative aspects of colonialism which I have discussed in this chapter provided the context within which writers emerged and the circumstances against which their writings spoke out. These writings provided one avenue wherein Papua New Guineans expressed their disillusionment and anti-colonial sentiments and agitated for decolonisation and independence.
Footnotes

1) See Robertson, 1985:53

2) Fieldhouse, 1981:1

3) ibid:7

4) This only refers to the coastal areas of Papua and New Guinea. The highlands region was only "invaded" in the 1930's and the main movement of Highlanders to coastal districts began in 1950.

5) Moore, C.J. Griffin and A Griffin 1984: III

6) Whittaker, 1969:628

7) ibid: 626

8) Mayo, 1969:24

9) Moses, 1969:54

10) JanMohamed, 1983:4

11) Amarshi et.al. 1979:168

12) Bhabha, 1986:159

13) See Griffin et.al. 1979:23

14) Ashcroft et.al. 1989:103

15) ibid

16) ibid

17) Whiteman, 1984:107

18) Griffin et.al 1979:30

19) Wolfers, 1975:31

20) ibid:6

21) Inglis, 1974:11

22) Wolfers, 1975:57

23) Inglis, 1974:11
24) Kasaipwalova, 1972:9-15
25) Powell, 1975:11
26) Opa, 1973:109-111
27) Moses, 1989:54
28) Wolfers, 1975:69
29) ibid:175
30) Chowning, 1977:84
31) Nelson, 1972:76
32) Oram, 1989:56
33) Hempenstall, 1978:187
34) ibid: 122
35) Nelson, 1974:192
36) See Powell,K.1975 "The First Papua New Guinean playwrights and Their Plays", for a more detailed account of this.
37) Hannett, 1970:22-28
38) Ngugi, 1963:5
39) Oram, 1989:67
40) Wolfers, 1975:177
41) Lawrence, P. in his introduction to Politics in New Guinea 1971:1
42) Griffin et.al. 1979:89
43) Inglis, 1974:114
44) Amarshi et.al. 1979:117
45) Griffin et.al. 1979:91
46) Powell, 1975:15
47) ibid:10-11
CHAPTER TWO

THE AWAKENING: REALISATION AND REACTIONS TO COLONIALISM.

Literature offers one of the most important ways in which ... new perceptions are expressed and it is in their writing, and through other arts such as painting, sculpture, music, and dance that the day-to-day realities experienced by colonised peoples have been most powerfully encoded and so profoundly influential (Ashcroft et al. 1989:1).

The above statement encapsulates one of the important functions of literature and arts in general in post-colonial societies. The instructive aspect of the quotation above is its emphasis on the point that literature neither emerges from nor operates in a "cultural vacuum" but rather functions in a proximate relationship with society of which it is a product. It is through literature that a people's fears, hopes and aspirations are raised. This is very true of post-colonial societies whose people have undergone the traumatic experiences of colonialism: the consequences of which are often social disorientation and cultural disintegration.

This chapter has several sections: in the first section I shall discuss the role of Western education and posit that it played a paramount role in making Papua New Guineans cognizant of their subjection and oppression by colonialism, simultaneously prompting them to reject it and agitate for self-determination and political independence. The second section focuses on the main subject of my thesis,
i.e; I shall provide examples of pre-independence plays to support my argument that the plays in Papua New Guinea emerged from the politicising of an educated generation immediately prior to independence and that their themes and styles are directly connected to the process of decolonisation. The final section will focus on some comparative examples from other post-colonial societies in order to show that what has happened in Papua New Guinea is isomorphic with what happened in other post-colonial countries.

Most writers from post-colonial countries have employed literature in its functional aspect. To them literature is a weapon to combat Western imperialism, whether it be colonialism or neo-colonialism. In this sense, the writer in society sees himself/herself as an "ombudsman of progress": a consciousness of society. Other writers advocate and pursue a more involved form of political commitment - one such writer is Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiongo. He once stated that:

...Literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice. Whether or not he is aware of it, his work reflects one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side in the battle: the side of the people, or the side of those social forces and classes that try to keep the people down.

What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only
question is what and whose politics?¹

For the Papua New Guinean writer, this form of more involved political commitment was missing simply because Papua New Guineans were "mercifully -spared the worst excesses of colonialism"². Despite this as Beier points out, "the first generation of Papua New Guinean writers is understandably concerned mostly with an attempt to re-define their position vis-a-vis the colonial culture on the one hand and their traditions on the other."³ This is evident in many of the writings. For example, Jawodimbari's play, "The Lofty Bird", in which the female protagonist, Dawari first refuses to succumb to traditional custom because as her father points out", she is seduced by the fruit of an alien tree". She opts to go out with an European, who impregnates her and later deserts her. When she realizes that Westernization has mocked her, she returns to the village to her parents. In doing so, she re-defines her position against the colonial culture on the one hand and her tradition on the other.

The growth of literature in Papua New Guinea was accelerated essentially by the quest for self-determination and political independence, though as Subramani notes, there were other factors, which included the growing regional consciousness, the establishment of the universities and the growing cognizance of writings from the Third World.⁴ The reluctance of the colonial governments to provide
Western education to Papua New Guineans, resulted in the late response to colonialism. Access to schooling was kept limited because "Australian citizens correctly suspected that education was revolutionary; once educated, the New Guinean would no longer be the manageable unit of labour he was". Thus, from the beginning, education was a neglected area and whatever education there was, for the indigenous people was left on the missions. But the education the missions provided was basically geared towards enabling "the pupils to read scriptures, take a fuller part in church activities and improve the conditions of village life." The limitations of mission education is evident in for example, Kama Kerpi's story "Cargo" or Russell Soaba's novel *Hanpis*.

**Western Education As An Eye-Opener.**

The creation of the University of Papua New Guinea followed the 1962 United Nations Visiting Mission to Papua New Guinea, which was extremely critical "of the rate of development in the country in such areas as education and demanded the introduction of crash programs with the objective of training on indigenous elites". Later a World Bank Report also criticised Australia and recommended a shift in educational policy."
In 1963 the Australian government appointed a Commission of Higher Education "to enquire into and report on the means for further developing tertiary education to meet the present and prospective needs of the Territory." This Commission recommended the establishment of the University of Papua New Guinea and the Institute of Higher Technical Education (afterwards the University of Technology), which was subsequently accepted by the Australian government and in 1966 the University of Papua New Guinea opened its doors.

Much of the agitation for decolonization and political independence followed the establishment of the University. It was, in fact, at the University of Papua New Guinea that most of the anti-colonial sentiments were expressed in academic classes, student forums and most obviously in the plays, poems and stories written. Whilst, of course, there had been countless conflicts between Europeans and local people prior to the creation of tertiary institutions, these conflicts were never a "politically contentious issue between the two races." John Kasaipwalova's story, "Betel Nut is Bad Magic for Aeroplanes" is an example of the growing student radicalization at that time.
Unlike their parents most of the first Papua New Guinean playwrights and writers in general began to be aware of their oppression and subjection by colonialism here at the University. Tertiary education opened up new perspectives for exploration. It unveiled the colonial myth which propagated European supremacy. The value of education is acknowledged by the old woman in John Waiko's play "The Unexpected Hawk". Amidst the ashes of the burnt village, she informs her son:

Mother: ... we do not understand them, and they do not try to understand us. But every tree has its roots deep down in the ground. Even, their actions must have roots. I want you to go to school, so that you can dig out the roots. Do not hesitate to uproot their tree and drink their wisdom [scene four: 32].

Even prior to the country becoming independent, the University was looked upon as a national institution. This is because in spite of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country, it has brought together Papua New Guinean students of diverse backgrounds and fostered a sense of nationalism by the "collective humiliation" brought about by colonialism.¹¹

The pre-independence Papua New Guinean playwrights whose plays are the subject of this thesis, were "members of the new Papua New Guinean educated elites, products of a tertiary education never before available to Papua New Guineans".¹² When they came to the University, they came
not only with stories about the whiteman but most, had
direct confrontations with colonialism. According to
Powell:

Two charges underlay all the rest: Colonialism
had fostered an 'economy of dependence' and it had
created in many Papua New Guineans a psychological
dependence, a sense of inferiority, which
threatened their very sense of identity.

Most Papua New Guinean playwrights whose works will be
discussed herein were students taking Ulli Beier's Creative
Writing classes, except for John Kaniku who attended the
Goroka Teacher’s College, Bernard Narakobi who was at the
University of Sydney and the "late-comers", John Bili Tokome
and Peter Kama Kerpie. Both Kaniku and Narakobi were also
political activists. Furthermore, they were also members of
the Niugini Black Power when it was formed in 1970. Apart
from notably Leo Hannet, Kasaipwalova, Narakobi and a few
more, it is true to say of them that their consciousness and
sensibility was essentially nurtured at the University of
Papua New Guinea. To an extent this was due to the fact
that academics at the University encouraged Papua New
Guineans to learn about their own history, literature and
traditional cultures. This encouragement coupled with new
perspectives provided by tertiary education in general
provided not only profound insights into the values of
traditional indigenous cultures but more so the
interrogation and re-evaluation of the validity of colonial
discourse. Moreover as the incubator of new values and
ideas, the University provided alternative perspectives, epistemologies, and discourses especially emanating from Third World theorists and writers. Whilst this is true, education also had a radicalizing contradiction: it aimed to train a few locals slowly to ease in a Western style of self-government (thereby prolonging, a paternalist colonial presence) but in making "black white men" it demonstrated when colonial laws were still in force the discriminatory nature of the system and promoted a speeding up of the dismantling of the system.

The formation of the Niugini Black Power was in some ways the consequence of the growing awareness of alternative perspectives of dismantling the colonial power structure which marred the social condition of the colonised peoples above all from the realisation that the struggle against colonialism was not unique to PNG but isomorphic with that of other Third World societies.

The aim of the Niugini Black Power was to "declare the right, the necessity, for Niuginians as people, and Niugini as an emerging nation, to master their own destiny". As Leo Hannet had argued:

We the black people of Niugini, are not the wards of the white race. We are not the Whiteman's burden. We can no longer allow ourselves to be continually defined into the narrow, prejudiced, oppressive and castrating whiteman's image of us.
He demonstrates the above point very well in his play "The Ungrateful Daughter" in which Ebony finally breaks free from the "bondage" of the Carneys, her Australian adopted parents. By breaking free she asserts her own freedom which was denied her by the Carneys.

Hannet's argument expresses the crux of the anti-colonial outburst. In essence then, the cogent anti-colonial feelings such as above highlights the significant role tertiary education played as a catalyst for decolonisation. As a institution of higher learning it provided an atmosphere and venue for uninhibited academic discussions, debates and the cross-fertilization of ideas.

PLAYS AS POLITICAL STATEMENTS: SOME EXAMPLES.

The first five plays I am going to comment on have themes that directly deal with anti-colonial sentiments. These are Leo Hannet's "The Ungrateful Daughter", John Waiko's "The Unexpected Hawk", John Kasaipwalova's "Kanaka's Dream", Kumalau Tawali's "Maksi Masta" and Arthur Jawodimbari's "The Old Man's Reward".

The second group of plays are concerned in general with the impact of colonialism on traditional Papua New Guinea societies and moreover with the notion that Christianity had allied with the colonial administration and together they destroyed the traditional ways and cultures. In this second group come Hannet's "Em Rod Bilong Kago", Jawodimbari's "Cargo", Narakobi's "Lai Bilong San na Tait Bilong Sea", Tawali's "Chauka", John Bili Tokome's "Oli Kam Na Paulim Yumi", Peter Kama Kerpie's "Voices from the Ridge", John Kaniku's "Cry of the Cassowary", "The Lofty Bird" another play by Jawodimbari, and Rabbie Namaliu's "The Good Woman of Konodobu". There are other plays which I have not included but the above-named plays are sufficient examples to support
my argument that pre-independence Papua New Guinea plays were essentially political statements. In other words pre-independence Papua New Guinea plays were not written primarily for their aesthetic value but emerged from the politizing of an educated generation and as such are functional fulfilling the role of social, political commentary in society. This is one reason why many of the plays are down right mediocre in quality.

Ulli Beier's point that "the first four or five years of Papua New Guinea literature can be described as the literature of decolonisation", is true as most of the plays were written in direct response to colonialism. Literature as a form of consciousness was intimately interwoven with the socio-political and cultural matrix of the society from which it emanated.

One commonality among the plays is the portrayal of patronising and discriminatory attitudes and practices of the Europeans. Despite the over-use of cliches and the stereotyped characters which populate the plays, these plays cannot be dismissed easily because colonial discourse is founded on ambivalence as Bhabha tells us. If colonial discourse sees and depicts the "native" as a fetish or stereotype, then these playwrights are refuting that discourse by reversing the stereotypic attributes from black to white.

These examples from two plays highlight how colonial discourse constructs the "native" as stereotype and how Papua New Guinean playwrights employ these formulations in order to unveil the discriminatory attitudes and practices of the Europeans.
Mrs Carney: Will these people ever be reliable? They simply cannot be trusted. Either they do a job badly or they don't do it at all.

Mr Carney: But do understand, darling, these people can't think as we do. They are like children, and you must treat them like children.... ["The Ungrateful Daughter", Scene One: 35]

Mrs Jones: You know how hard it is to teach those black people. Sometimes I wonder whether they have brains at all. They are simple-minded. They act like children.... ["Manki Masta", Scene One: 3].

Evident in the above examples is the stereotypical depiction of the indigenous people as children, with no brains. In almost all the plays the authors employ the 'manichean allegory' of white and black, good and evil, etc. The antagonism and confrontation in these plays is always between white characters and black characters.

From the beginning of these plays European supremacy is upheld until the ending when the black characters defy the existing colonial order. This is the case in Leo Hannet's "The Ungrateful Daughter" and John Kasaipwalova's "Kanaka's Dream". Ebonita for example, the female protagonist, tears off her bridal veil and breaks free from a (political) marriage she is compelled to by her Australian adopted parents, The Carneys. No one suspects Ebonita's intentions until the last.

Ebonita: I, Ebonita Carney, take you Sidney Smith for my lawful husband,... To have and hold, from this day forward,... For better, for worse, FOR WORSE, FOR WORSE, FOR WORSE!!!!! [Scene four: 46].
Suddenly, she tears her veil and throws it down, shouting, "No! No! No! I want to be Freeeee!" She then breaks into a wild dance and is joined by New Guinean dancers all dressed up in traditional costumes. This symbolizes a union with her people and suggests attainment of her freedom and independence.

In "Kanaka's Dream", Dikodiko finally rebels against his boss, the Accountant, after many years of submission.

Dikodiko: (exploding his anger, drawing out his words firmly) ALL RIGHT! You bloody bastard! (Smashing the broom handle on top of the desk). You think I'm a pig! You think I have no anger. I'll teach you, you bastard!... [Scene V: 58].

"The Ungrateful Daughter" is a political allegory in which Ebonita represents Papua New Guinea and the Carneys represent Australia. As Powell notes, Ebonita symbolizes Papua New Guinea, the colony of Australia, "colonised at no wish of her own, governed and educated in the Australian way, out of the coloniser's conviction that Australian ways are best and Papua New Guinean ways merely babarous".19 As such Ebonita has no identity and liberty until the moment she breaks free. The author herein combines all the forces under the umbrella of colonialism: Christianity, represented by Rev. Spellman, multinational companies, represented by Mr Dunley and Mr Webster, and colonial administration as represented by the other white characters. Hannet weaves all these forces together which gives cogency to the theme of his play. He explains the writing of this play thus:

"The Ungrateful Daughter" is very much a play wherein I attempted to put out everything from my chest re political social, cultural, and economic as well as religious views on New Guinea which I found hard to express openly through Dialogue...
In some ways Ebonita there is me soliloquizing to the whole world about my pent-up feelings about New Guinea’s identity and search for true independence. \(^{20}\)

John Waiko’s "The Unexpected Hawk" is based on actual events which took place in his home area. Similar to the opening of Hannet’s play wherein a newspaper article about the Black Power Movement in America broadens the context of the struggle against colonialism in Papua New Guinea the beginning of "The Unexpected Hawk" is symbolic as well. As the villagers are engaged in a traditional singsing and dancing, they are interrupted by the arrival of the policeman announcing the coming of the patrol officer. The interruption symbolizes the invading forces of colonialism into the traditional societies.

The conflict in this play is the refusal of the villagers to obey a government order for them to move to a new site easily accessible to colonial officials. Their reasons against moving is uttered by their councillor:

Councillor (with emotion): We cannot move this village. This is our land. Claimed by the forefathers of Babena, Sirida, and Tatari. Our fathers lived and died here. Their sweat and blood fell on this land. Their sweat and blood are the strength and wealth of this land, and we want our own sweat and our blood to be spilled for our children. We cannot give our strength to other villages and other people’s land. [scene two: 24]
The patrol officer does not consider the villagers' reasons for refusing to move but ignorantly views it as superstitious and "an open defiance of government authority." The patrol officer's ignorance is indicative of Eurocentrism. In fact the policeman correctly describes the patrol officer:

Policeman: ... but this kiap does not care. He puts the big man into his bad house, like a pig... [scene one: 21].

The policeman is right. The kiap finally orders the burning down of the entire village.

Kiap: To hell with their bloody ancestors! Now get back there, Sergeant, with all your men. Get back there at once and burn the goddam place down! [scene four: 29].

The burning down of the village therefore symbolizes "cultural destruction which the clash of cultures and colonial government has wrought". 21

The importance of Western education is predicated in the above statement. If we remain ignorant to change, we won't be able to comprehend the reasons for the whiteman's actions and mentality. This ending is echoed by Poro in "Manki Masta," but with more realization of the predicament caused by alien influences on the traditional cultures.

"Manki Masta" revolves around two issues: the native head tax, and working as a servant to Europeans. In order to pay the head tax imposed on the local people by the colonial administration, Poro has to go out to work and earn the money. At the same time, he provides cheap labour for the Europeans.
In fact the imposition of native head tax was an indirect means of putting further pressure on the local people so that they are tied to the whole process of colonialism. As Poro is placed in an invidious situation, he laments:

Poro:... I have been thinking very hard... I have been thinking and worrying about the takis next moon. How can we get the moni to pay for it?

Kitani (surprised and frightened): It is no lying! Next moon! And those who will not pay their takis will be taken to the dark house! (scene one: 1).

Poro is then forced to leave his pregnant wife to go and look for work. He finds work as a servant to an European family, (the Jones). He states correctly that "the white men have come to change our ways. And we cannot stop it" [scene one: 2]. Poro is dismissed after he was falsely accused by the children of breaking the mirror.

Like Johnny Tomtom in "The Ungrateful Daughter", Poro's job as a house-boy to an European family symbolizes the "natives'" inferiority as advanced by colonial discourse. Both have no sense of identity and whatever identity and label they may have is defined for them by their European masters. Poro in the end laments:

Poro: It is the whiteman's fault. This is his idea. My ancestors never had it. And yet it is here. It has taken root already, and it will give us a lot of trouble. This thing, this moni—the white has plenty—and they want us to give them more... They ask us for this takis... Oh my fathers, did you ever know anything like this? Takis... takis... where will I get the moni to pay? [scene five: 10].
Common in the characterisation in these plays is the perception of the "native" as the "quintessence of evil". Despite this however, the Europeans depended on him. JanMohamed argues that "he [the whiteman] is at the same time absolutely dependent upon the colonised people not for his privileged social and material status but also for his sense of moral superiority and, therefore ultimately for his very identity." In these plays, black characters are always submissive, imprisoned in a web of colonial paradox from which they can't escape. Even if they finally do [e.g. Ebonita in "The Ungrateful Daughter", Dikodiko in Kanaka's Dream", The villagers in Oli Kam na Paulim Yumi etc.], the psychological effect of colonialism is ever-present.

"The Old Man's Reward" circumscribes the subject of humiliation imposed on the protagonist by the colonial system and Christianity alike. Like many other plays, Christianity is viewed as part and parcel of colonialism. The statement made by one of the characters of S. Samkange's African novel On Trial for my Country is relevant here, when he says:

Was this talk about Christianity to make us soft so that they could steal our land? Yes, that is why they made you close your eyes when they prayed - so that when you opened your eyes the land was gone.

This is perhaps what Danuba finds in the end when he says:

Danuba: Keep your God. He is the white man's God. I gave all my land to him - now see how he allows his people to mock me [scene seven: 144].
Even Father Graham ignores Danuba and non-commitally tells him to hop in the back of his Toyota when Danuba begs him to give him a lift [scene iv: 138]. The coming home of Danuba in a car driven by a white man is incredible to the villagers. For the first time, there is some apparent respect for the "native" but of course this is only ephemeral.

Koena: I saw Danuba arrive in a car. I saw the young Tauba driving the car...

Danuba: Didn't you hear the sound of the car? Yes, I was driven here by the white man. The whites are now my friends [scene III: 133].

The villagers including Danuba are led to believe that at last the social relationship between them and the Europeans has changed for better. The news that Danuba will be honoured by the government makes him a great man in the eyes of the villagers. This assumption is enforced by Danuba dressed in shoes and coat. Only his wife Paine expresses doubt. The humiliation that Danuba faces is perhaps foretold by his wife.

Paine: I feel like laughing. The coat's too big for him. He looks like a small boy in his father's coat [scene III:134-135].

Definitely he is made to look like a small boy in the end. The medal is lost; he is put in the cell for drunken and disorderly behaviour and the coat and shoes are taken away from him. Finally he returns home in a mess; everything is gone from him.
"Kanaka's Dream" is the most complex of the plays in this group. Like "Manki Masta" it is concerned with the master-servant confrontation. More significantly it parallels the ideas propounded by theorists like Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha. More specifically, it dramatizes the concept of the Lacanian schema of the Imaginary.

Bhabha uses examples from Fanon's book *Black Skin White Mask* to back his ideas. For example, "a white girl fixes Fanon in look and word as she turns to identify with her mother. Look, a negro... mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened. Frightened." Bhabha then explains that "the girl's gaze returns to her mother in the recognition and disavowal of the negroid type", which makes the black person denounce his race and totally identify with the positivity of whiteness.

This is what is portrayed by Kasaipwalova in "Kanaka's Dream". Dikodiko the house-boy is made to believe that the white Accountant is superior to him and he quests to be like him. In his narcissist state, Dikodiko addresses the two dirty cups (48). He indulges in a fantasy in which two white waiters appear and come to serve him.

Dikodiko (still half lost but beginning to believe): What will my boss say?

Waiter (anxiously wanting to serve his master): Give it not a moment's bother Sir. He's nothing but a miserable vagabond washed ashore on this great estate of yours... [scene one: 49].
The whole fantasy scene (pp48-49) and the play as a whole follows closely the Lacanian Schema of the Imaginary as Bhabha has shown. Dikodiko's thoughts and actions in the fantasy scene can best be described in these words of Bhabha:

In the act of disavowal and fixation the colonial subject is returned to the narcissism of the Imaginary and its identification of an ideal - ego that is white and whole.

The fantasy scene earlier not only illustrates the narcissism - aggressive state in the Lacanian Schema of the Imaginary as shown by Bhabha but paradoxically always points to a sense of lack and absence: the subject's identity is always threatened by a "lack" which compels it to be aggressive.

When Dikodiko goes to the village, he is elevated to a status equalling that of the European. By going home with a suitcase full of "White man's clothes", he is viewed as important. After his refusal to marry the chief's daughter, sorcerers are set upon him and he flees back to Port Moresby to once again work with his old employer, the Accountant. In the end, he rebels against him.

All these plays I have so far commented on are concerned directly with anti-colonial feelings. These plays in essence take up the basic assumptions of the European mentality and epistemology and reveal their underlying power relations. At the same time they are protests against colonialism in their depiction of the possibility of self-assertion.
The second group of plays focus essentially on the impact of colonialism (Westernisation, Christianity) on traditional societies and cultures and the local people's reactions to it. As I will show, one basic reaction was one of confusion (and perhaps ambivalence), simply because the changes taking place were rapid and often beyond the comprehension of the people. This confusion, which is prevalent in many of these plays, is expressed by Tohiana a character in John Bili Tokome's play *Oli Kam na Paulim Yumi*.


The statement is both an interrogation and a voice of confusion. The intrusion of alien influences into self-contained, self-sufficient traditional societies is not understandable. Why for instance, should we pay taxes? Why for instance, are Christian missions here when we have our own traditional religions and so on.

Jawodimbari's "Cargo" and Hannet's "Em Rod Bilong Kago" are two plays which explore the issue of cargo cult. "Cargo" is based on actual events in which the Rev. Maclaren features prominently who was the first Anglican missionary to the Oro province.

In these two plays confusion occupies a salient position. The infiltration of Westernization and modernization as a result of colonialism into the traditional societies has baffled the people. Their worldview cannot provide explanations for these changes and what is unexplainable is traced to the spirit world: the dead ancestors. In "Em Rod Bilong Kago" the relatively easy living of the Europeans
cannot be explained. Why is it that the local people had to work hard to earn their living while the white man sits on his soft chair and yet has plenty to eat and drink and many other strange things? This incomprehension is uttered by Poro in "Manki Masta":

Poro:... Do you think white people have to go far to look for food? They don't work for it. All is ready at their hands.

... Not people - that's right. They are never short of food. Not like us. We only get food after our veins hurt with hard work... [scene two: 5-6].

This seems to be the basic perception about the white man by local people. The quest for the material wealth of the white man then leads local people to look for ways to have these things. As the character Ramram confides to his wife:

Ramram: Tande, bai liklik rod bilong yumi bai op bai yumi noken wok mo - bai yumi sindaon tasol olsem ol masta na misis. Long kisim dispela kago yumi mas go long matmat kolin korona na ol kain lotu na wantu graun i op na kago i kam i kapset nating. Em dispela i liklik rod bilong yumi i rod bilong Kago [scene: 48-49].

The misunderstandings and confusions experienced by indigenous peoples cannot be blamed on them, though they are inevitable. In many instances Western epistemology and mentality was the antithesis to traditional knowledge and how local people discerned their world. More significantly the refusal of Europeans to have anything to do with traditional cultures and their blind imposition of their culture upon traditional cultures led to the misunderstanding and confusion among the people. Too often the acrimonous social relationship between the two races has
been interpreted by some local people as a refusal of the white man to share his wealth and knowledge with them. As Ramram in "Em Rod Bilong Kago" once again tells Kaligula:

Ramram: You save aste long nait papa bilong Tande i kam bek, na em i tok olsem: "Taim bilong mipela i kam bai olgeta samting i op, mipela sidanu ologeta. Baimbai yumi sindaun gut olsem ol mast. Taim bilong masta i pinis nau. I bin long taim ol i pasim rod bilong kago long yumi na ol i save ropim ol samting ol tumbuna bilong yumi i save salim i kam..." [Scene two: 50].

These old people on a different level symbolize the traditional cultures which is struggling to survive amidst the onslaught of Westernisation. The young people who mock and ridicule them symbolize alien influences. These young people are able to understand the alien influences because they have been to school. In the end, Ramram and Kaligula walk off still unenlightened, despite the explanation given by Muruk and Kalibobo. They still believe that cargoes come from their dead ancestors.

In Jawodimbari's "Cargo", the misunderstanding and confusion arises when two semi-literate brothers mistake the word "pure" for the name of their tribe during the unloading of Rev. Maclaren's cargo.

Ganuma: Brother look! I think some of these goods are ours. Read the name on the box. It spells just like our tribe's name. It spells p-u-r-e, but what does s-o-a-p mean?

Kandoro: P-u-r-e must be our language - the name of our tribe - but to steal our goods, white man have written s-o-a-p, their language. This shows that they have been stealing goods sent to us by our dead relatives [scene three: 15].
In the night as the villagers attempt to steal the cargoes, Jamba one of the guards shoots one of them dead. However their efforts do not end there because the following morning one of the village women tells them about a dream which she had. In her dream, her dead son came to tell her how they can get "canoes full of cargo, all the cargo that the white man is stealing from us". Upon hearing this, Rev. Maclaren sends for assistance from the patrol officer. The patrol officer sends some policemen back to assist Maclaren. Quite frankly, we perceive the co-operation between Christianity and the colonial administration.

Maclaren: My dear Ribo, you have acted sensibly, get down to the village, and ambush, while the sun is fast asleep [scene seven: 18].

The charge about Christianity as been part and parcel of colonialism is explicit in the above. Whilst there are other peaceful avenues that still haven't been exhausted, Rev. Maclaren opts for what would have been the last resort.

The villagers do not challenge Jamba and the policemen because as Nati puts it, "your stick is too strong for me. I am no longer a strong warrior". In a symbolic sense, what is meant here is that Westernisation has dispossessed the indigenous peoples of their tradition and cultures. This dispossessment was not peaceful but was compelled on the people in the name of European supremacy.

The basic thesis in these two plays is that Westernisation and modernization, especially the rapid changes, have confused the indigenous people. The cargo cult is a way in which the indigenous people try to make sense of the connection between two cultures (Western and their own).
John Bili Tokome's play "Oli kam na Paulim Yumi", whilst it parallels the other two plays, circumscribes the competition for (black) souls by different religious denominations and the demands of colonial administration. The first intruder in this play is a Catholic priest followed by a Methodist pastor. When both later meet, an argument ensures:

Pater: Yu save mi kamap pastaim long dispela ples?
Fijian: Mipela save - Na yu laikim wanem?
Pater: Na sapos yupela i save, orait, bilong wanem yupela i no go long narapela ples? Dispela ples mi kamap pastaim long em. (scene one).

The villagers are baffled, they don't know who to listen to. Finally, they are divided, some side with the Catholic priest while others with the Methodist pastor.

When the patrol officer comes to the village he disregards (out of ignorance) the traditional leadership system and appoints a villager who isn't part of it. This is because he bases his selection according to Western criteria and ignores the traditional customs. The frustration of the villagers about the intrusion of these foreign institutions and their numerous demands on the villagers is uttered by a villager:

Yes, em i tru. Tumas wok. Bilong wanem kaunsil, moni pinis long takis. Yumi takis long misin, takis long skul, takis long kaunsil, oloman bai yumi kisim moni we? (scene three).

This leads them to form a co-operative society with the help of Tobin, a school teacher. The villagers don't see the benefits of their paying taxes to these institutions.
As the character Tohiana suggests:


When they stop paying taxes, the patrol officer comes with policemen to try to force them to pay the taxes but the villagers refuse.

Voices from the Ridge is a much more complex play but, like the others it explores the issue of the impact of Westernization and Christianity on traditional societies. The characters in the play are both humans and spirits, which is suggestive of the traditional worldview in which human beings and the spirits occupy the same space. Whilst the story can be seen as a love story, it is more than that. Its major concern is the rapid changes that take place. This change is first lamented by the spirit characters:

First spirit: ... But tell me, have you realised that our ways are dying out among the living? It has angered me so much I cannot have a peaceful night. For my mind is not at rest. I am seeing strange things [Act 1, Scene one: 4].

Second spirit: ... I have seen similar things too. Now the stone and metal statue knock at every door. They are tapping on my ridge... [p4].
The major antagonism is between Christianity and traditional culture. Christianity is represented by the Reverend Father while traditional culture is represented by Kola and the Ridge people. Bomai provides that (potential) bridge to traverse that "social gulf of silence". From the indigenous people's point of view Bomai is a bomblam (outcast). He lives in the mission station ever since his arrival to seek refuge there and he was educated there and is now a school teacher there. When he befriends Kola the village girl, the Reverend Father admonishes him against such relationship:

Reverend Father: You must at all times remember that you are God's instrument. Your job is to teach and convert. The classroom is your workshop [Act one, scene two].

As the story advances, Bomai seems torn between two worlds: the mission and traditional culture. Because of his love for Kola, he rejects Christianity (though not totally). This is symbolized by the construction of the traditional shrine. By constructing the shrine, he reaffirms his sense of belonging and attachment to traditional culture. The "social gulf of silence" is traversed when he ruminates:

Bomai:... Maybe no group of people can be an island. They must all gather under the name of civilization. We shall keep those things and remember him [puts the cross and the Bible on the shrine house and the radio under the posts]. (Act four scene one).

However he pays dearly for bridging the "social gulf of silence". His son dies. In his endeavour to blend the two worlds, he is seen as a traitor to traditional culture by the spirits.
Jawodimbari's other play "The Lofty Bird", Narokobi's "Lait Bilong San na Tait Bilong Sea" and Kaniku's "Cry of the Cassowary" also deal with the subjects so far explored in previous plays: that of the impact of alien influences on traditional cultures.

In the "Lofty Bird" for example, Dawari a high school girl, refuses to marry a village lad but opts to befriend an European Jim Hodgesy, who impregnates her and later deserts her. Moreover, Jim dislikes the customs of Dawari's people. The whole point in the play is how the introduced ways disorient indigenous people from their own roots and make them alien in their own societies. At the same time the paradox of the West is also revealed: i.e; while it despises the culture of the indigenous people and orients them to its own, it is not prepared to co-opt them into its own systems as equal partners. The concern of society is perhaps uttered by Dawari's father.

Soaba: (Sadly) Wife, our daughter is caught in the net of the floating canoe. She is seduced by the fruit of an alien tree. A tree whose trunk is invisible to my eyes. She is a lonely bird struggling against the gale (scene one: 3).

In Narokobi's play the conflict is between traditional values and Christian values. As Powell points out, "the plot hinges on a change that the mission has brought
affecting the possible roles of women". Mukoi refuses to marry the man arranged for her but instead opts to become a Catholic nun.

Daughter: ... Papa, mama, i nogat wapela meri long ples bilong mihela i sister. Sister long skul em i waitpela meri. Tasol em i tok, wapela dei, baimbai i gat bilak pela sister. (scene seven: 19-20)

The changes that are taking place, especially the new Christian values which are on the verge of taking over the traditional values is lamented by her father:

Father: Mi no save, wanem samting i kamap long ples bilong yumi nau. Ol pikinini i no moa istap wantaim yumi. Ol pikinini man i no moa karim liklik banara na supia olsem bipo. Ol i no save long ol stori. Ol i no save long ol nem bilong ol diwai na ol wara na bus (scene seven: 20).

The epilogue of the play heralds the invading alien influences.

Tasol nau, taim i senis pinis nupela tait, nupela win, na nupela dei i lait pinis, yumi mas go.
Mukoi's announcement of her intention of becoming a nun is in direct opposition to the traditional values which her parents symbolize. Like Dawari in "The Lofty Bird", Mukoi has also gone to school where most probably she was introduced to the new ways.

Cry of the Cassowary shares the above concerns as well. It is concerned once again with the conflict between traditional values and Western values. The Western values is symbolized by the children's dresses, the girls' dresses are too short, they dance in the modern way, etc. As their mother Sela accuses them "you belong to the whiteman" (scene one: 29). Sela, the children's mother is against change although in the end, the husband tries to convince her that the changes are here to stay.

Rabbie Namaliu's "The Good Woman of Konedobu" looks deeply into the consequences of the impact of Westernisation upon traditional society. Irea Raka, a young Papua New Guinean, turns prostitute in order to survive in an urban setting. As Powell points out, "there is the problem of the New Guinean migrant who finds it hard to adjust to city life, hard to make enough money for a decent life...". Irea only goes with those who have money, in this instance, mostly Europeans. As the apprentice character tells Burus Kamir, a new-comer to Port Moresby:

This play, written around 1970, foresees the impact of Westernisation. This is why it is perhaps the most profound of all the plays. In a capitalist society, everyone is a competitor. In this kind of society, everyone has to work hard to make enough money to earn a living. Whilst prostitution is a social evil in any society, in a way it may seem justified for Irea Raka to be engaged in it, because society forces her to.

Prostitution in traditional Papua New Guinea societies is very rare and a taboo. This is why Burus Kamir finds himself mocked by other Papua New Guineans as he tries to seduce Irea Raka.

Apprentice: Wantok i mo beta yu larim em. Mi harim sampela wantok tok pinis sapos yu lus tru baim balus, go long ples. Maski larim em. Em i no gutpela meri tumas. Em Pamuk meri ia. (scene One: 47)

Because Burus Kamir saves enough money, he is finally able to take her and sleep with her. He has to compete with those who have money. By migrating to the urban centre, Burus is baptised into the social evils of the introduced ways.
Like other Papua New Guineans, Westernisation has lured them into the city often only to find that it is not as easy to live there as they thought.

Tawali's "Chauka" is also concerned with the greed for wealth and therefore ignorance of the traditional social norms and customs. Pomotou promises Chauka to Molong when Papi comes to him to look for someone to marry Molong. Though Pomotou may be the eldest and thus, have authority, his wife's point takes that authority from him to decide on Chauka's marriage.

Nialin: ... But the final way must be backed up by something. Look at things realistically. What are you going to say when they ask: How many bowls of food of yours lie in the stomach of that boy Chauka?. When he was running around naked how many pieces of cloth did you give him?... Remember, the fruits of the future are sown by yesterday's sweat (scene one: 133).

Pomotou's actions is questioned by his other brothers and sister. The social norm is that before any decision is made, there must be consultations among the family members. Pomotou does not consult his family members before committing Chauka to Molong. As Hipapi, Pomotou's sister argues:
Hipapi: Yes, but on what basis did you make your decision? Eh?, Tell me. I tell you, not a single bowl of your food lies in the flesh of Chauka. No clothes, no money. (scene three: 138).

The family starts fighting among themselves because of Pomotou's actions. Pomotou in the first instance, was only interested in the wealth - bride price and for him to be looked upon as a "Big Man". In order to save the family from disintegrating, Chauka decides to leave.

Chauka: I must leave, so that neither you nor uncle Pomotou is the victor of this present war but both brothers together in a household (scene four: 140).

Chauka finally dies thus, saving the household from disintegrating. Pomotou's actions were motivated by the fact that he would share Chauka's possessions and wealth once he marries Molong. It was not for other reasons. This is the effect of Westernisation once again wherein family ties are severed because of greed and wealth.

The plays I have commented on here are just some of the plays, poems, stories etc, which are examples of political statements in which Papua New Guinean playwrights expressed their disillusionsment about colonialism and the impact of Westernisation on traditional Papua New Guinea societies. To them, colonialism has created an "economy of dependence" and a psychological dependence. It has disintegrated the tradition societies and cultures. Overt in the themes of these plays is an ideology which, whilst it represents the
indigenous peoples' conditions of existence, agitates for emancipation. This is especially true of the black characters. While they are stereotypes, they are nevertheless interpellated subjects, "constituted by and through ideology and have not existence outside its operations".\textsuperscript{31}

The situation of the Papua New Guinea writer and literature in general is not unique. That is to say that the experience of colonialism is almost a Third World phenomenon. Colonialism created the social and ideological conditions from which and because of which a new writing emerges. In other words, colonialism "manichean deep structure" constructs an oppositional framework that writing will both reflect and reject and contains inherent tensions/ambivalences that allow for subversion but which also transfer to the dialectic of a "resistence" writing. This is true of most colonial countries in Africa, the Caribbeans, the South Pacific and so on.

One specific example which readily comes to mind is the Negritude Movement: The primary aim of Negritude literature was to fight against the French policy of assimilation. Writings by the members of this group, Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire and Leon Damas among others reflected the resistance against French colonisation in general. As Damas states in his volume \textit{Pigments},\textsuperscript{32} later destroyed by the French police:

\begin{quote}
... my hatred thrived on the margin of culture the margin of theories, the margin of idle talk with which they stuffed me since birth even though all in me aspired to be Negro while they ransack my Africa.
\end{quote}
The role of the Third World writer is put succinctly by Achebe when he says that an artist is a person with "heightened sensitivities", who must be cognizant of the "faintest nuances of injustice in human relations" [p.79]. This ideal is exactly what informs all of his writings.

Commenting on his own writings, Achebe states:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them (p.45).

This is basically what all Third World writers want to do in their writings: to denounce colonial domination and oppression and simultaneously celebrate their traditional heritage.

In The Swamp Dwellers, a play by Wole Soyinka, he focuses on the impact of Westernization on traditional cultures and how alien influences have undermined social relationships.

Ngugi wa Thiongo's works follow similar vein, though his emphasis is on a more involved political commitment by writers. His play I Will Marry When I Want which he wrote together with Ngugi wa Mirii for example highlights such a concern.

From Australia, a settler society, Aboriginal writers are highlighting similar concerns in their writings. Merrit's play, just to name one example, The Cake Man, focuses on "the contemporary search for Aboriginal identity, the loss of traditional authority structures, and the figurative emasculation of Aboriginal people which has resulted".”
These few examples among many provide a commonality with the Papua New Guinean plays, I've discussed earlier. The point here than is that Papua New Guinea writing is not unique but is part and parcel of the literature of decolonisation which has become landmark of post-colonial literatures.

The cardinal point to draw from this chapter then is that Western, especially tertiary, education played a paramount role in making Papua New Guineans aware of their subjection and exploitation and simultaneously prompted them to reject colonialism. Their rejection of colonialism and quest for emancipation has been realized in a number of ways but most conspicuously in the plays, poems and stories they have written.

However, Papua New Guinea is not unique. What had happened here is isomorphic with what had happened in other Third World countries. But whilst in other Third World countries, the struggle for political independence was a collective struggle, taking many forms and waged by many groups, this was not the case in Papua New Guinea. For example, political parties etc., "which elsewhere in the Third World formed the vanguard of the independence movement, emerged late in the colonial period of Papua New Guinea" and only performed a limited role. Thus, it is true to say that the attainment of political independence by Papua New Guinea was not the result of much struggle. This is due to a number of factors. First, the geographical fragmentation and cultural diversity of the country meant that mass mobilisation was impossible. Second, Papua New Guinea was "spared the worst excesses of colonialism" compared for instance to Africa and thus, the struggle for independence was not extreme. The "quiet" transition allowed time for writing.
Third, the colonial government had legally forbidden such political organisations as political parties, trade unions and so on. Therefore, the emergence and development of such organizations was very slow. The lack of overtly political groups gave an importance to literature as a means of expressing reformist aspirations. Despite all these, the formation of the Pangu Pati in 1963 in a limited way, helped to agitate for early independence.

Drama then provided a public outlet for discussion of social issues and the discovery of a rational identity and collective will to shake off colonial power. Since Independence the containment of an educated elite within national administration has resulted in a decline of writing and a shift of interest to social issues such as rascalism (Rex Okona, "The Revolutionaries"), historical material (Nora Brash, Taurama) etc.

All in all then, creative writing was the most obvious avenue that was used by Papua New Guineans to express their quest for freedom from colonial rule, though in a very limited way, political parties etc., provided the other avenues.
FOOTNOTES

1. Ngugi, Preface to Writers in Politics
2. R. Namaliu, 1984, as cited in Wolfers 1989:418
3. U Beier 1975:304
4. Subramani 1983:4
5. Griffen et.al. 1979:55
8. R. Scaba 1977 Wanpis IPNGS Port Moresby
10. Ibid.
11. Griffen et.al. 1979:142
12. K. Powell, 1975:2
15. Griffen et.al. 1979:147
16. Powell, 1975:36
17. Hannet as cited in Powell, 1975:36
18. U. Beier, 1975:307
19. Powell, 1975:104
20. Hannet, as cited in Powell 1975:103
21. Powell, 1975:146
22. JanMohamed, 1983:4
23. Samkange On Trial for my Country as cited in Mutiso
1979:99

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Powell, 1975:426
33. A. Shoemaker, 1989:242
34. Amarshi et.al 1979:187
35. Ibid
36. E. Wolters, 1975:8
CHAPTER THREE

IMMEDIATE POST-INDEPENDENCE PLAYS

After the attainment of political independence, the proliferation of creative writing in Papua New Guinea seemed to subside. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the educated elites who wrote prior to independence were now "sucked" into the bureaucracy and had little time to write, though a few like John Kasaipwalova and Russell Soaba continued to write. Second, publishing was difficult as by this time Ulli Beier had left and moreover literary journals had high mortality rates in Papua New Guinea. Third, the arts in general were not high on the new government's list of priorities, although it did set up the National Cultural Council.

Despite this decline, a new generation of writers emerged, most notable of whom was Nora Vagi Brash. Furthermore, through the National Cultural Council two theatre groups were funded, namely, The National Theatre Company and Raunraun Theatre.

The thematic concerns of immediate post-independence drama were basically a carry-over from the pre-independence period, although one or two plays had shifted their concerns and broadened their bases. Cultural nationalism was a major theme which most obviously found expression in the folk operas performed by the two theatre groups.
Folk operas are generally speaking dance dramas in which traditional songs, dances and sometimes contemporary songs and dances are incorporated into traditional myths and legends from different parts of the country. They are primarily for stage production. Many of these folk operas are scriptless and based mainly on improvisation.

Some of these folk operas which have been staged are "Ba Oro", based on Binandere traditional dances and the activities of the Baigona Taro cult of the Oro Province; Taurama by Nora Vagi Brash, based on a Motuan legend about how Kevau Dagora, the only survivor of the Taurama massacre gains acceptance of the Motuan people; "Matanasil" based on a traditional North Solomons myth of creation and Niugini Niugini, a trilogy, adaption of a Trobriand Island story by John Kasaipwalova and others.

Folk operas are then a synthesis of different cultural expressions wherein a kind of national expression is created. They are not unique to Papua New Guinea but are also found in Africa. They try to bring out an alternative worldview: that of the traditional cultures.

Other post-independence plays touch on the social political and economic issues facing the country. John Kasaipwalova's play "My Brother, My Enemy," departs significantly from the rest. Its focus is the dilemma created by the relationship between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia which undermines and ignores the traditional social relationships between the Melanesian people of West Irian and Papua New Guinea. In this play he condemns outright the Papua New Guinea
government's action against the West Irianese Freedom Movement, by mocking at the notion of "Melanesian Way" which stipulates "friends to all and enemy to none." (This coincidentally was Papua New Guinea's foreign policy at that time). This play then moves from provinciality to a broader political concern never before written about by Papua New Guinean writers.

Nora Vagi Brash's plays, namely, "Which Way Big Man", "Pick the Bone Dry" and "High cost of living Differently" are preoccupied with the subject of the new Papua New Guinean elites and their mannerisms. In "Which Way Big Man", the author focuses on the dilemma faced by educated Papua New Guineans, in terms of their cultural allegiance. Contextually, the country is a synthesis of two worlds—Modern and Traditional—so Papua New Guineans cannot create a national identity without a relationship to their past. The other two plays spotlight the greed and selfish practices of public office-holders and the hypocritical and expensive lifestyles of the elites in their endeavour to keep abreast with Westernisation respectively.

The feeling of a sense of belonging and nationalism in the first place made it possible for Papua New Guineans to achieve political independence. However, nationalism does not necessarily lead to a genuine transformation of society because often the educated elites step into the shoes of the former colonialists and continue to maintain the same old system, only introducing "cosmetic changes"
Joyce Kumbeli's play "And what is to be done" examines the life and social relationship of an urban family in an environment of inevitable change. The parents of May try to bring her up in a way they think is best for her but ironically in so doing they only limit her freedom and independence. In the end the family breaks up and May moves out of the house to another house. In this way she asserts her freedom and independence.

"Election Fever" by Rex Okona looks at the way in which members of Parliament and intending candidates go about lobbying people for their support just as election time draws near. They hand out money left, right and centre and feed the people with empty promises. Most MPs, hardly ever go back to their electorates until election time draws near. This is the major concern of "Election Fever".

As we have seen, the change in thematic concerns of post-independence plays do not alter significantly. This is because they basically follow the changes in the social, economic and political arena and as it is, there has not been much change since independence. Maybe Ulli Beier was right when he said that there isn't any "intellectual" writer as yet to come from Papua New Guinea.
FOOTNOTES

1. Performed by the National Theatre Company in 1955. See also the review of it by W. Ferea in Ondobondo No.6, 1985.


9. Kumbeli, J. 1984 "And What is to be done" in Ondobondo No.4 pp21-27.

CONCLUSION

Pre-independence Papua New Guinea drama and writing in general was essentially a political statement in reaction to colonialism.

The imposition of colonialism meant that a traditional (social) institutions and worldview, was discarded as necessarily inferior. It meant that a Western worldview and social, political cultural, legal and economic institutions were forcefully imposed upon traditional Papua New Guinean societies. This was further worsened by what Ngugi has termed "mental indoctrination".

Basically, the imposition of colonial rule was based upon the false assumption of European superiority: the European myth which propelled and construed autochthonous cultures and peoples "as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin...." (Bhabha, 1986:154). This false assumption was a major factor which led colonial governments to impose discriminatory legislations and laws in colonial Papua New Guinea and which in turn provided the basis of general racist, discriminatory attitudes and practices of Europeans towards the local people. Worse still was the fact that the colonial governments denied the people political participation and formal education (especially tertiary education). Thus the reaction to colonialism was very slow.
The emergence of literature in Papua New Guinea was accelerated by the quest for self-determination and political independence. Colonialism provided the context within which and against which a new writing emerged. Through literature, Papua New Guineans expressed their denunciation of colonialism. The introduction of tertiary education made it possible for Papua New Guineans to understand their exploitation, oppression and subjugation and provided the impetus for them to speak out against it.

The thematic concerns of the plays were essentially anti-colonialism and, as stated elsewhere, the quest for self-determination. Literature not only provided an avenue to protest against colonialism but more profoundly, it served the social and political function of raising people's consciousness.

Whilst my focus has been on Papua New Guinea, Papua New Guinean writing is not sui generis, an isolated case. This means that what has happened here pre- and post-independence is isomorphic with what has taken place elsewhere in many Third World countries.

All in all, then the body of pre-independence Papua New Guinea drama was essentially political statements, resulting from the politicising of an educated generation.
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