

Under the Umbrella is a fascinating debut novel weaving delightful humour into apparently light-hearted moments of extreme violence. It portrays a mythical country wounded by the cruelties of dictatorship in post-colonial Africa. The humanity, the gentleness and optimism of the writing take the reader through 'real Africa', as opposed to the one-dimensional portrayals often seen in mainstream media. Here comes the celebration of a modern metaphorical tale focusing not only on the colonialism legacy but also, if not mainly, on the reality of the post-colonial Africa in all its complexity as seen through an African eye. The tale brings hope through the authentic details of the landscape: a postcard from tomorrow sub-Saharan Africa. The story opens when eight-year-old Felix is scheduled to meet his dying grand-father to receive a magical drum and learn a creed that will help him commune with his ancestors through animals, birds, insects and reptiles acting as his guides in his noble mission to restore an ancient kingdom. But a sighting of the parents of the country's president trying to collect grains of sand from the ancestral burial ground and their subsequent death there are seen as a threat to Christianity, which urges the local priest to stop the transfer of powers to Felix at all costs. The boy is launched into a survival battle, a battle not only for the restoration of the traditional rule but also for the entire destiny of the people of the Republic of Boriade. As he grows up, he must overcome both the Church and the cruel regime in place. A reader who got through the book in two sittings said: 'There is so much value in this multi-dimensional, multi-cultural novel from sub-Saharan Africa. The depiction of the mythical setting carries its rich characters along the story with absolute authenticity.' About the Author: Manu F. Manun'Ebo is a playwright, stage director and actor born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he ran a local theatre in Kikwit. He lives in England since 1990.

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