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SEEK WISDOM, ELEVATE YOUR INTELLECT AND SERVE HUMANITY!



College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication

**National Allegories in Selected Contemporary Anglophone African Novels
(2005-2015)**

By: Alem Sitot Getaneh

Addis Ababa University

December, 2024



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(2005-2015)**

By: Alem Sitot Getaneh

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Advisor: Dr. Molla Feleke Desta

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature in
partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Philosophy in English Literature**

Addis Ababa University

December, 2024

Approval Page

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

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(2005-2015)**

By: Alem Sitot Getaneh

This is to certify that the dissertation conducted by Alem Sitot Getaneh entitled: *National Allegories in Selected Contemporary Anglophone African Novels (2005-2015)*, and submitted to the department of Foreign Languages and Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Philosophy in English Literature complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Approved by Board of Examiners

Advisor: _____ **signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

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External Examiner: _____ **signature:** _____ **Date:** _____

Original Literary Work Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this dissertation, titled: *National Allegories in Selected Contemporary Anglophone African Novels (2005-2015)*, is my original research work, and it has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of materials used in this dissertation have been duly acknowledged.

Alem Sitot Getaneh

December, 2024

Abstract

National allegories are important critical tools in the study of postcolonial literature. They serve to examine the themes and strategies of postcolonial literary writers. This study aimed to explore the socio-historical and cultural conditions of postcolonial African nations that received huge impacts from the aggression of colonialism and the spread of imperialism by interpreting novels that are written to reveal these impacts. It was also intended to investigate the visions of contemporary African literary writers about the future goals of the post-independent nations. To address these, the study designed a textual analysis approach. The novels were selected purposively based on the significant socio-historical backgrounds they reflect. Basically, the following generic criteria were used in the selection process: the prominence/influence of the writers in modern African literature, the novels' recapturing of the African socio-political situations, the persistence of the writers in reflecting the situations, the periodic contemporaneity and the main Anglophone literature's regional representations. There are also specific aspects that were used to identify the allegoricity of the novels. Some of these include: the parabolic nature of the novels, the presence of satire, the presence of elements of myths and symbols, the polarized views of the characters, and the inclusion of cultural and historical references in the novels. The novels were analyzed against the idea of national allegory by employing critical reading followed by analytical interpretations. Accordingly, the authors reflect the national cultures and traditions, histories and struggles of their respective countries in the novels. Ben Okri represents the Nigerian oral traditions and the history of its ancient kingdoms in his *Starbook*. Ngugi wa Thiong'o reveals the conditions of Kenyan culture and history in the post-independent period in his *Wizard of the Crow*. He also exposes the nature of the authoritarian regime in the country under the leadership of most probably Daniel Arap Moi. Zakes Mda depicts the socio-cultural and historical conditions of the *amaMpondomise* people in South Africa during the colonial aggression in his *Little Suns*. Particularly, he unveils the impacts of colonial war against the native community. Themes like loss, exile, love of culture and history, perseverance and resilience are significantly reflected. These authors use the novels to respond to the colonial narrative against the colonized subjects and histories, the patriarchal hegemony against women, the oppressions of the ruling class against the lower class, and the arrogance of an authoritarian regime. They also show the impacts of unity and division. They reflect the tension between the ethnic, cultural and social groups that resulted from the legacy of

colonialism. Lastly, they indicate their future visions for the countries. They address themes of hope, regeneration, unity, perseverance and resilience, change and transformation. Importantly, building a unified national identity through mass mobilization and organization and regenerating the past socio-political complexities for the socio-historical transformations are among the keys forwarded as solutions for the persistence crises that Africans are languishing until today. Hence, examining African contemporary novels against the idea of national allegory helps to understand the trends of development in African literature thoroughly.

Keywords: National Allegory, Anglophone African novels, Socio-historical contexts, Counter-discourse, Socio-cultural symbols, Regenerating, Transformation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Postcolonial literature has grown up in the societies that were formerly colonized by the European imperial power (Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007). The imperial discourse, which was used by the imperialist thinkers, has a collective repression assumption towards the European protectorates. However, in response to this, postcolonial writing arises to be used to dismantle and decolonize the imperial assumptions by employing different thematic and writing strategies (Joseph, 2013). Hence, in the latter half of the 20th century, the postcolonial nation-states that emerged across Africa have been the subject of rich and complex literary exploration (Lazarus & et al, 2004). The following subsection demonstrates the development of modern African literature, which is flourished in the wake of independence. This provides the idea that the study of postcolonialism comes to see literature as an important field of critical investigation.

Postcolonial studies centers have been set up in many institutions – mostly linked to departments of literature but inviting significant input also from scholars based in cultural studies, history, anthropology, art, and other disciplines – and innumerable conferences and colloquia have been convened (Lazarus & et al, 2004,p.1).

This shows that postcolonialism/postcolonial studies have become a significant interdisciplinary field of study. However, it is a critical framework that analyzes literary texts produced in the context of colonialism and its aftermath. It continues to examine the contemporary issues of development such as globalization, migration, hybridity or cultural exchange in postcolonial literary production. In short, postcolonial literature is an important center of postcolonial studies.

1.1.1. Modern African Writing in English

Modern African literary writing flourished with the counteracting involvement against the negative stereotypes of European during colonialism (Ogude, 1999; Joseph, 2013). Therefore, writers during this stage have had to dismantle the powerful myths of inferiority that imperialists impose on Africa. At the same time, they have had to reassert the distinctive cultures of Africa.

African narrative and poetry, in the era immediately preceding and following formal declarations of independence, were born, for the most part, in protest against history and

myths constructed in conjunction with the colonial enterprise. Writers struggled to correct false images, to rewrite fictionally and poetically the history of precolonial and colonial Africa, and to affirm African perspectives(Julien, 1995, p.297).

For this instance, redressing the negative psychological effects of colonialism and reclaiming African history have been taken as the first resort of literary reactions by the two prominent writers of Nigeria: Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka (O'Reilly, 2001; Lazarus, 1990).

As the impact of British colonialism in Africa is significant literarily, culturally, linguistically, politically and even geographically, Anglophone African novels are emphasized for this study. Specifically, British took the lion share in colonial domination across the East, West, and Southern Africa. African writers from these regions are, thus, committed to react against the influence of colonialism in English language. Many of the African literary writings are written in English. Because of this, Anglophone literature emerged as a distinct form of literature.

The rise of English as a global language tied to its histories as the language of the British Empire means that both the language and its literature become a site of contest for the colonized, a means of challenging the political and cultural ideologies of Empire. This is particularly evident in writing from the early twentieth century onwards, when the gradual fracturing of the Empire generates new kinds of assessment of its cultural legacies(Mullaney, 2010, p. 4).

To complicate the matters more, the impact of British colonial involvement in its African empire is different from area to area, as it had designed notable strategies like 'indirect rule' and 'settler rule'. The case in point here can be distinguished based on the experience of white settler occupation of land, and vehement colonial imposition based on divide and rule system.

In the wake of independence, however, the role of the writers has been revealing the political realities of the incumbent regimes. In this respect, the blaming of the regime of apartheid in South Africa by writers like Athol Fugard, Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee, and the criticizing of the corruption of the government in Kenya by the most politically committed writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o can be pinpointed as the two explicit situations. To this consequence, writers have imprisoned and have banned from speaking out against the oppressive governments. These forefather writers who belong to the developing tradition of modern Africa literature in English

have also influenced a new generation of African writers, such as the Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga, the author of *Nervous Conditions* (1988), the Nigerian Ben Okri, the author of *The Famished Road* (1991). The Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo and the Nigerian writer Buch Emecheta are also known among others who are often obsessed with the issues of gender in postcolonial Africa (O'Reilly, 2001).

These arrays of concerns also attract many writers of modern African literature. As such, the bulk of Anglophone African literary products mount to place at the remarkable position to reflect those multiplicities of matters to the larger audience. Henceforth, as Owomoyela (1993, p. 4) remarks, "In all genres the countries that emerged from British colonialism have been the most fecund literary sources". Generally, the basic thematic and stylistic ground on which modern African literary writers rely is Africa's socio-cultural and political matrix (Ojaide, 2012; Innes, 2007; Gikandi, 2003). This is also evident in Ojaide's (2009) article, as described in the following way: "Every literary canon exists in the context of the people's overall experience and aesthetic values. Thus, the African literary canon is related to the African experience, which has strong cultural and historical underpinnings" (p. 3).

In the beginning of 1980s, an interdisciplinary field of study called postcolonial studies or post colonialism became the central field of contestation in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities. It draws its focus on the study of postcolonial societies, cultures and identities. The political and cultural ideologies take the gravity of the contestation.(Ashcroft et al., 2000). Particularly, language and literature, which played a significant role in the expansion of colonialism and building of the Empire, identified as the two important sites of the study.

The origins of 'postcolonial literatures' and 'postcolonial literary studies' are plural and their development is central to the evolution of the interdisciplinary field of 'postcolonialism' or 'postcolonial studies', which refers to the diverse study of postcolonial societies, cultures and identities by scholars from a variety of disciplines in the human and social sciences. The rise of English as a global language tied to its histories as the language of the British Empire means that both the language and its literature become a site of contest for the colonized, a means of challenging the political and cultural ideologies of Empire (Mullaney, 2010,p.4).

Therefore, postcolonialism is developed with the counter acts of colonialism and imperialism. In a response to the imperial discourse of history, philosophy, anthropology and linguistics, and its representational experiences of writing and speaking, the theoretical body of postcolonialism came into being. Subjects such as discourse, language, representation, race, gender, resistance, hybridity, suppression, migration, etc. are the focal points of the study (Tyson, 2006). However, the historicity of the European colonialism remains the main issue in the discussion of the postcolonial studies of African literature. “Thus the circumstances in which African novels, plays, and poetry are produced, many of them the legacy of colonialism, are as important to our understanding of African literature as are the style and images of the texts we read.”(Julien, 1995, p.304). Postcolonialism also comes to be used as an alternative discourse of anti-colonialism (Ashcroft et al., 1995; Ashcroft et al., 1998; Chennells, 1999).

In this regard, novel is refashioned to question the Western form in the postcolonial writing. It provides useful ideas and tools to deconstruct the imperial assumption (López, 2001). It focuses on the process and progress of ideas with which the genre is characterized in the postcolonial culture and society. Therefore, it is in a state of transformative and progressive. The demarcation is unfinished business. Like the study of postcolonialism, postcolonial novel is the project of activism (Mullaney, 2010 ; Ojaide & Obi, 2002; Young, 2016). Hence, the study of postcolonial novel is fertile to investigate the socio-historical and political situations of the postcolonial society of Africa.

The following discussion highlights the socio-political conditions that Africans have passed through so that the nature of African literature becomes clearer.

1.1.2. Socio-Political and Historical Matrix of Africa

For the clear draw of postcolonial textual resistance and representation, the socio-historical matrix of Africa is important because European metropolis have tremendously affected African socio-cultural history through their ideological repression and/or representation (Chowdhury, 1993). At the same time, African societies are also highly connected with their socio-cultural practices and beliefs, without which we are unable to think of Africanity (African identity and African history). Besides, the clear matrix and frame of colonial territories need to be drawn since it is upon these that postcolonial signification, representation, ideology, history, literature,

theory and critical thinking is developed (Nayar, 2008). By the same token, postcolonial study is different from those of Western epistemologies and theories because the real experiences of the colonial people are different from the Westerns (Wa Thiong'o, 1972). In a similar manner, the socio-historical distinction that Africa constituted is different. This proves that the cultural and socio-historical functional values of African literature should be primarily seen than its entertaining value. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, (1972,p.xv) underscores this point that the literatures of Western colonies persistently linked with their socio-historical and political milieu.

Literature does not grow or even develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations like slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism. Our culture over the last hundred years has developed against the same stunt dwarfing background. There is no area of our lives which has not been affected by the social, political and expansionist needs of European capitalism.

As noted above, therefore, Africa's socio-political and historical matrices have been used as a milestone for the literary experience and development of African literature upon which Modern African literary writers rely on. Hence, African socio-political matrices that significantly influence African literary production are pre-colonial African societal matrix, the triple Burdens of colonialism, and the ideals and challenges of African independence (Melakneh, 2010).

With respect to pre-colonial Africa, trade contact with European across the Mediterranean and with Asia in the East (Sub-Saharan slave trade) could be considered; however, the Atlantic slave trade or transatlantic slave trade, which existed out of this contact, occupied the main prevailing and wicked condition in the history of Africa in general. Starting from the 16th century up to the 19th century (for about 366 years), a vast number of Africans were enslaved and transported onto the Atlantic slave ships by European slave traders, but they were first captured in the interior parts of Africa by African slave merchants. In the span of these years, approximately 12.5 million of whom about 11 million survived the middle passage to landfall in life on the new world (O'Malley, 2014, p.6).

This catastrophic human trafficking through the Atlantic Ocean resulted in unprecedented consequences that ushered in massive plantations of agriculture for European industries. A great majority of slave captives were collected from the land of Africa to be taken to the new world (USA), Brazil and throughout the Caribbean for surplus cultivation. Therefore, the enslaved Africans worked on plantations that grew sugar cane and produced sugar and other byproducts to be exported to Europe. In due regard, European planters spread sugar and other profitable crops cultivated by enslaved Africans and indentured laborers in the aforementioned places. However, Europeans inherited all the profits gained from these dynamic and varied trading activities, while Africans are left victimized in an inhumane manner.

The Transatlantic slave trade radically impaired Africa's potential to develop economically and maintain its social and political stability. The arrival of Europeans on the West African Coast and their establishment of slave ports in various parts of the continent triggered a continuous process of exploitation of Africa's human resources, labor, and commodities. This exploitative commerce influenced the African political and religious aristocracies, the warrior classes and the biracial elite, who made small gains from the slave trade, to participate in the oppression of their own people. The Europeans, on the other hand, greatly benefited from the Atlantic trade, since it allowed them to amass the raw materials that fed the Industrial Revolution to the detriment of African societies whose capacity to transform their modes of production into a viable entrepreneurial economy was severely halted (M'baye, 2006,p.607).

Thus, scholars believe that this tragic experience of slavery had influence on African contemporary literary writers as it has borne out some contemporary features (like hybridity and racism) that can be noticeable even after independence. "In spite of its temporal distance, the impact of slavery is strongly felt in the contemporary African literature that it marks the roots of cultural hybridity and racism to-date", (Melakneh, 2010, p.3). Similarly, Mullaney, (2010, p.10) also points out that Atlantic slave trade has significant place in the postcolonial African literature.

The Atlantic slave trade has a distinctive force in popular memory and it is an important site of discussion in postcolonial literatures, because the places and peoples transformed by its operations (Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean and Britain) articulate a set of

distinctive, traumatic and deeply connected experiences forcibly represented in its literatures.

Thus, considering an eventful and dynamic aspect of slavery is worthwhile in the study of modern African literature.

On the other side of African historical experience in connection with Europe, the period of colonialism brought extensive consequences that affected the entire socio-cultural and political scenario of Africa. The Berlin conference (1884–1855) on “the scramble for Africa” left almost all African countries under the yoke of European protectorates. Because of this, the majority of Africans lost their sovereignty and disowned their natural resources (O’Reilly, 2001). The introduction of imperialism, thus, brought about the failure of Africa’s economy due to the exploitation of resources and labor, which, subsequently, created other related factors. Specifically, we can mention the triple burdens that wrought to Africa’s subjugation (Melakneh, 2010, Daniel Butt, 2013, Kok Chor Tan, 2007, Moore, 2016): viz. (a) economic exploitation, (b) cultural imposition and (c) political dominance.

The first European quest to African territory was initiated to control its resources. This motivation was accompanied by political control to ensure the access they were curiously demanding and to perpetuate their exploitation over Africa, which started in the era of the tragic slave trade. Again, this political and military control helped European imperialists extract African resources unfairly and contemptuously. Therefore, we can see here that this resulted in the cycle of colonial dependence and imperial enrichment, which ultimately left colonial subjects in a state of both cultural and economic impoverishment and political dependency.

In this way, there is no doubt that the central feature of colonialism brought to Africa is the subordination of colonial subjects. Their key cultural elements (history, beliefs, ways of thinking, cultural patterns, etc.) that they preserved for a long are denigrated, and in due process, they arrive on the brink of extermination or are removed from the native’s social practices. In other words, the cultural imposition the imperialists encumbered on the colonies was motivated by the objective of replacing the indigenous people’s culture with their own. Henceforth, the indigenous society’s forefather’s and foremother’s cultural patterns are dispossessed and subjugated; on the

contrary, the metropolitan's ideas and values achieved, in effect, their highest hegemonic status over the natives.

When we see the Africans' political affairs and their self-determination during colonialism, they were deprived, which shows the fact that Africans had been powerless in their own land. The dominant group that came to settle in the new territories reproduced their culture, displacing the natives from their land and culture. So, colonial settlement was a major form that was taken to denounce the natives' over-all involvement in territorial affairs, which, in turn, facilitated European political control over their colonies (Moore, 2016).

Even after independence was achieved, European imperial involvement in the affairs of Africa did not end. Europeans rather perpetuate their influence through indirect means. They establish economic, financial and trade policies that are used to keep less developed parts of the world under their authority. Foreign capital is used for the exploitation of labor and the drainage of natural resources, among others, rather than the development of the less developed African countries and other parts of the world. Today, under the guise of investment and financial aid, the western world continues to distort Africa and increase the less developed part of the world's economic impoverishment. Generally, these countries (the less developed) are suffering from the anguish of neocolonialism, which describes the type of foreign intervention in countries that were under colonial control. This perpetuates the indirect imperial influence in today's globalization.

Note worthily, the postcolonial studies continue to evaluate both colonialism and neocolonialism. This is seen as it is maintained in Nayar's observation: "Postcolonial studies today continues to examine the making of colonies and empires in history but also, more importantly, critiques the continuities of these older empires in the form of neocolonialism and US imperialisms" (Nayar, 2015, p. x).

In sum, what has been dealt with so far touches on three distinct historical settings that would be incorporated into the socio-historical and political matrix of Africa: slavery, colonialism, and neocolonialism. These settings are very important; thus, scholars agreed that it is impossible to divorce modern African literature from them, as they together constitute modern African

background (Wa Thiong'o, 1972; Melakneh, 2010). Thus, in order to have a good understanding of Africa and its literature, it would be imperative to probe into these major events.

1.1.3. Development of African Literature

As discussed earlier, the writing of modern African literature began as a reaction to white colonization, oppression and racism, (Madubuike, 1974). In its early phase of development, African literature has been preoccupied by nationalist themes that provide the images and views of Africans prior to colonial contact; on the contrary, it has reflected that African authors refuse the colonialist's view but reclaim African's past. Starting in the 1911–1940s, African writers mainly focused on the affirmation and validation of African identity (Melakneh, 2010). At the same time, they were also nostalgic for their heroic past. Generally, as Madubuike (1974, p.16) observes, they kept up explaining the roots of Africans in their literature.

Early African writers described in glowing details the cultural aspects and human worth of their societies. Theirs was a literature of assertion, and every writer worthy of the title tried to present himself as committed. And commitment, in simple terms, meant the condemnation of colonization as a destructive inhuman system, an apology for the African past and African cultural values. Commonality of inspiration, similarity of themes and views, a certain unique, romantic way of portraying pre-colonial Africa, and the use of colonial languages are some of the characteristics of this early literature.

Thus, the early development was used as a springboard for the next generation of African writers. Needless to say, Africans wanted to get rid of colonial administration; albeit, it was an unease and huge challenge that sacrificed hundreds and thousands of African lives. This event is well reflected in the first phase of modern African literature, i.e., protests against colonialism (1950s–1960s). At this period, writers were purely devoted to protesting against the imperialists' ideology, which claims their (imperialists) prime objective was the “civilizing mission” of Europeans for Africans. Hence, this group of writers can be embraced under the protest generation.

Fortunately, there had come joint factors both internal and external that propped up the advent of Africans independence. First, the Second World War (1939-1945) deteriorated the Europeans' colonial power, because of which they became physically and psychologically wane(Asante,

2023; Melakneh, 2010). Then, the international power shifted to the United States of America (USA) and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Along with this, the birth of United Nations (UN) was heralded in 1945 by replacing the discredited League of Nations. In due time, UN called up USA and Britain for the formal achievement of the Atlantic Charter, which was duly signed by the then leaders of USA (President Franklin D. Roosevelt) and Britain (Prime minister Winston Churchill) in 1941 to end up colonial administration and to declare African independence. It was declared as: “They (USA& UK) respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them” (The Atlantic Charter, 1941, p.686).

Secondly, African national movements for independence were at their decisive and striking stages. Trained African soldiers, who conscripted in WWII, also joined the movements’ armed struggle. The vanguard nationalist leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Kwame Nkrumah (Gold Coast, now Ghana), Julius Nyerere (Tanganyika, now Tanzania), Milton Obote (Uganda), Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Leopold Sedar Senghor (Senegal), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), and Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), among others, came forth to strike the struggle and spearhead the liberation movements, envisaging a range of strategic ideals such as national unification, political stability, modernization, economic prosperity, universal suffrage, and the prevalence of social justice in the wake of independence (Asante, 2023;Melakneh, 2010).

These ideals, which were expected to be realized after independence, however, were crushed and left mere dreams. On the contrary, in the wake of independence, military dictatorship, rampant corruption, ethnic and religious strives, several military coups, political instability, rigged elections, wretched maladministration, economic crisis, autocratic government, border conflicts, a high rate of unemployment, social injustice, decayed provision of education, etc. swept across West, Central, East and Southern independent African countries (Mullaney, 2010). Due to these consequences, public dissatisfaction mounts at a crucial juncture, which results in frustration and despair. This phase of writing is generally subsumed under African post-independent disillusionment, or, shortly it is known as disillusionment generation (1960s–1970s) in the trajectory of modern African literature (Melakneh, 2010).

Nevertheless, radical intellectuals and artists rise up against internal tyranny and external maneuvers by taking optimistic strides and forming populist coalitions. This is called the third phase (1970s–present), which is designated as recent or current trends of development in the trajectory of African literature. This also represents the younger generation in which new or experimental writing is manifested (Newell 2006; Osofisan 1996). It shows massive opposition against the incumbent governments of Africa is decisive at a critical stage.

As Melakneh (2010, p. 38) describes, “It goes beyond disillusionment to the point of launching mass mobilization against the national cancer”. Therefore, psychoactive intellectual characters are employed as key individuals along with the masses to fight the dishonest governments. Unlike the earlier phase, strong characters, including vigorous female characters, replaced weaker ones to fight to the point of sacrifice by upholding the optimistic effort to bring down the corrupt leaders from power. In addition, at this particular phase, African novelists stride from mere observation to signposting the way forward to curb the existing troubles of the continent (ibid.). Similarly, Traore (2010, p.19) points out as follows.

The current literary trends in Africa are characterized by their sharp critic to the current neocolonial situation in African countries. The authors put the accent on the loss of the cultural values like dignity, honesty, solidarity, hospitality, social cohesion and a multiplicity of positive sides of the tradition. It seems that literature reacts very actively in countries where social and political contradictions become worse.

Therefore, Kesteloot firmly describes novelists at this phase as, “Our novelists no longer want to be seen as moralists, mouthpieces, catalysts of their people” (1996, p. 8). Here, we can say that African writers have carried out a significant paradigm shift at this stage.

These historical and political activities, thus, have profound effects on modern African writers. It is, then, obvious that writers shape their concerns according to the concurrent situation of each historical period. Here, as O’Reily (2001) reasserts, postcolonial literature works between fact and fiction. Hence, bearing this in mind, a variety of styles/forms and representations of a variety of perspectives, along with postcolonial discourses, become common features of writers of modern African literature, wherein **national allegory** is among them. Generally, since the 1980s,

postcolonial literature and postcolonial studies have evolved to become the two institutionalized and inseparable constituents in the academic study of post-independent African nations.

1.1.4. National Allegory in Modern African Literature

Postcolonial discourse valorizes a body of critical thinking and polemics against the metropolis's ideological, political and socio-cultural views towards the colonies. Therefore, it has brought different literary or technical approaches and thematic issues to spread its resistance and /or reactions against this Eurocentric assumption and its biased representation of Africans in the literary expression and discourse.

Allegorical writing is one of these strategies that postcolonial writers use for similar purposes. Thus, "Some of the most remarkable opportunities for literary allegory in the late twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century come from writers from countries that were once subject to direct European colonization." (Copeland & Struck, 2010, p. 274).

Postcolonial form of allegorical writing, i.e. National allegory as termed by Fredric Jameson (1986) plays its role in raising postcolonial consciousness in psychological and physical liberties of the colonies in addition to exploring and platforming Africa's socio-political situations. In short, for resistance against Euro-centrism and developing consciousness about Africa, postcolonial allegorical form of writing is one of the mechanisms by which postcolonial writers and critics polemically contest the imperial discourses and western epistemologies, and show the post-independent society's social, political and cultural dynamics and predicaments. Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Ben Okri and Ngugi wa Thiong'o are worthily mentioned at this instance.

Here, national allegory or the postcolonial allegorical form of writing literature (can be used interchangeably) entails the symbolic narrative of postcolonial prose. The story of a novel in postcolonial Africa can be narrated symbolically. The symbolic narration implies the technique of telling the story of a novel by representing one character, object or thing, or an event for another historical figure, object, thing or an historical event that was happened in reality in the historical movement of Africa. Alternatively, it is, in a short manner, a narrative to be read for its metaphoric referent—in narrating one story often explicit there is also another embedded

narration that is implicit. As Xavier, (1999) points out, intentional encoding of the national experience through the narrative process is a recurring fact in the third world literature.

This form of writing has its own peculiar features in postcolonial African literature in that it focuses on the socio-historical conditions of the postcolonial nation states. It is also an important device for revisiting and revisioning the past socio-political matrix of the continent. As a result, it is designated first by Fredric Jameson (1986) as **national allegory**, but it is also be used as **postcolonial allegory** as the recent critics in the field such as Stephen Slemon also utilize it in their critical works (Slemon, 1988b).

Nevertheless, we need to bear in mind that national allegory is evolved to be used, in postcolonial literary texts, different from the past forms like the classical allegorical representation or other Western form of allegory, or other previous forms and aims. It is rather employed as a form of counter-discourse against Western style. It is believed that providing alternative visions and versions of the past allegorical signification is important in the schema of postcolonial era.

For some post-colonial writers, then, the task of transforming our concepts of history requires the reappropriation and revision of allegory itself, for allegory is seen to be both part of the imperial process that instilled those concepts and part of the neo-colonial process that continues to hold them in place (Slemon, 1988b,p.162).

Therefore, national allegory or the postcolonial form of allegory has a transformative potential in the postcolonial texts. As postcolonial is dynamic in nature, national allegory by which the postcolonial subjects are looked through also needs to be dynamic so that it can open up different imaginative ‘hybrid’ spaces where we can reconsider the transformation of the subject, and alternative vision that national allegory provides. “This process of transforming received concepts of history and tradition through the revisioning and reappropriation of allegory is under-taken” in the prominent post-colonial writers (ibid).

Some of the African postcolonial writers who significantly employed national allegory in their postcolonial novels include: Ngugi wa Thiong’o in *Devil on the Cross* (1982), Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of Savannah* (1987), Ben Okri in *The Famished Road* (1991), J.M. Coetzee in *Waiting for the Barbarian* (1980), Ayi kwei Armah in *The Beautiful Once Are Not Yet Born* (1968),

Sembène Ousmane in *Xala* (1974), and Wole Soyinka in *The Interpreters* (1965), among many others. Therefore, the study intends to interpret the postcolonial literary texts by using this strategy of writing as a critical tool in order to explore the socio-historical implications that are represented by this strategy. In fact, it is distinctively called national allegory for the particular purpose it plays out in the third world's national literatures.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Postcolonialism has brought African literature to the realms of the literary study to elucidate colonized countries' predicaments and their cultural background, which was denigrated by the imperialist's assumption. In other words, European's theory of inability to deal with complexity and varied cultural provenance and false universal assumptions of language, culture, values, epistemology, representation, etc. of the colonies are radical questions that result in postcolonial studies (Ashcroft et al., 2003, p. 19). Therefore, postcolonialism is associated with the process of demystifying the underlying assumptions of colonial writings and the spreading of colonial disillusionment among the former European colonies to bring about decolonization. Therefore, postcolonial writers usually manage to engage in postcolonial features (impacts as the result of colonialism) that are prominently preoccupied in their writing.

African literary writing embraces the socio-political climate of the continent. Africa has passed through the incursion of colonialism and the spread of imperialism. The other key elements that can be explored in African literature encompass resistance and nationalism, the challenges of post-independence dictatorship and authoritarianism, gender and women issues, social inequalities, identity and cultural heritages.

Therefore, the role of literature in Africa is mainly significant in recapturing the socio-political experiences that the continent has faced with. We can say that the continent's socio-political experience is foundational for the formation of its modern literature. As this socio-political predicament is a milestone in content wise, there are also different modes of writing like magical realism, exaggeration, irony, satire and national allegory that are adapted to viably depict the content stylistically.

National allegory is one of the literary tools that are used as a means of revisiting or refreshing the past for the present socio-political critique, reflection and re-imagination. "The past, whether

public or private, continues to repeat itself; the past remains an allegorical reflection of the present.” (Ogude, 1999, p.55). In addition, national allegory is a concept within literary and cultural theory that pursues to see how literature, particularly novels, can be used as allegories for the social, political, and historical conditions of a specific nation or culture. It discusses that literary texts can offer symbolic representations and narratives that capture the complexities and conflicts inherent in a particular national situation.

In his book “The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act”(1981), Fredric Jameson claims that national allegories often emerge in times of political and social upheaval, as authors struggle with the complexities of their national identities and the challenges faced by their societies. Hence, national allegory is a prevalent mode of representation in African literary writing to reveal these socio-cultural and political dynamics of the continent. African writers substantially use it as a means of grappling with the ongoing challenges of colonialism and unresolved tensions of nation building in the 21st century.

Accordingly, it can be considered that national allegory is taken as an instrument through which the historical truth of the ex-colonial nations, which was embedded beneath the historical surface, is unearthing. By doing so, national allegory in African literature is also used as a means of brainwashing device against Western or imperial assumption that propagates Africans as “Historylessness”.

In this regard, the leading novelists such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Athol Fugard and Ngugi wa Thiong’o are well regarded in recapturing the African socio-political experiences.

African novelists were the first intellectuals to bring before a wide public inside and outside the African continent profound questions about the corruption within postcolonial governments and the extent to which external domination persisted. Growing disillusionment made increasingly attractive the theories of "underdevelopment," which located the poverty and weakness of "peripheral" societies not in the colonial situation but in the more long-term process of domination within a capitalist world system (Cooper, 1994, p.1524).

Therefore, a comprehensive study of Anglophone African novels against the notion of national allegorical method of interpretation is important to have comprehensive socio-political

experiences of the African nations. This is also important to define the literary history of the African nations. In other words, the study of national allegory is helpful to determine the national literature because, as it has been discussed earlier, national allegory invests mainly in the national social, cultural and political resources.

However, national allegory receives less attention than other literary devices that depict the experiences of African post-independence nations. The researcher has tried to examine studies related to this theme across different bodies of literature. To the researcher's knowledge, a comprehensive and exhaustive treatment of Anglophone African novels against the idea of national allegory does not seem to exist. Particularly, African novels written in the 21st century appear to be paid little attention to examine how African writers employ national allegory to confront the persistent challenges that the nations have faced with. Nevertheless, allegorical perspective, particularly from the conditions of postcolonial nation-state experience, continues to be one of the windows of perspective that provides powerful views to explore the socio-political conditions of African nations from their literary texts.

Thus, the present researcher is motivated to explore different socio-political experiences and contexts that ex-colonial African nations have continually faced in the first decade of the 21st century by interpreting their prose fiction, particularly novels, by using national allegory as a critical device. It is an important device for revisiting and revisioning the past socio-political matrix of the continent and, at the same time, critiquing the current trends of development. This, again, helps to make a deeper understanding of the significances and implications of these texts for the contemporary societies within the continent.

1.3. Research Questions

Based on the above statements, the following research questions are formulated.

- What does national allegory represent in the selected novels?
- What are the implications of allegorical narratives in African contemporary novels?
- How does allegorical writing reveal the socio-historical experiences of African nations?
- What are the common themes and literary strategies employed in the selected novels to address the conditions of post-independent nations?

1.4. Objective of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

In the due course of this research, the main aim was to examine the themes and purposes of postcolonial literature in the selected Anglophone African novels by using national allegories as critical tools of analysis.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research emphasized to:

- identify the representations of national allegories in the selected novels
- interpret the allegorical implications of the selected novels
- explore the socio-political conditions of the postcolonial African nations in the selected novels
- demonstrate the common and different themes, motifs and literary strategies that are emerged in the construction of national allegories across the selected texts.

1.5. Scope of the Study

The study is delimited to novels written in English that were produced in the advent of the 21st century (2005–2015). The texts are selected from countries that were formerly colonized by great Britain and thus received huge colonial effects. Great Britain had vast territorial dominance in Western, Eastern and Southern Africa, and it left enormous challenges upon these parts of the continent. Consequently, most writers from these societies vigorously portrayed the devastating effects of colonialism and the challenges of post-independence in their literary productions of the contemporary period of Africa in English language. Active literary responses are made from these regions by situating the prevailing socio-political histories of the continent in place.

The novels selected for this study were interpreted against the concept of national allegory, which is the postcolonial form of allegorical representation. Therefore, national allegory is a postcolonial literary term with its distinctive features that is taken as a theoretical framework for this study. This postcolonial allegorical form of writing is used as a counter discourse for

imperialism and colonialism in modern African literature, and at the same time, it is used as a means of recuperating the African socio-political matrix. Any literary concept that is created based on the examination of imperialism and colonialism and their consequences must be cross-referenced with the postcolonial theoretical perspective. Hence, postcolonialism in general and national allegory in particular are windows of perspective for this study.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This research offers a wealth of knowledge, ranging from the historical backdrop of imperialism to the historical movements and processes of decolonization and neocolonialism. In other words, the changes that have gone through in the history of African literature are dealt using national allegory as a method of uncovering those historical events and experiences. Therefore, this study is imperative for students and scholars of Africa as well as those in the African/Black diaspora who are interested in learning more about African culture, politics and history.

This helps us to understand and discuss “the activist project” of postcolonialism in detail or in an extended manner (Schwarz, 2000, pp. 1–19). In the course of demystifying points in national allegory and its essential characteristics, it is helpful to understand the very nature and essence of postcolonial literature significantly. Therefore, readers of this study would gain enlightenment on postcolonial literature in general and national allegory in particular. The researcher believes that the study of postcolonialism, both as a subject matter and as a critical literary theory, would provide a clear glimpse of human experiences across the world, for it posits different arrays of human concerns and the world’s power structures. In this regard, the study of African literature based on the concept of national allegory, which is one of the postcolonial literary strategies, is also valuable for other researchers.

1.7. Methodology and Procedures of the Study

1.7.1. Approach of the Study

First, as mentioned earlier, postcolonialism is founded as a subject of study based on colonial contact with Europe (O’Reily, 2001). At the same time, postcolonial writing is built on the response to the Empire (Ashcroft, 1995). On top of this, postcolonial writing depends on the historical and cultural background and context of the colonial nations (O’Reily, 2001; Wa

Thiong'o, 1972)). As a result, many postcolonial literary writers engage in reflecting the socio-cultural and political history of the particular region to which they belong. For these reasons, they use multiple approaches and perspectives in writing their literary works. At this point, national allegory, which is taken as one of the discursive elements and literary writing strategies of postcolonialism, is designated based on the experience of post-independence nations with the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. Hence, as this study focuses on the reflections of socio-historical contexts, themes and literary techniques in literary works, it outlines the qualitative research approach for the study.

As national allegory is both a discursive element and a literary technique with its own distinctive features that help to see the realities and complexities of post-independent nations, it is an alternative window of perspective for the interpretation of postcolonial literature. It helps to explore the socio-political experiences of the post-independent nations of Africa as they have been reflected in contemporary literary works. Besides, approaching African literary texts through the lens of national allegory helps us to uncover the deeper socio-cultural symbolic meanings of the society whose sociocultural contexts are reflected in the literary texts. However, we must bear in mind that the relationship between national allegory and postcolonial theory in Anglophone African literature is one of mutual reinforcement and critical engagement, as they both involve in critical analysis of the challenges of postcolonial nation-states. Hence, postcolonial literary theory provides a general analytical framework and guiding principles for this study because the concept of national allegory is one of the literary strategies that are emerged within the conceptual framework of postcolonialism.

Therefore, the researcher believes that national allegory, which has been a new status of allegory since the late 20th century, has been a viable theoretical perspective for the nuanced understanding of the national culture, identity and oppression of African nations from which the texts were selected for this particular study. In this regard, Xavier (1999,p.333) observes that, “allegory has acquired its preeminence in criticism because the accumulation of historical experience related to cultural shock, slavery, repression, and violence has shown its central role in the interaction of different cultural systems”.

Although the concept of ‘*national allegory*’ emerged in the late 20th century, it has continued to be used as a vibrant and relevant theoretical perspective up to now by many critics. To mention some of these critics, for example, DiMatteo (2024) used national allegory to analyze a novel called ‘*Open City*’ by Teju Cole. Ghosh (2023) also used it to study contemporary Indian novels to explore new urban realism in the country. Similarly, Reimer (2020) employed national allegory to examine Canadian young adult fiction.

As noted above, the historical interpretation of allegory pays attention to the socio-historical conditions of a certain historical phenomenon (De Santis, 2019). This approach relies on the use of historical incidents as the main source of writing literature and interpretation. Precisely, literary writers are inspired by historical incidents as their main source of writing. At the same time, those who engage in the art of criticism and interpretation depend on the historical occurrences, major political systems and prominent figures of the periods to explain the pretext behind the production of literary work. This study relies on the studies of postcolonial literature, which confines itself on the socio-cultural and historical milieu of a post-independent nation. Hence, the historical and socio-cultural context of Africa is established here through secondary sources. In this regard, providing a clear picture of the literary background aids reading the literary pieces and enhances the interpretations.

1.7.2. Bases of Text Selection

The study examined the Anglophone African novels against the theory of postcolonialism in general and the implications of national allegory in particular. The reflection of national allegorical form of writing with its distinctive postcolonial discursive and strategic features as employed in the novels selected for the analysis was the focus of this study. The novels selected for analysis and interpretation are Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's ‘*Wizard of the Crow*’ (2006), Ben Okri's ‘*Starbook*’ (2007) and Zakes Mda's ‘*Little Suns*’ (2015). They are purposively selected based on the criteria explained in the following subsections.

1.7.2.1. Broad Spectrum

To meet the very aim of this study and at the same time to examine the depiction and implications of national allegory, the texts are selected purposively with the following major reasons in mind:

First, the prominences or influences of the writers of the texts have been born in mind because, for this particular academic purpose, the **canonicity** of the texts in postcolonial African literature is valuable. Most politically committed writers that uphold African cultural, economic, political and psychological predicaments are distinctively paid attention. Hence, the literary biographies of the authors are viewed. In this regard, the writers of the literary pieces selected for this study have a distinctive figure in African literature. They have produced proliferating works of literature for Africa in general and their respective nations in particular. They have also gotten worldwide critical acclaim from scholars who have studied these writers' other works.

Second, in addition to their prominence in African literature, these writers are known for recapturing African socio-political climate and employing allegorical form of writing as an effective means of subverting imperial myths and illustrating African contemporary predicaments. In other words, the writers' **persistence** in reflecting Africans' socio-political predicaments is considered for this study. This suggestion is provided here based on the observation of their earlier works and other secondary sources on their earlier works.

Third, the **period**—the current/recent development of the postcolonial trajectory—is embraced in the selection criteria because the current valence (new voices and new visions) of postcolonial dynamism is in compliance with this phase. Hence, the selected texts were produced in the wake of the 21st century (2005-2015). In this regard, texts that receive relatively less attention for academic study, especially against the concept of national allegory, are prioritized.

Fourth, the bulk of Anglophone African novels are produced in the areas where British colonial dominance was significant. British colonial dominance in Africa's West, East and Southern regions was so considerable. Accordingly, Ben Okri's *Starbook* (2007), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) and Zakes Mda's '*Little Suns*' (2015) are selected to **represent** the West, East and Southern African contemporary novels respectively. Therefore, the socio-historical and cultural contexts of the regions were considered to recreate the specific challenges each region has faced. In this regard, both literary and nonliterary documents were referred.

In conjunction with the above points, the researcher observes other literary and research studies on the works of the writers for a full-fledged understanding of the social, historical and political

settings they have encountered and passed through, as well as the literary styles and thematic concerns they have upheld. There are researchers and critics who approached their earlier works from different perspectives and theoretical frameworks, both from Africa and outside Africa. However, this study is concentrated, to put the difference, only on the selected novels by holding national allegory as a critical tool of interpretations.

To sum up the above discussion in brief, **canonicity**, persistence, **regional representation** and **periodic contemporaneity** (currentness) are considered in the selection criteria of the novels.

1.7.2.2. Limited Perspective

This section discusses the specific criteria that are used to single out the literary texts for the analysis. The study primarily aimed at exploring the socio-political experiences of the post-independent nations of Africa as they have been reflected in contemporary literary works by using the idea of national allegory. Literary texts that offer symbolic representations and allegorical narratives to capture the complexities and conflicts inherent in a particular national or cultural situation were selected. The allegorical aspects of the novels were used as the specific criteria to determine the presence of allegories in the texts. These include:

First, allegorical novels usually deploy parabolic characterization. In the second stage of African literature, the primary purpose of the writing is teaching moral lesson or shaping the human conscience (Webb, 1978). Hence, moralizing tales like parables and fables are component elements of the African fiction. Moreover, in parabolic characterization, the traits of characters can be identified by their moral position. This kind of narration includes the naming process of a character. This can again be transferred to depict the level of moral corruption in the post independent society.

The engagement of satire, or the inclusion of commentary on socio-political circumstances of a nation (Fletcher, 2021), the presence of multiple meanings or views (Webb, 1978) are also crucial. Here, in allegorical novels there are elements of myth and symbols that project or invite the readers to interpret or to envision the work in a manifold manner (Allen, 2017). Moreover, polarization of views between characters (Honig, 1960), the appearance of related literary devices (like symbolism, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, personification), and the allusion of

the past, or the making of cross-reference of cultural, historical, and social or religious contexts (Fletcher, 2021) are some important elements to determine the presence of allegories in the novels. Specifically, these elements are some common literary techniques used in national allegories. Again, all these points mentioned above appear in the novels under study. However, Okri's *Starbook* predominantly employs mythical story and mythical symbols, Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* mainly employs satire and Mda's *Little Suns* essentially employs socio-cultural and historical references.

1.7.3. Method of Analysis and Interpretation

As noted before, this research aimed at addressing the existing gap through a close textual analysis of the selected Anglophone African novels published from 2005–2015 that employ national allegories. Here, the study employed national allegory as a tool of interpretations. The study seeks to explain these contemporary novels that engage with the challenges and complexities of postcolonial nations of Africa through allegorical representations and allegorical narratives. Therefore, a close reading of the novels was utilized for understanding the symbolic meanings, inferring metaphoric languages and identifying the allegorical representations and allegorical techniques of the authors. In due course, the socio-cultural and political implications that the selected literary pieces want to convey is unveiled (Jameson, 1981).

The interpretation proceeds first by confirming that national allegory is employed in the novels under study with significant manifestations of the elements by which national allegory is revealed, followed by a pertinent discussion on the meaning, essence, relevance, and historical event that the identified allegory represents and the allegorical narrative reflects. Then, critical organization was made through critical justification. Generally, with the aforementioned points in mind, the texts are read critically and interpreted analytically. i.e., critical reading followed by analytical interpretation is the primary procedure for the analysis of the texts.

In due course, relevant extracts from the selected texts were taken to make the interpretation textually evidential. Besides to the primary texts (the selected novels), secondary documents from libraries and online accesses related to the topic under investigation were seriously diagnosed in the review of related literature and in the theoretical framework sections so as to

have a succinct understanding of the topic of the study, which, in turn, enriched the interpretation.

Lastly, the study concluded with the cross-diagnosis of the novels in order to cross-reference the literary traditions and experiences of the regions that each novel represents. This also helps us to cross-examine the writers' commitment to portraying the national challenges of their respective countries. To state briefly, to explore the socio-historical dynamics that the postcolonial African nations have gone through, identifying the allegorical levels of the novels under study through critical reading followed by analytical interpretations of these allegorical representations of the novels was the main procedure of the study.

1.8. Organization of the Study

This study has eight chapters. Chapter one provides the introduction section of the study. It mainly gives background information related to the topic of this study. It contains statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, the scope and significance of the study. Lastly, it encompasses the methodology and procedures of the study. This section offers the approaches to the study, the basis of selecting the novels and the method of analysis and interpretation of the selected novels.

Chapter two presents the literature review. This chapter revises the critical and conceptual treatises that are done on national allegory by the critical scholars in the area. It also revisits critical and research works conducted on the novels under study in order to see their differences against the present research.

Chapter three offers the theoretical framework of the study. In this chapter, the concept of postcolonialism, the concept of allegory, the origin and development of allegory in literature, the types allegory along with the fundamental characteristics of allegorical novels and the concept of national allegory with its prevailing features or/forms that informs its presence in the novels are discussed.

The other four chapters (chapters four–seven) of the dissertation deal with the analyses and interpretations of the study. They are divided and arranged based on the thematic demonstrations

they provide. Accordingly, chapter four presents the socio-historical and cultural conditions that the novels reflect. Chapter five presents the ideological commentary that the authors of the novels attempt to react. Chapter six presents the interpretations of the metaphoric and symbolic elements that are employed in the novels. Chapter seven presents the interpretations that describe how national allegories work as narrative techniques in contemporary African novels. The last chapter, chapter eight, wherein the conclusions and recommendations section is discussed, recapitulates the interpretations and implications of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Review of Related Literature

2.1.1. Critical Issues in National Allegory

This section revisits some of the critical and conceptual essays conducted so far on the postcolonial form of allegory, which is known as '*national allegory*' by Fredric Jameson. As a body of one of the postcolonial discourses, national allegory is being passed along the journey of critical contestation from the critics of postcolonialism. This paper attempts to collect some notable essays on this topic and tries to revise them in such a way that the concept of national allegory is debatable and inspirational for further studies. This again provides insights into the critical ideas that can be clearly treated under a national allegorical discursive framework. To point out the main purpose, the patterns and trends that are going through the study of *national allegory* as a specific concept or term for third-world culture and society are crucially seen. On top of this, the debates that have been made on this particular topic would show us the way to deal with postcolonial writing and reading strategies. The distinctive strategy of writing and reading, in comparison with the Westerners', the representation of allegory in postcolonial literature provides, once more, the central assumption of postcolonial intellectuals' arguments and the premises upon which they depend.

Accordingly, American Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson, who is deeply influenced by allegorical interpretation, paves the way for textual observation based on the texts' modern allegorical implication. He contends that, as Tambling (2010, p.153) also observes, "in the condition of postmodernism, there must be a requirement to scan texts backwards and forth for the readjustment of terms and interpretations which are in constant modification". In his essay, *Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism* (1986), he designated the term '*national allegory*' by which he reveals the nature of third-world literature in a comprehensive but not complementary manner.

Jameson shows that *third-world* literary intellectuals engage in reflecting and demonstrating the unique characteristics of their particular nation's literary signification at the expense of any attention from the other world, although the effects of multinational capitalism persist across the

whole globe. He insistently explains that the whole matter of *Third-World* intellectuals still resides exclusively on *nationalism*. Therefore, he seems to suggest that this group of intellectuals does not meet or go along with the present or current forces of the globe; as a result, they isolate and locate themselves in their *parochial* realm.

By this, he tends to put his argument in a hasty and rash conclusion that puts *Third-World* intellectuals in a single experience and then eases to restrict the varied, plural, hybrid, etc. representations that the third-world writers are maneuvering to meet their aim of resisting and appropriating the imperialists wrong representation and attitude of third-world subjects. Here, he also wants to show *Third-World* intellectuals are so adamant, once they stick, to shift their attention from the ‘*old nationalism*’ ideology, which is still fundamental to specific concerns of *Third-World literature* alone, to the postmodernist vibrant multicultural issues. It is to seal up the unique experience that postcolonialism raises by Western-rooted postmodernism.

As a result, he moves to urge *third-world* nation states to outgrow or refrain from their ‘old nationalism’ agenda as fast as possible; herein, he implicates that *third-world literature* lags behind and is unable to cope up with the global postmodernist culture. On the flip side of the fairy tale, he hypocritically, to add more, denounces that *third-world* novels would not offer satisfaction to postmodernist global readers because of the outmoded stage at which *third-world* intellectuals sit.

The third-world novel will not offer the satisfactions of Proust or Joyce; what is more damaging than that, perhaps, is its tendency to remind us of outmoded stages of our own first-world cultural development and to cause us to conclude that ‘they are still writing novels like Dreiser or Sherwood Anderson’ (Jameson,1986,p.65).

Here, Fredric Jameson even forgets or eases the radical difference between first-world and third-world literary traditions, and he views the third-world literature from the perspective of the first-world literature. This, again, stands from a lack of adequate understanding of the socio-historical background from which third-world modern literary development outgrows, or it might be his intentional fallacy that leads him to construct this totalizing proposition that puts the third-world literature under a single banner. Secondly, his critique reveals his insincerity towards the literary

achievement that comes to exist in the third world's contemporary literary movement, classifying it as if it is '*terribly parochial*'.

In a subsequent year, as Jameson's view was prescriptive, it was severely criticized by Aijaz Ahmad. Aijaz Ahmad, who is a Pakistani Marxist critic, wrote a critical essay entitled '*Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'*' (1987) to reply to Fredric Jameson's essay, '*Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism*' (1986). Using this critique, Ahmad clearly demonstrates the whole panorama of Jameson's view in pinpointing the gap of 'Third-World Literature' but contradicts what he has intended to prevail. Jameson suggests, as Ahmad observed, that 'national allegory' is persistently and exclusively employed in *Third-World literature*.

...all third-world cultural productions seem to have in common and what distinguishes them radically from analogous cultural forms in the first world. All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories, (Jameson, 1986, p.69).

This is the most important critical point that Jameson raised. It resulted in hot argument among critical scholars. As Ahmad emphatically examines, this shows Jameson's haste in totalizing the historical phenomena in terms of binary opposition (nationalism vs. postmodernism, first world vs. third world). This, in turn, reminds us that Jameson reiterates the *Manichean allegory*, which was practiced during colonial and imperial representation. Ahmad attempts to find out assumptions that Jameson has borne in mind to treat *third-world literature*. Accordingly, Ahmed believes that Jameson mentions nationalist ideology as an exclusive form of narrativity resulting from the experience of colonialism and imperialism. Hence, as the major point of his argument, Jameson has also taken into account the international dominance of postmodernism and/or cultural homogenization as the result of capitalism in order to appraise *Third-World literature*.

Furthermore, Aijaz Ahmad polemically contends that Jameson's view of *Third-World literature*, in this regard, is grounded on the basis of wrong and stereotyped assumptions, as he (Ahmad) remarkably illustrates the clear manifestations that support his argument. For Jameson, therefore, national allegory is dependent on national ideology. This national ideology, which Jameson has undertaken persistently, relies on the national oppression of Third-World societies. As a result,

the experience of colonialism and imperialism is taken for granted, by Jameson's assumption, as a singular form of literary technique for Third-World society's literature and culture. Therefore, Jameson insists over and over again that the national experience is central to the cognitive formation of the *Third World* intellectual and that the narrativity of that experience takes the form exclusively of a 'national allegory' (Ahmad, 1987,p.14).

On the other hand, Jameson's conception tends to valorize cultural homogenization. In the absolute delineation of first world literature and third world literature by Jameson, cultural homogenization preoccupies his mind, i.e., he seems to be deeply indebted to the capitalist system of postmodernist culture for the first world, while he solely undertakes the singular experience of colonialism and imperialism for the third world literature. Then one could say that this is the sheer cause of his haste in totalizing the historical phenomena. Based on this mark of division, Asia, Africa and Latin America countries are tied together in order to put them under one and the same umbrella, while they also have enormous differences. This happens as the result of the critic's biased judgment.

As for the specificity of cultural difference, Jameson's theoretical conception tends, I believe, in the opposite direction—namely, that of homogenization. Difference between the First World and the Third is absolutized as an Otherness, but the enormous cultural heterogeneity of social formations within the so-called Third World is submerged within a singular identity of 'experience', (Ibid, p. 10).

In sum, in this particular regard, Jameson's view towards third-world literature and the conception of single narrativity based on nationalism (national ideology) has to be modified. In this regard, this researcher is in line with Aijaz Ahmed's suggestion. However, the purpose of this study is mainly concerned to see the extent to which national allegory (which is a postcolonial allegorical form of writing strategy) is manifested in contemporary African novels among postcolonial African canonical writers and to see their multifarious views towards the postcolonial national experiences.

The third notable critic who gives much attention to this postcolonial allegorical mode of writing and reading in the contemporary period is Stephen Slemon. In his critical essay, '*Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History*' (1988), he has acclaimed this new mode of

writing—postcolonial allegorical writing—in postcolonial cultures and societies. Here, we can see that he redesignated the term itself from national allegory into a postcolonial allegory. Slemon then suggests that postcolonial allegorical mode of writing raises critical interest among postcolonial intellectuals so that they can transform their practice of textual writing and evaluation into a significant stage that utters the subversion of the previous Western rooted assumption about allegorical expression and interpretation.

This critical interest (postcolonial allegorical critical interest) has in turn sparked a significant reevaluation of allegorical practice, so that the marked prejudice against allegory that was initiated in the Romantic period, that continued through into New Criticism, and that still prevails in some areas even now, has become sharply, even radically, reversed (Slemon, 1988, p.157).

Here, he indicates that national allegory is a new mode of allegory that is different from its previous forms. However, he does not deny that this new mode of writing has faced confrontation from the Western mainstream allegorical theorists, who exclusively yield to the art and intellectual traditions of European and United States provenance. Leaving this partisan position aside, but observing its significance to postcoloniality, Slemon distinctively concentrates on the relation between allegory and history in postcolonial literary writing and reading to change our received ideas of history and to challenge the prevailing theoretical assumptions of the Metropolitans. The main purpose of this argument, at this juncture, emanates from the intention of redeeming or recuperating the past to avoid the dominant ideology of the Centre in contemporary postcolonial societies. For Slemon, allegorical form of writing has an historical investment in postcolonial writers, who principally build their fictional works of art on the socio-historical realities of their societies. This would give third-world nations the opportunity to evaluate their past experiences and then to change the *'received ideas'* and positions created by imperialists in a way that they could reconstruct their indigenous and/or domestic socio-political matter so that it could be an appropriate method for their people's struggle and to find new readers, who likely share the challenges of the new independent African nations.

Indeed, Stephen Slemon has invested much attention in the study of allegorical representation, as this can also be seen in his other literary analyses. For example, in his article entitled *'Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing'* (1987), Slemon

demonstrates the statue of New South Wales Governor Arthur Phillip, who led the British settlement and colonization of Australia, from the literal and allegorical levels of colonial representation. By this token, he views and recurs that the pattern of the statue in constructing or representing the colonial history against the colonial subjects is spectacularly manifested. Ironically, the statue presents the human civilization of the Europeans against their assumed savagery pedigree (background) of the Australian aboriginal culture:

This statue of Phillip is less an historical monument than a monument to history, and as such it works not only to construct the category of 'history' as the self-privileging inscription of the colonizer, but also to legitimize a particular concept of history: that is, history as the record of signal events.... colonized cultures must always remain uninscribed. Their communal practices of quotidian existence, their cultural acts of self-definition and resistance, are written out of the record; and in the process, subjugated peoples are 'troped' into figures in a colonial pageant, 'people without history' (Slemon, 1987,pp.4-5).

Again, in his *'Revisioning Allegory: Wilson Harris's 'Carnival'* (1986), he pointed out the implication of Harris's allegorical representation in the novel. Characters and certain historical settings in the *'Carnival'* are necessary to be seen from their allegorical significance among Harris's oeuvre. Therefore, Slemon observes that Harris in *'Carnival'* uses allegorical representation as both a technique and a thematic exposition or depiction. To add more, Harris's handling of language and characterization mechanism reflected that allegorical episodes became the structuring principle of the novel. However, he demonstrated that the dialogue between the past and the present episode is not deadlocked. The tradition of receiving the old prevailing hegemonic status quo as absolute must be suspended. There would not be an absolute guide for allegorization and allegorical interpretation. Therefore, rereading and revising/revisioning the past encourages "the act of recuperating allegorical writing" (p.53).

At this time in focus, Slemon's persistent seizure of allegorical interpretation/postcolonial allegory in his range of perspective towards art in general and postcolonial literary texts in particular is also taken as the prime pump for the present author because it uses to disclose the imperial's hidden assumptions during their Empire building and in the postcolonial dilemma.

Acknowledging that Jameson's theory of *national allegory* is seized to be the first attempt to differentiate the literary production of the first and third worlds, Imre Szeman (2001), on his side, follows a compromised and negotiated approach to the controversy of third- and first-world intellectuals on the theorizing of *national allegory* in his article entitled: *Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization*. However, he accepts that Jameson's approach is appropriate to manage the 'materialistic' difference of postcolonial texts and contexts from their counterparts in the first world. In a short manner, he observes both the problems and possible '*productive potential*' of Jameson's theory of *national allegory*. Imre Szeman also laments that although Jameson's concept of national allegory has "a properly materialistic approach to the study of postcolonial texts and contexts (p. 804)", it has been exposed for misreading. He admits that some discomforts felt by literary scholars arise out of Jameson's totality gaze for third-world literature: -"the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (Jameson, 1986, p. 69). Along with this, Szeman believes, the two terms designated "National Allegory" could have been exhaustively explained to justify how they could be attached to third world texts to conjure up the development of the theory and practice that third world literature has passed through with the experiences of the third world nations, or that how each of these component terms has political implications for the 'underdeveloped world' so that the heated debate among the literary intellectuals would be lessened.

Szeman believes that what prompted Jameson to write his essay, "National Allegory in the Era of Multinationalism," was the academic debate among Western scholars, especially US academics, about the third-world literary production. It was a reaction to the first-world viewers against their third-world counterparts. Szeman, here, seems to address the fact that Jameson could not seize a stereotyped position during his writing of the essay; rather, he (Jameson) tries to show his fellows the essential difference to be considered in reading third-world literature:

The claim is rather that the text speaks to its context in a way that is more than simply an example of Western texts' familiar 'auto-referentiality': it necessarily and directly speaks to and of the over determined situation of the struggles for national independence and cultural autonomy in the context of imperialism and its aftermath (Szeman, 2001, p. 808).

Much of Szeman's essay, '*Who's Afraid of National Allegory?*' therefore, discusses the main essence of Jameson's assumption by adding his understanding towards third-world literature and society in an extended manner and calls on polemical scholars against Jameson to bear this essence in mind.

Correspondingly, in '*Postcolonial Metacritique: Jameson, Allegory and the Always-Already-Read Third World Text*' (2005), Julie McGonegal provides her astute position on the interpretive function of national allegory. In this article, Julie McGonegal reacts to what she calls "somehow wrong with Jameson's basic thesis in 'Third World Literature and the Era of Multinational Capitalism'" (McGonegal, 2005, p. 252). For McGonegal, Jameson's concept of *national allegory* is an important paradigm to refute at least the following fundamental points: the violence of colonial history and the malaise of current postcolonial criticism, which have a distorting impact on postcolonial society. Besides, Jameson used his thesis to caution against the fundamental insistence of first-world readers on third-world literature that third-world literature is fundamentally preoccupied with the idea of *nationalism*. Therefore, by looking through Jameson's life-long works, including his '*Political Unconscious*' (1981), McGonegal observes, the new allegorical reading, which is designated as national allegorical reading, is potentially productive for third-world literary texts but misconceived by Jameson's ardent critics.

She emphasizes that the prime assumption with which Jameson dealt is to regard allegory as a term that can be carried into different multiple meanings. Especially along with the nation, which is also a devalued term, it would have a multifarious opportunity for alternative interpretations when it is connected with different locations and contexts than what some of Jameson's counter-critics assume. By doing this, she believes and sets forth that the *metacritique*—the structuring principle—of allegory is built as its "possibility of imaginative revision (p. 255)" is open according to the nation's socio-political location because it can provide high regard for "the complex interplay between the psychological, the economic and the political, and the cultural (p. 256)" elements of a nation simultaneously during the interpretation of texts.

Finally, '*The National Allegory Revisited: Writing Private and Public in Contemporary Taiwan*' (2006) by Margaret Hillenbrand is also another important article in revising the concept of *national allegory* in non-Western literature. She comes to enlighten the idea of Jameson's

national allegory, which supports her idea of *national identity* in contemporary Taiwanese fiction. She believes that Jameson's *national allegory* can be taken as an original paradigm shift in third-world literary theory and practice. Hillenbrand's article also tries to highlight the paradox between the "supposed pariah status and its very real tenacity, as both a creative and an interpretive mode in "non-Western" literature" (p. 634), of national allegory.

With all its totalizing defects, she stresses, national allegory has still brought forth plenty of views and heated debates on the cultural productions of the "non-Western" that at least third world critique emerged against first world on its literary production. The key point Hillenbrand suggests to take up Jameson's concept of *national allegory* in the interpretative mode of third world cultural production is not from its "operation of totality and fixity" but from its 'fluidity' and possibility of alternative interpretation of history by claiming the Dai Jinhua's argument "that Jameson's interpretive paradigm of the 'allegorical' text sets up a dialogue, or perhaps a crossing of swords, between the first world and the third world" (Jinhua, 1999, p. 637). Overall, depending on her case study, she finally admits that contemporary Taiwanese literary texts are obsessed with Taiwanese identities that mark the presence of '*national allegory*'. Therefore, like the aforementioned critic, she accepts the interpretive function of national allegory in third world literature.

To conclude the argument, bearing the points discussed earlier in mind, the concept of *national allegory* can be taken as a *metacritical way* to interpret third-world literature, as it has been continuing to be a playground for the polemical and dialectical contest of first- and third-world intellectuals. Many critics, as a result, uphold national allegory as a postcolonial discursive concept that is used to examine postcolonial fiction.

Considering this theoretical argument, the present paper aims to examine, to put the difference, the material realities of the postcolonial allegorical mode of writing as it is employed by contemporary African novelists using national allegory itself as a critical tool of interpretation. Here, bear in mind that national allegory can be functioned as both a creative and an interpretative tool. Therefore, to deal with both arguments together—national allegory for national ideology and postcolonial allegory for transformation of history—this paper interprets

the textual realities of African form of allegorical writing of literature as an encounter discourse of Western thought as well as a revision or transformation of African socio-political history.

2.1.2. Review of Sample Studies

This section of the paper specifically points out critical studies on the novels selected for purpose of the present study. Looking at literary texts, once they are written, from different set of perspective amounts to the rich academic value they would have to seek the attentions of critical scholars. To strike at the crux of the due point here, besides to refraining from mere duplication of the study from the similar topic /issue, it would be useful to the present author to see the bulk of critical studies on the novels understudy to clearly observe the possible views of understanding and interpreting them, and then to take position towards a particular subject of argument on the texts that would particularize and deepened the analysis that would come next.

Accordingly, the texts' earlier critical observations by other scholars are attempted to be seen, here, one by one but bearing the chronology of the studies (late to latest) in mind as follows. The novels selected for this study are Ngugi wa Thiongo's '*Wizard of the Crow*' (2006), Ben Okri's '*Starbook*' (2007) and Zakes Mda's '*Little Suns*' (2015) based on the criteria mentioned in the previous chapter under the subtopic, '*Bases of Text Selection*'. Compared with the other two selected novels of this study, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) receives more scholarly attention but still it must attract wider areas of views and approaches *per se*- a lot of studies can be yet to come on the text.

In '*Modes of Resistance in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Wizard of the Crow* (2012), Chakraporty demonstrates the role of the protagonists (Kamiti and Nyawira) as after the initiations given to them by the wizard. He then connects their performance (wizardry performance) with the resistance to disrupt the hegemony of the state of Aburiria (Imaginary state). It is also argued, "That Ngugi draws upon the African-American mythic-trickster aesthetic paradigm, Schechner's theorization of socio-dramatic/ritualistic performance and Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque and grotesque to form certain modes of resistance in the novel". However, to put the difference, this study emphasizes on the allegorical implication of the novels of the former colonial nations. It also holds postcolonialism as an interconnected term with national allegory. It considers that postcolonialism embraces postcolonial themes and aims while national allegory is one of the

postcolonial discursive elements that can be used as a critical tool to interpret postcolonial themes and aims in postcolonial novels.

The other study conducted on *Wizard of the Crow* is Raphael Dalleo's article entitled '*Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's Wizard of the Crow and Postcolonial Pedagogy*' (2012). In this article, Ngũgĩ's novels pedagogical implication is seen. Different philosophies of pedagogy are explored with the comparative observation of Ngũgĩ's earlier and recent novels. So, pedagogy of anticolonial education against colonial pedagogy for European indoctrination is pointed out. As it is demonstrated, European form of education can be disrupted by using an alternative mode of educational pedagogy that foregrounds Kenyan version of history but interrogates European/colonial version of history. In doing so, the truth of postcolonial reality is also revealed. In *Wizard of the Crow*, globalization needs to be seen as a new form of imperialism, which, in turn, changes postcolonial reality. It is also advised that in this new form, postcolonial teaching style has to be also appropriated so that the postcolonial society is conscious of the adversaries of globalization upon them. Nevertheless, this study wants to examine *Wizard of the Crow* from the postcolonial (counter) discursive and interpretative approach by using national allegory as a critical view.

As one of their selected novels, PhD and MA students of Addis Ababa University also included *Wizard of the Crow* in their University partial fulfillment dissertation works. A PhD dissertation entitled '*The Practice and Significance of Magical Realism in Selected African Novels*' by Hiwot Walegn (2020) treated *Wizard of the Crow* as one of the selected novels that clearly prevail the aspects of magical realism. Therefore, using magic realism as a theoretical framework and a critical lens of reading her selected novels, Hiwot attempted to identify issues raised in magic realist approach. She also tried to compare and contrast the practice of magic realism across the African regions (West, East, South, Central and North) with different traditional contexts. Shortly, the study tried to show how and why the magic realism approach is used in the diverse contexts of Africa. In line with this, she observed the writers' motivation in using magic realism in crafting their literary works that help to identify the differences and similarities among the different traditional contexts of Africa.

Lastly, Hiwot's dissertation concludes that African novelists use magic realism in association with their contexts, cultural backgrounds, shared historical accounts and the socio-political and

economic matrix of the continent. However, the present paper is different from Hiwot's is that its primary focus is to unveil the implication of postcolonial form of allegory in prominent Anglophone African writers. To do this, regions who have received enormous influence from the British colonial domination alone were selected unlike Hiwot's selection of each region that could embrace the practice of Anglophone, Francophone and Arabic literature. In addition, the topic of this study focuses to scrutinize national allegory as it is applied in the novel in order to be used as a counter discourse of colonialism and as critical tool in order to reveal the postcolonial socio-historical dynamics.

The other dissertation conducted in (2020) at Addis Ababa University using Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* as a text for analysis is Dagnachew Adefris's '*A Post-colonial Ecocritical Reading of Ecological Violence and Resistance in Selected Anglophone African Novels (2000-2010)*'. Using Postcolonial Ecocritical approach, Dagnachew tried to identify the ecological violence and resistance as reflected in his selected novels. With particular reference to *Wizard of the Crow*, he pointed out that deforestation and loss of natural ecologies are taken as major forms of Post-colonial ecological violence wherein he also identified rehabilitation, glorification of nature and reforestation are as strategies of Postcolonial ecological resistance. Dagnachew also revealed that the writers of the respective novels use narrative strategies, such as narrative voices, point of view and environmental tropes as means of articulating ecological violence and resistance, but the present study uses the novel to see it from the point of the counter discourse of postcolonialism. This research also uses national allegory as an interpretative literary instrument that reveals the socio-political complexities of the postcolonial nation. This marks the difference between Dagnachew's study, which used postcolonial Ecocritical reading as critical view, and the present study.

Ben Okri's *Starbook* (2007) takes the second position for the review section of this paper. One of the critical papers that tries to examine Okri's *Starbook*, along with the writer's other literary works, is Chukwumah's '*From Realism to Fantasy: the Poetics of Setting in Ben Okri's Narratives* (2015). This study engages to see the techniques employed in Ben Okri's Oeuvre in general. Paying attention to the settings of Ben Okri's narratives, the study explores the transformation of the writer from realism to fantasy (a move from conventional narrative to the journey of the spirits in order to deviate) in his literary techniques. In essence, elements of

fantasy pervade his later works than his earlier works. So, the *Starbook* (2007), the author identifies, is occupied with Okri's later technique. Compared with his nation literary giants, he fuses the magical or the fantastical element in a more astute manner, however, the present study explores the allegorical implication of this technique in the postcolonial African nations by using national allegory as critical tool of interpretation.

Next, *Transcending Historical Violence: Uses of Myth and Fable in Ben Okri's Starbook* (2015) by Mariaconcetta Costantini shows how the historical violence of slavery is reimagined in Ben Okri's *Starbook*. By this treatise, Costantini mentions the specific strategy that Okri adapts to narrate the trauma of slavery. Accordingly, myths and fables are the most important traditional narrative forms in the novel. In addition, Ben Okri infuses myth with historical realism, mutates romance into tragedy and incorporates folktales into the narrative structure of his novel (p.119). It illustrates that Okri uses these folkloric form of narrating the story of the novel along with his wittingly creative adaptation of the traditional or archetypal form of telling a story. The indigenous mode of understanding reality and his suggestive creation of storytelling are uniquely intertwined. In conclusion, he syncretically blends myth and historiography to reimagine the historical violence of slavery.

This study is different from Costantini's in that it uses national allegory as a critical tool to interpret the allegorical representations employed in the postcolonial novels of Africa. In other words, it aimed at exploring the socio-historical matrices of the postcolonial nations as they are allegorically reflected in the literary works. Hence, it ultimately investigated the themes, as well as the literary technical implications of the novels.

The article entitled '*Ideology and the Pursuit of Desire in Ben Okri's Starbook*' (2019) is conducted by Chinyere Chinedu in Nigeria. Chinedu sees Okri's '*Starbook*' from the perspective of ideology that could take the desire of characters, and interpret their identity, action, norm, value and the kind of relationship they have with others based on the ideology they have upheld. In other words, the interpretation of language to the study of ideology in literary texts is exposed in this article. Poststructuralist critical approach is adopted to the study. Most particularly, Jurgen Habermas's linguistic theory is taken as appropriate for the analysis while this study takes postcolonial form of allegory (national allegory) as theoretical perspective.

Little Suns (2015) by Zakes Mda is the third novel considered for the purpose of this review. As such, Harry Sewlall's study entitled "The Postcolonial/Posthuman Nexus in Zakes Mda's *Little Suns*" (2020) is important. The study sees the novel as a recent masterpiece of Mda by which he uses to develop his characterization, which was prefigured in his '*The Heart of Redness*' (2000), that embodies human and animal relationship.

This article describes Zakes Mda, the author of *Little Suns*, as an exemplary author who skillfully blends human and animal characters together. He is also characterized by using magical realism as his literary technique. Moreover, Zakes Mda is categorized under the postcolonial literary writers group mainly because he seamlessly stitches magical realism, indigenous knowledge and the colonial history of South Africa into his narrative fabrics.

As the article confirms, Mda's (colonial) historical backdrop for his literary background makes his works viable pieces to be studied by postcolonial critical thinking, especially by the concept that is developed by Ashcroft (2015) as postcolonial aesthetics. In a similar manner, the human-animal nexus in his characters portrayals makes his novels suited to be studied against the idea of posthuman critical thinking developed by Cary Wolfe (2010). However, in this article, the author attempted to investigate an interstitial space that can be found out by the affect theory, which is a useful window of perspective and developed by Brian Massumi (1995) to see the postcolonial and posthuman nexus. In short, the article underwrites the viability of postcolonial and posthuman literary aesthetics along with affect theory to show the phantasmagorical dimension of the relationship between human and animal characters in Zakes Mda's *Little Suns*.

However, this study is different from Harry Sewlall's because it mainly engages in exploring the allegorical implications of the novel by taking the idea of national allegory as a critical perspective.

The other literary study that takes '*Little Suns*' into consideration is Noel Zanoxolo Sicwebu's PhD dissertation titled '*African Humanism and Character Representation in Zakes Mda's Fiction: A Socio-Cultural and Psychological Approach*' (2021). This dissertation attempted to explore African philosophy as it is applied in Zakes Mda's novels and autobiography. African philosophy, or Ubuntu, is developed based on the cultural concepts such as collectivity, sharing,

interdependence, mutual respect and the placement of human beings at the center. Hence, the study discusses the role of this philosophy in Mda's literary writing. The emotional and spiritual development of the characters relies on the social relevance of the philosophy to the African psycho-cultural impediments wrought about by colonization.

Specifically for '*Little Suns*', the study demonstrates the social discourse that Mda intends to transfer basically in two ways: First, the description of the landscape in the novel suggests socio-political implications. The strong connection between human beings and the physical environment they inhabit is essential in Africa because it is believed that each of them affects one another. Understanding the nature of the landscape helps to determine and select the right destination from "several little destinations". The author of the study seems to say that, from the protagonist of the novel, we can realize that a "long walk" may take several destinations that can deter us from achieving a certain goal. Similarly, he argues that the struggle for the liberation of the land is the struggle for the liberation of the people from colonization and Western hegemony.

Second, the Ubuntu-based culture and religion in Africa is a vital force to connect communities together because its basic tenets connect not only people in life but also people with their ancestors. However, in *Little Suns*, the colonialists attempted to undermine the Ubuntu culture by imposing their religion on the natives. Hence, the protagonist's struggle against the colonialist is supposed to retrieve or save the native's socio-cultural institutions, which are proverbial glues to keep the communities together.

Nevertheless, this study is different from Sicwebu's dissertation in that it interprets the allegorical implications of the novel's overall constituency by applying the notion of national allegory as a postcolonial critical tool.

From the assessment of the critical anthologies that consider the selected texts in their studies, comparatively, '*Little Suns*' has received the most scant attention of the literary scholars.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Introduction

As noted earlier, the correlation between postcolonialism and national allegory is an interactive engagement. Both of them are working on the sociopolitical and cultural concerns of the post-independent nations. They are intermixed critical tools or concepts for postcolonial psychosocial, cultural and political studies. They seem to be a blend of terms that appear to be used equally in postcolonial studies. Hence, what is each of these terms distinctive essence and role? And what is their interrelation?

Postcolonialism is used to examine the legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It reveals the ongoing social, political and cultural challenges of formerly colonized societies. It focuses on the issues of national identities, culture, history, power, discourse, resistance and struggle. Postcolonialism adapts various literary techniques to illustrate and address these postcolonial themes and aims. One of these literary techniques that have emerged to reflect the impact of colonial legacies on the individual and collective identities of postcolonial nations is national allegory. It is also an important literary instrument to articulate the complexities of postcolonialism. Similarly, it is a critical tool to interpret the literary and cultural works of these societies as allegorical representations.

In short, national allegory is a vital tool that functions in the following three ways: first, it can be used as a postcolonial discourse to respond to ideological power and structure; second, it is a postcolonial literary technique by which literary writers engage to explore and reflect their nations' histories and identities. Third, it is a postcolonial critical tool to examine postcolonial literature. Hence, it works within the broader postcolonial analytical framework. In this regard, postcolonialism and national allegories are interconnected concepts. Thus, to explain the functional line of demarcation between postcolonialism and national allegory in this study, providing the essence and definition of each of these concepts is imperative.

Therefore, this section of the paper would bring to light the concept of postcolonialism and national allegory consecutively in order to explain the nature of postcolonial studies in general and national allegory in particular and to understand the aims of African literary writers and

African historiographers in a nuanced manner. This helps us to determine whose perspective is better suited to interpret a certain work of literature. It is, as well, good to see possible interrelational and relational significance across or between theories or approaches for the analysis.

3.2. Conceptualizing Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism offers wide areas of views and debatable concerns in the post-independent nation-states.

Postcolonial criticism is particularly effective at helping us see connections among all the domains of our experience—the psychological, ideological, social, political, intellectual, and aesthetic—in ways that show us just how inseparable these categories are in our lived experience of ourselves and our world (Tyson, 2006, p.417).

This provides a multiple lenses for understanding how postcolonial literary texts simultaneously resist the perpetual legacies of colonialism and create consciousness about the challenges of post independent nations.

Since the early 1980s, postcolonialism has developed as a body of critical studies to deal with the nature of the contact between Western and non-Western nations. In its attempt, therefore, it consciously shifts to see the dominant ways through which the relationship between Western and non-Western people is viewed from both angles (from Western and non-Western angles). Accordingly, as far as a postcolonial literary study is concerned, the following important vanguard figures or practitioners are inevitable to be mentioned: Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Bill Ashroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, and Gayatri Ch. Spivak. However, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) takes the groundbreaking credit for launching an inquiry into the views and relationships of the Western world and the non-western world in terms of literary and cultural productions.

The term postcolonialism has debatable views and definitions among theorists and critics who have dealt with many concerns about it. There are reasons for this problematic definition. First, it covers a wide range of concerns both in colonialism and in neocolonialism. It also embraces

different disciplines like literature, history, anthropology, sociology, philology, psychology, etc. that were affected by colonialism and its aftermath (Burney, 2012,p.173).

Second, European imperialists, especially Great Britain, contain an extended territory of cultural provenance and landmarks with different bases of beliefs and modes of thought, which have diverse terrain to put in a single and easy pot of definition. The definitions of postcolonialism try to cover a literarily, culturally, historically and geographically wide range of texts and contexts. Thus, to consider this broader development that postcolonial studies has attempted to address affects its precise and clear-cut definition.

Third, the degree of influence that colonialism brought to these vast areas is so disparate. To shoot a point, there are literal and cultural colonies based on the extent of the imperialists influence. In some areas, like India, Africa and the Caribbean, it resulted in huge adverse effects that extended to the level of extermination of human races (especially in the Caribbean), whereas in other areas like Canada, New Zealand and Australia, it was not as exploitative as the aforementioned places; even the influence of imperialism among the formers is different.

What the West Indian shares with the African is a common political predicament: a predicament which we call colonial; but the word colonial has a deeper meaning for the West Indian than it has for the African. The African, in spite of his modernity, has never been wholly severed from the cradle of a continuous culture and tradition. His colonialism mainly takes the form of lack of privilege in organizing the day to day affairs of his country. This state of affairs is almost at an end; and its end is the result of the African's persistent and effective demand for political freedom... (George Lamming as cited in Ashcroft et al., 1995,p.15).

Fourth, some definitions of postcolonialism tend to oppose colonialism, where the assumption of postcolonialism amalgamates wider arrays of visions and revisions, including post-independence and colonial periods. So, the nature of postcolonialism and its concerns are the center of flux for different reading practices and critical analysis, starting from the inception of being studied in academia.

Influenced in part by post-structuralism, in part by political developments in the western academy, postcolonial critical discourse has developed over the past quarter-century or so, following the publication of *Orientalism*, into a still-proliferating set of reading practices directed at analyzing aspects of colonial and postcolonial writing (Boehmer, 2005,p.6).

The other very important element that contributes to the lack of a precise definition for postcolonialism is that scholars' multi-prismatic perspectives on this subject matter are still controversial. Most of the time, the parameters and priorities they want to give for their study emanate from their professional and national contexts. Besides to this, the deep-dyed ideological influence of imperialism still resides or exists in the current independent states, but they were the erstwhile colonies of the imperialists. So, this may have its own role in creating confusion and illusion among scholars who are dealing with their studies on postcolonialism. In line with this, most proponents of postcolonial studies are living in imperial nations while dealing with the exigencies and problems of their home or native land. This has also been contradictory on the part of the critics. These and other polemical issues have blended complexity and played their role in the lack of a precise definition of postcolonialism yet.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the experience of colonialism and the challenges of post-independence produced an explosion of new form of writing in English across the former colonies of Great Britain (Melakneh, 2010).

There are also linguistic and semantic discrepancies between the strategies and the practice of post-colonialism and postcolonialism (the hyphenated and the non-hyphenated terms) that we must take into account (Ashcroft et al., 2003). Here, it is to remind that the prefix 'post' with hyphen and without hyphen also continues to be the source of vigorous debate among critics. Regarding the prefix, Newell (2006, p. 179) observes, "In any of its manifestations, the word 'post' therefore offers a 'misleading chronology' with its linear, 'before-after' framework, which ignores the multidirectional, ruptured quality of time and space in which the 'past' may not yet be 'post'".

In fact, some theorists and critics want to restrict the implication of the term postcolonialism to its chronological sense, meaning after-colonialism or after-independence. Others also take the term to mean the implication of its oppositional sense to colonialism, then, to denote anti-colonialism. The purpose of the latter implication is to subvert and appropriate the colonial discourse of imperialists in contemporary postcolonial writing. To put it another way, it intends to consider active reading that makes the colonial texts available for rewriting and subversion to meet the project of 'Write Back to the Center'. However, the implication of the term goes far from indicating the above evocations, as the following extract suggests:

All post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem. The development of new élites within independent societies, often buttressed by neo-colonial institutions; the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistic or religious discriminations; the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous peoples in settler/invader societies—all these testify to the fact that post-colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction (Ashcroft et al., 1995,p.2).

Here, the debates usually stress across the politically defined historical periods of pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence cultures. Accordingly, we have the most distinguished adherent elements that are clung in the definition(s) of postcolonialism, viz., some may depend on the interaction of European nations and the societies they colonized. Other definitions could also be based on the reclaiming of European stigmatized perspectives towards the colonized nations (like Oriental vs. Occidental). On the other hand, there are scholars who bear postcolonialism in association with the concept and practice of resistance and representation in their definitions of the term. At this point in time, just to make the position known, the focus of this paper goes along with the above extract. Therefore, in this paper, the term postcolonial (without hyphen) would be used as last resort.

As it has been discussed so far, postcolonial studies have come to mean many things based on the 'historical fact' of European colonialism and the diverse effects to which this phenomenon gave rise (Ashcroft, 1995). Needless to say, postcolonial literary enterprise proceeds and addresses wider social and political issues affecting postcolonial societies, and thus, it is impossible to deal with everything of this vast avenue in this study, but the aim is to show how

and what postcolonial studies embraces multiple issues and how it is so fluid and has resonated with complex intricacies throughout its line of development. As a result of this fluid and vibrant nature of postcolonialism, critics like Aijaz Ahmed (1987) complain about the limits that postcolonialism should specifically underline. But the flux on the definition of postcolonialism would continue as this subject matter is likely to comply with the postcolonial societies' past, present and future agenda and forces that these societies incline to modify the direct response of colonial incursion and foreground the tensions with the imperial power.

To end the point of the above discussions, we can say that the specific practice of postcolonial writing has established a diverse and powerful body of literature and has brought into light dominant ideas of literary writing and cross-cultural studies. Therefore, we need to determine the last resource for the definition of postcolonialism that would be operational for this study.

Accordingly, postcolonialism is the study of postcolonial countries' socio-cultural and historical, philosophical and ideological, politico-economic and linguistic phenomena and the effects of these phenomena, starting from the inception of imperialism up until now, as these are reflected in their (postcolonial countries) contemporary literary productions. It focuses on the reworking of the forms of Western historicism to reorder them in such a way that the natives are represented authentically. It is also a critical examination of the continuing challenges of post-independent nations.

Postcolonial literary writers have vested to contemplate alternative techniques other than the European model of representation, taste and style that can truthfully portray the subjugation and dispossession or the lost temperament of the colonized mindset as well as their socio-cultural history. In other words, postcolonial literature, as a body of writing that deals with non-Western creativity, has focused on the distinctive or different strategies of writing to effectively address the experience of colonialism and its legacies. Later, these adapted strategies and techniques have played a role in decolonizing the minds of the colonized and illustrating the themes and aims of postcolonialism. For example, postcolonial African literature has represented African socio-cultural and historical reality while also presenting an African world panorama from which readers could understand the truth of the continent.

For this reason, allegories that were used to illustrate the acts of colonialism and imperialism must be interrogated and dismantled, and reappropriated in postcolonial strategies of writing literature. This would have a significant role in protesting against the very assumption of imperialism in the colonies. Slemon (1987, p. 11) argues, “Allegory becomes a site upon which postcolonial cultures seek to contest and subvert colonialist appropriation through the production of a literary, and specifically anti-imperialist, figurative opposition or textual *counter-discourse*”. As such, in many respects, the representations of individuals, objects, subjects, culture, gender, nature, historical events, ideas, race, etc. have been the major areas of concern in literary studies of postcolonialism. These are also the salient focuses of African canonical writers, who have firmly engaged in the process of decolonization and the representation, or reflection, of postcolonial cultural reality. Therefore, what are the representations of allegories in the contemporary African novels, then? However, first, we had better see the definition and development of allegory in literature in order to have comprehensive information about it from which national allegory is stemmed at the end of 20th century.

3.3. Allegory in Literature

3.3.1. Introduction: Definition and Background

Allegorical mode of writing has been an important practice since ancient times up until now. From classical to Romanticism and continuing through to New Criticism, deploying allegory in writing was considered the highest skill of intellectuality (Tambling, 2010). It is a symbolic narrative that conveys meaning both on literal and implied levels. Hence, literary writers across different periods used allegorical modes of writing to produce literary works. In the same manner, allegorical interpretation of these kinds of texts has been employed as one method of explicating and interpreting meanings for a long period among critics (Copeland & Struck, 2010).

Allegory is often defined as an “‘extended metaphor’ in which characters, actions and scenery (*addendum*—abstract ideas) are systematically symbolic, referring to spiritual, political, psychological (*addendum*, and social) confrontations” (Childs & Fowler, 2006,p.4). At this point in particularity, the term allegory denotes the representation of one thing in place of the other that might be located at the anterior spot in time, which has closer and immediate affiliation

and/or relationship to the former or the past incident. It is a strategy of saying one thing literally but meaning another thing metaphorically. As De Santis(2019)also explains, the most important thing in Allegory is the sphere of literal and the sphere of symbolic get intertwined. The following definition of allegory gives the general description of allegory.

In its simplest form, allegory (from the Greek *alios* — 'other' + *agoreuein* — 'to speak openly, to speak in the assembly or market') is a trope that in saying one thing also says some 'other' thing; it is the doubling of some previous or anterior code by a sign, or by a semiotic system, that also signifies a more immediate or 'literal' meaning.' Allegory thus marks a bifurcation or division in the directionality of the interpretive process (Slemon, 1987,p.4).

Allegory in literature can be used as a literary device and as a method of symbolizing content. As a literary device, it signifies a technique of symbolizing certain actions, settings, characters, objects, or images in such a way that these elements can transfer some set of philosophical, political, religious, or moral meanings. As symbolizing a content, it is a method of narrating a story by representing some actions, characters, settings in place of another object, person, action, historical situations and events in such a way that these elements are contrived to represent some historical and cultural events, and to make them coherent sense on the literal signification (primary level) and metaphorical signification (secondary level), and as same time they communicate each other (Abrams, 2013). Thus, allegory works both as a technique and as an exposition of thematic contents. Primarily, it uses as a technique of writing but it also uses to depict the thematic concerns in its secondary level.

3.3.2. Characteristics of Allegorical Novels

This section intends to provide some features of an allegorical novel. An allegorical novel uses parallel narratives to convey both literal and figurative meanings. Therefore, to understand an allegorical novel, we need to look at certain features, which are useful to invite readers to explore multiple layers of meanings that the novel intends to transmit.

First, allegorical novel possesses “plurisignificance”(Webb, 1978). It makes correlated events or concepts wherein we can sense literally, and as the same time they signify implicitly. The narration of one event carries the implications of another circumstance. In other words, in

allegorical novel, one set of circumstance implies to another set of circumstance. Therefore, it invokes double or multiple interpretation that suggests multiple meanings and views. It provokes the reader to think beyond the literal or to think away from the direct meaning of the actual narrative. “Allegory, in its ‘purer’ forms, attempts to direct the reader to various meanings ‘behind’ or ‘within’ the literal story.”(Allen, 2017,p.212). There are elements of myth and symbols that project the readers to interpret or to envision the work in a manifold manner.

Second, allegorical novel occupies polar views or oppositional relationship(Honig, 1960). Certain figures or ideas confront against one another in a manner of polarities. They contest over an object, or a thing or an idea to take dominant position. Therefore, rival authorities carryout actions that could degrade the opposing power. We can see “the symbolic power struggles” between the contestants. “At the heart of any allegory will be found this conflict of authorities. One ideal will be pitted against another, its opposite.” (Fletcher, 2021,p.22). On top of this, one of the extreme distinct aspects of allegorical narrative is its inclusion of a revolutionary character in it. A character rises to oppose against the actions and attitudes of the contemporary authoritative body especially the tyrant, and commits himself/herself to change unjustified principles and the important figures who convicts crime against humanity and morality (Allen, 2017). This is important to investigate alternative socio-political and ideological views(Webb, 1978). It also helps to subvert the logic of master-slave relationship that perpetuates in the social, cultural and political structure of a certain society (Allen, 2017,p.213).

Third, allegorical novel provides satirical engagements. Literary allegory and satire have intimate relationship. Authors usually tend to use satiric position to forward their socio-political reactions against a particular situation. They depict and criticize the moral, philosophical, and political aspects of a certain socio-political situations(Webb, 1978; Fletcher, 2021). Particularly, this is common in modern African literary writing where African oral traditions are included to evaluate the moral and ethical dilemma of post-independent regimes.

In line with the above feature, allegorical novel is commentary in nature because it provides social and political commentary. It employs humor, irony, or exaggerations to expose and criticize follies and shortcomings of individuals, institutions, societies, or regimes(Webb, 1978). In this regard, authors use allegorical novel to subvert and critique an ideology or the power

structure that reins the socio-political circumstances of a particular period. Hence, it is an indirect approach that allows writers to provide an indirect commentary (Frye, 1995). In this regard, Graham Allen provides the role of allegory in exposing reality of some difficult situations.

In a time of political conflict, when it becomes difficult or dangerous to express directly one's own political and social beliefs, then allegory can become an indirect way for writers to communicate their beliefs. The writer of an allegory can express political beliefs covertly by foregrounding the literal level (Allen, 2017, p.217).

Fourth, parabolic characterization can be deployed in allegorical novel. In the second stage of African literature, the primary purpose of the writing is teaching moral lesson or shaping the human conscience (Webb, 1978). Hence, moralizing tales like parables and fables are component elements of the African fiction. Moreover, in parabolic characterization, the traits of characters can be identified by their moral position. This kind of narration includes the naming process of a character. This can again be transferred to depict the level of moral corruption in the post independent society.

Allegorical novel is also identified by the appearance of related literary devices (like symbolism, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, personification). It usually employs figurative languages to create vivid imagery and to deepen insightful meanings and perspectives.

I understand allegory as belonging to the extended family of tropes. Thus, Allegory bears some resemblance to figures such as synecdoche, metonymy, simile and metaphor. Each of these figures of speech asks readers to understand or to see one thing in the terms of another; they are all substitutive in nature (Johnson, 2012, p.4).

The allusion of the past or the making of cross-reference of cultural, historical and religious contexts is another feature of allegorical novel. In this respect, Angus Fletcher (2021, p.9) provides the following: "In the close web of allusion and cultural cross-reference that forms the fabric of the text, the names even of the guests at the final dinner (a thinly-disguised vegetation ceremony) have deep symbolic significance". Therefore, there are specific events, movements or ideologies that inspire writers. These embrace the historical and cultural contexts wherein they have lived and happened.

3.3.3. Origin and Development of Allegory

The interpretation and representation of allegory is based on the a certain context, function or attribute(De Santis, 2019). As allegory passed through different times, it came across continued adaptations and versions. In fact, it develops through adaptations. In this regard, Philosophers, Theologians, and Literary men are the main players of allegorical adaptations (Honig, 1960). The historical overview of allegory helps to understand the process of writing, representing and interpreting allegorical thoughts.

When it is seen from earlier times up to the modern era, it is a flexible literary mode of expression or /writing. In its historical moment, we come across different versions and thoughts of allegory that was employed by different writers. Across the different historical periods, theorists and critics in the area also pointed out critical points for the study of allegory in literature.

Hence, this section mainly revisits the development and practice of allegory across the major literary periods that were prevailed in the history of the world. The following subsection provides the trajectory of allegory in history.

3.3.3.1. Classical Allegory

The use or deployment of Allegory as a mode of writing in literature and rhetoric is dated back to ancient Greek and Rome (Allen, 2017). It was primarily used for philosophical and rhetorical purposes. Philosophical interpretation and rhetorical engagement during the ancient Greece and Rome were common practices. During the period, philosophers had paid attention to enlighten philosophical elements. Therefore, they had taken allegory as an instrument to enlighten abstract ideas and aid people to understand hidden or deeper concepts (Tambling, 2010). Allegories were justifiably used to manifest the heightened aspects of thoughts and the insightful elements they encompassed. Thus, the great scholars of the period used allegory in literary, religious and cultural manifestations (Copeland & Struck, 2010).

In this regard, poetry was deemed to take the utmost philosophical status because allegorical impulses and devices were embodied in it. Therefore, it was an essential genre whereby the essence of allegories was justified. In brief, allegorical writing and allegorical interpretation

became common for philosophical thoughts, and poetry was the repository of allegories in ancient/ classical times (Copeland & Struck, 2010).

3.3.3.2. Medieval Allegory

Allegory during the medieval age was used to teach Christian doctrine or Theological views. Hence, religious allegory was prominent in providing moral instructions (Tambling, 2010). Allegorical interpretation of the Bible was essential for this purpose, and a parabolic form of narrative was invented to provide the instruction (Brittan, 2003). Personification of vices and virtues also became the most common allegorical representation in this period. Therefore, personification of abstract ideas was the dominant mode of allegorical writing and speaking (Tambling, 2010). Hence, during the medieval age, the common context that must be kept in mind for allegorical interpretation was scripture, and the last resort of the interpretation was aimed at conveying spiritual meaning.

3.3.3.3. Renaissance Allegory

Allegory was also used as an artistic and literary expression during the Renaissance. The period of the Renaissance is believed to be the period of intellectual and cultural flourishing in Europe. It drew on classical sources and thoughts. It set the stage for the revival of ancient Greek and Latin philosophy. On the other hand, the long history and literary tradition of middle age had a significant influence on the practice of art and literature during the Renaissance. Again, allegory was increasingly employed to explore secular themes like politics, love and the natural world during the Renaissance. Allegorical narratives to represent philosophical, moral and political themes intensified. As such, there was a controversial debate on allegorical writing and interpretation.

However, the Renaissance brought about a cultural and intellectual shift in writing and interpreting art and literature by using allegory as an important literary device. Allegory helped the European thought process spread to the universe by concurrent authors. Seen from the long Christian traditional point of view, the Renaissance declared the new social change in humanity that allowed allegorical and symbolic representation and interpretation outside the realm of spiritual significance. Therefore, it also announced the decline of univocal spiritual interpretation but proclaimed the birth of reformation, which gave the right to multiple interpretations of

literary texts (Brittan, 2003). Hence, Renaissance is the reformation approach to allegorical interpretation of texts. In short, allegory is one of the important literary modes writers employ to describe abstract ideas through imagery and rhetoric during this period (Caldwell, 1977).

3.3.3.4. Romantic Allegory

Some scholars, like Benjamin (2009), argue that allegory was a disreputed mode of expression during the Romantic period because it “is concerned with the discovery of truth and reveals more clearly than anything else the identity of the pure curiosity which is aimed at mere knowledge” (Hendershot, 1995, p. 6). In fact, there was controversy over the use of allegory in Romanticism. Romantic writers like Coleridge (1875) and Wordsworth (1802) viewed allegory as limiting interpretation by imposing a rigid, mechanistic, and moralistic scenario on the reader, while “many theorists refute this view by arguing that the allegorical mode is polysystemic and overdetermined” (Hendershot, 1995, p. 6).

However, allegory is one of the important literary modes by which poets expose the reality of the epoch in an imagery way. The description of abstract ideas through imagery and rhetoric is commonly used. Allegory during the Romantic period was employed to explore the vastness and mystery of the universe. In particular, Romanticism is a literary period that places a central emphasis on individualism, imagination, emotion and nature. Hence, it paid attention to the language and imagery used to recreate the artwork that portrays these elements. For example, sensory language and intense imagery for emotional heightenedness were very important (Allen, 2017). Allegories that achieved this purpose were employed in literary writing. Similarly, nature was a source of inspiration to create a metaphoric realm. Romantic allegory helped to envision and explore the desire for transcendence. Hence, the allegorical or symbolic representations that met this purpose were used in the Romantic period. In order to describe the secret of life and a universal theme or truth, symbolic representation and/or allegorical narrative were commonly employed in Romantic poetry. Contrary to the contemporary allegory, the Romantic allegory sought to have universal truth.

3.3.3.5. Modern Allegory

Modern allegory comes to be used to refer to the 20th century version of allegory. It reflects the complex and ambiguous lives of the modern world. It also sheds light on the complex forms of literary narratives, which disturb the earlier traditional forms of allegorical narratives. In modern times, it gives a chance to reimagine the past accounts for reevaluation and reconfiguration for the present. To “emplot the past differently”, texts must be reevaluated based on current sociopolitical impulses.

The past becomes an allegory of the present when seen as prefiguring it, and the present also becomes allegorical, because though past events are fixed, their meaning is not; Dante’s encounters with dead souls in the present reopen and reread the past, which means that the present (as the result of the past) becomes prefigured differently (Tambling, 2010,p.151).

In modern periods, it is used to express the socio-political concerns of a particular nation (Xavier, 1999). Essentially, allegory and allegorical interpretation provide a new window of perspectives to scan texts from the socio-political and humanities points of view. Moreover, it is seized to be a critical term through which literary and cultural studies are seen in a fresh manner because allegory is shifted from the earlier philosophical, religious, and cultural backgrounds to the contemporary social, political, and ethical issues and contexts. Compared to the earlier forms, the modern sense/version of allegory helps to describe and examine the complex characteristics of the current situation in a more nuanced way, as it has allowed for the intermixing of multilayered meanings and dimensions. In this regard, White (1987, as cited in Tambling, 2010, p. 150) provides the following point: “Narratives contain indefinitely many ordering relations, and indefinitely many ways of combining those relations... a historical narrative claims truth not merely for each of its individual statements taken distributively, but for the complex form of the narrative itself”.

3.3.3.5.1. Colonial Allegory

It indicates the use of allegory in the process of colonialism and imperialism. Colonialism was supported by the strategic expansion of imperialists into the world of their colonies. One of the most important tools in this regard is the textuality of colonialism, which included Biblical

interpretation and imaginative colonial writing mostly achieved by the Metropolitans themselves (Jefferess, 2008). They engaged, for instance, in reshaping the contours and metaphorical investments of the Bible into their needs, by which they flattered and lobbied the colonized peoples to accept their (colonizers') metaphorical interpretations that they supposed themselves as superior beings. They told colonial subjects that they came for the 'civilizing mission'. They also crafted imaginative texts parallelly to address their underlying agenda among the colonized people and provided them to Western-backed schools to teach colonial children. These imaginative texts also had a metaphorical designation in their representation that could satisfy imperialist and colonialist desires, but consequently, they wrought disruptive and subjugated effects on the part of the colonies. The following paragraph underpins this argument:

In both conquest and colonization, texts and textuality played a major part. European texts: anthropologies, histories, fiction, captured the non-European subject within European frameworks, which read his or her alterity as terror or lack. Within the complex relations of colonialism these representations were reprojected to the colonized—through formal education or general colonialist cultural relations—as authoritative pictures of themselves, concomitantly representations of Europe and Europeans within this textual archive were situated as normative. Such texts—the representations of Europe to itself, and the representation of others to Europe—were not accounts of different peoples and societies, but a projection of European fears and desires masquerading as scientific/'objective' knowledges (Ashcroft et al., 1995,p. 85).

Taking the above assumption in mind, colonial literary writers represent their subject matters—fictional figures, settings, events, etc.—allegorically, which would be interpreted based on the colonialists' attitude and satisfaction towards the colonies. This method of allegorical representation of colonial subjects and things in colonial literature is called **colonial or imperial allegory**. This was a common practice, especially during the colonial era.

In this instance, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) are notable English fictional works for portraying imperialists' allegorical representation of the colonies. In *Heart of Darkness*, it is shown the dangerous journey from Europe of England to Africa of Congo. The journey includes the tiresome travel across the troubled central African landscapes. However, allegorically, it is done in such a way that Africa

is the land of the 'Dark Continent' without modern civilization. Therefore, Conrad allegorically represented it as primitive and savage, while he represented Europe as civilized, humane and religious. The journey to the Congo basin, which is imagined as the heart of the 'Dark Continent', is a European civilizing mission. So, Europeans are depicted as having a moral responsibility to domesticate and civilize the heart of Africa's Congo. Forster's '*A Passage to India*', on the other side, literally shows the relationship between British and Indians. Nonetheless, allegorically, it underpins the racial prejudice of Indians by the British during imperialism and colonialism and shows how it affects their (Indians and British) relationship.

3.3.3.5.2. Postmodernist Allegory

Allegory within postmodern reality cannot be interpreted statically. The condition of fragmentation and discontinuity in culture and history distinguishes the basic sense of postmodernism. The literal representation of something is different from its implication when it is understood from the hidden or allegorical sense. The gap between the sense of the direct representation and the sense of the meaning it signifies is the act of deciphering or uncovering the meaning of postmodernism, and this is a self-conscious need for interpretation of art and literature without the imposition of certain concrete or universal thought. This sense of interpretation "has made allegory the favorite trope in postmodern criticism". (Longxi, 1994, p.213). Hendershot also points out that "Allegory is conducive to the postmodern because it, too, foregrounds signification rather than being." (1995, p.6).

The most important shift in postmodernism toward allegory is that it shatters the pretext by which traditional allegory emphasizes on building a single and unified truth. "Postmodern allegory shatters the unity represented by the pretext by positing a multiplicity of pretexts and by undermining the "truth" of any of these pretexts. In postmodern allegory, the pretext is just another text, not the text, as a site of ontological truth (Hendershot, 1995, p.7). This demonstrates the revival of allegory in the new reality, emphasizing the breakdown and discontinuity of the older doctrine of monumental work and universal assumptions. Hence, a postmodernist allegory is a new form of allegory that is used to inquire into the multifaceted and alternative meanings that a text wants to disclose.

3.3.3.5.3. Postcolonial Allegory

In the second half of the 20th century, allegory has come to be used in a different manner. Particularly, allegory has come to be used in a more distinctive manner in postcolonial literature. Hence, as one of the foci of postcolonial discourses and postcolonial strategy/style of literary writings, the study of allegory in postcolonial literature does not escape the role of its consecutive contributors and foremost critics, such as Fredric Jameson (1986), Aijaz Ahmad (1987) and Stephen Slemon (1988b), as it has been attempted to revise each one earlier in this paper.

In view of this particular regard for allegory, Fredric Jameson's (1986) pioneering work observes that third-world texts, which are produced out of the experience of colonialism and imperialism, used allegories distinct from the previous allegorical model of representation. He then termed this kind of allegory '*national allegory*' because, for him, the socio-cultural and political embodiment of a colonial nation is represented by the daily struggles of individual characters. Besides, the persistence of African literary scholars on the matter of nationalism, as Jameson insists, invokes him to call the postcolonial form of allegorical writing '*national allegory*'.

Following his designation of the term, many postcolonial critics have argued on the assumption he has forwarded to third-world literature, but they uphold critical interest in interpreting postcolonial texts using this new postcolonial discursive element, which is national allegory.

In postcolonial literature, allegorical form of writing is used as a method of recuperating the subjugated past by the colonizers to reconceptualize and reinterpret it in the present while at the same time claiming Africa's history and culture. This is observed as "there has been a resurgence in allegorical writing in recent years, and in my view the most interesting examples of it are coming out of postcolonial cultures" (Slemon, 1988b, p. 157). Hence, Slemon posits a new trajectory of allegory that works to counter the colonial discourse. Shortly, here, national allegory is taken as a counter discourse against the Western-rooted attitude towards the colony.

In postcolonial texts, hence, some actions and situations are represented allegorically to refer to certain movements in colonial or/and post-independent history, as Slemon has also pointed out as follows:

the relation between allegory and history - post-colonial allegorical writing not only constitutes a challenge to prevailing theoretical assumptions about what kind of cultural grounding is required for allegorical communication to take place, but also, that it is helping to change our received ideas of history (1988b,p.158).

Clearly, we can see here that the socio-cultural and political history of a nation is used as a prior text (a pretext) to the development of the notion of national allegory. This is why, as Slemon proposes, allegory in postcolonial texts “depends on pre-existing codes (or ‘*addendum*’ signifying systems) of recognition: thus, the colonized subject is ‘positioned’ within a ‘master code or pretext’ that comes from the tradition of (colonial/European) representation” (Nayar, 2015, p. 109).

Sembene Ousmene’s *Xala* (1974) and Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (1991) can be taken as typical examples of **postcolonial form of allegorical writing**, which was called, earlier in the above discussion, *national allegorical* writing. In the novel, “Xala”, which means sexual impotence in the Wolof language of Senegal, it is literally depicted that the sexual impotence of the protagonist, El Hadji Abdoukader Beye, occurred while he wanted to consummate his third marriage (Jameson, 1986). His erectile dysfunction upon his third marriage satirizes, by implication, the failure of post-independent Senegal in particular and the African governments in general that they promised at the time of the revolution against colonialism (Jameson, 1986). *The Famished Road*, on the other hand, literary shows the recurrent births and deaths of the spirit child, Azaro (the protagonist), and the continuous suffering and injustice he encountered. This metaphorically reflects the passage of Nigerian political history from colonialism through successive military coups and ethnic conflicts of its post-independence period, which has resulted in the continuous suffering of Nigerians (Jagne & Parekh, 1998; Quayson, 2009).

3.4.3.5.4. Operational Definition for National Allegory

National allegory is a post-colonial literary writing phenomenon. This phenomenon has mostly characterized third-world literary texts that have dealt with the experience of colonialism and imperialism (Jameson, 1986). In his monograph, Fredric Jameson first describes the nature of third-world literature, and then he characterizes it under a discourse called national allegory. Since then, national allegory has become an area of controversial debate in postcolonial studies

(Buchanan, 2010). Jameson intends to invariably associate every third-world literature with the history of colonialism and imperialism as literary background. In other words, he aims to seize colonialism and its legacies as a mere reflection of third-world literary writers.

However, national allegory is a term created out of the sense of postcolonial exigencies wherein the literature of the nation and its history have played a complementary role in the third-world nation states because they (literature and history) are used as discursive elements to encounter imperialism. In this respect, national allegory in these post-independent nations must consider the following main purposes:

- One, it retrieves to the socio-cultural and political history of a nation,
- Two, it uses to respond, as a counter-discourse, to the imperial discourse that was built on the assumption that African nations are “historylessness” before the advent of colonialism,
- Three, it has also taken as a tool to create awareness about post-independent political anomalies of Africa (Neocolonialism). The new independent African leaders untrustworthily take the mission of the national struggle into the abyss of political corruption and ineptitude. At this stage, the primary purpose is to strike the masses of the population against these political leaders.

In this regard, what is unique in national allegory (allegory in postcolonialism) is the projection, meaning the allegorization, of the received image of the colonized nations by the colonialists and the struggle against the biased assumption of third-world history into an underlying or implied meaning that runs in parallel to the text’s literal meaning. In practice, then, the study of national allegory in postcolonial studies principally aims at reading the text and evaluating it from an imperial historical perspective for the purpose of decolonization.

Stephen Slemon (1988), who is one of the forefront postcolonial critics, concentrates on the relation between literature and history in postcolonial literary writing and reading to change our ‘*received ideas*’ of history and to challenge the prevailing theoretical assumptions of the Metropolitans that they say Africa is “historylessness” before the advent of colonialism. The main purpose of his argument emanates from the intention of regenerating or recuperating the past to avoid the dominant ideology of the ‘Centre’ from the contemporary postcolonial societies.

For Slemon, postcolonial writer has an historical investment because he principally builds his fictional work of art on the socio-historical realities of the native societies. This would give opportunity for third world nations to evaluate their past experiences and then to change the *received ideas* and positions created by Imperialists in the way that they could reconstruct their indigenous and/ or domestic socio-political matter so that it can be appropriate to their people, and the people at the globe. This shades light on the contemporary society of Africa. Therefore, it is this very assumption that the present author wants to claim as “Regenerating Socio-Historical Conditions for Socio-Political Transformation” to remind the past socio-political milieu so that the contemporary society can step up their effort to adjust the concurrent situations.

To end the point of discussion, national allegory can be defined as the postcolonial discourse that relies on the allegorization, or metonymization, or metaphorization of the third world’s socio-political matrix to react to the imperial’s cultural assumption towards the colonial nation-states in a way to transform the received assumption imported from Western ideology so that the truth of the nations is disillusioned. Hence, one of the purposes of national allegory is to create awareness by means of a counterargument against colonial discourse. This also includes the explorations of post-independent challenges that have persisted up to the present. Accordingly, this study mainly aims to interpret the postcolonial form of allegorical representations as they are reflected in contemporary African novels.

3.4.4. Types of Allegory: Political/Historical and Conceptual/Spiritual

We could have two distinctive allegories at this instance: (1) Historical /or political allegory and (2) allegory of ideas. In the first type, characters and actions that are represented literally in their turn signified, or allegorized historical personages and events; whereas in the second type, the literal characters and actions are taken to allegorize concepts and certain abstract/spiritual ideas. A typical example for the first type could be George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945) while John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*(1678) could be for the second type.

In *Animal Farm*, George Orwell allegorizes the story of animals into the events of Russia’s Bolshevik revolution and the Communist Soviet Union. Each animal in the story portrays to signify Russia’s political leaders and Russian working class during the Russia’s communist

regime under Joseph Stalin. On the other hand, *The Pilgrim's Progress* allegorizes the Christian doctrines for salvation. It shows that the salvation of the character named Christian after his laborious journey from the city of Destruction to the city of Celestial. However, in his way, he encounters with characters like faithful, hopeful and the 'Giant Despair', and he also passes through places like "the Slough of Despond", the valley of shadow of death etc.(Tambling, 2010).

3.4.5. National Allegory as a Postcolonial Discourse

Discourse has a controlling power, and it influences the practices and perspectives of individuals and institutions. The representation of culture and society could also be heavily influenced by this controlling power. Hence:

Discourse is important.., because it joins power and knowledge together. Those who have power have control of what is known and the way it is known, and those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not. This link between knowledge and power is particularly important in the relationships between colonizers and colonized,(Ashcroft et al., 2000,p.63-64).

To see the effect of this power in cultural relations, the study of discourse attracted the attention of scholars, among whom Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida are the major theorists. These major poststructuralists again decisively impacted the exponents of colonial and postcolonial discourse practitioners such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. The postcolonial scholars started to examine the colonial representation as their central critical work. For example, Edward Said relied on Foucault's idea of the concept of 'Discourse' to bring forth his idea of 'Colonial Discourse', which is followed again by postcolonial discourse.

Here, postcolonial discourses are the counter-discourses of colonial discourses. For the forthcoming discussion of this topic, first providing the concept of discourse along with its derived and succeeding terms would be imperative. Accordingly, Michel Foucault, who pioneered the theory of discourse in "The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language" (1972), observes the power of discourse and the history of ideas. Based on his conception, the short definition of discourse is given below:

‘Discourse’ ... refers to the conditions – political, social, administrative and linguistic – that enable certain kinds of things to be said. It describes the hierarchies of power in which certain figures – doctors, police, kings, administrators – determine what may be articulated and what will be silenced (Nayar, 2015,p.32).

Stephen Slemon (1988a) also discusses that any mode of reading and writing a text is formed to go along with the prevailing or dominant assumption of a concurrent period because it is through this power of dominant ideology that we construct the system of knowing and understanding the world. For example, “History is a mode of discourse that is culturally motivated and ideologically conditioned; it is a mirror of contemporary concerns and dominant, institutionalized practices (p. 159)”. Hence, writing of whether literature or history depends on the content and the perspective of these contemporary dominant concerns. As witnessed earlier, most colonial writers formulate colonial form of allegorical writing to address their intentions and try to inculcate their attitude on the part of the people of the colonies. To beat the crux of the matter, the allegory that was used by imperial ideology had a powerful repression assumption towards its colonies. Colonialists used to reduce or try to erase the colonized's or native's culture and history from the world platform and forced the subjugated groups instead to seize the metropolitan's dominant culture.

One of the legacies of the colonial encounter is a notion of history as “the few privileged monuments “of achievement, which serves either to arrogate “history” wholesale to the imperial Centre or to erase it from the colonial archive and produce, especially in New World cultures, a condition of “historylessness” of “no visible history” (Slemon, 1988a,p.158).

This is an ostensible ‘truth’ of **Colonial Discourse**, which demands to give colonial culture and society inferior status. The term colonial discourse came to be used by Edward Said in the 1980s in order to mark it as a foundation for establishing postcolonial studies. It pays attention to see the modes of representation in colonial writings and the arts. “Colonial discourse may be defined as a set of European representations of the colonial power's subjects that enables the political, economic, cultural and social practices of racialized power relations between colonizers and colonized peoples” (Nayar, 2015, p. 32).

This is the basic reason for Edward Said to insist on examining the role of colonial literature in promoting colonialist discourse. He maintains that “the nineteenth-century novel comes into being as part of the formation of the Empire and acts reflexively with the forces of imperial control to establish imperialism as the dominant ideology in the period” (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p.64).

However, in postcolonial criticism, an encounter against Western-rooted discourses and thoughts has come to a confrontation. The discourse that sets out to encounter another discourse is a counter-discourse. The concept of counter-discourse is discussed first by Richard Terdiman (1985) to “describe the complex ways in which challenges to a dominant or established discourse (specifically those of the imperial Centre) might be mounted from the periphery, always recognizing the powerful ‘absorptive capacity’ of imperial and neo-imperial discourses” (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 50).

In the period of postcolonialism, the imperial assumption must be shattered and reappropriated in a way that relieves postcolonial society’s psychological trauma and the attitude of inferiority. This is the idea of postcolonial discourse, which deals with the discursive power of colonialism (colonial discourse) on the culture and society of the colonies. National allegory is one form of post-colonial discourse that focuses on examining and encountering the discursive operations of the Empire (Ashcroft et al., 2000).

Therefore, it is argued that the allegorical form of writing in postcolonialism sets to encounter the colonial form of allegory to reinterpret its intention and then to reappropriate it for the post-colonial society (Slemon, 1988a). In the same manner, post-colonial form of allegory also invests in history to reimagine or revision it for proper understanding. This assumption, as suggested by Slemon, is the building block of the postcolonial form of allegory. “Postcolonial allegorical narratives show that allegorical transformation can also be an effective means of subverting imperial myths” (1988a, p. 164). In other words, allegory in postcolonialism functions to free or decolonize the postcolonial society from the dominant assumption of imperialism. It constitutes to challenge the prevailing or dominant assumption of allegory and works to change the ‘received *ideas*’ of the colonial history and the concept of imperial allegory that was taught by Western imperialists. This is clearly forwarded by scholars in the area like the following: “By refusing,

realigning, and deconstructing the master narrative of Western history by interrogating its tropes as well as its content, postcolonial writers have been and are recapturing notions of self from “Other” and investigating that destructive binarism itself” (Tiffin, 1988, p. 179).

In short, allegorical writing in postcolonialism goes to encounter the Imperial-Centre, which puts the third world in the condition of “historylessness”. For colonial allegory, there must be a postcolonial form of allegory that could encounter it (colonial allegory) by revising, reappropriating and reinterpreting the Western notions about the native’s history for proper consciousness and articulation. As Slemon (1988b, p. 159) believes, this would again provide a common body of work for the study of postcolonial writing: “This general project of transforming our inherited notions of history provides a framework for appreciating why so many allegories of the colonial encounter and its consequences are being written within postcolonial literatures”.

Therefore, national allegory is the literary response to the literary construction of colonial fiction that was formed based on the imperial ideology. It is a postcolonial form of discourse that has attempted to thwart narratives that patronize the supremacy of the Empire. Hence, we can seize national allegory as a counter-discourse of colonialism, as is clearly suggested in the following quotation:

Colonial discourse might be contested by postcolonial writers through the use of allegory, given the fact that the subjectivity and identity of the colonized and formerly colonized has been constructed within colonial rule. Slemon thus sees allegory as carrying the possibilities of a counter-discourse, where it can serve as an instrument of postcolonial analysis of Europe itself: when the postcolonial writer revises allegory what s/he does is to reject these prior codes of interpretation, or even, perhaps an entire system of signification by focusing on anti-imperialist figurations.(Nayar, 2015,p.109).

Therefore, national allegory is one of the postcolonial discourses that focuses on the objective of cultural and historical changes (Ashcroft et al., 2000).

3.4.6. Representations of Socio-Historical and Cultural Contexts as National Allegory

To understand the meanings of allegorical representations in African postcolonial novels, we need to identify the following two intertwined elements that go together: vehicle and tenor. Actually, they are traditionally known elements in allegorical and/or metaphorical expressions.

An allegorical vehicle is an object or a thing that carries the meaning of the story, object or narrative of the novel, whereas a tenor is a metaphorical or hidden meaning of the object, the thing or the narrative that is carried by the vehicle. Therefore, in an allegorical novel, tenor entails the interior meaning that is represented by the vehicle. It is an embedded meaning of a story.

In this regard, national allegory is a vehicle for postcolonial themes and aims. It illustrates postcolonial socio-political contexts. In other words, it describes the effects of colonialism on the postcolonial cultures and societies allegorically. Accordingly, the life of an individual is important in the postcolonial novels because the experiences and struggles of an individual metaphorically recapture the socio-political and cultural dynamics of the post-independent nations. Hence, an individual character would signify the national history, struggle, identity, culture and political ideology of these countries. Based on this premise, the characterizations of the postcolonial novels are given due consideration in the study. The portrayals of the characters vis-à-vis the socio-historical realities of the post-independent nations need to be cross-examined to interpret the representation of allegories in the novels under scrutiny.

Furthermore, an imaginary character in the African novel may invoke the historical personage who has been positioned at a significant level in the historical movement of a nation (Ogude, 1999). In a similar way, a character could go through a complex interplay of matters and struggles, aiming to avert and/or portray the oppressive situations that affect his or her personal life. However, this kind of portrayal of characters extends to imply the embattled situations of collective and public culture and society (Jameson, 1986). Therefore, the life of an individual character would depict the larger public situation of postcolonial society in Africa. James Ogude (1999, p. 66) also suggests that “the individual’s thoughts and deeds become representative of his

or her class and are, therefore, a reflection of what takes place in the wider society”. Therefore, characters are allegorical to the extent that implies what has taken place in the larger society.

The reality of a national predicament can be depicted through the character’s portrayal, as the nation is more important than the individual is. “Under a range of pressures—political dislocations and violence, economic trauma, geographical and cultural displacements, other forms of national schizophrenia—the *made up* nature of nationhood has emerged into greater prominence” (Boehmer, 2017, p. 141). This would indeed help literary intellectuals create a sense of nationhood in the masses or in the public. Furthermore, writers employ strong characters with robust struggles to strike the masses to stand up against the oppressive situation that was disrupting the will of society. Therefore, the story of the character is the story of the nation in third-world literature, wherein Africa is an important bulk of postcolonial writing.

Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society (Jameson, 1986, p.69).

Accordingly, how does the portrayal of a character serves as a national allegory in third world literature? Here, understanding the relationship between national literature, national allegory and a character's portrayal is a crucial aspect of knowing how national allegory functions in third-world literature.

National literature is deemed to be held within the specific values or criteria that define or shape the literary history of a nation. It embraces the masterpieces that a nation has produced. Literary masterpieces that are produced in a particular nation uphold the social, political and cultural contexts of the people who inhabit that nation (Schipper, 1987). The socio-political and cultural climate of a nation is an important aspect for the construction of national literature because every literary work usually confirms to the national values, traditions and experiences that a nation has gone through. In this instance, African national literatures are established on the basis of colonial contact with Europe. European colonial ambitions and dominance in African nations have brought about multiple arrays of experiences, including political, social, cultural and economic disruptions. Hence, these aspects hold an important place in the literatures of African countries.

Above all, Africans struggle for national independence and liberation was significant for the emergence of modern African literature. This continues to evolve by reflecting the post-independence anomalies that swept across the nations.

In this regard, African novelists have often employed national allegory as a unique literary device to reveal the social, political and cultural dynamics of the newly independent nations. National allegory is a literary technique by which the fate of individual characters or protagonists or family is used to symbolize the broader socio-political and cultural challenges and experiences of these nations. In short, the individual (private) destiny is made to suggest the historical moment of a nation.

Hence, some common ways in which characters portrayal functions as a national allegory are as follows:

- One, a character personifies a nation because an imaginary central character's struggle is designed to represent a national experience. The actions, decisions and development of a character can be interpreted as symbolically represent the historical journey, challenges and transformations of a nation.
- Two, a central character can epitomize the national experience or/nationhood. The personal narrative of a character is used to reflect the broader social, political and cultural history of a nation when it is interpreted.
- Three, a character can be used as a physical body in which national tension is situated. For example, a character may face with competing interests or conflicting national identities, ideologies or perspectives. This internal conflict of a character can be interpreted as metaphorically implying national tensions or problems.
- Four, a character may be portrayed as a vehicle for national critique or commentary. In this instance, the portrayal of a character can serve as a method of showing or addressing the national flaws or shortcomings that need to be improved.
- Lastly, a character can symbolize national resistance and liberation. A character who struggles for self-emancipation from oppressive forces can be interpreted as an allegory of the national quest for self-determination and sovereignty.

Generally, the portrayal of a character is one of the important mechanisms for national allegory because it often depends on the historical and cultural contexts in which the literary work is produced.

As this study in particular is concerned, national allegory works at the relationship between an individual's private vicissitude (sexuality, family life, identity, struggle, etc.) and the history of the postcolonial African nation states, where they are juxtaposed to be referred back and forth for the metaphorical interpretation of the postcolonial texts. The lives of individuals can represent the collective lives of postcolonial society in order to imply the political and cultural dimensions of African nations. Therefore, when carefully scrutinized, the novel's inner dynamics are made up of the socio-historical and political influence of the author of the post-independence nation as he/she wants to portray them in his/her literary works, and at the same time, the socio-political histories of the nations are borne in his/her private experiences.

3.4.7. Magic Realism as National Allegory

The main purpose of this subtopic is to demonstrate the relationship between magical realism and national allegory and show how they work together in contemporary African novels. Magical realism and national allegory are two important narrative techniques that are often employed in African novels. Each of them has their own distinctive features, yet they serve similar or sometimes overlapping purposes. Even, national allegory can be used as an instrument to interpret the implications of magical realism.

The day-to-day realities of African society have a significant room in modern African literature in order to portray their past and unique experiences and to protest Western colonial assumptions that were imposed on them (Slemon, 1988a).

These realities are often found in their oral traditions mainly in their mythology, fairy tales, fables, legends etc. Since the people and their oral traditional are intertwined, their traditional account helps to explore their socio-cultural and historical matrix that occurred in the past.

On the other hand, Modern African writers are intimately concerned with history and politics of the continent. Politics, as wa Thiong'o, (1981) believes, is reflected in the daily lives of the

actual people. As a result, unconventional style of writing, like magical realism, that is different from the Western or the mainstream style is adapted to freely forward comments on the political realities of modern African nations. In this regard, one of the narrative strategies adapted by modern African writers to reflect the realities of the people is *magical realism* (Gikandi, 2003).

The story of a novel may be told through mythical narration or mythical elements. The mythical narrative provides a specific culture. Especially in Africa, the daily activities and beliefs of the people are found in their mythical narration. Thus, mythical stories are suited to present the authentic experiences of the society. Hence, in order to understand the contemporary socio-political climate of the post-independent nations in Africa, reading mythically told novels is important (Allen, 2017).

Here, in contemporary literary writing of Africa, besides to the thematic shift, the narrative strategy the new generation often uses is magical realism by which they develop new experimental writing (Newell, 2006). It is the new mode of literary writing that can depict African reality because it incorporates the indigenous way of life (folkloric life) and belief by which African people are also known. It creates the African context of culture, history, and politics with the views of the natives, which are different from the Europeans (Cooper, 2012). Equally, it is also seized to encounter the European imported tradition of the convention of realism. The above argument is clearly suggested by Gikandi (2003, p. 642) as follows:

If magical realism attempts to capture reality by way of a depiction of life's many dimensions, seen and unseen, visible and invisible, rational and mysterious, such writers walk a political tightrope between capturing this reality and providing the exotic escape from reality desired by some of their Western readerships.

Therefore, magical realism, which is derived from the African traditional narrative techniques, is held to be essential in the contemporary African literature. This new literary mode allows writers to include mythical imagery, rich imagination, episodic adventures and a multiplicity of the postcolonial socio-political issues and meanings in their novels (Jagne & Parekh, 1998). However, these magical elements have allegorical implications for the post-independent society and culture. The main purpose of the literary writer here is not to deploy the mythical narrative or to display his skills at embellishing a story, but rather to lead the readers into the hidden

meaning behind the story. The mythical elements often symbolize deeper truths about the socio-cultural and identity of post-independence society.

Allegory developed in an attempt to discover the 'truth' presumed to reside within ancient myths. Myth can be defined in many different ways, but in all myths there is a strong narrative element. They are, on a simple level, the stories which underpin and thus define any specific culture. There is a strong link between allegory and myth. One might say that allegory is the interpretation of myth, or the re-telling of myth, for historically specific purposes. By this I mean that the central myths of a culture are re-told or adapted to suit particular circumstances (Allen, 2017,p.209).

Hence, to bring to light the relationship between the two terms (magical realism and national allegory), first it would be essential to provide the essence of each term separately. In postcolonialism, magical realism is a technique of narrating or representing of postcolonial cultural conditions. At the same time, it is a thematic reflection of the socio-cultural experiences of the postcolonial society. In brief, magical realism has both a system of narration and a thematic dimension in the African novels.

Therefore, by implication, the features of magical realism are a peculiar manifestation of postcolonial novels in which the society's socio-political milieu is represented or reflected. In other words, magical realism form of narration, which is a mythic or fantastic way of narrating a story, is grounded in the socio-political history of the postcolonial countries.

In the concept of national allegory, on the other side, the main idea is that the history and literature of the third-world nations are interwoven for the purpose of counterargument against the attitude of the imperial's Centrism or universalism. The Western assumption is that third-world societies did not have history and literature before the advent of colonialism. However, postcolonial writers intertwine their unique literary techniques and socio-historical backgrounds to disrupt this stereotyped notion of their former subjugators. Hence, for the understanding and interpretation of the postcolonial literary writings (of the third-world nations), the historical episodes that took place during colonialism and imperialism through to the post-independence periods are important. Here, both literature and history work as a discursive system in the

postcolonial context, which is a peculiar form of postcolonial literature. Thus, national allegory is used to interpret magical realist novels that represent these historical backgrounds.

At this instance, literature and history use to reflect the actual social relations of post-colonial culture to encounter the process of colonization (Slemon, 1987). In short, the postcolonial novels narrate the actual conditions of postcolonial culture. Therefore, the national history of the postcolonial nation could be diffused into its literature. Accordingly, its literary's code of recognition can be transmuted from its historical realities (ibid). In this regard, reading the literature and history of the postcolonial nations back and forth would help us know the realities of postcolonial culture.

Magic realist texts use mythic/fantastic elements in their language of narration, but in their thematic dimensions, they reflect the real social relations of the postcolonial cultures (ibid). The mythical/fantastic narration in magic realism texts, therefore, represents the site of the postcolonial cultural realities. In other words, when we see from the thematic point of view, the fantastic narration of magical realism becomes the metonymy of the postcolonial socio-cultural and political realities.

The magic realist text reflects in its language of narration real conditions of speech and cognition within the actual social relations of a post-colonial culture. In other words, the real social relations of post-colonial cultures appear, through the mediation of the text's language of narration, in the thematic dimension of the post-colonial magic realist work. (Slemon, 1988a,p.12).

Hence, if magical realist narration is the site/ or the representation of postcolonial cultural realities, then at its thematic dimension, the thematic content it reflects becomes national allegory because it is the mythical/fantastic element and/or the mythical/fantastic narration that is allegorized when we interpret.

As Stephen Slemon (1988a, pp.12-13) points out, this helps us attain the following three purposes:

The first involves the representation of a kind of transcendent or transformational regionalism so that the site of the text becomes a metonymy of the post-colonial culture as a whole. The second is the foreshortening of history so that the time scheme of the

novel metaphorically contains the long process of colonization and its aftermath. And the third involves the thematic foregrounding of those gaps, absences, and silences produced by the colonial encounter and reflected in the text's disjunctive language of narration. On this third level, the magic realist texts tend to display a preoccupation with images of both borders and centres, and to work toward destabilizing their fixity.

To put the above discussion in the African context, African realities are embedded in the African culture (Walelign, 2020). Therefore, needless to say that African culture is the depository of African socio-political histories. By this implication, magical realist texts are the mirrors of African socio-cultural conditions. National allegory is an instrument that is used to interpret the thematic levels of magical realism.

Hence, another postcolonial form of narrative discourse that has gained much critical currency among current postcolonial critics is magic realism, in which national allegorical (post-colonial allegorical) form of writing and signification is embedded. To express in different ways, literary modes of national (postcolonial) allegory and magic realism are the flip sides of the same coin in most postcolonial African fictional texts.

The researcher of this paper, hence, argues that these modes are **mutually inclusive** elements in African literature. As such, postcolonial literary writers have used them as a stylistic and thematic expression to illustrate the distinctive and recognizable type of literary discourse in postcolonial literature. In doing so, as Slemon (1988a) points out, the generally accepted and established system of literary practice and Western form of fictional classification can be resisted by the literary practice of magical realism. This shows how magical/*mythical* realism and national allegory are interconnected, and they are companion discourses of postcolonialism.

Magical realism as a style and a discourse is formed from the non-Western cultural provenance.

Magic realism as a literary practice seems to be closely linked with a perception of "living on the margins," encoding within it, perhaps, a concept of resistance to the massive imperial Centre and its totalizing systems. The established systems of generic classification are themselves, in my view, examples of these centralized totalizing systems, for they have been constructed through readings of texts almost exclusively of European or United States provenance (Slemon, 1988a,p.10).

The concept of magic realism had evolved from the school of Surrealist German painters in 1920s; the term first coined by Franz Roh in connection with Post-Expressionist Art in 1925. Then in terms of literary practice, it has been mostly associated with the two major periods of Latin American and Caribbean culture. The first embraces the 1940s and 1950s wherein the concept of the term was closely aligned with the “Marvelous Vision of everyday reality” whereas the second indicates the 1950s and 1960s the “Boom period of Latin American novel” both genre-wisely and strategically. Yet, the concept of magic realism was not clearly distinguished from its neighboring genres such as fabulation, metafiction, the baroque, the fantastic, the uncanny, or the marvelous. As a result, the term had even come to virtual abandonment.

Again, “this term was first used in a wider postcolonial context in the foundational essay by Jacques Stephen Alexis, ‘Of the magical realism of the Haitians’, (Alexis 1956 as cited in (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p.118).

Later the adaption of magic realism in writing fiction has become apparently popular mainly in Latin American novelists in 1960s and 1970s who widely, as result, translated into English. In extension, it becomes to describe the prose fiction of writers like Jorge Luis Borges in Argentina, Gabriel García Márquez in Colombia, Isabel Allende in Chile, Günter Grass in Germany, Italo Calvino in Italy, John Fowles in English, Salman Rushdie in India, Ben Okri’s in Nigeria are among others who started experimenting with this new form of writing. By incorporating magical elements in their novels, they obtain a wide range of attractiveness among readers and critics. Therefore, nowadays it has been viewed as an international mode of literary writing.

Stephen Slemon (1988a) also provides both the theoretical aspect and the discursive function of magical realism in postcolonial studies. Lack of theoretical specification motivates Slemon to deal with from this matter of concerns so that the theoretical view of magic realism is set to be used in critical studies of postcolonial literature. His attempt, as he pointed out, was not to define “the concept instead to place it within the postcolonial culture as a distinct and recognizable kind of literary discourse” (Slemon, 1988a,p.9).

The concept of magic realism can be described as follows:

"Magic realism" is an oxymoron, one that suggests a binary opposition between the representational code of realism and that, roughly, of fantasy. In the language of narration

in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the "other," a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rendering them with gaps, absences, and silences. (Slemon 1988a, pp.10-11).

As the re-enactment of history, magical realism has been recognized to be used in postcolonial societies whose real lives are rooted in a living tradition of their myths, legends, magic, and/or fairytales. Countries like the Africans and the Caribbeans have rich traditional practices. They have gotten that magic realism is also an alternative form of literary writing by which folkloric performances could be given plenty of space so that the society's long-lived cultural milieu is drawn realistically on the basis of a fantastical scheme. In due process, writers from former colonies would be rid of the Western mode of literary practices.

Magical realism enables (postcolonial writers) an escape from the limits of European norms of writing in terms of linearity or realism. By mixing worlds, timeframes, spaces and human/animal/ non-human characters these postcolonial authors call attention to their brand of storytelling, and of the need to develop forms that connect with pre-colonial, folk, tribal and communitarian pasts and worldviews. Since myths and spirits, ghosts and gods are a part of the everyday worldview in most non-European cultures, whether in Africa, Asia or South America, the storytelling that makes use of these aspects captures the postcolonial social-political condition better than the realism of the European novel (Nayar, 2015,p.101).

At this point in focus, the connection between postcolonialism as a body of literary theory, magic realism and postcolonial form of allegory (national allegory) as parts of its discourse is as follows: The assumption of postcolonial studies has brought forth decentering the Eurocentric ideology through not only contesting but also regenerating indigenous theories of value and stylistic deconstruction that accommodate various cultural differences and describe different features that are shared across traditions via a comparative approach.

Magic realism is characterized by fantastical elements drawn from mythology and fairy tales and is juxtaposed with every-day and historical realities that contain labyrinthine plots and multiple worlds (O'Reilly, 2001). Again, national allegory deals with the representation or portrayal of individuals, people and historical events, often biased and stereotyped both in their literal and symbolic (beneath the surface) significance. Hence, magic realism, along with national allegory, is designated to meet the very assumption of postcolonialism.

To state the case crudely, national allegory uses mythical or fantastic elements to allegorize the historical and cultural conditions of postcolonial nations and notify the textual reaction against colonial or Eurocentric assumptions in a contesting and subtle manner. It can also be adapted to be used to criticize the post-independence predicament and reveal the contemporary material phenomena.

To put down the very premise of this paper, therefore, magic realism and **national allegory**—a postcolonial form of allegory—clearly characterize most postcolonial literary forms of writing. As a matter of fact, the thematic concerns and stylistic features of these texts (postcolonial literary texts) can be essentially unveiled and interpreted using these two discursive elements as critical frameworks. Similarly, the socio-political conditions of postcolonial nations are well reflected by these two forms of writing.

Here, the narrative technique of magic realism, in a specific manner, is believed to be the site of this national allegory. In this regard, they (magic realism and national allegory) might be considered to be designated as two postcolonial literary modes that would flock together. Taking this in view, the implication of magical realism is interpreted in a practical manner in the selected texts by using national allegory as an interpretive tool. Consequently, this helps to confirm that how national allegories are veiled in magical realist texts.

3.4.8. Socio-Cultural Symbols and Imagery as National Allegory

African literature often confines itself to its socio-cultural milieu. It reveals that African culture has rich national resources. Therefore, the connection between African literature and African cultures is so strong because African cultural elements are abundantly reflected in African literature.

As has often been remarked, the most influential African writers have been committed to developing a narrative form that is adequate to the historical and **cultural complexities** of postcolonial black Africa. The success of these writers in fashioning creative ways of elucidating Africa's experience in the modern world serves to make the continent the subject, rather than the object, of literary representation and philosophical knowledge (Gikandi, 2003, p.254). The emphasis is mine.

The following are some key ways in which African cultural elements are reflected in the literatures of the continent.

First, many African oral traditions are included in African literary works, including folktales, myths, legends, and proverbs (Garuba, 2003;Gikandi, 2003). These influence the literary tradition of the continent. For example, the works of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Wole Soyinka are influenced by the rich oral storytelling traditions of Igbo, Gikuyu and Yoruba communities respectively.

Second, African literature frequently includes the spiritual and religious beliefs of the continent (Garuba, 2003). These show the central role of spirituality in many African cultures. Authors like Amos Tutuola and Buchi Emecheta have incorporated the Yoruba and Igbo belief systems into their narratives.

Three, The complex socio-political and historical realities of the African continent, including themes of colonialism, nationalism, liberation battles and postcolonial experiences, are frequently reflected in African literature. Authors engage with these subjects by drawing on cultural traditions and lived experiences of the continent to create narratives that appeal to the African audience. In this regard, Ousmane Sembène and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o are among the influential writers.

Fourth, African authors also allude extensively to culturally significant symbols, motifs, and imagery to convey deeper meanings and cultural significance. Accordingly, animals, birds, natural elements and cultural artifacts, etc, are used as symbolic elements to build the basis of the literatures of African nations. For example, Amos Tutuola takes culturally symbolic elements from Yoruba traditional beliefs to write *'The Palm-Wine Drinkard'* (1952). Similarly, Wole

Soyinka uses the masking, rituals and chants of the Yoruba culture in his plays to reflect themes of identity, myth and tradition.

In this regard, a certain cultural society could have symbols that help them to describe and express their culture and beliefs. These kinds of symbols are said to be socio-cultural symbols, providing an “insight into a culture and a tool with which to further probe various cultural beliefs and practices” (Fetterman, 1998, p. 28).

Socio-cultural symbols could also have national meanings. As a result, they have national significance because the national situation of a country can be revealed through them. These Socio-cultural symbols are derived from the long-lived tradition of the people, and they represent the nation of the people.

A cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood.... symbolic elements’ that may provide a sense of ethnic belonging. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity, religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, physical features, cultural values, and cultural practices such as art, literature and music. Various combinations of these elements (‘one or more’) may be privileged at different times and places to provide a sense of ethnicity (Ashcroft, 2000, p. 78).

In this regard, African literary writers have used these culturally significant symbolic elements to enrich their literary productions with multifaceted meanings. At the same time, they have used them to represent the national resource to the larger audience, and to reflect the national culture and theme. Xavier (1999,p.341) also strengthens this point by saying, “Together with economic and institutional support, the nation is produced by narration and other forms of representation, implying a particular blending of historical ground and mythic accounts of past experiences”

Literature that reflects the national culture can be categorized under the rubric of national literature because the cultural conditions of a particular nation is represented and revealed (Jameson, 1986). Hence, in modern African literary writing, writers have been mostly preoccupied with African tradition to meet their literary aim of reinstating the African socio-cultural history. For example, influential writers, like Ben Okri, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o are known to deal with the African socio-cultural conditions in their novels. These

authors are renowned postcolonial African writers. They have produced influential and proliferated works for African literature, which significantly reveal the socio-political and cultural histories of the postcolonial African nations. In this instance, Ngugi's novels like *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), and *Devil on the Cross* (1982), and Okri's novels like *The Famished Road* (1991), *Astonishing the Gods* (1995) and *Dangerous Love* (1996) can be worthily mentioned.

3.4.9. National Allegory as a Literary Technique

Allegorical writing in postcolonial literature presupposes the prevailing relationship between history and allegory. Novels, often times, are supposed to be written out of imagination and the impulse of creativity. However, when we come to third-world literature like Africa, the production of literary writing is made from the historical and political experiences (especially colonialism and imperialism) of the continent. Therefore, in Africa, the relationship between the history of a nation and the narrative of its literature then requires cross-examination so as to figure out what the narratives of some novels allude to from its socio-political history. In order to have a comprehensive approach to the study of African literature against the notion of national allegory, the social, political and cultural history of the continent is also worthy of consideration. Consequently, the distinctive nature of African literature would be demonstrated unequivocally, as both the socio-cultural, political and natural environments and locations have their due place in it.

This mode (national allegory) of representation foregrounds the fact that fiction, or writing, mediates history; that both fiction and history are discursive practices, subject to questions of authorship; and that history, like fiction, requires an act of reading before it can have meaning. This central positioning of the reader, this insistence [sic insistence] on the reader's active and self-conscious participation, is enormously important in allegory; and some critics go so far as to argue that the reader is actually the central character in the allegorical in adjacency to a fictional re-enactment of it (Slemon, 1988b,p. 160).

In this sense, to put it briefly, the socio-political and historical settings wherein the novel's protagonist encounters could be thought of as one of the distinctive ingredients and backgrounds that comprise the national literature in Africa.

Hence, in the interpretation of allegory in postcolonial African literary texts, the socio-political history that swept across a long period of the continent must be imagined. At this point of emphasis, the African slave trade, anti-colonial resistance, African post-independence politics and its contemporary trends of development have to be sought as the major continental events; as a result, they are required to be borne in mind in the critical reading of most of its literary production in general but most prose works in particular. Therefore, most writers could be understood by their allegorization of the African past, for example, slave trade, resistance, African (cultural) nationalism, post-independence anomalies and the contemporary events and trends, or the challenges of neocolonialism.

To clearly tackle the significance of the meaning of African literature, one has to thoroughly study the history and tradition of the society from which the literary text emanates. It is because the semantics of the objects and things represented in a literary text can be understood once the master codes attached to each subject, object or thing by the society or by the writer are unraveled contextually, i.e., based on the traditional and historical experiences. The reader of that particular text, hence, must be aware of the tradition and cosmos of the society so that he or she can interpret the signs of the tradition appropriately as deemed represented in the text; otherwise, it would be difficult to decipher the code of the text and even its structure or form.

Experience in life connected with a certain historical incident or cultural value that asserts the presence of a certain political, ideological or social milieu constructs the basis of the argument for a particular study or interpretation (Abis, 2011). The production of meaning out of this connection provides a lively view that requires active concentration of many addresses, and a large audience may take for granted the significance of such kind of study and world panorama. In brief, the narrative of the novel would have metonymic associations with the socio-political history of the postcolonial nation-states.

To conclude the above discussions in brief, national allegory serves to tell the story of a novel using imaginative elements that represent and critique the collective experiences and struggles of a nation. Hence, the narrative structure in such novels is designed in such a way that key themes are explored through their fictional plots. Characters are also portrayed as embodying national ideals and tensions. Moreover, the narrative of a novel often incorporates myths, other folkloric

elements and cultural symbolism to enrich the story and deepen the connection between the national psyche and heritage. Here, national allegorical narrative provides national stories and broader human experiences of a nation. Ironically, a fictional narrative embodies the socio-cultural and political history of a nation. As such, national allegories serve as literary technique that is used to illustrate the themes of postcolonialism while postcolonialism is a broader perspective that allows us to see the impact of colonialism.

CHAPTER FOUR: REGENERATING SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS AS NATIONAL ALLEGORIES IN THE SELECTED NOVELS

4.1. Introduction

Having the discussion in the previous chapters in mind, the texts selected for the study are practically examined one by one against the concept of national allegory. In the previous chapters, an attempt was made to discuss the concept of national allegory and its distinct features that provide a clear platform to examine the socio-political implications of contemporary Anglophone African novels. Accordingly, each novel is tried to be seen separately with specific parameters that distinguish or determine the appearance of national allegorical form of writing literature. Based on the ideas that national allegory has provided, the thematic and literary technique connotations of the texts are explored. This interpretation or discussion of the analysis is organized based on certain common ways that can put each novel's separate interpretation tied together. Therefore, this and the following chapters of the paper deal with the discussion and interpretation of the selected texts. Accordingly, the analysis and interpretation sections of the study begin with the socio-historical and cultural contexts that the novels understudy suggest.

4.2. Synopsis of Plots of Selected Novels

4.2.1. Synopsis of the Plot of *Starbook*

The narrative of this novel is told through the path of a young prince, starting from his youth up to his maturity and greater insight.

In a certain mythical forestland where dream-like spirits pervade, the prince of the kingdom and the maiden of a tribe of artists made dialogue in the form of questions and answers accidentally by the shore of the river without the actual observation of the maiden. At first, each of them was seen to move in his or her respective or/ realm. The prince is the son of the king of the kingdom, and the maiden is the daughter of a happily married couple whose origins are from the ancient tribe of artists. They promised to meet again at the same spot where they first virtually met. Unfortunately, the maiden failed to fulfill her promise because of unexpected difficulties in her way of keeping it. Consequently, the prince wandered out through different environs on her quest. Their delay in meeting again exposed the two lovers to persistent confrontations and

temptations, such as the cynical council of elders and suitors, who run for tough competition to win the maiden's hand for marriage. In the course of his quest, however, the prince met the maiden's father, who is the master of artists. By disguising himself as an apprentice, he then got permission to serve this master of artists and to hide himself among the statues at the artist's workshop, where he also conducted thorough surveillance on the maiden without her awareness when she came to stay at the workshop. At last, patience, as it was his strategy, helped him to enjoy his love with the maiden.

However, in the course of time, there came the white wind, which destroyed the entire kingdom and its subkingdoms, including their arts, philosophies, traditions, people, statues, animals, trees, shrines, etc. Along the way, white spirits appeared. They kidnapped and chained masses of people and carried them off to the coastal sea and then sailed them across the sea. This plague wrought many consequences for the kingdom.

4.2.2. Synopsis of the Plot of *Wizard of the Crow*

There was a dictatorial regime in the republic of Aburiria, an imaginary country in East Africa, whose leader is known as "*the Ruler*" throughout the novel. He considers himself as he has the mightiest right to rule the country forever. The fate of the country is solely in his hands.

In the meantime, the big national celebration of his birthday is held, during which the architectural design of the "Marching to Heaven Project" is also presented to him by the national committee. The project is planned to be constructed to reach out to the very gates of heaven so that the '*Ruler*' can be closer to God. In order to build this ever-tallest building that surpasses the Israelites' Tower of Babel, he seeks the Global Bank located in New York to finance the project. Therefore, he travels to America along with his entourage ministers to gain the huge loan from the bank. However, he fails to secure the loan because the project lacks viability.

Consequently, the '*Ruler*' is stricken by malaise out of rage, which restricts his vocal voice to speak out words. He further suffers from tummy bloating that raises his body to the ceiling, which later changes into a rumor of pregnancy. Besides his ailment, a strong mass of opposition by the coordination of "the movement for the voice of the people" has already been raised in the whole country. The movement is especially coordinated by female protesters, whose leader is

Grace Nyawira, the heroine of the story. Her friend-in-bond for politics and revolution, Kamiti, who is also called “Wizard of the Crow”, becomes an instrumental figure in the struggle against the dictatorship. He plays a significant role in exploring the mental image of ‘*the Ruler*’ and his ministers. At the same time, he uses to probe out important governmental information for the “Movement for the voice of the people” along with his female counterpart.

Then the two individuals (the protagonists), Nyawira and Kamiti, are labeled as the enemies of the state. Particularly, Kamiti becomes the most wanted person to publicly dispel the rumor that claims about the pregnancy of ‘*the Ruler*’, as it is believed that “Wizard of the Crow” is behind this rumormonger. But Kamiti professes that he speculates on the pregnancy of the country with possible changes. Ngugi writes the novel as a political satire that dramatizes the political situation in African nations, particularly in his homeland.

4.2.3. Synopsis of the Plot of *Little Suns*

The novel tells the story of two lovers whose ancestors came from different clan branches. They knew each other when they were in the great house of one of the *amaMpondomise* kings (the orthography is in original). He was the advisor of the king, while she was the maiden of the queen. The man was determined to get married to the woman; however, the arrival of the white colonialists interrupted to make this decision into reality. The war between the local chiefs and the colonial government displaced the native community from whom the man arose. As a result, these lovers were separated. After a period of exile, he was haunted by a quest for his beloved. He, therefore, started his journey of questing by assessing every possible trace that indicated the location of the lost girl. Going through difficulties, he came to contact his lost beloved at the end. When they met, they both were old, and their physical appearances drastically changed; they got weak and feeble. They were about to forget each other.

4.3. Regenerating Socio-Historical and Cultural Contexts as National Allegory in *Starbook*

The works of the writer should exhibit an important interplay of a number of national factors in order to be taken into national literature. Socio-cultural, political, and ideological factors that affect the history of a nation are vital for its literary development. In other words, the national themes and motives that the writer communicates are the building blocks of national literature because they are important in building a nation (Schipper, 1987).

Writers whose literary writings focus on the gory background of colonialism and its consequences are African national literary writers because the typical feature they reflect in their works is the common factor that affected the history of the entire continent. Hence, the literary biography of the writer should not be ignored here.

Accordingly, Ben Okri, the author of the novel *Starbook* was influenced by ancient Greek mythology, which encapsulates ancient Greek classical tradition, philosophy, beliefs, history, literature, art and wisdom. Myth is not restricted to ancient Greek alone.

Hence, here, the main argument is that his reading of Greek mythology is a springboard for him to explore the myths of his country. Otherwise, he is influenced by the oral traditions of his homeland, as he has also clearly spoken out. His native land's oral stories told to him have a significant influence on his literary writing (Sethi, 2011). The first aim is to reveal the abundant resources that African tradition can offer for the creation of African national literature. This is why African literary writers reshape the novel, which is the Western form, itself into their own use to **counter argue Western discourse**. The novel is not only a genre but also a counter discourse in the African context. Likewise, employment of the African oral tradition into the African modern literature should be taken as a counter act against the Western assumption. The Westerners came up with their literary tradition to be used and adopted by their African subjects. Africans were forced to leave their tradition. However, African writers and historiographers have been reclaiming the lost traditions that were denigrated by the imperialism.

The second aim is to retrieve African culture and traditions in order to show how these elements enrich the narration of novel. Like Greeks, we can find similar mythological stories everywhere, including African countries. Hence, Ben Okri explores many ancient mythical stories from his homeland, Nigeria, and employs them in his modern literary writings for retrieving or/reclaiming of African culture and traditions. We could say his reading of the ancient Greek's mythology later triggered him to contemplate over his homeland's diverse cultures and traditions, which contain abundant myths. Again, these myths become a source of his modern literary writing as well. He glimpses the Greek mythology to discover the Nigerian myths. Consequently, he is fond of the diverse oral story telling tradition of his motherland, as he also ostensibly describes in the beginning of his novel, *Starbook*. "This is a story my mother began to tell me when I was a child.

The rest I gleaned from the book of life among the stars, in which all things are known.” (Okri, 2007,p.1).

As his consistent style, he employed this tradition in his the prize winning novel, *The Famished Road* (1991). He engaged the spirit child, Abiku, as the protagonist of the story. Abiku is “a Yoruba term meaning ‘children of the spirit world’ or ‘ancestral soul being reborn’. It refers to the belief that Abiku children are those who died in one life and continually return in succeeding ones” (Falola & Genova, 2009, p.4). This is one of the ancient Nigerian myths.

In a similar way, in his *Starbook* (2007), he abundantly uses the traditional form of telling the story of the novel. The myths, fairytales, legends and the fantastic elements of the ancient Nigerian kingdoms, especially the ancient Igbo and Yoruba traditions, are used.

4.3.1. Character’s Selfless Devotion for Socio-Political Transformation

Starbook is written at the dawn of the 21st century, but it retrieves the past socio-political histories. A high mythical narrative possesses it. In brief, Ben Okri has reflected the socio-political conditions of an African nation in this novel through the portrayal of the protagonists, the young prince and the maiden, as the following explanations provide.

The young prince (the **hero** of the story) was seeking his lover (the maiden), his last destiny, with his entire endeavor. He believed that his lover was his ultimate destiny, without whom he could not be healed from his giant wounds—wounds by which an entire race and an entire kingdom suffered from. To attain this aim, he had to go through difficulties; he had to suffer from great obstacles that could robustly stand on his path of seeking his destiny. In other words, though the ultimate goal of the young prince was to meet his destiny, the maiden, he had to come across tough confrontations, particularly with the maiden’s suitors and the cynical elders of the kingdom, as the following discussions try to point out.

Here, ironically, it indicates that the socio-political challenges the country faces are so complicated. It seems to be a huge challenge that could be unattainable to the young prince. However, the most important matters for the prince to overcome those challenges were selfless devotion, wisdom and determination. First, he set aside his personal interests and greed. Besides, the art of wisdom and knowledge of the ancient history and traditions of the ancient tribes and

/or the ancestors were essential methods that the young hero must master. This was the method by which he arrived at his potential maturity, whereby he also managed to make the maiden his own destiny. Nevertheless, how could he achieve this? What was the path through which he had undergone? The following interpretation shows the journey he went through to achieve his ultimate goal.

Bearing the above assumption in mind, the young prince decided to leave the palace of his father, who is the king of the kingdom, to endure and suffer the difficult passage of life, which was bitter but ultimately rewarding, for he had succeeded at the end because he had gotten his lover and his artistic maturity. He went into the forest because he chose to live there rather than in the palace. Royalty and kingship are not his preferences because the prince got perplexed and confused when he noticed slaves, numerous servants and many wives of his father at the palace, against whom evil deeds were being committed.

He showed no interest. Politics and royal duties bored him. He seemed to much prefer working with the common people in the farms, harvesting corn, teasing the maidens, building huts for the frail old women of the village, splitting firewood, and piping music around the edges of the kingdom, as if he were haunted by a sad beauty that fringed the limits of the world. It touched the hearts of the elders to see his fragile body bent to such difficult tasks he set himself, or to see his fading presence dissipate itself in the lovely music that he teased out in the dappled shadowy realm of the myth infested forests that was his second home (Okri, 2007,p. 4-5).

While he was in the forest, he came to see a maiden. He was then fanciful to her. A maiden gave him stability. As a result, a strong mood of hope rested in him. A new initiation of life brightened in him. What he often dreamt of then was a beautiful maiden. The pain and agony he had felt in the palace were replaced by love and tenderness. He appointed her to come back to the same spot where they had their first conversation. However, the maiden could not keep her promise. She disappeared. Since then, he started to spend sleepless nights. “He lost her and searched for her the world over and could not find her.” (p. 15). As a result, his heart grew heavier.

This shows there was a criminal governing system in a particular nation in Africa. However, the determination of the prince to bring about socio-political change in the nation that was being

affected by the bad governance is important. Here, it is an optimistic effort that is seized by the prince. The nation is represented by the maiden, whom the prince aspired to have at the end. The prince knows at the outset that he would face challenges in his passage to arrive at his last destination, which is freedom.

To add more, when the prince went back to the palace, he would see a group of men and women from another land. These were the war-captured people. They were forced to be slaves. To his astonishment, he could see when they were treated as non-humans. He opposed this act, but the elders of the kingdom remarked to him that the act was legitimate and acceptable under the law of the land of the kingdom. They took him, rather, as if he was suffering from derangement or bewitchment. Nevertheless, he did not stop battling with these people. He wanted them to give him justification as to why these people were treated unfairly. He came to understand that the elders upheld prejudicially obstinate attitudes toward slaves, outcasts, servants, lepers, beggars, etc. This made him ill. Above all, the prince was worried to know that bad practices were being committed against these kinds of people. Harsh treatment of people was nauseating and traumatic for the prince. As a result, he suffered from an unsettling condition that further resulted in his serious illness.

Ironically, these people (the war-captured) represent the ill-treated class of the citizens. As a result, the young hero persisted in trying to change those long-standing traditional bad practices and unfair treatments. Nevertheless, his determination for this aim brought him into a ferocious confrontation with the elders of the kingdom. As a result, he chose to hurry to the forest, his hiding place, to alleviate his traumatic condition. He left the palace because the tyrannical government controls everything; hence, it is a place of maladministration. Lastly, we could notice that the prince decided to be part of the slaves and the outcasts to share their ill conditions.

He was then accustomed to knowing, by his dream, evil deeds of different kinds that were being committed. Evil deeds committed in the kingdom became a disease for the young prince. Whenever he was confronted with evil deeds, he would suffer from profound sickness.

The prince saw so much evil and he was the home of so many kinds of nightmare beings that he became ill. He fell into a deep illness because of all the evils in the kingdom that he was shown in his dreams. All the hidden evils affected him so

powerfully that he slid into a profound sickness that lasted a long time (Okri, 2007, p. 50).

Thus, his sickness of this kind brought him to the brink of death. However, the prince thrived and became stronger. He even took on challenging tasks.

This situations show that there are profound problems that the African nation faces. Nonetheless, to curb the difficulties, tough confrontation is inevitable. Thus, a selfless and robust person who determines to sacrifice himself or herself up to his or her death is important. Equally, strong hope to bring about change must be retained. In this regard, the cynical council of elders destructive role against the nation ultimately saved by the self-sacrificed devotion of the young prince. Because he had determined to go through life's tests and tempts, he had suffered the difficult malaise up to his state of dying. He faced evil deeds and elders' cynicism being committed in the kingdom.

Hence, leaving his political interest and his chance for power aside, the young hero revolted against the wicked deeds, including human oppression, gender violence and personal greed that were being committed in his father's kingdom. He clearly opposed that these wicked deeds were absolutely against women and the war-captured people. However, the elders defied and confronted the sympathetic attitude of the young prince. They invoked the long-established myth, which legalized that women must be enjoyed with their unremitting chores.

In the same way, they took slavery as a legitimate practice that went through long periods without any challenge. Worse than this, they considered themselves as the natural custodians of the rules and customs of the kingdom. They explained that this was their affair. Therefore, they prohibited the young prince from interfering in their affairs.

By implication, we can see here that the elders' cynicism continued to affect even the life of the prince because they want to kill him for the simple reason that he opposes their crime against humanity. Hence, in his fighting against the evil deeds, the prince suffered from serious sickness. He was just dying that worried the entire kingdom. But this brought forth many thrived performances from the people to save him from death. For example, greatest herbalists summoned to relieve the prince from the evil occupants. The prince recovered from his sickness.

Nevertheless, the recovery of the prince again haunted a sleepless feeling on the part of the elders.

Here, the prince is the leading player for change and transformation. But the ruling class are against his plan for change. They keep stick to their old ways that give them important position in the country. They do not like to leave this position until their death.

By implication, they are the enemy of the prince means that they are the enemy of change. They rather become the main obstacle for the new generation who wants to see new face of reality in the nation, the African nation. Therefore, it is important for the new generation to exert great effort to bring about the desired change of the nation. As it can be understood through inferences, consciousness, perseverance and wisdom are vital in this regard.

Therefore, the prince's concern also developed for the welfare of the kingdom at large. He wanted to know the origin of the evil beings that were committing evil deeds in the kingdom. He asked the elders to take him to shrines and the oracle so that he could consult the diviners. Nevertheless, the elders were so reluctant that they said the prince was wasting their time on a less likely reasonable matter, but they were pretending as if they were dealing with the daily state matters of the kingdom or as if they were deliberating the important matters of the state.

He wanted to know the legends and genealogies and the origin of monsters, of shadow forms, of spirits, of evil beings, and of the forces that warred against the welfare of the kingdom. He wanted to know the origin of evil in the world. And the king roared with laughter as he listened to the requests of his son...

The elders protested at how much the young prince was, with his perfectly reasonable, but slightly unseasonable requests, wasting their time (Okri, 2007, p. 45).

Here, it is implied that these elders are seated to fulfill their own interests at the expense of the matters of the kingdom and its people. The kingdom represents the ideal nation that the author of this novel imagines. National leaders of this nation continued to commit crime against the interests of the nation and its people. However, they believe that this young prince came to challenge their comfort.

The other area where the young prince needed to sacrifice himself was in the tribe of artists to acquire art. At the same time, the maiden whom this young prince sought for was the daughter from the tribe of artists.

With all challenges, therefore, he never gave up to seek the maiden of his destiny who descended from this tribe of artists, who lived in their separate village. As the saying goes, “Seek first the wisdom”, he went to learn art from the tribe of artists. Who were the tribe of artists that the prince chose to learn art from? What were the arts he learned from them? What kind of method was he following to learn the art? Why did he choose to learn art?

The tribe of artists implies to a certain society in the nation who lives in one of the regions of that nation. They are exceptionally known by the following manners. In this society, **art** was the central tenet for their **peace** and **tranquility**. They believed that they continued to exist through art—art of regeneration. As the belief in the tribe of artists, there was a power that directed the artists to create a work of art that had more meaning and beauty. The artist was the servant to that power. The best servant of that power would have, in turn, more servants whom he directed and received support from it.

It was as though her father's voice were a sort of a bridge to another realm, where the real learning is done, a realm of universal knowledge, where masters whisper secrets into the ears of their unknowing pupils as if into the petals of flowers. And when her father stopped, her lesson seemed over. A bizarre joy encompassed her heart. Had she heard a word of what her father said? Only later, much later, in another land, in the fragrance of honeysuckle, on one of the few days of her adult life when she knew true happiness, did she hear what her father said, and more; but she heard it only because she repeated it, as if she were saying it from her own power, to her child, who would one day change the world, invisibly, through the **secret power of art** (Okri, 2007, p. 116). The bold is my emphasis.

As it is seen, **art** is the central value of the society. Here, it is implied that the role of art in regenerating the African culture and value is important. Beyond this, art can play a significant role in signposting the problems of the African people. It creates awareness regarding the roots of the difficulties that weigh down the African nations. It is helpful in raising the unity of the

masses to confront the problems and to bring about the socio-political transformation that the African nations must acquire. To this end, understanding the culture and the demands of the people is valuable.

In addition, **art** was taken as a tool to reveal a person. As a person, there might be much to be concealed, but in his/her artistic endeavors, everything is possible to be seen and unveiled. A man's loyalty, tranquility, passion and sympathy can be revealed through art. The author seems to believe that art is crucial to humanity and human dignity. Hence, he also advocates that art is an important instrument for fighting for freedom.

Therefore, with all being artists, humanity was considered to be the greatest work of art that is being created. One way or another, all are contributing to the greatest vision that ever will be, the vision of all above and below, in life and in death, on earth and in heaven. The tribe was therefore fundamentally serene about all things, and lived in the secret freedom of this knowledge, which was more than knowledge (p.98).

Accordingly, all must be helpful or must contribute for the creation of humanity and humility. Otherwise, if someone was unable to create humanity, he would not be an artist. Therefore, everyone in the tribe of artists is required to be initiated to implement art and understand art. Furthermore, to be admitted as a member of this tribe, each individual took his/her own wealth of art so that he/ she would live and then transfer it to the next generation. Otherwise, one without art would bring forth plague and illness to the tribe.

Here, the art of creativity, the art of interpretation, and the art of revealing were upheld as vital values of the tribe of artists. Hence, to win her hand, the prince must master that art because marriage between couples in the tribe of artists was only held by the competition of art. Women could only be courted by art. To be a husband and a wife, art matters in the tribe of artists.

Similarly, this indicates knowledge of societal values is crucial for effective administration. For example, the quality of leadership and its level of maturity were customarily evaluated based on the societal norm, which is the artistic endeavor. The following demonstration substantiates this:

In order to hold marriage in the tribe of artists, first suitors must customarily compete for a maiden. In this regard, the maiden whom the young prince was seeking for was the center of

attention by many suitors. Accordingly, handsome suitors started to court her by their artistic tasks, as it was a custom in the tribe of artists. They engaged in tough and persistent competition among themselves to seduce the maiden. By now, his (the prince's) new confrontation was with these suitors, who were his rivals. In fact, the norm is clearly maintained as follows:

The artistic competition for her hand turned out to be unique. The most gifted of the tribe, driven to heights of inventiveness in order to win the respect of the master artist that was her father, surpassed themselves in artistic endeavor (p, 154).

Therefore, an artwork that is deep, profound and secretive can earn the maiden's hand for marriage. The model of this kind of work of art could be derived from the master of artists, who was her father. Likewise, a person whose leadership quality is proven smart must be selected as a leader of a country, as the following demonstration taken from the novel substantiates.

As it was his usual task, the prince went to quest the maiden in the forest. Fortunately, he saw her for the second time among her companions first, and then he saw her when she wandered alone along the shore of the river. The prince then vigilantly followed every movement of the maiden. At the end, he saw her when she leapt into a gap that was found in the maze of trees at the forest, and then she disappeared. He also leapt into the same gap through which the maiden leapt into. In this way, he came to discover the village of the fabled tribe of artists, then the maiden's parents. Making himself indistinguishable, the prince managed to live among the tribe of artists. Above all, he became an apprentice, a servant-student, in disguise of statues, sculptures, or ordinary man at the maiden's father's workshop. He was permitted to be the servant of the master-artist for seven seasons. Consequently, he was able to master the master-artist's artistic talent. He developed a skill that he acquired in secrets from the master-artist. At the same time, he was able to study the maiden's favorite taste and interest without her awareness. "The new servant absorbed the lessons he had to learn from the master without being told anything. He absorbed by being still. He almost never moved." (P, 322). Ultimately, he captured the maiden's heart and made her his darling.

On the contrary, the Mamba, who was the main suitor, and his followers were in a rage about the prince. This violent suitor had inspected the two lovers. Out of jealousy, he decided to attack the newly consummated lovers. The two lovers then tried to escape the assault or the revenge of the

jealous suitor. While they were fleeing to escape, the maiden was unable to keep up with their fleeing. She, therefore, demanded her lover “make his own escape” (p. 405) and return when times were auspicious or promising. However, in his haste to escape, the prince chose the wrong way, which could expose him to the cynical elders (who are mentioned above) of his village. They were in a position to remove him from the land of the kingdom. They had already decided that the prince should be killed or “delivered up to the white spirits to be carried off into the sea” (p. 406) wherever he could be found.

By implication, from the above demonstration, we can learn that the fighting and violence of the suitors were also challenges in the kingdom. These evil deeds committed against the prince, who is the protagonist of the novel, exposed the long political crime against African society by different actors, including their own fellow and alien forces. They (the African fellows) decided to eliminate the young leader, who represents the young generation, because they feared him that he may take over their political power. To achieve their evil intention, they invite foreign allies.

However, these challenges and sufferings are alleviated by self-sacrifice and devotion because, though the young prince faces many problems, he overcomes them wisely and devotionally. Generally, there were forces of decay and destruction in the kingdom that brought temptation to its survival and continuity, including, mainly, the cynicism of the elders and the rivalry of the suitors. However, the prince comes to overcome these forces and rescues the kingdom because he manages to acquire the skills that helped him to do so. He moves and works with knowledge, while his competitors go with emotions and hypocrisy. It is this kind of leader that African nations demand today.

Furthermore, we can also understand from this incident that the African ruling class, along with white patronage, is degrading African socio-cultural values for their own self-interests. In the same manner, the African resources are being driven out by the leading role of the Africans themselves. Gravely, the cynical council of elders plays a negative role that weakens their own country because they betray the prince, who represents the best ideal leaders of Africans, for foreign aliens. This further indicates that they hand over their nation to the foreign enemy. Consequently, the country’s socio-economic and political developments lag behind. As such, we

can deduce that the African leadership messes up the socio-politics of the continent by intentionally inviting the alien forces.

However, the protagonist of the novel in Ben Okri's *Starbook* clearly shows us that the principle of pertinent and selfless devotion to the collective social will and social transformation, as well as tranquility and stillness, is vital for present-day Africa. This idea is strengthened by Nnolim (2006,p.9) as follows:

if the dream of the African writer in the last century was to recapture our lost humanity and re-establish the African personality, the African writer in this century (21st century) is challenged to envision a new Africa, which has achieved parity (politically, technologically, economically and militarily) with Europe and America.

At this time in focus, we can see here that his self-sacrifice and self-determination were significant, as they are discussed above. He has overcome the problems he has faced wisely and devotionally. He acquires wisdom through learning of many kinds. He has to keep learning, especially from the tribe of artists, until he is enlightened with the secret of life. He has to keep learning until he can acquire essential skills that help him manage the populace. The needs of the populace have to be the most priority for the prince because it is in this way that he could be able to manage and satisfy the people from which the main positive forces could also be derived. He determines to become "the man [of his] people". He also wants to learn the art of regeneration, the art of overcoming death, the art of converting evil images into positive forms, and the art of discovering gaps. This, by implication, means the new leadership must acquire the skills to search the problems and the ways to solve these problems of the nation.

To conclude, it can be understood that art has a powerful influence on changing society. It is also important for an individual to know the cultural values and demands of the people. He or she must, therefore, explore the heritage of the society. It helps him or her to negotiate with the culture of the people so that he or she can serve them according to their interests. At the same time, it is important to have sympathy, from which loyalty derives. Loyalty is an imperative for African rulers to serve the people faithfully. Hence, the writer of this novel portrays an iconic individual who determines to work for the people's demands. The real son from the soil of Africa for leadership comes forth if and only if he has a strong passion for his people, heritage

and tradition. Similarly, knowledge of the culture and psychological set up of the people has a similar contribution. This real wisdom needs to be acquired by a leader before he or she holds power.

4.3.2. Regenerating Precolonial African Histories as National Allegory

Some modern African literary writers, such as Ben Okri, are actively involved in the regeneration of precolonial African socio-cultural and political histories, with the aim of promoting certain aspects of historical regeneration. First, they reclaim cultural identities through the restoration of historical heritages that can be used to create unity and belongingness among the current communities. Second, they counter-narrate to challenge the colonial narratives and misrepresentations against African histories and values because colonialists narrated and represented the precolonial societies as primitive and backward. Third, they want to revive traditions and histories for the broader cultural Renaissance of the continent. Lastly, they want to teach historical facts and cultural values that would enhance awareness and deepen understanding. In fact, these all empower African communities and create a sense of pride among themselves. Okri represents the Ancient forest kingdoms of Nigeria in his novel, *Starbook*, for similar purposes. Hence, the following discussions are done on the exploration of this ancient history from this text.

4.3.2.1. Representation of Ancient Forest Kingdom

As we can see, including today, Nigeria, where the national setting of the novel depends, is a nation of multiethnic groups with many traditional, linguistic and ancestral origins from the past. These origins have long traditions of political polities, traditional practices and the culture of crafts that may influence the current communities of the country. In this regard, we can mention, for example, historically known forest kingdoms, as they are mentioned in history, which were remarkable in their ancient politics and cultural artifacts, including bronze work, metalwork, casting work, woodwork, etc.(Johnson, 1966). However, the main purpose of this paper is not to recall history but to explore how history is transfused into literature, mainly into fiction. This helps us to reimagine the past for empowerment and agency through knowledge. This helps to advocate change in the present and future based on the authentic understanding of histories.

The Presence of the Kingdom: The important location where the story of the novel took place is in an imaginary kingdom. This recent work of fiction of the writer also allures to the socio-cultural history of one of the ancient kingdoms of Nigeria that existed in the pre-colonial period. Hence, *Starbook* (2007), which is one of Okri's fantastic tales/narrations, also summons up one of those ancient kingdoms/societies. It is reflected that in one of those ancient kingdoms, there was a great golden age that marked the influential civilization of that period. This kingdom was established in the huge forest areas, large bank of rivers and streams. It was built in the place where there was fresh as the environmental condition was pure and uncontaminated.

The kingdom was sprawling and vast and within it were many sub-kingdoms. In fact the kingdom was so extensive that it did not know itself. And the king knew it only through the cartography of dreams, of his dreams. He dreamt all the corners and obscure places of the kingdom and saw the great variety of the people, the vast forests, the mighty rivers, the innumerable creeks, the uncountable hills and valleys, the multiplicity of traditions and the incredible number of languages spoken. He saw them all in dreams, and ruled this vast unruly undivided yet much divided kingdom through the agency of dreams. There was no other way. Terrestrially he had chiefs, emissaries, deputies, spies, messengers, sub-rulers who travelled the vast lands, carrying laws, decrees, legislations, edicts, proclamations, instructions, dictates. He had an extensive hierarchy of chiefs and sub-kings who ruled the lesser kingdom in his name and spirit (Okri, 2007,pp.236-37).

Okri recreates these areas in order to conceptualize them as a source of refreshness, knowledge and inspiration. Similarly, these kinds of rich socio-political hierarchies and rule of administration happened in the early periods of the country.

Along with this, the practice of slave trade (both the savannah and the Atlantic) and the common assumptions towards the socio-cultural (Ethnographic) symbols, which are discussed in chapter six, are substantiated features that mark the presence of that ancient kingdom in the pre-colonial period of Nigeria.

To put the crux of the matter, there were ancient forest kingdoms, which are known in history that practiced similar social traditions like what is told in the above passage. Therefore, the story

of the novel is allegorically referring to that practice, which would have a lesson for the present readers.

Ancient Civilization: There were an anonymous ancient tribe of artists, who were rich in both spiritual and material wisdom and knowledge in the kingdom. Their rich spiritual values were so great in the fact that the spiritual values gave them enlightenment and the power to understand and interpret those ancient mysteries of life. This tribe of artists had given foremost importance to the value of art and secrecy above all the other commodities.

Again, in the art of material, they were owners of great artistry of many kinds, including copper, bronze, metal, wood, etc. Particularly, they were cultured and civilized people in their sculpture carving and bronze casting skills before the advent of the Atlantic slave trade.

He knew at once that she came from a family of bronze-casters, sculptors, a tribe of artists, a hidden race that lived away from all other peoples and tribes, so that they could listen to the oracles in the air and create forms in bronze and stone that warned of things to come, or things that haven't been done, or of disturbances to the realm, prophecies and revelations, or just forms that give a secret joy to some unknown self within. Such was the tribe she came from, a tribe that knew and kept the ancient secrets of bronze-casting, of divination through art, of healing through created forms, of the mysteries of creation (pp.40-41).

By implication, this indicates that the roots of the present communities emanated from the kind of society whose socio-cultural histories and spirituality were spectacular. The maiden to whom the young prince aspired represents the ideal nation that these communities inhabited. The author regenerates this monumental history and cultural practices to initiate the current society/people for cultural Renaissance through works of art, such as: sculpture, paintings, music and literary expressions.

In the same manner, in history, in the old days of the ancient forest kingdom of South Western and South Eastern present-day Nigeria, there were legendary tribes of artists (guilds) who had strong affinity with traditional wisdom of work of art, and they were also good at art of

interpretation. For example, they believed that a dream is powerful and powerfully regarded to rule the kingdom.

Secret Society: During ancient times, there had been certain society that had greater socio-cultural influence. This influence was usually the result of their mastery of skills and wisdom in working out a certain work of art or their unique socio-cultural administrative abilities. Accordingly, for the purpose of identification, they might be distinctively recognized based on their unique aspects. This includes the naming of the society. For example, in the ancient kingdoms of Nigeria, there were called “medicine societies” who were concerned with traditional methods of disease diagnosis and healing (Offiong, 1984; Gould & Kolb, 1964). Likewise, in those ancient times, some groups in the societies were supposed to have mysterious relationships with their ancestral spirits. As a result, they were said to be ‘secret society’. They are, as such, the guardians of the society’s cultural organizations, customs and values (Enato, 2018).

However, in the *Starbook*, there were the secret “*tribes of artists*”, who were known by their crafting skills and art of interpreting dreams. Particularly, guilds of craftsmen, who were great in sculpture, separately lived in the forest kingdoms. As a societal custom, there was also a cultural procession for the initiation of art and a competition of art.

This indeed indicates that those societies were secret for their interpretation and unique crafting skills. By implication, the story of the novel allures to that historical time, but it is made to be vanished by the presence of the Whites.

Golden Age: Again, in the story of the forest kingdom, there was the golden age. This golden age had existed just before the advent of the white wind in the kingdom. “That was how it seemed before that cycle ended, before their golden age perished, before they passed away into the sands.” (p.418)

The wake of the white wind represents the appearance of slave traders. Following the white wind, the golden age of the ancient tribe of artists was diminished. However, immediately before slavery, there was golden age in the ancient regions of Nigeria.

Based on the time line of history, slavery is known to be started during 16th century onwards. In this regard, the golden age would be just before 16th century. During that period gold and slave were the most important items of the trade (Falola & Heaton, 2008). As a matter of historical fact, therefore, the golden age had existed in reality among the ancient societies at that time.

4.3.2.2. Representation of Slave Trade as National Allegory

As depicted in the novel, there came the white wind in the course of time that destroyed the entire kingdom and its subkingdoms, including their arts, philosophies, traditions, methods of administration, people, statues, animals, trees, shrines, etc. Along with it, white spirits appeared. They kidnapped and chained masses of the people and carried them off to the coastal sea and then sailed them across the river.

This indicates that African native people were forced to scatter around the different parts of the world, including the Caribbean, Brazil, USA and so forth by the forces of slave agents. This plague wrought many consequences in the kingdom.

In the forest kingdom in which freshness and purity reigned across the entire subjects and villages, tranquility and cultural richness were plentiful. The social beliefs and customs were secured. Loyalty of the people to the king and loyalty of the king to the people were truthfully maintained and strongly grounded by the law of the land, which was imagination. They knew the presence of one another by heart. They respected one another by heart. Their harmony pervaded in the entire kingdom and along the edge of the forest and the banks of the rivers.

Art was the central and communal property of their survival by the time. It was part of their belief system. By using the wisdom of art, they believed to communicate with their creator. Communicating with the oracles, gods and ancestors of the tribe supposed to be held through art. Enigmas of human life, dreams of the tribe, and the secrets of events were understood and interpreted through art. Therefore, they engaged with making and appreciating art. There was a distinct tribe of artists in a separate village who were busy in crafting art works in their entire days.

However, such tranquility and richness of the tribe came to the stage of disaster. Strong plague in the form of cool white wind appeared. At the beginning, this white wind seemed peaceful and

calm. It appeared with delicacy of fragrance and hilarious scenes. Even it added new vision to the kingdom. It helped the subjects to see further that hinted them to imagine more spaces besides to the particular realm wherein they had lived.

The wind was at first a beautiful wind, bringing melodies and fragrances and pleasant dreams. At first it was a soothing wind that brought hints of new visions of the world and the heavens. It seemed to clear the sky, and stars that had always been in the heavens were seen more clearly for the first time. The wind was at first cleansing and fresh and bracing and it cooled the humid air of the sun-loved land. (p. 240).

This signifies that when European slave traders first appeared in Africa, they brought attractive materials like jewelry, costume, iron, beads and toys to flatter Africans.

After some time later, this new white wind changed from its nature of coolness and harmony into the other side of its nature of calamities and erasures. What was seemed friendly at the time when it first emerged to the society was converted into horrific spirit that resulted in many vanishments of the land of the kingdom including its natural resources, beliefs and traditions.

Then, imperceptibly, the nature of the white wind changed. It began to erase that which it passed over, or passed through. The white wind began to erase hills and valleys, it erased the memories of people, it erased villages and towns, forests and gold mines and rivers and animals and flowers and whole portions of land. Slowly, mysteriously, things began to disappear. The weather changed. The seasons were altered (p. 241).

This shows the White traders later started to committing crime against the black race up to vanishments. In the process of vanishing at a time, prioritization was given to the people's beliefs and system of the customs. For example, we could see when the god of interpretation, god of asking questions and god of harmony by which people believed in strongly were disappeared before the rest of gods and goddesses.

By implication, these represent the beliefs, the traditional customs and values of the people had perished. Their ancient way of morality, philosophy and peace keeping methodologies were also erased following the appearance of the white wind. In the same manner, at a time when European

slave traders appeared in the land of Africa, many forms of long-lived traditional properties had been taken away. It was the beginning of African impoverishment.

Following the above mentioned form of erasures, the condition of the land of the kingdom turned up-side down. Suspicion, misinterpretation, fear, enmity, rumors, etc. became prevalent among the people. Positive forces, which were abundant for long period, were replaced by negative forces. As a result, confusion resided in the land. On top of this, masses of the population were kidnapped and taken away to the coast of the sea. There had been seen that people (men and women, children and young) were chained hand in hand and ankle to ankle by the metal chains, and taken to cross the tragic travel of the sea.

The prince saw figures with metal chains linking their legs and wrists. They were being led by cloud-colored men with hats on their heads. They had guns and they had servants with them who carried luggage and who kept the chained figures in control. The chained figures were often whipped. Then they were bundled on to boats and borne away into the blinding reflections of the river. He heard their poignant lament from beyond the horizon. (p.271).

In this regard, it was Portugal that came to make trade contact through slaves with the rulers of African kingdoms. In history, the South Western and the Southern kingdoms of ancient Nigeria played a significant role in providing slaves to Portuguese slave traders via the Bight of Benin and the Bight of Biafra. These are historically known slave routes.

In short, the above discussion shows the great loss of the African continent during slavery. As it is depicted in the novel, the human forces and the material and spiritual properties were taken away. This consequently brought forth the enormous socio-political predicaments of Africans for centuries to come.

4.3.3. Regenerating Socio-Political Conditions for Political Transformation

Ben Okri, who is one of the new generation's prominent literary writers of Africa, is devoted to reflecting the passage of Nigerian political history from colonialism through the successive military coups and ethnic conflicts of its post-independent period that have resulted in the continuous suffering of Nigerians. He has depicted the social injustices that were outrageous in

his homeland, Nigeria. In this respect, his commitment to depicting African oppression using African literary tradition helped him to win the Booker Prize in 1991 and the Commonwealth Prize for Africa in 1987.

In this novel, *Starbook*, we can also see the political conspiracy committed upon the young prince, the protagonist, by the council of elders of the kingdom. Through the protagonist, who was represented as the prince of the kingdom, Okri discloses the origins of African political problems at the beginning.

Though he (the young prince) made his idea—freedom—clear at the beginning, the elders the kingdom were the challenge to him. These elders kept those inhumane deeds that were undergone in the kingdom as normal, and no one was allowed to comment on them. These elders had only incisive minds for the power they had owned. They obstinately defended those awful customary practices by the law of the kingdom, which was validated by its legendary origin. Hence, it was a never-challengeable subject as they had blatantly spoken out.

This is to indicate that the ruling class is the enemy of freedom and justice because they stand against the needs of the majority of the people, but they care about their interests, who represent few individuals.

He continued facing vicious confrontation from them. First, this council of elders had suspicions about the unique personalities that the prince had been witnessing. They had not come across to see the kind of personality that the prince was manifesting. They thought that the prince had a spell of enchantment and incantation with which he would know and understand about the kingdom beyond his age. Second, they were worried about two basic visible concerns that they were just observing. One, the prince was insistently asking questions about women and slaves who were being treated unfairly in the kingdom with the soul consent of the council of elders. This was restless to elders, as they were considered the guardians of the kingdom. Two, the whole people, both men and women of every kind, paid homage and unprecedented love to the prince at the expense of the presence of the elders of the kingdom. This was also another disturbing issue for the elders, as they were great advisors and, at the same time, they were the main beneficiaries of the kingdom. Therefore, they showed a lack of interest in the young prince.

To worsen the situation, they stepped up to plan a conspiracy against his path of life as they became very suspicious of him.

The truth that the young prince raised persistently serious, logical and critical questions to them was out of his strong demand for **justice**. These questions might lead them to justice if they were positive to the prince's thought. In this regard, the elders were in a significant position to correct those crimes, which had been executed unjustly. However, they were adversaries to the prince and the kingdom.

Still, the young prince never stopped asking questions about the kingdom. For example, he was persistence to raise questions to the elders as to why many gaps were existed in the kingdom. Nevertheless, they denied that there were no gabs at all. They dared to say even that the gab was the prince himself that they said he might be suffered from madness. "Another elder stepped forward, and said: 'There is a proverb: "Only the person who sees the world as mad is mad."'”(Okri 2007, p.275).

Above all, one of the elders, chief Okadu, *threw his crocodile eyes* against the prince. He was the most sinister among the chiefs as to why the prince challenges the elders with questions. He was also skilled in the play of things above his power over the minds of the rest of the elders. So, "he was the force behind the elders, and they all held him in silent awe; and it could be said that, all of a sudden, and quite mysteriously, they realized that they feared him more than they feared the king" (p.279). So the chief elder, Okadu, was able to convince that the notion that the prince always referred as the gabs were the elders themselves, or the elders as creators of the gabs.

In this way, they had borne in their mind that all forms of negative forces like corruption, distortion of the law, misuse of power, stealing of the kingdom and the people, impoverishing the traditions, the history and the land held to be their crime. The chief of the elders evidently said this as follows:

'It seems to me quite clear,' said the Crocodile, in heavily accented menace, 'that we are the ones the prince is referring to; and the way he is going he will sooner or later want to get rid of us as a class and as a force. He is our natural enemy. We wish him nothing but good, but he sees us as the cause of destruction in the kingdom. We have much to fear from that prince when he ascends the throne'. (p.280)

As it is suggested, the council of elders of the kingdom were unable to fill the gaps that were referring to them by the prince. They did not develop the tradition of detecting potential problems. They could not have the skills of addressing problems for better solutions. They rather kept planning to remove the prince from the kingdom for he only devoted to engage in insightful matter that would save the kingdom and the society from diminishing. As a result, they attempted to poison him.

They thought of having the prince poisoned, and enlisted the support of one of the king's wives, the most disaffected. Three times they attempted to poison the prince but each time the food was eaten by an eagle, or a dog, or a monkey that appeared in the prince's chamber before he was ready (p.292).

Most particularly, the appearance of the white wind also made the prince to feel unease about the kingdom. He had started to be vigilant when the brooding darkness appeared in the kingdom. It had hung over the land of the kingdom. He was able to notice that it became thicker that it blinded the native people. The people could not be able to notice because of the darkness, which indicates ignorance. They did not notice when the men and women, and children were disappeared invisibly by the white spirits. In the meantime, even people, who were good at dreaming and interpreting dreams, now became in confusion; they were in ambiguity to deal with it. At this time again, the prince, concerned by the new event, began to rouse to ask so many questions to the elders. However, the elders once again feared that he (the prince) would undermine them. They feared that he was going to destroy their power and their institutions when he would become the king of the kingdom. At last, they specifically listed out their suspicion as follows: he would bring forth “too many ideas, make women equal to men, reduce hierarchies of things, change the nature of their religion, alter the laws which made them the secret masters of the land”, (p.329). They were against of all these points.

As the result of their **cynicism** that is discussed earlier, they were persistent in drawing plot/conspiracy to get him rid of the land (from the country) so that they could command the kingdom with the highest power. Accordingly, the chief of elders, Okadu, now carried out his “brilliant idea” to offer him to the white wind. The white spirits took him away. The white wind carried him off the sea and freed the elders from their worry. The elders now became the rulers of the kingdom. They usurped the power of the kingdom for themselves.

Ironically, people lacked knowledge as the result of their ignorance about what had been happening in the land of the kingdom. They faced difficulty to aware of the nature of the sycophant elders–African authorities– that they agreed to handover their own fellow to the white spirits. These elders gave the prince away to the slave traders. They had betrayed him to the alien forces. These white spirits represented European slave traders who launched human trading activities with the rulers of ancient African kingdoms across the Atlantic Ocean.

If the horrors of slavery are partly imputed to the natives' greed and lack of wisdom, colonialism is equally represented as a direct responsibility of a group of Africans who paved the way to the invaders' sapping of the continent's strength, wealth, and culture. The dire effects of their betrayal are increased by the annihilation of the usurpers themselves who ironically become the victims of their own treachery (Costantini 2015, p.1127).

Hence, the young prince's betrayal by the elders, who represent the rulers of Africa nations, further reveals Africa's exposure for foreign invasion and influence.

They ruled with unwisdom, and much dissension broke out amongst them, and the people distrusted and undermined them, and one by one they fell to each other's blades at night, or to secretly administered poisons by day. Their children were mostly lost to a terrible lassitude, others to a madness that took the form of incurable fits of fiendish laughter; and they laughed themselves into early graves. Then the gaps began to devour the kingdom. And then the full force of the white wind descended on them and wiped out great areas of the past, and wiped out memory, and dissolved many traditions. And then the white spirits came and the land lost the spring of its ways. (Okri 2007, p.411).

This depiction helps us to see the history of Africa. It is portrayed that African political history has gone through repeated hostilities that exposed the continent for alien agents. This has further brought forth persistent suffering of the people. However, writers, like Ben Okri, are devoted to regenerate or /reflect this kind of problem so that Africans can learn from it. It could help them to revise their socio-political history with foreigners for its future change and transformation. Here, although in matter of time and the devilish suffering that the Africa race has endured which again tempted to the survival of the native's traditions and histories, there are still

fragments of witnesses and inheritances both in spiritual and material forms that could be helpful to reimagine and revive the ancient truth of the continent.

Here, it is revealed that the past wicked deeds are being continued to be done at the present. If we are unable to overcome them now then, humanity in Africa will suffer more in the future. Therefore, “glimpsing the past for seeing the future” (p. 75), is essential ground to plant the truth of Africa which is being distorted by alliance forces of self-centered African rulers and foreign agents, and so does for its transformation as well as tranquility and stillness.

Furthermore, competition for a beautiful maiden was another encounter for the prince. A group of suitors must compete for her hand. This competition was the art of crafting a statue that must be at least very similar with the tribe’s master of artists, or it can be a unique artistic endeavor that could surpass the master artist’s work. In addition, the maiden had been attributed to the art of initiation and the art of appreciation. She was good at the art of creativity and the art of evaluating artistic works. Then, how could the suitors, including the prince, master the artistic model of the tribe's master of artists to win the maiden's hand?

One of the suitors, Mamba, whose statues and prowess, along with his power and strength, were remarkable, had been paid significant attention by the members of the community. He carried out different artistic works for his competition. He tried to evidently observe the master's work of art in order to master the artistic skills and the true works of her father. However, though his artistic endeavor was as tough as winning his competition, he had not acquired the true work of the master artist. The master-artist was such a secret man that he made his works invisible to a person who had no art of initiation. He cunningly concealed his true works, wherein the art of suggestiveness and its hidden light could be illuminated. As a result, the maiden was indifferent to this suitor. None of his works attracted her.

Nevertheless, his lust for possessing her rose. He came to use another mechanism that could offer him her hand. There were rumors against her good fame. The clamor of the suitors spread bad rumors against the maiden. Mamba, who was among the suitors, tried to threaten her family. This could not also bring him success. Instead, this took him in the wrong direction, as is utterly clear in the following statements.

“Meanwhile the Mamba, not knowing the effects that his plans had wrought, not knowing of the disappearance of the maiden, kept up his malicious campaign.” (p.202).

Her parents concealed the maiden in the hidden cave at the hill because they worried about her safety: “But first he summoned his wife, and deep into the night, they planned for the safety of their child and the future regeneration of their people” (p. 190).

Hence, no one knew in the tribe where the maiden had gone. Her parents hid her in an unknown place.

Hence, the suitors started another campaign. They fought among themselves for her hand. They tried to settle their aggression through combat. In this regard, Mamba was the champion of the contest in the end. However, the maiden again disproved such a contest. She did not like to witness the barbarous contest the suitors made to her hand.

Ironically, Nigerian rulers in particular and African rulers in general, for decades and now, could not solve their problems or differences through peaceful means. They usually incline to hold power through coercion. They wish to win their contestants by war so that they can execute their interests over others by force. In fact, power has been held by rebellion. In Nigeria, one regime overthrows the other through the power of the gun. However, as it has been seen from its long experience, this has had a devastating effect on the country, both in terms of humanity and material matters. Hence, it is not taken as an alternative means for the building of peace and tranquility in the nation. It is important to choose a better mechanism beyond the devastating act. The Africa nations in general do not want war and political hostility because these things are causes of damages than positive changes and transformation.

On the contrary, to win his rivalry, the prince used a strategy that was different from the other suitors. The suitors used fighting (for seduction) and rumors (against her), while the prince applied strategic familiarity: “He did not believe in fighting” (p. 384). First of all, the tribe of artists from whom the maiden originated lived in a separate village, about which no one knew where it was found. Therefore, the prince insisted on detecting the village of the tribe of artists. He followed a gentle way—“the principle of the heron,” his personal bird spirit (p. 289)—to find out the village wherein the master-artist, her father, was working out his art.

Consequently, he was able to master the master-artist's artistic talent. He developed a skill that could be acquired in secrets from the master-artist, "He thus acquired a delicate patina from the air of the master's dreams." (p. 323).

Hence, it implies that he (the young leader) becomes skillful to manage and lead his people at his last endurance though he passed through difficult journey. Here, it is also important to know that women are believed to be wise enough to indicate the way out from troubles. Thus, it is advised for males to work with females to overcome the problems and attain success. As demonstrated, the prince is convinced that equality of women with men is one of the right ways to resolve the national crisis.

At the end, the prince got matured and illuminated. He was destined to be with the love he has longed for for a long periods. In the same manner, the maiden had a profound sickness that had affected her life for a long time. She, therefore, longed for a man who could be able to heal this sickness. He came to win the maiden's hand for marriage through the artistic competence he acquired from the master-artist of the tribe, while the other suitors failed. Then the two lovers consummated their love as it is expressed in the following way:

Their love had, at last, after centuries of missed opportunities, finally found its great moment. And their love in a future time would last a lifetime and an eternity for having finally connected on this earth, where such a possibility is all too rare. Yes, there was rejoicing in all the high places (p. 403).

Accordingly, this man became fair and unbiased to every man and woman, child and the elderly. This indicates justice for everyone. It was rejoicing in their land. It was a momentous meeting. The two lovers met with a love that would be transmitted for generations and lived for an eternity. It was a spectacular love that was found deep inside the memories of the lovers and the tribe. This is to indicate the method or the way to transform the socio-political crisis of Africa. The nation gets its chosen political leader in this way. A passionate leader who obtains the intention of the people and whose skill of leadership is practically evaluated is elected.

Besides, it signifies that competition among contestants is important for the fair play of politics in this modern time. Hence, fair competition is taken to be the art based on which a skilled individual is demonstrated and evaluated. Accordingly, the quality of his or her leadership is

determined. The author of the novel unveils that this skill can be retrieved systematically from African long-term cultural practices.

We can learn that the prince's endurance gave significant mark to the coming inheritance. His profound love was deep in the memory of the masses of the population though they were scattered. Later, it says, the scattered tribe of artists tried to regroup themselves.

As a result, historians could get explanation from these scattered people's deep memory that was rooted in their minds. Their artistic traces, upon which the prince had put his hand, also helped them to revive again. Some rich artistic heritages would remain to be used for the rediscovery of the lost social history of the tribe. On top this, the prince's child survived the white wind as his mother's grand parents did. When the time came to the scattered tribe to reappear from different margins, they "came to claim the grandchild as their future king."(413).

Hence, it shows that the paternal heir to the throne and artistic heritage play a significant role in the regeneration of the social history of the kingdom. So, we can say that the prince's committed confrontation with the destructive forces is important lesson to learn how to save the kingdom from total ruin. This shows the fact that the regeneration of African cultural and historical heritage with the firm endurance of committed individuals is possible.

To conclude, one has to learn the great suffering that the black race has gone through. One also has to sense with all his intuition that the repeated suffering over a period of time results in great loss. As a matter of fact, the black race had faced vast inhumane suffering in history. Slavery took the most tragic incident in this regard, as it is depicted in the novel. There were evil deeds committed upon black Africans with impunity. Blacks were tortured, chained, beaten, killed in masses, forced to work over days and nights. They were also shipped across the Atlantic Sea for many days with no sense of humanity; as such, many died on the route to cross the sea. They were forced to be scattered around the Caribbean and the new world, now the USA, for laborious farm and industrial productions with no any human benefits. So many drains of humans committed across the Atlantic slave trade route. Therefore, by the servitude of blacks from Africa, the world, by small and large, had gotten service. The world absorbed the massive stream of African sweats and bloods.

However, these all happened as the result of a lack of a sympathetic and a skillful native's governing system. The greedy nature of the native rulers and their lack of wisdom cost many lives of blacks. The immense damage that had happened could not have happened in the history of Africa if sympathetic native's governing bodies had held power in the African nations. Therefore, knowledge and wisdom, along with a sympathetic attitude, are important for one who is determined to serve his or her people. In this regard, we could see in the novel that knowledge of the native history followed by a firm determination to serve the people is required to cure the long socio-political malaise that has endured in the African nations beginning from a long time ago up to the present time.

4.4. Regenerating Socio-Historical and Cultural Contexts as National Allegory in *Wizard of the Crow*

Regenerating the socio-historical contexts involves revisiting the historical events, such as colonialism and post-independent social upheaval, to enhance deep understanding of their impacts on the contemporary society. Likewise, retrieving cultural contexts reinforces sense of belonging and mirrors collective memory. As it is explained in the earlier parts of this paper, African literature is confined to the socio-political history of the continent. This makes it different from other first and second world literatures. Each African nation has its national socio-historical experiences. Therefore, the literature of this nation allegorizes the national experience of the country. Because of this, it is called national allegory. Hence, the historical contexts/conditions of the nation play a significant role in writing the literature of Africa. As such, African literary writers work as both historiographers and novelists.

4.4.1. Regenerating the Socio-Political Conditions as National Allegories

In this novel, the author, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, reveals that there was the second ruler who was anonymously called "the Ruler" of Aburiria. He had controlled the political power of the nation lonely by designating one national party called "the Ruler's party". He had adapted an authoritarian rule by which he could decide the fate of the nation alone. He equated himself with God; as there is one God in heaven there is one "Ruler" in the republic of Aburiria. The monopoly of his power started from time immemorial in the past up to an unknown time in the future. As he claimed to freeze time itself, nobody dares to ask the time his power did start and will end. He had also cabinet ministers who were forced to abide by his rules alone. The political

atmosphere was so ill-mannered that people of different groups could not have the right to make decisions on the affairs of their country. It was rather characterized by self-centeredness, inequality, tyranny, oppressiveness and corruption. Therefore, groups of intellectuals, including lawyers, writers and historians, who opposed this ill-treatment were the typical and frequent detainees of the government.

Before his existing power as “the second Ruler of Aburiria”, he carried out an important role in favor of colonial administration. He held the position of military officer of information. When an insurgent group fought against the British rule for independence, this figure was working with colonial rule. But later, when the British colonial rule understood that independence of the country was inevitable, it leveraged him to become an important political figure. He became the vice ruler of the first ruler in the post-independence period. This later helped him to hold power as the one party “Ruler” of Aburiria. The following extract substantiates this argument.

He was first widely known during the colonial times for seeming meek and mild-mannered to every white man with whom he came into contact. All the white settlers' and missionary reports about him concurred that he was a good African, and later, "our man." Whether in school, the government bureaucracy, or the army, his servile bearing facilitated his climb up the ladder of success. He had failed to attain his high school diploma, but nonetheless he ended up an assistant headmaster of an African school on a settler's farm in western Aburiria. Seeing that full head-mastership was the most that he could ever attain in education, he quit the profession and went into the colonial army, becoming a self-proclaimed Military Officer of Information. His main job was helping to produce leaflets in praise of the heroic deeds of the colonial army against the nationalist insurgents. (Wa Thiong'o, 2006, p.231)

It seems that in response to the Westerner's favor in his power control over the republic of Aburiria, he used to crush the communist movement that ran in the country to pacify the rage of his Western allies who stood against the communist bloc.

Long time later, this “Ruler” had got strong illness that affected the whole of his safety authority. Possible causes were mentioned, but the most important cause of his power discomfort came from the power of Daemons. Daemons made groups of themselves based on the different

categories. Each group took up its own determination to trigger the population for revolution against the autocratic government. However, daemons who wanted to revolt against the authoritarian regime divided into rival factions. This, in turn, weakened their power of revolution/opposition. Their weakness actually emanated from their lack of unity.

By using this narrative account, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the author of the novel, recaptures the post-independent historical condition of one of the African nations. For the interpretation from the perspectives of regenerating the historical conditions, the following questions are set:

- a. Which African nation is it that the free Republic of Aburiria represent?
- b. Who was the ruler that was known by "the Second Ruler of Aburiria"?
- c. What were the daemons that tried to disrupt the stability of the long-lived regime?

The fictional nation that was imagined in the novel was one of the British colonies in East Africa. Most native people of this nation spoke Kiswahili ('Kiswahili dominated their speech' (p. 34). It was a place where a fierce fighting against colonial regime took place. An organized insurgent group of freedom fighters for independence participated in guerilla warfare.

Now his father was direct: his grandfather, Kamiti wa Kienjeku, had been a holy seer, a spiritual leader working with forces fighting the British in the war of independence. "He lived with the fighters in the mountains, teaching them how to be at peace with one another, settling conflicts, leading units into battle, and cleansing them of evil after their engagement with the enemy. He knew every path, every plant, every living thing. No one knew the ways of the forest better than your grandfather. The British shot him dead one day, but his body was never found. Some maintain that he is still alive and that his spirit hovers over Aburiria, ensuring that the truth of our past endeavors shall never be forgotten. (Wa Thiong'o, 2006, p.294).

In this particular regime, it was characterized by social crises like corruption, joblessness, poverty and diseases. At the expense of these crises, the regime was so torturous that oppressed his own people. He also allowed foreign investors continue to exploit the national resources in the name of loan or investment.

It indicates that the post-independence regimes in Africa nations are ridiculous to their own people and nation. What they have rather given utmost emphasis is the safety of their political

power. Reigning on power for a long period is the characteristics of African rulers as it is reflected in the novel. They would become outrageous when anyone criticize their regime. They immediately choose to eliminate the critic from the face of the earth than work to improve the government's bad conditions that are being carried out in the country. They do not have trust in their own people. As a result, they put up huge security organs to gather information and threaten the people. In this regard, later in the novel, we can see individuals secretly disappeared from their government position like Minister Machokali in this "Wizard of the Crow".

To fight the lies of these terrorists he ordered the formation of a new squad, **His Mighty Youth**, and he asked all school and college students to join and become the Rulers youth wings. Their main responsibility was to tell all the land that his might was the might and the light of the nation. The wingers would teach the catechism: Aburirians can never have a party except the Ruler's Party or worship political idols imitating the Ruler. (Wa Thiong'o, 2006, p.25). The emphasis is mine.

On the other side, the autocratic nature of the "Ruler" is exposed, here. It is one political party that was allowed to govern the country. Multiparty democracy is banned. So, this shows that African rulers consider the presence of political parties as a threat of a nation.

The "Ruler" is portrayed as physically huge that his tummy is also floating. But this implies that the "Ruler" is typically greedy and corrupt. He has collected huge amount of money for himself. Every wealth in the country belongs to him. Even it said that the country itself belongs to him. In this regard, national equation is formulated to authorize and confirm the power of the autocrat ruler as follows: the "Ruler" is the country and the country is the "Ruler". Separating the "Ruler" from the country is forbidden. Anyone who breaches this declaration is assumed to commit the national crime, or it would be considered as treason against the nation.

Therefore, it shows that every decree that set in the country is based on the individual interest of the rulers in Africa. Power is only in the hands of few individuals if not a single individual. In short, the "Ruler" seizes the power and accumulates the wealth of the country to himself, which indicates that the autocratic government is leading the country.

In the same manner, rulers in African usually make deals with foreign allies for sole purpose of their political power patronage. The selfish nature of the ruler is depicted when he wanted a deal

of huge loan with the international funders to satisfy his personal interest. The loan was not planned to relieve the people's social and economic crises but it was for the luxurious project called "Marching to Heaven" construction. But it increases the national debt crisis.

In the wake of independence, the African socio-economic and political crises were so pervasive and persistent across the nations. This is because the degree of viciousness of the dictatorial regimes along with the petite compradors debilitated the socio-economic and political demands that the masses of the population aspire for long periods of time. The personal interest overtook the national interest in post-independence nation-states. So, we could see that the postcolonial leaders and supporters work together to satisfy their common interests leaving the interests of the populace aside. This is the utmost anomaly that the African regimes have committed over the people after colonial control. Because of this, radical intellectuals and artists stood up against these tyrannies. They handed over themselves for sacrifices. For example, Wole Soyinka jailed; Ngugi wa Thiong'o detained; Kristopher Okigabi executed; and Saro Wiwa killed. These individuals determined that fighting against the neocolonial exploitation had no an alternative resort.

The other great anomaly committed in the post-independence periods of African nations is the ruling system that the postcolonial regimes adapted. In this novel, for instance, it is depicted that the "Ruler" used the strategy of dividing and rule system. As the country is composed of multiple ethnic backgrounds, he adjusted his governing system based on dividing policy. He composed his cabinet ministers from the major rivalry ethnic groups. Governing based on hostile ethnic disparity eases the "Ruler" to avoid any threat against his political power. This is taken from the ex-colonial administration system, but what makes it worse is that it is committed upon fellow citizens.

The dictator's reputation for making minister plot against minister, region rise against region, and community fight against community was now a matter of legend. He would side with one warring faction, which would rejoice at its alliance with power only to wake up one morning to find that the dictator had sided with its adversary, for a time, at least, before changing sides again or even goading altogether another faction into the fray. The dictator, seemingly above it all, looking good as he appealed for peace and

understanding, would be embraced by all the feuding parties as a Solomonic prince of peace. (2006, p.231)

The “Ruler” created envy and hatred between the two important cabinet ministers, Machokali and Sikiokuu. They, therefore, engaged in fierce colleague rivalry that affected their own individual influence on the “Ruler”. They did not aware of the cunning behind the scheme. One rival group becomes a threat to other group within the cabinet ministers but not to the “Ruler” because the rivals engaged in struggle of conspiracy against one another. There was no doubt that each rival always abided by the rules of their “Ruler” to be paid more attention. In other words, each of them became attention seekers by carrying out the “Ruler’s” rule of orders accordingly. They believed that the degree of their loyalty to the regime was evaluated based on the upper hand one can gain over the other. In other words, the ministers believed that they are evaluated based on their level of sycophancy to the “Ruler”, who determines the political position they would be rewarded. This strategy was important especially for the “Ruler” who came from the minority ethnic group. While the major ethnic groups struggled to take advantage from him, the so called “Ruler” from the minority group secured his political power over the country. In this regard, what we could see in the republic of Aburiria in the novel called ‘Wizard of the Crow’ is a similar situation.

The two important ministers of the “Ruler”, Machokali, minister for foreign affairs, and Sikiokuu, minister for the state, were always in intense competition to take advantages. Each of them had a supportive squad that worked for their desired goals. Therefore, on their part, the cynical desire that these two ministers paid attention disregarded the safety of each other, let alone they could keep the interests of the people whom they represented. The other minister of the “Ruler”, John Kaniuru, was added up to the rivalry team. Now, this cunning “Ruler” ignited the competition among his three ministers. These three ministers always heeded to win the attention of the “Ruler”, and gain promotion. So, they worked out to the exhaustion of their spirits, minds and physical bodies.

We can see, here, that ethnic rivalry as a means of exploitation was the governing system of the “Ruler”. By implication, the reality is visible in African nations’ context. This is the legacy of colonialism. Internally, African governments use conflict as a tool of exploiting against their

own people. They work to gain political profit from the ethnic conflict that repeatedly rises within the nations. In the same manner, neocolonial masters in Europe and USA are carrying out many strategic schemes against the African nations to make them weak and submissive to their political orders and desires. Provoking a conflict is taken as one of important methods to address their objectives.

Specifically, the irony behind the mess of the African nations like this is that the Westerner's political strategy over their ex-colonies. The Westerner's political impact over the colonies is persistent still now mainly in two ways. The first one is through fighting. Politics within a particular nation in the post-independence period usually divide into different factions. These factions came to fighting for political dominance based on regional territory, ethnicity and religion. This kind of conflict extends to include wars between different nations. By and large, these kinds of hostilities and fractions, which could be backed by Western nations, affect the political independence of postcolonial nation-states. The second one is by the economic dependence. The ex-colonial states continue to receive aids from their former colonizers. But these colonial nations first have to be abided by the political conviction/orders of their neocolonial masters to get aid from them. The pseudo multi-party-political system must be adopted in order to fulfil the preference of the neocolonial masters in Europe and USA. As a matter of fact, the neocolonial masters use the political parties for political frictions to hold down the post-independence nations. Hence, they are behind the African political crisis.

In the meantime, Daemons start to awake seeing the dictatorial and repressive nature of the regime. To thwart his autocratic presence over the people, daemons take the initiative to intensify the rebellion against the regime.

By implication, they are called to be daemons because any person who wants to stand against the "Ruler" in Aburiria is perceived as not normal human but as a daemon that potentially threatens the country. In other words, the premise for this claim is that the "Ruler" tries to associate himself with God. Therefore, as Devil was the rebellious angel against the God in heaven, Daemons were the rebellious against the "Ruler" in Aburiria.

Nyawira, a woman who could raise female and male daemons at once, was dangerous, a menace to Aburiria. It was necessary to hunt her down by any means so as to comply

with orders repeated by the Ruler with ever-increasing urgency and desperation and last uttered just a few minutes before he boarded the plane for the USA,... (2006, p. 269).

Besides, the awakening spirits that determined to fight the dictatorial regime were labelled as daemons. These spirits also signify the group of men and women who are organized to incite the revolution against the rule of the dictatorship. Determination of the citizenry in unity is vital to change the socio-political atmosphere of the African nations. In this regard, the author underpins, strong figures need to play the leading role to bring about this goal into its ultimate effect.

Precisely to the historical reality, it was Daniel arap Moi who adapted this strategy in his reign as the second president of Kenya, next to Jomo Kenyatta. The author meticulously used the novel to expose the torturous and divisive nature of the Kenyan regime under Daniel arap Moi to the larger audience in the country and outside the country. Also, Moi was known by his **political guile** by which he formed tribal politics for exploitation. While he is from the small Kalenjin ethnic group, he created political rivalry between the leaders from the two major ethnic groups, Luo and Kikuyu, for his political profit. Additionally, he was known by officially advocating one-party-state in Kenya wherein the government gained reputation of brutality and corruption. Therefore, the novel under interpretation regenerates the socio-political conditions of Kenya under Daniel arap Moi's regime.

4.4.2. Character's (Private) Situation as National Allegory

The socio-historical experience that the African nation-states encounter is portrayed by the character's individual experience. Therefore, understanding the characters and their social environment is vital to explore the past and contemporary experiences of the nations. And the meticulous scrutiny of the characters and their role in the novel is equally important to realize the very implication that the novel wants to reveal as the specific history of an individual character can embody the collective history of the nation/the society. This section looks at the characters' unique personalities and experiences /or situations to come into the view of the national situation of the postcolonial African country by interpreting '*Wizard of the Crow*'.

Rachael: In the imaginary republic of Aburiria, the "Ruler" of the country is the mighty ruler that no one has allowed to ask questions, provide comments or complain about his mistakes. The manner of lordship resided on him. Only the decree of "Mighty is right" was acceptable.

However, once in the meantime, the “Ruler’s” legal wife, **Rachael**, reasoned out to complain about his making love with schoolgirls. Actually, it was taken that he was the husband of ‘all women’ with whom he wanted to share bed. What Rachael complained was that his relation with young schoolgirls who could be his children but he turned them into his wives.

What figure of a Ruler would he cut were he to renounce his right to husband all women in the land in the manner of the lords of Old Europe, whose *droits de seigneur* gave them the right to every bride-to-be?

Rachael thought she was being reasonable. I know you take the title Father of the Nation seriously, she told him. You know that I have not complained about all those women who make beds for you, no matter how many children you sire with them. But why schoolgirls? Are they not as young as the children you have fathered? Are they not really our children?(Wa Thiong’o, 2006,p.6).

The “Ruler” dumbly surprised that Rachael, his wife, faced him up to criticize his act. So, he immediately built a separate house for her that was surrounded by “a stone wall and an electric fence”. An armed guard was also stationed, and all clocks in the house were made to pause counting so that he revealed even his power of freezing time on Rachael. She was confined in the house, where she was completely isolated because no one was allowed to visit her.

This shows the fact that the woman is imprisoned. Besides, she is put under the guard of police force that restricts any of her contact with any person, including her children. By implication, the woman represents the country. Therefore, the imprisonment of a woman is the imprisonment of a nation. The post-independent nations of Africa are imprisoned under the force of the dictatorial rulers. As a result, these countries have no socio-political change because they are alienated from their people who are the potential resources. They are faced with a lack of transformation by their own disloyal sons who have forgotten their public promises that they have sworn before they held political power.

Again, like the feudal lords of Europe in the medieval periods, the “Ruler” of the country has given legal right to himself to exploit women sexually. This indicates that he is exploiting the nation for a longer period of time. In addition, this alludes to the psychological effects that are left behind imperialism (the imperial culture and history) in African nations.

Minister Silver Sikiokuu: In the story of the novel, one of the major characters named Sikiokuu, who is the “Ruler’s” minister of state, is depicted as morally degraded individual. He had once suggested that along with the construction of the tower of “Marching to Heaven” project, the construction of “a space luxury liner”, which he called it “Star Rover or “Rock Rover”, must be constructed for the “Ruler” so that he (the ‘Ruler’) could easily travel from star to star and planet to planet easily. However, the mighty “Ruler” took this idea as crook when he saw from a video that this kind of space crafts were smaller like toys that were made for boys—smaller things did not attract the “Ruler”. Thus, he interpreted it as a low-down trick intentionally suggested by his own cabinet-minister. Then the “Ruler” became ferocious about the suggestion. But Sikiokuu, who was so worried by the state of the “Ruler”, decided to make an effort to calm the angry “Ruler”. He sent his three wives and two of his daughters one after another to the state house to gratify the “Ruler’s” sexual interest.

This shows the breach of common human conscience which is resulted from moral degradation. Giving away ones wives or daughters for another person is an immoral act in most cultures of Africa. But when a person, like Sikiokuu, focuses on his personal advantages, he lacks morality to abide by this moral law. Ironically, this story exposes the reality of the post-independent African rulers because they betrayed their people and nation for imperial agents. In the colonial discourse of manipulation against blacks, we could see that the colonialists used literary works which had depicted that blacks were raped by Whites so that they purposefully wane the psychology of their colonial subjects. However, in the post-independence period, the black fellows (the national bourgeoisie) are giving away their own people and nations to the neo-colonial regimes and to their business organizations who are engaged in the contemporary exploitation of the post-independent nation-states. Hereby, by the description of this government minister, moral decadence of the African rulers is portrayed clearly. Similarly, it shows the exploitation of women by the joint crime of the patriarchy and the ruling system of the country.

4.4.3. Narrative Events as National Allegories

There are important narrative episodes that took place in the story of the novel. And they have implications in the historical movements of colonial nation states. So, this section underpins to elaborate and then interpret some noticeable events/episodes of the story in the novel.

Event in the national birthday ceremony: There was a special national birthday ceremony that was held in the imaginary republic of Aburiria. On this national ceremony, the sole management of the national committee that was organized for facilitating the ceremony prepared a special national gift. The gift was planned to be presented to the only “Ruler” of the country. The day on which the ceremony presumed to be celebrated was made in coincided with the birthday of the “Ruler” because it was taken that the ruler is the nation and the nation is the ruler. People from all corners of the country were summoned to join the celebration in masses. So, in this huge public gathering, the architectural design of the “Marching to Heaven” project was presented to the “Ruler”. It was a project assumed to be erected for the ruler to travel from the earth to heaven so that he, “the Ruler”, could call on God daily to say good morning or good evening, or simply, how was your day today, God?” (p.16). Also, it was presumed to surpass the Israelites trial to build the Babel wall so that the completion of the project would bring huge wonders in the world because it would be the first ever modern and huge construction that would give historical and international fame for the modern republic of Aburiria. And thus, it was anticipated to provide national pride and admiration for the “Ruler” and the people of Aburiria.

The project of the tallest ever tower that the “Aburirian Ruler” wanted to construct indicates that his ambition to build the only authoritarian regime on earth. In general term, it extends to show the over ambitious nature of African rulers for power. They are portrayed as so greedy that they want to control everything to themselves as it is squarely mentioned in the novel as follow: “...what he would have to do to make Rachael understand that he, the Ruler, had power, real power over everything including . . . yes . . . Time.”, (Wa Thiong’o, 2006,p.7). The way they (the African rulers) can prove their utmost satisfaction is based on the power they control at the expense of the socio-economic transformation of the nations they rule. Eventually, the national pride that the skyscraper (the tower) presumed to provide to the Aburirian nation turns out to be the image of national failure because the socio-political and economic crises the country has faced demonstrate this fact. For example, the spread of kwashiorkor that resulted from malnutrition clearly substantiate this claim.

Pictures of beggars or wild animals were what many tourists sent back home as proof of having been in Africa. In Aburiria, wild animals were becoming rare because of dwindling forests and poaching, and tourist pictures of beggars or children with

kwashiorkor and flies massing around their runny noses and sore eyes were prized for their authenticity. If there were no beggars in the streets, tourists might start doubting whether Aburiria was an authentic African country (Wa Thiong'o, 2006,p.35).

At the same time, it also indicates the level of corruption. It is described as being piled up one over the other. Here, it is an unusual kind of hyperbole the author portrays to satirize the "Ruler" of the imagined nation called Aburiria, which implies again the African nation.

Chaos during the birthday ceremony: However, "The Ruler" was making a speech about himself to the crowd. He told them that he was the father of all in the country. He loved his people. He described himself as merciful and sympathetic. When he was notifying them these all, he also promised to release those in jail because of their sins against his government. He described the detainees as sinners because, as he said, they were radical proponents of Marxism that advocates class struggle for freedom. He labelled them as rebellion, for they initiated people for struggle. However, in the middle of his speech, chaos was raised. Many artificial or plastic snakes were thrown on the crowd to create a terrifying mood and disperse the assembly. Then after, it was called **the incident of the snakes** (p. 82). In consequence, the special occasion ends with the disruption of "the Ruler's" birthday ceremony.

By using this satirical incident, the author of the novel rather depicts here the hypocritical quality of the "Ruler". Calling out the masses as "my blessed children" as if he has provided his fatherly love to his children when in reality he sucked their bloods and sweets, and at the same time he treated them so tyrannically is an ignominious hypocrisy. The brunt of poverty was so rampant that most people suffered from it. In addition to this, bribery is common in the government's bureaucracy. He wasted a lot of money for his birthday ceremony, which was ridiculous to the people.

So many were dying of hunger or illness, not to mention the ones in despair who took their own lives, that the police would have no reason to search for yet another corpse amid the stench. Maybe I should let them bury my body, he told himself, or rather his bird self: What use am I in Aburiria? The body is a prison for the soul. Why shouldn't I cut off the chains that now tie me to it, let the body and the soul say good-bye to each other? That way my soul shall be free to roam across land and all over this sky. Yes, to

go wherever it wishes without the endless restraining demands of the body: I am thirsty, I want water to drink; I am hungry, I want food to eat; I am naked, I need some clothes; I am out in the rain, I need some shelter; I am ill, I must find a doctor. (2006, p.40).

In this particular event, though “the Ruler” tried to display his false identity, the underground group that coordinated the disruption of the ceremony exposed his true identity to the masses of the people. His true identity is like a poisonous snake that toxifies humans. It implies that the true identities of African rulers are revealed by their deeds but not by their words. Lastly, it shows a **precarious political platform** (the snake politics) that they adhered to. The political system based on ethnic rivalry is dangerous. Hence, it is part of the process of disillusioning the masses of Africans about the national cancers who came to power only to betray the people. In this respect, the writer, Ngugi wa Thiongo, vehemently criticizes the post-independent Kenyan ruler.

Beggars gathering in the inauguration ceremony: Dignitary missionary personnel were invited from the Global Bank, and a welcome dinner ceremony was hosted. These visitors were expected to feel spring of joy so that they could influence the Bank to allow the loan to the ‘*Republic of Aburiria*’ in order to realize the construction of “the Marching to Heaven Project”. The hosting dinner was intended to create good impression on the part of the visitors because it was important for flattering the finance that ‘the Republic of Aburiria’ aspired to gain. However, group of beggars who were organized by an underground resistance movement called “the Movement for the Voice of People” turned the situation up-side down though the police were on duty to keep the visitors from possible harassment. They spoiled the deceiving image of the government in front of foreign cameras and blemished the reception.

Almost as if in answer to the prayers of the media, a group of beggars started shouting slogans beyond the decorum of begging. Marching to Heaven Is Marching to Hell. Your Strings of Loans Are Chains of Slavery. Your Loans Are the Cause of Begging. We Beggars Beg the End of Begging. The March to Heaven Is Led by Dangerous Snakes (2006, p.74).

There are many poor people in Africa. Their living standard is low. However, their governments do not plan to relieve the problem of these people; they rather make international deals that

aggravate the problem. The people's oriented (demand) project is abandoned; instead of this, the frivolous/humorous project is about to be constructed to further worsen the plight of the people.

4.4.4. Characters' Romantic Relationship as National Allegory

The narrative that recounts about the romantic relationship between the characters can entail us the socio-political matrix of the post-independent country of Africa. The female character Nyawira saw that Kamiti had incredible skill of investigating and probing out the real problems of African leaders and businessmen when she shared her home to him during his homelessness and desperate situation. He came to exceptionally understand the real problems of African nations by being "Wizard of the Crow", a diviner for healing patients. This lured Nyawira towards Kamiti. Later, the two major character (in fact, the hero and the heroine), became couple.

Once again they laughed together, and as they looked in each other's eyes they were suddenly without words. They resumed their walk in silence, taken up by the light they saw in each other's eyes.

Love was everywhere: in the tree branches where the nests of weaverbirds hung; in the fern where the widowbird had left two long black tail feathers; in the murmurings of the Eldares River as it flowed eastward before turning into a roaring waterfall; in tin-sun's rays,...

But they felt enveloped in peace beyond understanding, peace emanating from the forest even though the crickets were calling and hyenas were howling from afar, and when Kamiti and Nyawira looked at each other, their eye beams pulled them together, Kamiti's fingers straying to Nyawira's nipples, the color of blackberries.

They slid into wordless wonder, and even on waking up in the morning they were still firmly locked in each other's arms as if they would never ever part (pp.205-206).

Kamiti and Nyawira who first came from different backgrounds became like-minded individuals on several things of their country. So, they together determined to struggle for its change and transformation. Nyawira was the daughter of a local businessman. He (her father) was a man who could send his children to school and college that was impossible for most of the people of Aburiria. Specially, this man sent two of his sons to American colleges with complete coverage of their educational tuitions, and their room and board fees by himself. He even bought Nyawira, his daughter, a new brand Toyota-Corolla car. Nevertheless, Nyawira, the heroine of the story,

abandoned all the properties behind and left to live her selfless life. Because once in her journey of life, she got a car accident while she was driving on a highway with the fastest speed that crashed her car on the roadside, but she narrowly escaped death with only minor injuries.

To her surprise then, there was no one who stopped to see if anyone in the crashed car had hurt except one bare-footed man who used his donkey cart to rush her to the nearest medical Centre for emergency aid. During her recovery period then, she recalled to what had happened and passed in the event of the accident. It was only a poor man with a donkey-cart that tried to save her life while a number of cars simply passed her by without giving her a little attention. It was then that “she started to thinking seriously about her life. If she had died, what would she have left behind as her legacy to the living?” (2006, p.79).

Similarly, she married one of the government’s latecomer cabinet, John Kaniuru, who was living only for his self-advantages. He collected money, plot of lands, and houses for his personal interests. But Nyawira divorced him. At the end, she even decided to separate herself from her parents because of her business-only-minded father, and to live her loneliness life.

It indicates that the heroine of the story understands that her country is suffering from the anguish of selfishness and corruption. She decides to separate herself from the injustice system that is instilled by the autocratic government in her country, and she determines to struggle it for the interest of the masses. Her father represents one of the bad leaders or forefront runners of corruption in her country. Hence, she becomes the leader of the secret group called “the movement for the voice of the people” to fight some selfish and corrupt individuals. “Nyawira: The world is the way it is and will always be so? The world is upside down, and it should be put to right by those who on earth do dwell, to borrow a phrase from the hymn.” (p, 63). Therefore, Nyawira is convinced that the nation should undergo socio-political transformation. Envisioning this, she becomes the heroine of the revolution.

Likewise, Kamiti, the hero of the story, was the son of the poor countryside persons who sent him to school and college by selling their plot of land and cattle expecting that he would be a government employee to repay their lost assets. He has got BA degree in Economics and MBA in business administration. On the contrary of their (his parents), expectations he turned out to be

an educated country beggar for lack of employment in the country. He was even running after garbage to feed himself on the remnants of food.

And indeed, moving from office to office asking the same question, is there any vacancy, was what he did the rest of the morning, until the middle of the day **when hunger drove him to the foot of the garbage mountain to see if he could find some cast-off tomatoes or the remains of any other edibles.** (p.70). The emphasis is mine.

Again, he also suffered from the pain of humiliation from business owners when he was hunting for jobs until he finally became “Wizard of the Crow”. This extract describes his state of being, “And it was this desperation that had made him ingratiate himself with Tajirika, ending up with his drinking dregs from the cup of humiliation.” (p.71).

They (the lovers) decided to pull themselves together. They discussed several problems of the country, and they also agreed to work together for the betterment of the country in the future. As the leader of the movement for the voice of the people, Nyawira enlisted Kamiti as an important member for the movement: “Yet she concluded that he was a man of wisdom and integrity whom the movement could usefully have recruited” (p.200).

The story implies that the post-independent nations suffered from the rampant socio-economic and political crises. These crises extremely affected every ordinary citizen. The two individuals in the novels are shown to become a couple after many of their lives’ turns and twists as the result of the bad political conditions. They exerted each of their individual efforts to overcome their personal problems. But later they understood that pulling their efforts and potentials together was an important way out from the problems.

Likewise, each citizen of the country must be pulling together to strengthen their unity and integration so that they can solve the socio-political crises of their country. In this regard, the romantic relationship of these characters signifies unity as it is expressed precisely. “All of us men and women of Aburiria must join hands in opposing this madness of Marching to Heaven.” (p. 210). Besides, the act of love implies patriotism and commitment for one’s nation. Therefore, patriotic commitment for the redemption of the country from many socio-political crises is important.

4.4.5. Reflection of Social Crises as National Allegories

Corruption and Bribery: In Ngugi's 'Wizard of the Crow', social crisis is one of the dire problems of the nation that he fictionalized. It clearly depicts the terrible situation dramatically (i.e. in a dialogic manner).

It is portrayed that the police dispersed the crowd of beggars who disrupted the special day of the dinner host from the Centre of the town. But two police officers chased two beggars who held bags in their hands. These police officers did not want to stop chasing until the beggar could leave the bags behind. Especially, one of them ran after the beggars so long a distance and through narrowed and dimly lit spaces, though he was trapped by road hardships that could have endangered his life. He continued running after the beggars' footsteps. The secret behind his insistence to run after the beggars is the bag that was upheld by the beggars. He assumed that the bags had contained money.

This implies that the people are in the brunt of poverty, but the authorities in power have no mercy to take away these people's property. In brief, the rampant corruption that spread across the nation affects every citizen, including beggars, who are the most destitute group. It shows that the magnitude of corruption is so high that it degrades the moral standards of the country. For example, the following excerpt shows one of the police officers, A.G. (Arigaiga Gatherere), as he is characterized by receiving bribery.

I got on my motorcycle and went to the road. I targeted big carriers because most of them carried contraband and would rather pay bribes in thousands rather than have their goods inspected. To a police officer they were a blessing, unless bad luck crossed your path and you harassed a carrier belonging to the big men including the biggest of all (Wa Thiong'o, 2006, p. 116).

Unemployment: Unemployment became another social crisis in the country. Graduates from different degrees of professions could not find jobs. They learned their college education by the cost that their parents had sold their plot of land and cattle. The graduates and their parents expected that the new graduates could secure their employment in the government organizations after graduation as the government had promised before holding power. However, the

government could not provide employment positions to these graduates. Their parents also left nothing. They could not even afford their daily expenditure.

My parents were not rich, so paying for my schooling was a burden. They had to sell off their chickens, goats, and eventually their land, thus leaving us with nothing for a rainy day. When I finished college, I thought my time had come to show my gratitude. Aburiria thought otherwise. (2006, p.86).

As a result, some graduates had no option other than begging: "I would never have imagined meeting a university woman begging in the streets! Does rough weather choose men over women? Does the sun beat on men, leaving women nice and cool? Nyawira asked rather sharply." (2006, p.83). Here, while few number of businessmen and political leaders continued to accumulate the national resources with no moral responsibility, masses of the population suffered from misery of life. One of the miseries that majority of the people are facing is joblessness as reflected clearly in the novel.

To proceed with the realization of 'Marching to Heaven project', "the Ruler" set 'Marching to Heaven project' committee who could follow up and coordinate the process of the building. One of the businessmen who owned the premises of Eldares Modern Construction and Real Estate, Titus Tajirika, was assigned as the chief of the building committee. Following his position, contractors from inside and outside the country started to congratulate him with visiting cards containing money notes. This businessman was capable of collecting sacks of money notes on a single day. Seeing this, to manage the visiting cards and telephone calls from "the dignitary" businessmen and the contractors, he decided to appoint a person that could support his secretary. At a time, two long lines of people formed in front of his company's building wherein he is the manager. The first was queues of the rich hunting for contracts, and the second was the queues of the jobless people seeking for jobs. The second queue was so long that no one knew the end point of it. However, the regime twists the queue and enlist it as the threat of the country. "These people all want to smear the Ruler's good name by exaggerating the severity of unemployment, by dramatizing the plight of the unemployed. That man, your friend, is a threat to the stability and security of the country." (2006, p.145). As a result, they designated it "queues of daemons".

This suggests that the number of unemployed individuals in the post-independence African nations is numerous. These countries are facing socio-economic crises because of the national bourgeoisie that is scrambling the national properties. People dispossessed from their assets. Consequently, the majority of the people are suffering from the anguish of joblessness. Also, ironically, dictatorial regimes like this are not willing to take responsibility to solve the country's dire problems. But when people ask questions and start to address their crises to the government, they could rather be labeled as threats. This is the habit of dictatorial regimes in African nations that suspect every movement of their people because they do not have confidence that they are leading and serving the people justly. On the contrary, they (regimes) are the source of threat and misery for the populace. Therefore, a regime that commits crime against the people always dwells with fear and suspicion. In general, the magnitude of the plight of the people is evidently depicted in the novel.

Disease and prostitution: Graduates could not find jobs in the country. They became unable to secure their daily meal. They were compelled to get themselves in a more dangerous social crisis. Some engaged into the act of sexual promiscuous to earn money from foreign visitors. This further exposed them to the endemic virus (HIV/AIDS), which later took away their lives. For example, Kamiti's former girlfriend, Wariara, deceased as the result of the deadly virus. She passed many of her nights in hotels with foreigners after she had faced with problems because of joblessness. Wariara submitted into prostituting herself after nobody gave her a job. This became the last resort after she could no longer financially support herself.

Years after leaving school she still had not landed a job despite her high school diploma now boosted by a secretarial course—typing, shorthand, and computer literacy. So at the time they met, Wariara was still looking for a job (p.66).

He recalled how Margaret Wariara, later a victim of the deadly virus, had left him. Was there something about him that drove the people he most loved away from him? But try as he might, he could not imagine Nyawira leaving him without saying good-bye. But then again, had he ever imagined that Wariara, a homely woman, would prostitute herself among tourists in big hotels? (p.591).

This situation shows that Africans are victims of many problems. Apart from being attacked by disease and pestilence, it also indicates that the exploitation of black Africans has not stopped.

Besides, it reveals that prostituting women is prostituting the nation for the little gain the African rulers have been given by the Whites. Women are exploited because of their sex; nations are exploited because of their resources. Therefore, it means that African countries continue to serve as a source of wealth and raw materials for Western countries. On the contrary, they (Africans) are the place of dispossession for the ills of Western nations.

4.4.6. Representations of Magical Elements as National Allegories

Divine Mirror: Divine mirror is an important investigative tool that ‘Wizard of the Crow’ (the sorcerer) used to figure out the truth of things. The divine mirror is used to unearth the truth that was kept inside the minds of the characters. It was instrumental to disclose the secret thought that was hidden behind the minds of the important characters. By scrutinizing the emotional and psychological aspects of an individual character, the sorcerer turned character’s wishes and ambitions inside out. Here, the important figures who were diagnosed by the diviner’s mirror were authorities and businessmen of the country. Based on this method, they can be characteristically grouped some as they were eager for power, some were lust for money and some others behaved self-centered. But, in all cases the probing questions that the diviner created were helpful behind the divine mirror. The probing questions were significant to press the individuals to admit their inner most thoughts though they gave the credit to the power of the magical mirror.

By doing so, the ‘Wizard of the Crow’ contributes his role by exposing the real identities of the rulers and the petit bourgeoisie of the African nations. In this regard, he creates awareness among the masses of the people about the nature of the post-independent political elites. Therefore, the divine mirror provides the real (self-) reflection of individuals because these individuals were systematically pressed to release the thoughts they have kept in their minds by themselves. In other words, it is an object that represents the truth of things. It lets the rulers and national bourgeoisie to release their self-love personalities. This again creates the window of self-awareness on the part of these kind of individuals. By implication, the political elites of Africa must aware of themselves and their political conditions to act on the basis of the demands of their society than on the demands of their interests alone. Hence, novels like this reflect the internal socio-political climate of African nations.

4.4.7. The Quest for Traditional Past as National Allegory

Africa was endowed with rich traditions. It is owned by various tribal communism with multiple traditions. These traditions were being practiced for long among the society. They include indigenous customs, values, norms, rituals, cultural habits, conventions, ceremonies and procedural rules that have practiced in the continent. They have played a substantial role in the socio-cultural organization of the people. As a result, needless to say that they have also played a significant role in the psychological make-up of the populace.

However, these native cultures were and are being degraded by colonialism and neocolonialism one after the other. It is shown that the impact of imperialism does not end up after independence. The influence of neocolonialism continues to affect African culture and traditions. Even today, modernity influences African people to abandon their ancestral traditions. The imported values of the Western become a threat to the traditions of Africans. So, African children and youths must pursue to restore the lost traditions. In this regard, recognizing the threat, one of the aims of African writers is to reinstall the African tradition. They seize this to suggest that the opportunity to learn African culture and history must be created for the new generation of Africa because this helps to recuperate/regenerate the lost traditions and save them from the threat.

On the other hand, it is depicted, in the “Wizard of the Crow”, that Africans have faced with political system contradiction. “Master of Science” that has taken from the West is failed to resolve the difficulties of Africans. When African leaders faced with socio-political problems, they usually requested to Western countries to get support. However, the problems cannot be solved by the mere involvement of these countries. As clearly portrayed, the “Ruler” of Aburiria got illness of malady of words that further caused for his body floating when he went to America for state visit. This malady of words actually became strange illness in the land to affect Aburirian leaders and businessmen.

There is a strange illness in the land. It is a malady of words; thoughts get stuck inside a person. You have seen stutterers, haven't you? Their stammer is a result of a sudden surge of thoughts, or calculations, or worry. Now I ask you: who has more worries than a head of state? Who said that uneasy lies the head that wears the crown? (p.490).

It restricted the function of the larynx to produce voice for the sound system of words. He, the “Ruler”, received medical treatment from the well-known White doctors in America. But he could not be cured from his illness. His entourage ministers got worried by the new development of the “Ruler” and the failure of the Western medication on him. Later, they (the ministers) recalled the “Wizard of the Crow” who can be able to heal the malaise by his magical power. They called at home to summon him in America. As usual, “Wizard of the Crow” cured the Ruler’s malady of words by using the divine mirror. It is done secretly in the Ruler’s VIP room to avoid unnecessary rumors against the ‘Ruler’ that he was healed by the African superstitious power.

Ironically, it shows the common problem that affects the rulers of African governments in leading their countries. The dysfunctioning of the larynx shows the dysfunctioning of the African ruling system that is adopted from Europe. The political reality that African governments use behaves in an odd manner that contradicts the African socio-cultural contexts wherein these political elites used to grow up. In the same manner, the Ruler’s body was expanded, which floated him over the ground/land, showing the conflict of the African political system and the demand of the people. So, negotiation of the African ruling system and the African socio-political and people’s desires must be settled for the socio-political transformation that the African nations must bring about.

This contradiction between the African political system and the African people exists because of the rulers strange behaviors towards the people. People expect their rulers to address the socio-economic and political predicament that they have faced. However, the new independent nation’s leaders move against this expectation. Although their bodies are in Africa, their spirits and minds are outside Africa. They usually act as if they are Europeans. They disregard their own ways and they rather desire to uphold the Western ways. Westerners have many strategic ways to diffuse their political system and political recommendation into African nations’ political system so that Africans develop the habit of down grading their values and traditional treasures, but they wish to take up the Europeans. The dressing style that meets with the American and the political action that is agreed with the European diplomatic means are depicted as if the Westerners are always true. Therefore, feeling of shame by the African practice and culture, as if it is irrelevant and unscientific that only uneducated people are withholding it, is implied on the part of the

African political elites. This is, indeed, the effect of colonialism left behind in Africa. The contemporary influence of neocolonialism is also significant here because, as depicted in the novel, European modern political influence persists in the African countries.

Therefore, writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o use to write novels to enlighten and show us new method of teaching and learning African culture and history in the formal educational institutions like in schools and universities. Ngugi, in his "Wizard of the Crow", intends that African nation's educational curriculum must consider the inclusion of the African cultures and history because this helps to open new opportunity for the study and the regeneration of the African past.

Besides, organization of festivals to celebrate African culture is another way of reviving the feebleness of its role in the society. In this regard, practicing or performing the native's tradition is essential to re-establish the African cultural institutions. The role of mass media in transmitting and promoting the native's socio-cultural and historical elements is also paramount. Hence, Radio and Television transmission should be set to air the content and context of African culture and history. This helps to resurface the prejudiced culture of Africa. The utmost matter of the issue here is devising African based curriculum to counter the European educational system that works to take over the African values. In the same manner, African traditional practice must be given due consideration to be functioning in the society.

In the novel "Wizard of the Crow", Ngugi describes the illness that commonly attacks African rulers and business fellows. It is resulted from the mental disorders, and it can only be cured by African psychiatrists. American doctors tried, but they failed to heal the 'Ruler' from the disease. In other words, the civilized nations' or the Whites' science has failed to cure the African disease. Nevertheless, African traditional doctors used African medicinal plants to treat the roots of the African disease, and they used African wits to remove the African mental problems. An African psychiatrist, the protagonist of *Wizard of the Crow*, is able to cure the common disease that struck the African political leaders and African national bourgeoisie.

Here, it is indicated that African psychiatry or '*Afropsychiatry*' must be organized to give medication for the African mental illness. At the same time, African herbalists succeeded in curing African wounds and diseases; henceforth, a school of African '*herbacology*' must be set

up. It is also shown that a school of black sorcery that would produce new '*Afro-psychiatrists*' must be established in Africa.

By implication, African problems can be solved by African values and culture. This reveals that Africans also have great thoughts, which shatters the European assumption that they believe great thoughts belong to the Whites.

Convinced by this idea, Ngugi also wants to have a political philosophy that contains African socio-cultural values. He wants to install a political system that cures African socio-political malaise based on African contexts.

"Some people think that it is only white people who can come up with new theories, and they are wrong!" he said, and all the ministers chorused back: Yees! They had gotten the hint and unanimously selected Machokali to head a committee to write down the Ruler's Theory of Politics and Government. (163)

In the same manner, it is suggested that African wisdom of saving for difficult situations is important for post-independent society. It is recalled to them that their ancestors used to it.

"Nature may be abundant," said Nyawira in response, "but it is also good to build a granary for when nature has the flu. I understand that long ago there was no home that could answer to the name of home without a granary being part of the architecture. Look at our Aburiria today. How many households have a granary? None, because they have nothing to store. Am I straying from my point? I suppose what is bothering me is the image of a hermit competing with animals for honey and wild berries." (p.204).

Generally, negotiating with the multiple arrays of African culture and traditions is vital to bringing about peace and reconciliation. Reconciliation with African culture means reconciliation with African identity because African socio-cultural organizations set up the psychology of the people. The unity of the citizenry is also imperative for the change of the postcolonial nation-states. Political leaders are treacherous, as they were empirically seen immediately after the advent of independence until now. However, promising socio-political change and transformation can be realized with the commitment and cooperation of the masses of the populace. Robust individuals, both male and female, who have experienced the anguish of postcolonial crises, must lead this mobilization.

Therefore, as Nnolim (2006) also points out below, in order to achieve this dream, Africans must refrain from political factions, political rivalry and political guile but pull together for unity and tranquility.

Our writers, in this new epoch of globalism dominated by a technologically oriented new world order must create a new Africa, a new spirit of optimism, an Africa full of promises able to feed its teeming populations, with a healthy and vibrant people not dependent on Europe and America for sustenance.(p.3).

However, it is also important to adapt the foreign political system in reconciliation with African socio-cultural values. Similarly, the clash between modernity and tradition needs to be settled for the current societal co-existence of Africans because the mixture (hybridity) of the two is a noble way forward.

4.5. Socio-Historical and Cultural Contexts as National Allegories in *Little Suns*

Zakes Mda is one of the South African black writers whose literary writing shows the impact of colonialism and apartheid. He is known for depicting the socio-historical and cultural events and conditions that resulted in the current state of affairs in South Africa. He portrays the struggles against the White incursion on blacks, or particularly on the native community of South Africa. He usually brings forth community related matters to the submit of South African literature (Heywossod, 2004). He combines historical and political themes in a magical form of telling story (Julien, 1995).

He engages to depict the societal conditions of South Africa in the post-apartheid period. Hence, he sheds light on the link between the historical condition and literary tradition of the country because he sees history and literature as complementary components of the socio-political setup of the society. Furthermore, the national identity of the people is built and developed on the basis of these matrices. Particularly, the complete historical conditions of South Africa can be drawn from its literary work that delves itself into the societal journey that passed through different time epochs. In this regard, Cornwell et al., (2010 p.12) point out that “the character’s and the story’s situations are the real texture of the South Africa’s societal life”. In similar manner, Zakes Mda relies on the socio-historical incidents and the indigenous knowledge system of his country in writing his novels.

4.5.1. Regenerating the Socio-Historical Conditions as National Allegories

In his recently published novel, *Little Suns* (2015), Zakes Mda regenerates/reimagines past socio-historical conditions. Malangana, the protagonist of the novel, starts to quest his beloved, whom he separated 20 or more years ago. Since their separation, the two lovers have never met for a long time. Thus, he (Malangana) is nostalgic for his lost beloved.

He has a long way to go. How long, he does not know. He does not care either. His journey will stop only when he fulfils his longing. Or when he dies, an eventuality he is not prepared to entertain. Not yet. He will walk from destination to destination – little destinations that seem never to have any finality (Mda, 2015 p. 7).

Therefore, he decides to search for her. She is only named by *Mthwakazi*, which means woman of the *abaThwa* people (the orthography of the word is original). The people's ancestral origin is from one of the native South African people called *San*, who were known for their hunting and gathering lives. They had inhabited in the part of the land of *amaMpondomise* clan (the orthography of the word is original). In his search for her, Malangana was informed that *Mthwakazi* was living with the missionaries as a servant but had disappeared because she feared that the missionaries would uncover her relationship with Mhlontlo, the King of *amaMpondomise*. King Mhlontlo killed Hamilton Hope, who was the colonial magistrate in the *amaMpondomise* land, during the colonial incursion. However, after the killing of the magistrate, the people of King Mhlontlo, *i.e.*, *the amaMpondomise*, were assaulted and forced to live in exile in another neighboring land. Hence, they left their homeland. Not only this, but the white colonialists continued to attack and jail these people wherever they lived and found them. Because of this, the *amaMpondomise* people scattered and lived in exile. However, Malangana, who had been one of the king's advisors, launched a search to find the lost woman from the land of his exile.

Then, what does this episode of the novel want to invoke or infer about the socio-political conditions of South African native people during the colonial invasion? Historically, there was conflict between the colonial magistrate and the *amaMpondomise* people when colonialists came to control the natives' land and traditions.

First, the colonialist contemptuous assumption towards the *amaMpondomise* people precipitated the conflict. The Whites believed that they came to civilize the native people. Therefore, the colonialists demanded that the natives must be devoid of their long-lived traditional belief system because they, the Whites, perceived it as a superstitious practice, which is the act of heathens. This superstitiousness is a sign of barbarism and primitive for them. Therefore, colonialists worked to remove it and replace it with their own culture. When colonialists met the native people, they started to eradicate the natives' culture and traditions. They established different missionary schools and churches to install their Europeanizing ideology over the natives. They taught European culture as a civilized culture. Besides, the traditional administrative system of the people that gave high regard to the customs and the local kings decided to be eliminated. In other words, colonialists disregarded the local chiefs, but the natives showed great respect and gratitude. Hence, Malanagana's quest for the lost beloved can be understood to be his quest for the lost tradition, which was abolished and eliminated by the White's incursion and the White's tradition.

Second, colonialists separately attacked different clan chiefs to control them under their domination. Whenever one chief was found to be strong enough to hand over himself to the colonialists' incursion, colonialists had a habit of collaborating with those who had already handed over themselves, and they stood to attack the one who was labeled as rebellious. In short, colonialists divided the local chiefs into two groups: loyalists and rebellious. Those who agreed to support and accept the white administration were called loyalists because they collaborated with colonialists' to achieve the Whiteman's interests, whereas those who rejected their (the Whites') administration system were called rebellious. Therefore, the collaborative chiefs to the colonialists were given guns and ammunition to fight on the sides of the colonialists against the other fellow or local chiefs.

In this instance, one of the colonial magistrates, Hamilton Hope, put every district chief under his control, but the king of the Basotho (present-day Lesotho) people, Magweyi, refused to surrender to the White government. Though the king of *amaMpondomise* expressed his indifference to the war with the Basotho people because he knew these people were his fellows, the magistrate forced the king of the *amaMpondomise* to cooperate and to assault the Basotho along with the colonial government. Here, the colonial government used the force of the native people against

their own fellows to control both of them under the colonial forces. In the beginning, dividing the people of the same race to fight one another so that they were weak enough to be dominated by the colonialists was one mechanism of the colonial government in South Africa. However, the king of *amaMpondomise*, outdid against the magistrate's intention. He cunningly killed the magistrate by pretending to accept his command to wage war against the Basotho. By doing so, he disclosed his comradeship to his fellows.

By implication, this story evokes the idea that division was the main cause of the natives' defeat against the British invasion during colonialism. Division based on ethnicity has taken the natives away from solidarity but placed them in different fragile ethnic groups that cannot protect the aggression of colonialism. Here, one of the inferences is that the quest for the woman can be deduced that the recovery of the overlooked history of the *amaMpondomise* people's solidarity with the Basotho people during the 'Gun War' in South Africa. It was called the "Gun War" because the colonialists flared up the war to disarm the gunmen of the Basotho people. Hence, the author uses the novel to unearth past history in order to give lessons for the present society of South Africa in particular and the African people in general. He wants to recall that the present conflict based on ethnic background is the legacy of colonialism. Thus, holding the unity of the people is important for the socio-political development and peaceful coexistence of the present day society.

Third, after the killing of the colonial magistrate, the British forces attacked the *amaMpondomise* people as part of their vengeance on the natives. Therefore, the *amaMpondomise* people deprived and migrated to Lesotho, the land of *amaXhosa*, which is another clan (the orthography of the word is original). More than twenty years have passed since they left their land. The quest of *Mthwakazi* by Malangana is the quest of the ancestral land of the *amaMpondomise* that was dispossessed from them. At the same time, it implies the quest for the forerunners (predecessors) of the clan because when the dispossessed land is found, the ancestors who used to live in that land are discovered.

The novel provides a story that shows the conflict between the *amaMpondomise* (people) and the colonialists. This also regenerates/explores another historical incident called "The War of Hope." The "War of Hope" happened when the colonial Magistrate Hamilton Hope forced the *amaMpondomise* king to join the colonial force against the neighboring clan called *Basotho*

(present-day Lesotho). Generally, both Gun War of the Basotho and ‘War of Hope’ of the *amaMpondomise* are the real historical background for Zakes Mda’s recent novel, ‘Little Suns’, written in 2015.

4.5.2. Reciting Family Genealogy as National Allegory

Reciting family genealogy is one of the common ways to quest for the past tradition. In *Little Suns*, chiefs and elders of the native people were summoned to gather at one of the districts called *Maclear*. The colonial magistrate, Hamilton Hope, ordered the meeting to be held. The meeting was about to discuss the Basotho uprising against the colonial government. The “peace preservation act”, which required all native people to surrender and hand over their guns and ammunition to the colonial government, was ratified. Nevertheless, the Basotho king was indifferent. Hence, the magistrate designated the king and his people rebellious, and he demanded that action must be taken against the Basotho. Therefore, each district under the colonial government must participate to take action. Accordingly, chiefs and delegates from different districts came to attend the meeting. However, it was an etiquette, a protocol, in which every chief had to recite his genealogy or family line before the actual meeting was started or before he spoke out his position on the agenda. This local protocol was unacceptable and rejected by the colonial magistrate, but the chiefs kept reciting their respective histories at the expense of the magistrate’s warning. Each one of them recited it turn by turn until it went back to 400 years of begetting, which tested the magistrate’s patience.

There are many clans in the country, South Africa, but their ancestral origins are similar. The division between the clans is made by the white colonialists’ first in order to get alliances to conquer each clan one after another and second to sustain their administration system that was established on the basis of a divide and rule mechanism. This helped the colonialists keep the ethnic groups apart from one another. Therefore, the ethnic and territorial boundaries are brought by white imperialism to shatter the unity of the native society, whose socio-historical background is drawn from their common ancestors and common socio-cultural traditions.

Nevertheless, the writer keeps the chiefs reciting their respective genealogy up to many generations back until they reached out to their very early ancestor, who became the common origin for all of them.

This suggests the resistance and perseverance of the native people. They are depicted as passionate about their customs and traditions though great annihilation has been committed to eradicating them. They insisted on uncovering their oral story that was forgotten. They used to recite oral stories to retrieve their past socio-cultural history. In short, reciting the (past) genealogy indicates the quest for the predecessor clan and the quest for the dispossessed land and culture of the native people.

Furthermore, this helps the present people of the country restore their unity and insist on living together. The purpose of retrieving the ancestral background of the society is to remind them that their communal origins are derived from their long-lived tradition. In addition, it is crucial to refresh the common identity of the people. As discussed earlier, mutual respect among the ethnic groups whose socio-cultural backgrounds are similar is essential to creating peaceful coexistence in the present society. Here, the story of family genealogy is helpful for the socio-cultural restoration and reconstruction of the country. This again builds a harmonious life among the people.

4.5.3. Character's Actions and Situations as National Allegory

In the bulk of African literature, the experience of an individual character infers to the collective experience of the society (Jameson, 1986). The following discussion shows the socio-political implications of the physical appearance, naming, roles, characteristics and challenges or obstacles of the protagonist in Zake Mda's *'Little Suns'*.

Characters' physical appearance as national allegory: When Malangana started searching for his lost beloved after 20 years of separation, his everything changed, including his physical appearance and walking style. He got very old, and he was facially wrinkled. Particularly, he faced difficulty of walking a normal walk. Hence, his walking was a stumbling walk.

Everything about him is twisted: his face, his lips, his arms, his waist, and his legs. Especially his legs. They are like dry stumps of grey wood with knees forming twisted knobs that knock against each other as the crutches try to find their way down the escarpment among the rocks and shrubs.

....They are the ones who would ultimately have recognised him despite all the changes that have happened to his now convoluted constitution. (Mda, 2015, pp. 7&143).

Here, the experience of Malangna represents the collective experience of the community from which he originated. The change in his physical appearance is a socio-cultural alteration of the society. He stumbled because he participated in the colonial war against his people. The colonial incursion affected the people. Hence, the violence of colonialists collapses the people and their culture. They are forced to lose their culture and traditions. In other words, the presence of the colonial government disregards and disintegrates the native's culture while privileging the White's culture.

In the same manner, we can see when characters discuss their physical changes after a period of separation. In their conversation, two characters, Malanagana and an old man, came to unveil their past experiences while they were in the same place with the same purpose. An old man who was serving in the house of King *Mhlontlo* of the *amaMpondomise* met Malangana, the protagonist, after several years. Both of them were working in the house of the king, but on different tasks and duties. When they met, they saw great change on the part of each of their bodies. For example, the old man lost his sight, whereas Malangana's bones rattled because of the war he fought with the colonial magistrate, Hamilton Hope.

This suggests that the arrival of colonists caused the indigenous people to lose their identity. They lose their land, culture, history and heroes. As a result, they have not had anything to see from their own perspective, but they have been provided with the White man's history and culture to view from the White man's perspective. They lose their view. They are forced to accept the colonialists' views. Thus, the natives' have not had their own eyes; theirs have been replaced by the colonialist's eyes. They walk on the colonialist's ways but not on their own ways. Their legs are shackled. They are unable to walk freely. They are coerced to walk the stranger's ways and see the alien views (by the Euro-centrists).

This implies that they lose their freedom and independence. In addition, they are forced to separate because of the aggression of the colonialists against the native people. The social

welfare of society is affected by the presence of Whites. The native people are forced to abandon their culture and traditions.

Although the impact of colonialism adversely affects the native's culture and traditions up to the verge of being lost, there are still traceable elements that help to regenerate/rediscover it with the joint effort of the present community and the government. This can also be deduced from the physical features of the character, as described below:

Even though she has greatly shrunk and years have furrowed her face he can recognise her. She was one of the diviners who nursed the queen when she was sick. She was robust and matronly then but *nguye lo*. "She is the one" (p. 160). (The emphasis indicated by quotation mark is original).

This extract shows the re-joining of the beloved characters after a long time of forced separation. Though great change happens in their physical appearances, they do not entirely fail to remember one another. By implication, it suggests the societal resistance and perseverance in the face of great challenges.

Names of the characters: The names of the characters also have socio-historical implications in the novel. Malangana's name is derived from the sun because Malangana means "*Little Suns*" in '*isiXhosa*', the language of the Xhosa community. (The orthography of the word is original). Therefore, he is the eponymous hero of the novel. Why? First, it has historical reference. In the history of *amaMpondomise*, there was Malangana, who was known for his mysticism and the art of hunting. He was an ancestor from whom the present Malangana descended.

Surely his parents were not mad when they named him Malangana – Little Suns. **There are many suns!** Indeed, he was not the original owner of the name. He was named after an ancestor, the leader of *abaMbo* from whom *amaMpondomise* descended. The patriarch who led them during the epochs of great migrations, and who was famous for his mystic powers and his prowess in the art of hunting people of the forest, as leopards were called (p.18). (The emphasis is original but it was in Italics).

Second, descendants of the *amaMpondomise* people have different socio-historical incidents in their different paths of generations. Hence, "sun" here represents the monumental or heroic historical deeds that the people of *amaMpondomise* perform in their paths throughout those

historical periods. Broadly speaking, today's South Africa is a multi-ethnic nation. It consists of different branches of clans that have great ethnic and sociocultural backgrounds. Each ethnic or clan group has its own distinctive historical and cultural background, like the great and established kingdoms of amaMpondomise, amaXhosa and amaZulu. At the same time, each group has a great deal of respect for their respective socio-cultural background because the general set-up and beliefs of the people are built on it. However, each group comes together to compose South Africa as a nation. Therefore, it can be deduced that although there are multiple ethnic branches in South Africa, they are all the South African citizens or people whose ancestral origins stem from the same founding father and mother. Hence, here, the story of Malangana represents one of the ethnic groups whose socio-historical background is monumental. The same is true for other branches of the ethnic groups. Nevertheless, they together build the big South African nation (it means little suns become the big sun). As such, they have a common destiny to live in harmony and cooperation.

Yet more and more people these days are becoming increasingly united and would like to see themselves as one black nation, as the ikhumsha teacher who was reading Izwi Labantu was telling the people the other day. They have seen what the white man can do to them when they are many separate kingdoms. (p. 173).

Third, 'Sun' has a power over clouds and rain. These elements (clouds and rain) represent the power of dominance, sanctions and restrictions. The presence of Whites is represented by clouds that control the natives' land and culture. Similarly, the rain restricts the movement of people. However, the rise of the sun appears to be seen as freedom or the cessation of restrictions or dominance. So, Malangana is named to represent the icon of freedom fighters against colonial domination who start struggle for the light of national independence. Accordingly, "Little Suns," which Malangana represents, indicates the heroic performance of the second Malangana, next to the first Malangana. Collectively, it shows the heroic resistance of 'amaMpondomise' people against colonial occupation or colonial dominance. Alternatively, it can also indicate the collective effort they exerted for their national independence.

4.5.4. Cultural Clashes as National Allegories

When colonialists appeared in the land of the black community, they started to impose restrictions on the natives' culture and administration system. This raised disappointment and

anger among the community. Later, it grew to conflict between local chiefs and the colonial government. Consequently, what does this conflict imply?

a) Conflict between Local Kings and the Colonial Magistrate as National Allegory

In the '*amaMpondomise*' tradition, when the Queen-Mother of the community dies, there is the '*ukuzila*' custom and '*Lobola*' tradition, in which national mourning for many moons, a period of many days, is celebrated. Because she is the wife of the king from the great or senior house. In addition, she is supposed to be the Queen-Mother of all the wives and the children of all the houses. As a result, the king would also be forbidden to eat salted meat, touch a woman, or wear arms of war until the '*umbuyiso*' ritual is celebrated. The 'Umbuyiso' ritual would happen after a period of mourning to bring the spirit of the deceased into a full-fledged ancestor. However, the colonial magistrate banned this custom from being celebrated because he (the magistrate) ordered the king and his community to wage war against the neighboring king, Magwayi, the king of the Basotho. This resulted in conflict between the colonial magistrate and the local chief or the king. The king wanted to abide by the customs of his tradition, while the colonial government rejected the natives' cultural practices as if nonsense.

Malangana explained that *amaMpondomise* were not pulling out of the war. Only Mhlontlo would not be participating because *ukuzila* customs forbade him to touch weapons of war or to spill blood. He had appointed his uncle Gxumisa, a tried-and-tested general, to lead the forces. I do not accept that,' said Hope. 'Umhlonhlo is a liar!'

'This man is insulting our king,' said Mahlangeni...

We are not governed by native customs. You are now under Government, you cannot expect Government to come down to your level and adopt your customs...

Of course, Hamilton Hope had heard all this nonsense before. He sent Faya back to his master with a stern message: the British Empire could not be kept waiting on account of heathen customs. (pp. 66&81)

As explained above, the conflict between the local chiefs and the colonial magistrate indicates the cultural clash of the two nations: the colonized's nation and the colonizer's nation. The colonialists are so contemptuous of the natives' customs and traditions, while the natives are so obedient and passionate about their culture and traditions.

b) Cultural Transgression as National Allegory: Similarly, in the ‘*amaMpondomise*’ custom for marriage, there is the ‘*Lobola*’ tradition where ‘*Umbhororho*’, songs for marriage, are held. As a customary practice, when a person transfers from his boyhood to manhood, there is festivity, which is accompanied by poetry, songs and dances. It is called *the ‘school of initiation’* by which a man receives his complete manhood. The girls of the village came together to sing a song for a wedding that would be held soon. In addition, it is a great festivity where the fattened ox is slaughtered and gourds of sorghum beer are prepared. Although Malangana graduated from the ‘*school of initiation*’ for marriage, the girls could not hold songs and dances for his wedding because of the presence of Hamilton Hope, the colonial magistrate.

For the new colonial magistrate, this was illegal because drinking and celebrating on Sundays, on which only praising the Lord is allowed (in the Whites’s culture). Hence, the colonial magistrate sent policemen to quell the festivity. Nonetheless, Malangana straightly opposed the idea that the White government must not interfere with the customs and traditions of the natives.

Malangana son of Matiwane, had stood up in front of the leader of the policemen and told him that no British magistrate had the right to interfere with the customs and traditions of his people. ‘It is an insult to uTat’uGxumisa, the king’s uncle, to come to his homestead and tell him that he cannot hold a feast,’ he shouted at the Qheya sergeant (p. 32).

Because of his firm opposition, Malangana was taken to prison, and he appeared in front of the magistrate, who had the right to judge the case. When Malangana was asked why, his response was still rowdy to the magistrate. Therefore, the magistrate forced Malangana to lie face down and beat him. He also sentenced him to prison for one year.

By implication, the British colonialists began to restrict the cultural practice of the ‘*amaMpondomise*’. This indicates the cultural imposition of the colonial government against the natives. Similarly, Malangana is forced to lie down and be beaten. This implies that colonialists transgressed the customs and traditions of the natives because the experience of the individual is the collective experience of the society. In other words, the natives’ culture and traditions are downgraded while the Whites’ are emerging in place of the natives.

Nevertheless, Malangana became hard-granite, unyielding firmness, to satisfy the white man's pleasure. He did not submit himself to the white man's beating. He did not show any sign of hurt, though the magistrate repeatedly flogged him.

He would not give this white man the pleasure of his screams. After all, he had graduated from the school of the mountain where he had been trained to take pain like a man. Hope's face reddened as he lashed out with greater vigour...Still Malangana would rather die than give him satisfaction. Hope instructed the sergeant to lock the rebel up in jail and bring him before the magistrate for trial first thing in the morning (p. 33).

As described above, this is resistance against the Whites' cultural supremacy. Colonialists tried to annihilate the natives' culture and traditions, but as represented by Malangan's unflinching steadiness, the natives resisted it.

4.5.5. Interrupting Characters' Romantic Relationship as National Allegory

The story of the novel is developed based on the romantic quest. It is the journey of a man to search for his beloved, whom he lost many years ago. The woman does not have a distinct name to be easily identified, but simply she is called '*Mthwakazi*'. This name belongs to the '*abaThwa*' people in-group (but it is not an individual name). (The orthography is original). These people are not supposed to have equal status with the '*amaMpondomise*', another distinct group of community from whom Malangana, the protagonist, was sprung. In other words, the '*amaMpondomise*' depreciates the '*abaThwa*' because for the '*amaMpondomise*' '*abaThwa*' do not have a permanent place or homestead to live in. They rather live in mountain caves and sustain their food from hunting and gathering. This is disrespectful activity for the '*amaMpondomise*'. Therefore, they (the *amaMpondomise*) prohibited any of their ethnic members from marrying a wife from '*abaThwa*'. If anyone like Malangana loved a girl from this community, he would face scornful laughs from his own community.

'So what's going to happen when someone wants to marry her? With whom are his people going to negotiate lobolo?'

Mahlangeni broke out laughing. Though he was older than Malangana and was a family man the two men had established a close friendship after Mahlangeni sacrificed his buttocks that were ripped to bits by Hamilton Hope's salted cat-o'-nine-tails. Malangana once confided in him how he was being haunted by Mthwakazi. Mahlangeni,

of course, had pooh-poohed the whole idea. How could a noble Mpondomise man even entertain such thoughts about a low-born woman? Or an autochthon as it had now been revealed?

Malangana glared at him.

‘I didn’t say anything,’ said Mahlangeni, giggling like a naughty girl.

‘Why, nephew, are you thinking of taking her for a bride?’ asked Gxumisa.

He was quite perfunctory about the question. He thought he was just teasing his nephew (p. 59).

This shows the marginalization of people based on their ethnic identity because one group of the larger community decreed that making any relation with the minor group is a disgraceful activity. “You cannot disgrace our nation by marrying a Bushwoman” (p, 60). Nevertheless, why Malangana from the *amaMpondomise*’ and Mthwakazi from the marginalized group of ‘*abaThwa*’ are intended to get married and live together?

In the novel, the hero of the romantic journey is primarily initiated to seek out the ‘*abaThwa*’ woman because she was his ultimate preference for wife before the appearance of colonialists. His plan to be intertwined and consummated with her was obstructed not only by the ethnic stereotype but also by the repeated aggression of colonialists against the native communities. Despite all these deterrent factors, he insists on continuing his quest for her.

Later, Malangana’s uncle, who is an old man, came to narrate the family history of ‘*amaMpondomise*’ and ‘*abaThwa*’. He had a good knowledge of history and wisdom. To Malangana’s surprise, this old man discovered that the founder of the present-day ‘*amaMpondomise*’ kingship had been sprung from the progeny or descendants of the *Bushwoman*, which is the Mthwakazi’s community.

‘How do you know it will be an issue with him?’ asked Gxumisa.

‘You’re all hypocrites! All of you here of the Majola lineage have the blood of *abaThwa* flowing in your bodies, and you are not ashamed to include that fact in your praise poetry by calling each other *loMthwakazi*.’ The progeny of a *Bushwoman*.

Mhlontlo and all of you here are direct descendants of Cirha, the son of that Bushwoman, and today we recite that with pride in our genealogy and praise poetry. Why should Malangana not marry his Mthwakazi?' (pp. 61&63).

Therefore, it is proven that the '*amaMpondomise*' line of kingship and '*abaThwa*' have similar ancestral origins. The stereotypical attitude towards the '*abaThwa*' is unjustifiable because there is no basic difference between them other than cultural practices. Thus, they can live together. Most importantly, the two native communities of South Africa faced significant historical challenges from colonialism, land dispossession, cultural assimilation and marginalization. However, they are very important ethnic groups that significantly manifest the indigenous socio-cultural formation of South Africa. In other words, one of the indigenous and rich socio-cultural tapestries of South Africa can be manifested by the integration and regeneration of the two ethnic groups' socio-cultural histories.

Why? First, the '*abaThwa*' or *San* people are the native hunter-gatherer group who had extensive knowledge of land and the natural environment (ecology). This proves that they had a strong connection with their environment, and due to this reason, they are known for their knowledge of fauna and flora; hence, they are good at the art of traditional medicine. In addition, they are known for the egalitarian social structure by which equal rights and opportunities are entertained. However, they faced historical challenges that threatened their existence and their cultural heritage from colonialism and marginalization. Second, in a similar manner, the '*amaMpondomise*' are the indigenous agricultural practitioners who were known by producing indigenous crops. Also, this group was the owner of a rich history and cultural heritage consisting of tradition, music, art, language, history of resistance and kinship systems.

Therefore, we can deduce that the purpose of the author in crafting the two major characters from these two ethnic groups as the quester and the quested is as follows:

One, he suggests avoiding discrimination based on ethnic background is essential because especially the '*abaThwa*' people are the most affected groups by ethnic marginalization and discrimination. They also faced cultural assimilation by the major ethnic groups that brought about their (the '*abaThwa*'s) cultural extermination and land dispossession. In this regard, this

group faced double jeopardy from colonialism and marginalization. Hence, he suggests that marginalization against minor groups while they are rich with cultural heritages must be avoided. Two, he suggests promoting social integration. Social integration is valuable to regenerate lost socio-cultural identities and treasures. Similarly, it also helps to create peace and harmony in the society. Hence, the protagonist's romantic desire and romantic quest is an allegorical journey that implies the importance of searching out the indigenous traditions for current social integration and harmony among the people to live in peaceful co-existence within one nation. Similarly, the author wants to suggest that the romantic desire between the characters, which was interrupted by ethnic stereotypic attitude and colonial aggression, must be tied up again.

Besides, the story of the novel unfolds by switching back and forth between the beginnings and ends of 20 years of time and duration. Specifically, it covers the early 1880s and early 1900s. It describes the challenges of Malangana and amaMpondomise in two phases. The first phase shows the challenges that Malangana and the amaMpondomise had faced during the invasion of colonialists. The second phase indicates the challenges this community faced in their exile, but mainly it reveals the obstacles that Malangana encountered on his journey to quest for his beloved after 20 years of separation.

While the story sways between the early 1880s and early 1900s, we can see the physical and emotional state of the protagonist, who is also the hero of the event. Comparatively, there is a drastic difference on the part of the character before and after the 20+years of time span. This indicates the difference between the time before and after colonial dominance. Therefore, as many of the physico-emotional features of the character changed, many socio-cultural aspects of the amaMpondomise community also changed because he (the character) represents this community. This is resulted because the colonial culture predominated the native's. However, he was nostalgic about his lost identities and dispossessed land. He faced an identity crisis. As a result, he reclaimed the past to be restored and adapted to the concurrent situation.

4.5.6. Segregation of the Native people as National Allegory

Colonial missionaries used to build their mission station at the center, around which the school people's houses are built. The term "school people" is designated to divide the natives into two factions: school people and hordes. Some natives who have gotten access to White education

were called school people, whereas those who have not gotten access to White education were called hordes, which mean uneducated community.

The houses of the school people were used as a buffer zone between the missionaries and the hordes. Hordes were segments of the native community whom the Whites assumed them as savages. The Whites said they (Hordes) are provocative to attack the Whites. As a result, the Whites also called them heathens. As such, they did not allow these people to settle closer to them. A senior regional magistrate has decreed that only natives who conform to the rules of the mission and do not practise immoral heathenish customs should be granted land around the mission centres.

Traders and Government officials have adopted the same laager-style settlements, the wagons this time being the houses and gardens and kraals of *amakhumsha*, the school people. (p. 7).

This reminds that the beginning of White segregation against blacks and the native community in South Africa. Missionaries also used to build urban areas, which were allowed only for Whites. Similarly, governmental officials and traders adopted the same style of treating natives. Natives were allowed to settle far from the urban center.

4.5.7. Narrative Episodes as National Allegories

Meeting: The colonial magistrates held a meeting with the local chiefs. The magistrates led the meeting sitting on the chairs, and as their protocol demanded, they also had bodyguards behind them to protect them from any threat. However, the local chiefs left to sit on the bare ground. Each traditional chief needed to stand up to address his issue to the colonial magistrates. On the contrary, the magistrates did not address their concern in a respectful manner. Rather, they used to threaten the local chiefs because they (local chiefs) had failed to pay tax for the white government.

Hope (Hamilton Hope, the magistrate) did not stand up to address the chiefs. Instead he shifted for more comfort on the chair and leaned forward. He began by making his usual threats towards those who had not paid taxes; the chiefs would be held responsible if their subjects continued to dodge their civic responsibilities. The men on the ground grumbled

that they had not travelled through the night to be harangued about taxes (Mda, 2015,p. 40).

This is the political imposition of colonialists against the natives. They used to undermine self-governance, which shows the deprivation of independence.

Quarrel between rival kingdoms as national allegory: In the middle of his journey, Malangana faced the Tsolo people's disgruntled insults because they hated him to see. These people are one of the *amaMpondomise* branches from the Tsolo district, whereas Malangana is from the other branch of *amaMpondomise* from the Qumbu district. In the span of time, the *amaMpondomise* people were divided into two groups and became rival kingdoms. One group took up the Tsolo district, and the other took up the Qumbu district. Since then, they continued quarreling between themselves. It was unexpected for Malangana that two groups of the *'amaMpondomise'*, whatever district they occupy, became rivals because they both are from the same clan or family genealogy. Therefore, he wanted to investigate the exact origin of the rivalry between the Tsolo and Qumbu people.

He found out that once upon a time the *'amaZulu'*, another ethnic group, attacked the *amaMpondomise'*, which had resulted in great migration of the people. During that time, the *amaMpondomise'* were under the rule of Regent Velelo. He was a regent, but not the rightful king. However, he was such a strong king to take revenge, and defeated the *amaZulu* king. He protected the people from further attacks. Later, the rightful king of *amaMpondomise'*, King Myeki, who was also the young king, took over the power of the kingdom. Nonetheless, he became weak and could not withstand the continuous attacks of the *amaZulu*. It was during this time that the quarrel among the *amaMpondomise'* began.

Some wanted Velelo, the regent, to rule and protect them from conquerors, while others felt that Myeki must rule so that the rightful succession of power from one king to the next should not be trampled by any reason. Hence, the supporters of Velelo and Myeki disputed over this issue, which later resulted in civil war among the *amaMpondomise'*. It was after this that they were defeated by *'amaZulu'* again, and later they were conquered by British colonialism.

The important lesson the author of this novel suggests is that the division of people among themselves causes great consequences. One, it causes civil war, which results in damages (both human and material). Two, it results in a weak nation that cannot protect its own people from foreign invasion. As a matter of fact, the British colonialists used this kind of incident as a good opportunity to control the South Africans during the colonial invasion. They used to infiltrate one ethnic group to raise against the other so that they could weaken both sides and surrender them later. Three, it causes continuous violence that affects even the contemporary society because its legacy results in the present consequences.

As the rivalry of the kingdoms became an obstacle to Malangan's journey to join his lost beloved, the rivalry of people based on ethnic background became a challenge for the unity of the people (the South African people). Hence, division based on ethnic or linguistic background affects the interests and welfare of the masses of the population. It also exposes the country to foreign political influence. On the contrary, Malangan's insistence on joining his beloved in the face of challenges shows that he is the strong man to unite the different factions of a nation.

CHAPTER FIVE: NATIONAL ALLEGORIES AS IDEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE IN THE SELECTED NOVELS

5.1. Introduction

It was discussed earlier that one of the postcolonial discourses that counter argues against the prevailing assumptions of the contemporary period is national allegory. It is a powerful tool to comment on the political, social and cultural realities of a postcolonial nation. It criticizes the dominant narratives that are functioned to subjugate the marginalized groups. In other words, national allegory serves to expose and challenge the mainstream historical accounts that narrate against the interests of subaltern groups. Therefore, it reveals the impact of dominant ideologies like colonialism, imperialism, authoritarianism and patriarchy on contemporary society. In this regard, postcolonial literary writers employ this literary technique not only to expose but also to react against the assumptions of these ideologies. Considering the selected novels, this chapter practically illustrates the idea explained above.

5.2. National Allegory as Ideological Critique in *Starbook*

5.2.1. Counter Discourse against Imperial Assumptions as National Allegory

During colonialism and imperialism, Europeans were engaged in self-validating that they were superior. In order to establish the myth of white supremacy, justify conquest and legitimize the continuation of colonial presence, they used religious and educational teachings. Therefore, they defied the African values by endorsing as if there was only ‘one’ civilization, which is Western civilization whereby African should take it as role model for their (Africans) progress. However, African writers take the opportunity to encounter this attitude by depicting the astonishing ancient civilizations that happened in the African continent.

The author of this novel wants to depict great stories that inform us great deeds and happenings in the great land of Africa. These stories have a beacon of hope that they induce vitality to new life. They have a power to initiate somebody into something that has a mood of happiness because it provides spectacular historical monuments that were crumbled by Western-based narratives. The stories give appropriate home for one who is in restlessness as the result of historical vacuum because these stories are supposed to create awareness that informs the

truthful historical identity. The recreation of this historical identity encounters the Western assumption that articulates Africans as “historylessness”.

As it is clearly named in the novel that the land where the ancient kingdom was established is African land.

The king was moved by the tenderness of his people. He watched from the palace window the great crowds that had gathered from all over the known world to show their support for his family.

The king, who had fathered the new mysteries in the kingdom, who had guarded the secret rites that had been brought to his land by a caravan of magi long ago; the king, who had been initiated as a child into the wonders of the sages from the land of the magic river where stones had been raised into perfect structures for the adoration of the sun; the king had long ago entered and crossed the chambers of death and dwelt among the higher beings who whispered the secret ways in silence all through the timeless moments of an eternal life that shone above the **African sands**.(p. 65) and 'I will tell you the story of a girl by the river in **Africa**,'(p.159); my emphasis is made to be bold.

In this land (African land), there were ancient kingdoms that were known by their remarkable deeds that shaped their cultures and histories. These deeds reflect the ingenuity, ambitions, cultural richness and ancient civilization of the people. Especially, these people were notable in the art of building and the skill of advisory that could be transferred from generation to generation.

On the other hand, the story of the girl implies the significant history that the nation had done in that ancient period because the female protagonist, the maiden, is portrayed to depict the nation. In the story of the novel, we can understand that the desire that she wants to have is the desire that the nation wants to achieve or receive. Therefore, the great story of the girl is the great story of the ancient kingdom. As such, the land is a source of history rather than the place that faces with a vacuum of history. This disproves the wrong claim of imperialists.

5.2.1.1. Representation of Environmental Conditions as a Counter Discourse

As it is referred in this literary text, the kingdom was built in a place where the air was so fresh as the environmental condition was pure and uncontaminated. It was surrounded by dark forest and water bodies, including rivers. For example, four rivers met wherein the village of this kingdom rested. So, the abundance of water bodies was the central and unique part of the village. We could see then that the outflow of numerous sources, including traditions and the beliefs of ancestral origins, from these resources. This proved the peculiar aspect of African ancient society that they lived together in dense forests wherein they performed their rituals and cultural congregations. They also addressed their cult of ancestral worship in these forests and rivers.

...in the Centre of the circle stood the palace of the king. Four rivers met in the forest around the village. The shrine house was at the edge of the village and the path that ran past it led to the outside world. **The forest was dense about the village**, and it seemed that those in the heart of the kingdom lived in a magic dream, an oasis of huts and good harvests in the midst of an enveloping world of trees (Okri, 2007,p.3). The bold is my emphasis.

Therefore, people during that ancient time had strong connection with the forest and rivers. Forest was believed to be source of many of their societal needs and shelters. They certainly accepted it as their destined abode/ place to live with their ancestral spirits. The spirits of their ancestors hovered over and lived in the forest so that they communicate with them, and receive advises and power as their shrine houses were also built in it. Every form of politics and royal duties, therefore, was supported and used from what was found in the forest and the rivers; including foods for eating and medicine for healing. Besides to that they were places of rites and ritual processes. Hence, forest is a place of plenty of resources in African cultural context. As the result, it is the place where the protagonist, the prince, uses to refresh himself which is contrary to the imperial assumption that it is wrongly represented as a place of “primitiveness”.

Similarly, the forest is the place of aspiration for the young prince. When he was in the forest, he came to see a maiden. He was then fanciful to her. They conversed in virtual dialogue in the form of questions and answers. A maiden gave him stability. As a result, strong mood of hope rested in him. A new initiation of life has brightened in him. What he often dreamt of then was the beautiful maiden. The pain and the agony he had felt in the palace were replaced by love and

tenderness. He appointed her to come back in the same spot where they had conversation. However, the maiden could not keep her promise. She disappeared. Since then he started to spend sleepless nights.

Long ago, in the time when the imagination ruled the world, there was a prince in this kingdom who grew up in the serenity of all things. He was my mother's ancestor, and he alone of all the people in that village loved playing in the forest. (p.1)

He felt he hadn't slept because he spent all night wandering through the world looking for a maiden who bore his heart in her womb. His heart grew in her like a child. She was pregnant with his heart for a long time, for a year, for ten years, for a generation, for a hundred and two years. His heart grew bigger and bigger in her, and she grew bigger and bigger to accommodate the growth of his heart in her womb. He never knew when she would give birth to his heart and he lost her and searched for her the world over and couldn't find her (p.15).

As a result, he became restless, and his heart grew heavier when he lost the maiden whom he bore in his mind. However, he became happier when it seemed to him that he caught her up. This shows that the determination to bring about socio-political change of a nation that was being affected by bad governance. Here, it is an optimistic effort that is seized by the prince. The maiden whom the prince aspires to catch at the end represents the nation that he wants to lead.

At this juncture, the forest is represented as a place of his aspiration to achieve this goal. As a result, we saw him when he chose to hurry to the forest, his hiding place, to alleviate his traumatic condition, which was haunted in the palace. The forest is a place for refreshment and a source of energy for the prince to achieve his goal. It is a place where beacons of great hope are maintained. It is also a sign of purity that is free from oppression and repressiveness.

5.2.2. Critique of Domestic Violence as National Allegory

The novel also upheld so many crises, such as rape, violence against women and children, oppression of slaves (the lower classes), abuse and destruction. In the meantime, there are important events in the novel understudy from which we can learn the following essential ideas:

Firstly, domestic violence based on gender and class was a common societal practice for a long period of time across Africa. In the novel, it is portrayed that the treatment of women and children in the imaginary kingdom was so harsh. They were treated as non-human. Domestic activities, starting from farming up to their homes, were mere tasks of the women. Women and children are often exploitative up to their sweats and bloods by their own countrymen. They are given many chores of the homes and the farms. They shoulder the main weight of daily tasks. These were/are now also the day-to-day realities of African nations. Without any difference, it is taken as common cultural practices. As it is reflected in the *Starbook*, domestic oppression is, therefore, seen across every cultural community of Africa, though the ancient community of a certain kingdom is merely targeted in the novel.

They woke early, before dawn, prepared food for the family, swept their yards, cleaned the house, bathed, went to the river to wash clothes, went to the market miles away, returned home, prepared the afternoon meal, washed the utensils, then went to the distant farms again, then to the market to trade. They often came back with heavy bundles on their heads. Then, making several journeys there and back, they fetched water from the wells. They prepared dinner. They attended the meetings of women. Back home they discussed family matters with their husbands and relations. They took part in the social and communal business of the village, and made their contributions to looking after the sick. Then they slept very late at night. They were usually the last ones to sleep in the whole family, and the first to rise (Okri 2007, p.26).

In addition, bad cultural practices were committed upon women, like marriage at an early age, circumcision and unremitting tasks. They were also forced to live in wars and famine. Therefore, the young prince gets worried about them.

But the prince did not laugh, for he was serious. **He wanted to share in the suffering of women, their beauty and their secret majesty. Their grace. Their hidden humiliations.** And because of his interest he was the first and only man ever to be initiated into the mysteries of women, the nature of mothers, the great cults of the goddesses. The initiation took place that night, in his sleep, in his

dreams, in a place where women do their greatest work, deep in the secret consciousness of men and the world. (Okri 2007, p.30).

In due course of thinking about the troubles of women, he had developed sympathetic attitude towards them. It is believed that his concern about women, as women were believed to be the secret bearers of power in tradition, brought him shining knowledge that helped him to know the tragic life they were experiencing. With all his thriving effort about women, he was still waiting for the maiden to appear. His strong desire was to meet the maiden. She was the daughter of the master of artists. He maintains that she is the secret of the goal he wants to achieve ultimately.

By implication, the young hero believes that this kind of bad cultural practice has to be transformed. The author of this text also aims at it. In this regard, the protagonist, the young prince, is used as his advocator for change and transformation. He demands that the exploitation of women in Africa needs to be changed because they are humans like men. Men have time to entertain, free from routine work, while women do not have any portion of time to be freed. Worse than this, they do not have a chance to sit for decision-making upon their own home, community and national affairs, even today. They are rather left for facilitators, service providers and accommodation furnishers for men to manage and rule the home and the kingdom. Hence, we could observe in that ancient kingdom that the prince, the protagonist, demanded the women be free from the obsessive oppression imposed upon them. As a result, he went to the chamber of the palace to demonstrate the wicked deeds that were committed in the kingdom to the king, his father, and the council of elders.

The prince left them and wandered back to the palace, and sought out the elders and the custodians. When they gathered, under the watchful eye of the king, he said:

'If I am to be future king I want to know about the lives of our women. How do we treat our women? Why do they work so hard, from dawn to dusk? And what do we do for them in return?'(pp.26-27).

Here, the author wants to show that what had been experienced in that imaginary kingdom of the *Starbook* is real in the African nations, as it is directly named the land as African land, where the ancient forest kingdom was established and multiethnic groups resided. In essence, this is an

internal exploitation that is kept by African patriarchal society. Beyond this, women's oppression is national oppression because they ideally represent a nation.

Secondly, in the African long cultural practice, there were wars between clans, or different ethnic groups. The kingdom of a certain clan may conquer the other clan during warfare. Consequently, those who were conquered would be taken as captives and then became the slaves of the winner of the war. At this point, Tylor (2018,p.36) has also observed as follow: "Prior to the industrialized levels of slavery under the Arabs and Europeans, slavery took on the form of indenture whereby individuals became slaves through being prisoners of war, being indebted to a family, being kidnapped, or committing a crime". Thus, the conquered people, who were slaves after they succumbed to their conqueror, did not have any chance to serve their own affairs and needs; they were rather entirely taken to serve their masters up to their possible energy, even up to their last death with no any complain.

This again shows us the societal subjugation of the lower class of the people in the African continent. Those who had gotten complete control over the conquered groups committed crimes against their (the conquered groups) humanity. These include subduing, belittling, beating and forcing them to work throughout days, weeks and months without any rest. Worse than these, the captured people could be killed without any course of justice or moral question. These evil deeds were happening on the same continent within the same race—the black race. This is apparently reflected in the novel as follows:

They were from a different land. They were fetching wood and they were downcast and the men looked brave and the women looked unhappy. So he went among them and asked who they were. The leader among them, a burly man, with a warrior's mien, said:

'We are men and women captured in war. We are slaves of your kingdom. We do your dirty work till our people can pay our ransom.'

'What are slaves?' the young prince asked.

'The lowest of the low,' the warrior replied.

'What does that mean?'

'Mean, sir? It means we are nothing. We have no freedom. We do whatever you tell us to do. You can kill us whenever you want. Our people don't know where

we are. We are here by force. We don't want to be here. We want to be in our villages, with our own families, and our people.'

'So why don't you just go?' the prince asked, amazed.

'Because they will kill us if we try. We are slaves, sir. Captured people. (Okri 2007, pp.16-17).

As a matter of fact, these people are conquered from another kingdom in Africa. Mostly, the kingdoms were established based on a common ethnic background. So, in the African continent, ethnic exploitation/oppression was another common cultural practices for long, even today. As a result, African writers are committed to portraying those humiliating practices within the same race by using their literary productions.

In a similar manner, we could see that he was very concerned about the slaves. The slaves, who were the captured people in battles and brought to the palace, were put aside as outcasts. In other words, the prince also wanted them to be free, and he suggested that they had to rejoin their own people and family. Briefly, the main target of the prince is to get the oppressed group of people free from his father's kingdom, wherein gender and ethnic oppressions were being committed.

Therefore, what is suggested here is that the imaginative realms African writers create in their novels are the real experiences, which were/are found in different nations of Africa. So, the magical kingdom Okri demonstrated in his novel exposes not only the common traditional oppressive practices that every subject of the real ancient kingdom had known but also depicts those practices as they persist in today's African nations, including Nigeria, his homeland. In this regard, Ben Okri, who is the son of a lawyer, gains the opportunity to sense the incisive problems of the Nigerian people when they come to appeal the problems to his father. Hence, we can say his intimate knowledge about the complainants of these people and Nigeria's injustice system profoundly affected him, as he has reflected it in his fictional works like this.

The author seizes the fact that domestic violations based on gender and ethnicity were common practice in ancient times. The present violations are, thus, the continuation of the previous long-lived traditional practice. As depicted, the main machinations of this crime are the African ruling class themselves. They committed crime brutally in the African land where they ruled fellow

citizens. Here, the council of elders who commit this violation represents the old ruling class. They resist change and they are not willing to hand over power to the new generation, whereas the young prince who confronted them represents the young generation who seeks change and transformation.

By extension, this might also represent the trans-sub Saharan slave trade as the author reimagines slavery. Before the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Africa had experienced the Trans-sub Saharan slave trade. The Trans-sub Saharan slave trading was launched when African royal rulers had used their prisoner of war (POW) as slaves. Slaves were sourced through raids and conquests, and then they were used as an important component of trade commodity. They also presented as a tribute in an exchange for peaceful relation between ancient states (Oliver & Fage, 1978; Kehinde, 2013). Those ancient states had also used slaves as their economic and military sources. As a result, as sub-Saharan Africa became an important repository of slaves, large slave trading activities were emerged in the area. This obviously ushered in political instability in the region.

The important point that should be clearly noticed here is that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade was the continuation and the extension of Trans-sub Saharan slave trade. The great human wickedness had started in Africa when African themselves had begun to enslaved their own fellows for trade. The important lesson we have learnt from this is that the main betrayals of Africans are Africans themselves.

To summarize the above discussions, the most important trace of irony is that women represent the ideal nation in Africa. So, the writer wants to depict that the exploitation of women is the exploitation of the nation. In the same manner, the children of the continent are faced with social, political and economic deprivations for long periods. From Colonial administration going through neo-colonialism, the majority of the African populace suffered the anguish of subjugation and oppression. African leaders who came to power replacing the colonial government in the post-independence period continue to exploit the people. During this period, national bourgeoisie, with the assistance of their Western alliance, have committed national abuse at the expense of the national interest they had promised to salvage. Therefore, we could say the exploitation of Africa has passed through a long historical trajectory. In the same manner,

the captive groups imply that those groups of people who are deprived from the justice system. Thus, the demand of the protagonist for the oppressed groups (children, women and the captives) to be freed and to be equitable is the demand of the real author, Ben Okri. As discussed above, he insists that the tradition of the justice system requires to be transformed in order to serve every sect of the people equally.

5.3. National Allegory as Ideological Critique in *Wizard of the Crow*

5.3.1. Representation of Environmental Condition as a Counter Discourse

As it depicted in the novel, the coupled protagonists later prefer to go into the forest. Kamiti decided to go away from the urban area where he lived with Nyawira because of the stench he always sniffed. So, he left the urban and went into the forest. Nyawira, his new female friend, also went out in search of Kamiti. She longed for him. They exchanged good experience while they were together in the small village house hiding themselves from the reach of the government's intelligence squad. Similarly, they met again at the forest. They consummated their love in the forest, and they refreshed themselves with plenty of natural resources including numerous flora and fauna. They enjoyed blissful peace of life in the wilderness.

Love was there in the breeze that made the leaves sway ever so gently. Love was everywhere in this forest, but neither Nyawira nor Kamiti mentioned the word.

Later, seated on the ground, leaning against the trunk of a sycamore tree, they sipped cocoa, sometimes in silence, each lost in a world of his or her making, thinking the same thoughts and now and then indulging in small talk. Love had followed them here as moonlight illuminated the leaves to form patterns of light and shadow on the ground and their bodies. Yet still they could not pronounce love to each other or even silently to themselves.

But they felt enveloped in peace beyond understanding, peace emanating from the forest... (p.206).

In addition, the forest was the best alternative abode for the couple. They fled from the urban area to the forest to escape from the stink that spread and affected their life.

This, the stench, indicates that urban areas are afflicted by corruption and bribery. These crimes are the day today realities of the country's urban areas. They spread like a bad foul that deterred the breathing system of a person. Therefore, to get pure air for breathing, forest was the best alternative place. It represents a place of purity, or it is a place, which is free from the act of corruption. Again, the imperialists assume that people living in the forest of Africa are barbaric and uncivilized. However, the forest in the novel represents a place of purity, love and peace, which is against the Western's assumption. Therefore, it is a counter-discourse of this imperial assumption towards the natives.

5.3.2. Gender Oppression against Women as National Allegory

Domestic violence against women is seen as a common practice in the modern Republic of Aburiria. We can see that wife beating is considered to be a male right. For example, Tajirika has supposed that he had the natural right to commit any of his interest against his wife as if she was his natural property, for whom no one could claim about her ill-treatment. This is because he believed that the long tradition had given men power over women. Women are also used as a pretext for every failure, while men take the utmost credit for every success. This practice works across African nations and beyond. But it should be eliminated and transformed.

"You have a husband who assumes that he has a natural right to beat and discipline his wife. Unfortunately, he is not alone. Violence against women bedevils many a home—rich, poor, white, black, religious. In the world today, a husband measures his maleness by mauling his wife. A wife swallows insults in surly silence instead of resisting the violation of her sacred self. A sacred self soon becomes a scared slave, leading a scarred life. (pp.429-30).

African women face triple jeopardy. One, they are women/woo-men or wife-men/ who are the victims of gender oppression. It is believed that they are created to be easily persuaded to love and marry men. Normally, they are suffering from the pain of gender abuse and sexual exploitation. The patriarchal society treats them unfairly. The socio-cultural organization exposes their communal and domestic position for abuse. At the same time, in the African society like this, the burden is overwhelmed over them. Two, they are black from which they suffer from discrimination of race. Three, they are also affected by the economic class they are put because they are at the lowest rank in this position. Usually, women are not allowed to own property.

Their husbands possess the property. Therefore, they have to have their husbands' consent to use the property of the family that they have produced together for their "common" interest.

But the author of this novel demands that women themselves should stand together to the right of equality with men. They could take, as seems to suggest, an organized force of action to stop any form of violence against them. In this manner, organization of women is necessary to settle women's abuses. As the way out from this internal (domestic) problem, the author of the novel, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, has upheld that morally strong and consciously involved women characters like Nyawira in the "Wizard of the Crow" must participate to bring about change of attitude on the part of the African society. In other words, he firmly believes that women must play an important role in the socio-political change of their nations so that they can hold significant position in these countries, which, in turn, brings about attitudinal changes in the society towards women.

Women bear the brunt of poverty. What choices does a woman have in life, especially in times of misery? She can marry or live with a man. She can bear children and bring them up, and be abused by her man. Have you read Buchi Emecheta of Nigeria, **Joys of Motherhood**? Tsitsi Dangarembga of Zimbabwe, say, **Nervous Conditions**? Mariam Ba of Senegal, **So Long a Letter**? Three women from different parts of Africa, giving words to similar thoughts about the condition of women in Africa." (2006, p.83).

As discussed earlier, similar sentiments are created on the part of the African rulers over their nations. They exploit the nations to gain their individual interests but at the expense of the major group of the citizenry. As women are suffering from gender oppression mainly as a result of socio-cultural attitude, African nations are facing exploitation because of misuse of political power.

5.4. National Allegory as Ideological critique in *Little Suns*

5.4.1. African Humanism as a Counter Discourse

On the contrary to the Whiteman's attitude towards humanities, as demonstrated next, we can see that the natives' feelings towards their fellows are compassionate. The colonialists' violence against the '*amaMpondomise*' resulted in the displacement and scattering of the people. Due to

this reason, one of the members of the community, Malangana, was isolated from his beloved. Nevertheless, his longing haunted him to quest for her. In the course of his travels, he came to stroll a long way across different villages and towns. In addition, he asked people he met, especially the older ones. When the day got dark, people invited him for food and offered their homes for shelter and nighttime sleeping, as their culture complied with.

People generally open their doors to strangers; hospitality is an obligation of each household. In return, a stranger goes through the ritual of introducing himself, his village, his father's name, his clan, and even his mother's clan. He elaborates on the purpose of his travels, on the ravages of the weather, on those who are sick and those who are dead, and on any tidbits he has gathered in the villages through which he travelled. That is how news travels. Itinerant strangers are the media (p.10).

It is depicted that every member of the community is kind to any human. They have to provide free accommodations to abide the values of their custom. This kindness is also extended to animals. Human-animal relations in the '*amaMpondomise*' were so strong that they lived in an interdependent and interconnected manner. Unlike Europeans, human beings and animals shared the same house. Animals support human beings by carrying out different duties including fighting in wars. Humans take care of the well-being of animals. Above all, the relationship between humans and animals has socio-cultural significance in most African communities, like the '*amaMpondomise*' in South Africa. For example, some represent the symbol of wealth and prestige or heroism, while others signify messengers of the ancestors, but the representation is different from culture to culture.

In Zakes Mda's '*Little Suns*', the interconnection between animals and humans is significantly portrayed. Animals were considered as members of the family in the king's great house. As a result, the loss of a family member was equally miserable both for humans and for animals. This was seen in reality when the queen of '*amaMpondomise*' died. Both of them (humans and animals) wept for her death.

Until the whole of Mhlontlo's Great Place was drenched in wails. The animals in the kraals, in the stables, in the pounds, joined in their various voices.

By the time these sounds reached Malangana in an adobe rondavel where he slept, dreamed of Mthwakazi and played with himself to her spectre, they had swirled into a

vortex of hollow howls. He knew without anyone telling him that they were announcing the death of the Queen of amaMpondomise, daughter of Sarhili, King of amaGcaleka, they who descended, together with amaRharhabe, from an ancestor called Xhosa, and were therefore also known as amaXhosa (Mda, 2015, p.52).

Particularly, the relationship between Malangana, the protagonist, and Gcazimbane, the king's horse, was unique. They communicated as humans do. The man can understand the needs of the horse easily. In the same way, the horse felt the state of the man easily, as if they were from the same species and/or flock. The horse accompanied the man when the man wanted to meet his love mate. In addition, the horse mourned when its caretaker, the man, mourned. They played hide-and-seek like young boys do. Because of the strong relationship that the man and the horse built, we can see that Malangana overwhelmingly wailed when Gcazimbane (the horse) died.

In short, it is depicted that the well-being of the animals is the well-being of the human beings; on the contrary, the suffering of the animals is the suffering of the human beings among the '*amaMpondomise*'. Here, the native people's relationship with animals defies the Whites' morality, which puts Western humanism under question. It also resists the false claim that Europeans have propagandized about black society as if they (blacks) do not have useful culture and traditions that the world can learn from it.

5.4.2. Local Chief's Strategy as a Counter Discourse

In the novel, the king of amaMpondomise, King Mhlotlo, pursued a strategy of waying out to the call of the colonialists to wage war against the Basotho fellows. The colonial government decreed that every native chief must surrender and hand over their gun and ammunition to the colonial government. Nonetheless, the Basotho king refused this decree. Hence, the colonialist government called on the other local kings to cooperate in the war against the Basotho king.

King Mhlotlo decided to join the White government's war against the Basotho provided that the colonial government supplied guns and ammunition. Mhlotlo's decision was shocking to his councilors at the beginning because the people of Basotho are fellow citizens while the White government is a conqueror, an enemy from the land of the Whites. So, how could the natives ally themselves with the enemy of the natives? However, Chief Mhlotlo's strategy was different from this assumption. A disarmament act proclaimed that all natives must surrender and hand

over their guns and ammunition to the White government. Therefore, if the White government could supply guns and ammunition to the natives, it would be against its own decree of disarmament.

‘Do you think Hope will really give us the guns?’ asked Gxumisa.

‘If he doesn’t keep his promise we do not go to war,’ said Mhlontlo. ‘I doubt if Government will allow him to give us guns. They would be going against their law of disarmament. So what does that tell you, my uncle?’

‘We are not going to fight in the white man’s war, my nephew!’ said Gxumisa (p, 46).

However, the White government failed to keep it. It supplied arms to the natives to wage war against the Basotho.

This proves to be the failure of the White government to keep up with its own words. It is complete dishonesty for the natives. Therefore, compared with African moral values, Whites are vulnerable to disloyalty, as the natives later perceived. As a result, the native’s/local king understood that Whites relied on lies and crookedness to convince the native people. From this, it can be deduced that the native’s socio-politics is established based on loyalty, whereas colonial politics is established based on hypocrisy and deceitfulness.

CHAPTER SIX: SYMBOLIC AND METAPHORIC ELEMENTS AS NATIONAL ALLEGORIES IN THE SELECTED NOVELS

6.1. Introduction

In national allegorical form of literary narrative, the use of cultural symbols, myths and motifs that link the narrative with the nation's folklore and cultural heritage is prevalent. Hence, the following analyses bring this idea into practical observations.

6.2. Socio-cultural Symbolic and Metaphoric Elements as National Allegory in *Starbook*

As it was discussed earlier, Ben Okri, the author of the novel, was influenced by ancient Greek mythology, which encapsulates ancient Greek classical tradition, philosophy, beliefs, history, literature, art and wisdom. Myth is not restricted to ancient Greek alone. We can find similar mythological stories everywhere, including African countries. Hence, Ben Okri explores many ancient mythical stories from his homeland, Nigeria, and employs them in his modern literary writings for retrieving African culture and traditions so that they reflect the national identity. We could say his reading of the ancient Greek's mythology later triggered him to contemplate over his homeland's diverse cultures and traditions, which contain abundant myths. Again, these myths become a source of his modern literary writing as well. He glimpses Greek mythology to discover the Nigerian myths. Consequently, he is fond of the diverse oral storytelling tradition of his motherland, as he ostensibly describes in the beginning of the novel, "This is a story my mother began to tell me when I was a child. The rest I gleaned from the book of life among the stars, in which all things are known." (Okri, 2007,p.1).

Therefore, he uses the traditional form of telling the story of the novel. The myths, fairytales, legends and the fantastic elements of the ancient Nigerian kingdoms, especially the ancient Igbo and Yoruba traditions, are used. For the purpose of this paper, some traditional elements, which are seized for their socio-cultural symbols, are tried to be explored and interpreted below.

Heron: certain birds like heron in Yoruba tradition symbolize "the diviner's ability to chant and the mystical power of the women (Bartok and Christine, 1993, p.13). In African folktales and myths, it also indicates the virtues of patience, perseverance and determination in the face of adversity (for example, in Yoruba, Akan, Maasai and Kikuyu communities).

In the same way, heron is assumed as the bearer of culture and tradition, but for the young prince in the *Starbook*, it is represented as it is the bearer of wisdom and knowledge. Heron is such a liminal creature that could be barely perceptible. It is taken as the lowest necessity to produce particular effect on the minds of common people. It has the ability to live in the air, on the ground, and on the water. In addition, heron is believed to be a truly beautiful creature. This creature has higher ability to conceal its presence because it does not like to be noticed distinctively. Thus, the way it flies is so strategic in such a way that no one could notice it.

As a result, the prince is made to have special connection with the heron. According to the ancient tradition of Igbo, which was accustomed to offering personal gods to every member of society, this creature (Heron) is made to be his personal god.

From this creature, then, the young prince learnt how to survive from disasters and from evil deeds. He also learnt the act of humility and tenacity. The way the heron flies, walks, catches fish provided him great insight. The great attention the prince made to the white heron's every bit of movement helped him to achieve great wisdom.

The prince was very fond of herons. He loved their ability to be great and small, visible and invisible, majestic and minor, tall and insignificant. The heron could conceal its own magnificence and appear to be a raggedy creature not worthy of being noticed. It was a royal creature that understood that to survive in the world you must not overly dazzle out your brilliance, otherwise you wouldn't catch true fish, and you would be hunted for your beauty. Only a truly beautiful creature could so conceal its own beauty for a higher purpose.

And, in love, and fascination with a creature of marvels that didn't want to be noticed so that it could go about its business of making the miraculous ordinary, the prince kept his enraptured but awakened and vigilant gaze on that most cunning of birds. (Okri, 2007, pp. 34-35).

This shows that Nigerians have many culturally iconic creatures from which we can learn wisdom. This works in almost all Africans. The connection between nature and human is so strong. This provides a vigilant eye for Africans to see things wisely and carefully. African method of learning the quality of things helps to acquire skills that use to identify the meaning of

different socio-cultural conditions. Therefore, African values are important repository of knowledge and philosophy. This again encounters the Western attitude that Africans must import Western thoughts for the purpose of their (Africans) literacy. As the Western culture is important to the Westerns, the African culture is equally important to the Africans. However, African can learn the way the Westerns maintain and promote their culture and tradition.

We can also see that the young prince had also particular concern with women of the kingdom. Although he had seen them deprived, the prince believed that women had a powerful value for the continuation of the kingdom. As such, the young prince admitted that women had essential power for the safety and continuity of the kingdom. “The responsibility for women to be wise is truly great. The greatness of a people is a tribute to the wisdom of its women. ... The strength of women is the backbone of the land” (p.29).

He also believed that strong connection with women would keep his secret power; the power that kept him enlightened to know what was going on in the kingdom. In this regard, the heron also represented women, as it was the power of art and illumination to the prince. Therefore, it seemed that he had been enchanted with special initiation by the heron, his personal god, to maintain focus on women. This belief is taken from the Yoruba tradition, which upholds that women have power to support the king in order to govern his kingdom.

“Birds are viewed by the Yoruba both as symbols of the diviner’s ability to chant and the mystical power of women. The Yoruba word for mystically powerful women is *eleye* (eh leh YEH), or ‘owners of birds’. Images of birds are used to decorate the king’s beaded crown, representing female power and the king’s need for women’s support in order to rule.”(Bartok and Christine, 1993, p.13).

Hence, certain birds are important in Yoruba culture and tradition. In this regard, the heron is the most important bird to signify this tradition. It is considered as the mother of birds as clearly mentioned in the novel, “*they were all children of the golden heron*” (Okri, 2007, p. 130). This tradition challenges both colonial and patriarchal ideologies that they undermine race and gender equality respectively. This kind of tradition has important lessons not only for Africans but also for the world at large. Therefore, the study of African culture and literature is the investigation of the rich tradition and customs, which provide resolution for unfairness and injustices.

On top of this, heron also represented the whole generation in the kingdom. The threat to the heron was the threat to the people and the land of the kingdom. Again, as evident in the novel, the threat of the heron was the threat of the ancestors and the descendants of the imaginary kingdom. This is also the same in Yoruba tradition where the heron is used for similar purposes in ancient kingdoms. Variety of approaches might be used to deprive each of the African nation's values and traditions but the ultimate goal is similar-eliminating or replacing the African culture and identity.

Ironically, the presence of slavery and colonialism in Africa were the threat of African culture and African people as the following extract implies:

Beautiful white birds descended on the heron and tore off all its feathers and broke its wings and left it dying on the riverbank where it lay sick for ninety-nine years, sick and dying, but not dead. The birds had also fallen on the nest of the heron and carried off many of its children and many died on the seas and many others were borne off and scattered about the world in horrible conditions, and they did not know one another anymore, and forgot that they were all children of the golden heron. (Okri, 2007, p. 130).

Shortly, heron is one of the ideal representations of women, generation and a nation in the African nation's tradition. It shows you how to acquire wisdom. Paying attention to the heron signifies paying attention to the aforementioned elements all in one. You have to embrace the nature of heron to love and serve your nation with all your effort.

The Swan song: we can also come across the tale about the swan song in the novel. Why did Ben Okri invoke the Swan song in the novel?

The image of swan appears in different myths and folklore throughout the world. Swan is depicted to signify the fabulous emblem of nature in different cultures. In Greek mythology, the swan song is held to be a metaphorical phrase that signifies the final gesture, effort, or performance offered just before death or retirement. Accordingly, in the ancient Greek beliefs, a song of a swan represents the upcoming death. In most of their lives, swans are silent creature. However, they could have a beautiful song in their lifetime that could be interpreted as an immediate death or migration, like a death note in the Ethiopian experience.

Another aspect of the swan in myth was the power to prophesy. When Apollo slew the Python at the temple of the oracle, he gained prophetic power. The swan, his sacred bird, was honored to draw his chariot of the sun across the sky to the land behind the north wind and back again, an association with the swan's natural migrations. The most noted example of the swan's mythic powers as a creature endowed with prophecy, and therefore a kind of spiritual being, is in the writings of Greek philosopher Plato when he reported the great Socrates' last words before death. Socrates compared himself to the swan, saying that the swan, because it was sacred to Apollo, "sings joyfully before its death," for the bird more than any other could "see into an afterlife with the god it served."(Price, 1994, p.17).

Here, Ben Okri used "the swan song" in his novel, *Starbook*, to signify the immediate diminishing and migration of the tribe of artists from their forest kingdom by the appearance of the white wind, as it is demonstrated below.

Its strength was no longer able to hold out against the dissolution wrought on it by the destruction of its old ways. The tribe survived long enough as a people to have one last stage of almost great flowering. It was **the swan song of their golden age**. It was the last days of their old dispensation before they vanished into the dust of time. (Okri, 2007, p.414). The phrase in bold is my emphasis.

There was a distinct tribe of artists in a separate village who were busy in crafting art works in their entire days. In the forest kingdom in which freshness and purity reigned across the entire subjects and villages, tranquility and cultural richness were plentiful. The social beliefs and customs were secured. Loyalty of the people to the king and loyalty of the king to the people were truthfully maintained and strongly grounded by the law of the land, which was imagination.

Besides, Art was the central and communal property of their survival by the time. It was part of their belief system. By using the wisdom of art, they believed to communicate with their creator. Communicating with the oracles, gods and ancestors of the tribe supposed to be held through art. Enigmas of human life, dreams of the tribe, and the secrets of events were understood and interpreted through art. Therefore, they engaged with making and appreciating art.

However, such tranquility and richness of the tribe came to the stage of disaster. Strong plague in the form of cool white wind appeared. At the beginning, this white wind seemed peaceful and calm. It appeared with delicacy of fragrance and hilarious scenes. After some time later, this new white wind changed from its nature of coolness and harmony into the other side of its nature of calamities and erasures. It looked friendly when it first emerged to the people. Nevertheless, it was converted into horrific spirit that resulted in many disappearances in the land of the kingdom including its natural resources, beliefs and traditions.

By implication, these represent the beliefs, traditional customs and values of the people that have been perished. Their ancient ways of morality, philosophy and peacekeeping methodologies were also erased following the appearance of the white wind. In the same manner, at a time when European slave traders appeared in the land of Africa, many forms of long-lived traditional properties and ancient civilizations had been taken away. Following the aforementioned forms of erasure, the condition of the land of the kingdom turned upside down. Migration, suspicion, misinterpretation, fear, enmity and rumors became prevalent among the people. Negative forces replaced positive forces, which were abundant for a long period. As a result, confusion resided in the land. On top of this, masses of the population were kidnapped and taken away to the coast of the sea. There had seen that people (men and women, children and young) were chained hand in hand and ankle to ankle by the metal chains, and then large ships carried them off across the sea. Thus, the representation of the Swan song signifies these losses.

6.3. Representations of Socio-Cultural Symbolic and Metaphoric Elements as National Allegories in *Wizard of the Crow*

Ngugi, who was affected by the Gikuyu people's terrible suffering by the British imperial domination and the Mau Mau rebellion for Kenyan independence, has used the community's socio-cultural symbols in his earlier novels so that he has revealed his thematic obsession and stylistic features. In his literary works, he always sides with the community. His political stand led him to detention/jail for a year without accusation. He was forced to leave his homeland and to live in foreign countries. The scars left by what Ngugi suffered in Kenya, his homeland, persisted, leading him to write about it. Ogude (1999, p. 46) notes that:

Ngugi's recourse to allegory would seem to be a strategy aimed at creating some sense out of a state of chaos; a way of reclaiming Kenya's history once suppressed in the

colonial state and again in the postcolonial state. Allegorical writing, for Ngugi, must have opened up the possibility of transformation – a means of rereading the imperial myths and their social agents in the postcolonial state.

Hence, allegorical /symbolic perspective drawn from the community from whom he belongs to is vital tool for Ngugi in crafting his literary productions.

The Gikuyu society, wherein the novel ‘Wizard of the Crow’ has based its socio-cultural setting, have various socio-cultural symbols that help them to signify their communal interpretation /or meaning significations. Some of the most important socio-cultural symbolic elements that are represented/reflected in the novel are interpreted below:

The Crow: Crow has various socio-cultural implications in African cultures and traditions. It is usually depicted in African folklore and myths signifying those cultural significances that have been given due regard by African people (Finnegan, 2012; Marzluff & Angell, 2013).

Many oral stories including fables, folktales and myths are included in this novel. Aesop’s ¹ fables are among them in which the crow is one of the characters. These fables are also African fables because his fables are collection of various oral stories from cultures across the world (Gibbs & others, 2002). Especially these collections of the stories are similar with most African stories. As such, some argue that Aesop is originated from Africa and his stories are from African oral traditions.

Why does Aesop have African animals in so many of his fables? Most of his fables have a moral and African folk tales often show us the meaning of a proverb. Aesop’s fables aren’t like fairy tales from Europe with “happy ever after” endings. They are much more like traditional African stories. Life is tough... and things can end badly for anyone who doesn’t watch out or use their wits! Nowadays I think that Aesop was African. He was probably captured somewhere in North Africa and forced to go to Greece. His name

¹ Aesop is a legendary Greek fabulist who is supposed to collect various fables. The Western tradition of fable effectively begins with Aesop. Modern editions contain up to 200 fables, but there is no way of tracing their actual origins; the earliest known collection linked to Aesop dates to the 4th century BCE.

sounds like the old Greek word for a black African: “Ethiop”. Some say that he was so wise and witty that his master freed him and that he became an adviser to the king (Grobler & Naidoo, 2011,p.7).

Kamiti, one of the main characters, is represented as “Wizard of Crow” in the novel. He played a significant role for the plot of the story to move on in suspension and for the thematic obsessions to be revealed succinctly at the end. The novel takes the title “Wizard of the Crow” for the outstanding role that the character has played for the text’s overall recreation of the African wit and truth. Therefore, why is the ‘Crow’ important for its representation, and what does it imply in the novel?

There are some symbolic meanings that are given to the **Crow** in different cultures and beliefs like wisdom and divination, cunningness, and ability to see beyond the ordinary (Marzluff & Angell, 2013). However, one of these is that “the crow represents the most intelligent birds” (Britannica & others, 2006, p. 488) establishes its reputation for intelligence and resourcefulness (Marzluff & Angell, 2013). The context used in the novel suggests this implication. In Kenyan oral tradition, Crow is also known for its problem solving skills. For example, we have known it in the fable called “The Crow and the Pitcher” wherein the Crow quenched its thirsty in a spell of dry season by putting pebbles into the pitcher which contained little amount of water in its bottom part. Because of the drop of small pebbles into the pitcher, the water rose up until at last it was near enough to the thirsty crow, (Winter & others (eds), 2014). Though it is known in Aesop’s fables, it is also an African oral tradition known throughout the continent. Therefore, the author of this novel alludes to this oral tradition to provide strategic solution to African nation’s post-independent predicaments. Some of the roles played by “Wizard of the Crow” or Kamiti, show his strategic skills in overcoming the problems while depicting his insightful wit and wisdom. These are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The two characters, Kamiti and Nyawira, escape police brutality with Kamiti's wit. The police officer was chasing Kamiti and Nyawira (later becoming a couple) on the streets, through bushes and villages, and from house to house in order to put them under his brutality. He was also interrogating residents to give him information about their whereabouts. However, Kamiti came up with an odd but brilliant idea that could keep away the rapacious police officer from coming

near to the house they had entered. He tied bones and rags with a dead lizard and a frog together. He also wrote the following on the cardboard in big letters: “warning! This property belongs to a wizard whose power brings down hawks and crows from the sky. Touch this house at your peril, SGD. wizard of the crow.” (wa Thiong’o, 2006, p. 77). Then he suspended down these bundle of things above the entrance of the door of the house. When the police officer who was chasing them saw the bundle of those alien things, he took step back immediately.

The police officer who was going from house to house in search of Kamiti and Nyawira indicates his intent to collect bribery. This shows that the level of bribery and corruption is at its climax in the post-independent nation-states. It affects every citizen of the nation. Largely, every household faced this problem. This problem is resided because of the **moral deprivation** of the national leaders who are again affected by the neo-colonial ideological systems. The post-independent leaders are affected up to the point of forgetting their respective country’s socio-cultural values, which were used and practiced in the past. Therefore, **negotiating** with the native’s cultural values is crucial to resolve the severe socio-political crises that the African nations are facing. The stratagem used by Kamiti implies that African socio-cultural wit is crucial to solve the postcolonial African nation’s problems. Therefore, it must be part and parcel in the searching for a solution.

Second, his psychological ability clearly outlines the mental image of a person. Kamiti has the ability to outline the mental image of a person by carefully scrutinizing his demand. By using series of logical questions, he can squarely click out the crux of the matter that is recurring frequently inside the person’s mind. For example, he probed out the recurring obsessions that one of the characters, police officer called Constable Arigaigai Gather, contemplated in his mind. This police officer wanted to step up to the best of power hierarchy in the country. Although he longed to secure his power desire, this could not be happen in a short period. As a result, he claimed that his colleagues were the reason for his failure. When Kamiti, disguised as a witch doctor, wittingly confirmed this to the police officer in power-seeking, the police officer came to believe that Kamiti, “Wizard of the Crow”, is an omnipotent figure who could change the fate of a person.

Third, he discloses the secret desire for political takeover of the cabinet Minister. African leaders are power seekers because they believe that political power is the source of power, money and property. Therefore, at the expense of logical reasoning and public responsibility, they want to grip the political power of the nations. This desire for political power creates conflict of interests among the politicians, which results in again conspiracy and political rivalry that affects the majority of the people. It is also the source of political divisiveness. This is the prolonged impact that colonialism left behind on the continent of Africa. Hence, it is important to aware of the political situation in African nations in order to root out political rivalries.

Similarly, to worsen the situation, another state minister, Sikiokuu, also wishes to control the power of the country.

Sikiokuu could hear very clearly what he was being asked but found it difficult to answer. Finally he nodded his head.

"No, tell me in words," the Wizard of the Crow insisted. "Do you ever dream of occupying the highest office in the land?"

"Yes. I have," he said through clenched teeth.

And with that Sikiokuu gathered steam and started talking, words all of a sudden flooding from his mouth like a rushing river.

"There is no minister who does not dream of one day becoming the Ruler. We lust for power, and what power is greater than that of a supreme ruler? (wa Thiong'o, 2006, p. 414).

Fourth, he discovers the cause of business rivalry between individuals using a divine mirror. In the same way, 'Wizard of the Crow' has the power to discover the wishes and ambitions of businessmen when they come to consult his divination. For example, Titus Tajirika, one of the businessmen in Aburiria, is an ambitious man who wants to collect more wealth. He owned the huge Modern Construction and Real Estate premises. He had also been assigned as the chairman of the "Ruler's" *Marching to Heaven* project from which he collected three sacks of money from contractors who wished to win a contract from the project. These kinds of dealers paid money as a means of making acquaintance with Tajirika. In short, he was able to amass much wealth from the different ways that helped him to secure his desire to become the number one businessman in

Africa. He wished to keep up both his highest position in Africa, and to become the highest-ranking businessman in the world.

My appointment as the chair of Marching to Heaven was announced this morning, and by the evening I had come into possession of all this. The morrow would bring even more money, for there were many more people coming to see him [sic, me]. If in just one day I have harvested this much and Marching to Heaven has not even begun, when the Global Bank releases its loans and the construction actually begins, my money will go through the roof. By the time all is said and done, I will be the richest man in Aburiria, the richest man in Africa, probably the richest man in the whole world, and I will be in a position to have anything I want, except . . . (wa Thiong'o,2006,p.173).

Nevertheless, besides to accumulating much wealth and property, in order to secure the world's highest businessmen rank, he thought that he had to change his skin color since he knew that Whites took the highest business position in the world. But he lacked white skin. So, when Tajirika was thinking over this matter, he accidentally stuck in the spell out of words at his throat. He was unable to speak out because of malady of words in the larynx. Malady of words became the epidemic in Aburiria that separately struck businessmen and authorities. He only repeatedly tried to say *ifs* and *if onlys*. His wife became worried by the accidental malady of words that her husband suffered from. To her trouble, he also started upholding a mirror to watch his face and scratching it with his fingers. She got more perplexed as to which hospital she could take him to treat his malady. Later, she got advice from Nyawira, his secretary, to visit "Wizard of the Crow", a witch doctor curing patients. "Wizard of the Crow" then identified the real malady that Tajirika suffered from by using his divine mirror. The diviner made Tajirika to speak out every piece of word that stuck behind his larynx. When he combined them together, those pieces of words became as follow: *If my skin were not black...* and *if only my skin were white like a white man's skin...* From this "Wizard of the Crow" figured out the malady of the person. White-ache afflicted Tajirika because of his desire to become White. So, the diviner pronounced to Vinjina, the patient's wife, that "Daemons of whiteness took possession of your husband..." (p.179). Finally, 'Wizard of the Crow' cured the malady of white-ache from Tajirika. When Tajirika was told that he would become homeless if he became White, he immediately refused to become White by saying, in unison with his wife, that "Black is beautiful. Give us back our blackness" (p.188). This made him free from his malady. But the truth is that Kamiti "was not a witch

doctor. He was a make-believe Wizard of the Crow” (p.125). The cunning behind the “Wizard of the Crow” to know the malady of a person was in his ability to psychologically examine, to explore the ambitions and wishes of the person’s mind.

Like Tajirika, other businessmen had also admitted to the shrine of the “Wizard of the Crow” to present their claims against their business fellows. This shows rivalry, as the result of selfishness, is spread over the country. As the following short excerpt also substantiates, this complicates the problems of the nation.

Yes, my fellow businessmen. You might see us dining and wining each other, and laughing and slapping one another on the back, but this is all a lie. Now it looks as if the Global Bank is about to release funds for Marching to Heaven...If we are always scheming against one another even when the stakes are low, imagine what's going on now. I own many quarries. All I want is to become the chief supplier of cement, stone and sand for Marching to Heaven. But believe me, Sir Wizard, my enemies are many, they are everywhere, they are ruthless, and they want what I want. (wa Thiong’o,2006, p.149).

In the same manner, John Kaniuru, a young commissioner of the regime, is working hard against Tajirika, who is the biggest businessman, so that he can take over the position of business ownership in the country.

The irony is that when we finally got the secret of all these messes and conflict of interests, African businessmen and African leaders are greedy. Money and power never satisfy them. As a result, they suffer from psychological disorder expressed through their obsession with money and power. They are facing with an identity crisis. The cause of the identity crisis of these businessmen, as depicted in the novel, is their greediness towards wealth and power. Therefore, rulers, who are suffering from this kind of psychological disorder, cannot bear the problems of the people in their mind. On the contrary, the business and political rivalry they raised between themselves complicates the political climate/matters of the postcolonial nation-states. Again, the spread of the malady of words over most cabinet ministers and businessmen shows the dysfunctioning or the failure of African leaders to address the public demand. Generally, in Africa, we can see that the political elites along with the businessmen fall apart.

As Kamiti had questioned Tajirika about his malady, a picture of the nature of the illness had also formed in her [Nyawira] mind, and she felt as if Kamiti understood it as pervasive among the rich and educated of Aburiria. Perhaps this explained in part what was wrong with the leadership of the land and the incredible turns the country had taken since independence. (2006, p.196).

Lastly, Kamiti had also strong sense of smelling stench in the country. Kamiti detected stench in the body, stench in the town, stench in the building and stench in government's offices and institutions. It spread everywhere in the country.

"Smell? What smell are you talking about? Oh, yes, you said you had tidied up to remove the smell of the police officer. Surely it could not have been worse than the stench of uncollected garbage in our streets," Nyawira said.

"I don't know what it is," he began quietly, as if talking to himself. "I can't quite explain it, but the smell was stronger than that of rotting garbage, a rancid belch, or a ripe fart. Sometimes when I am walking the streets I can detect it from among all other scents in the air and often I come across **people** and **buildings** that have it about them more often and more strongly than others. (2006, p.122).

Hence, 'Wizard of the Crow' is an instrumental body for change and transformation of the nation, which is under the grip of dictatorial leadership that messes with its socio-economic and political predicaments. He plays a significant role in indicating the way out of the nation's weighed-down crises. The eponymous 'Wizard of the Crow' is an important epitome of African wit and wisdom that can be a source of resolution for multiple arrays of problems in the continent. Therefore, robust characters like this have the power to inspire and enlighten the people of the post-independent nations to take persistent courage and stirring initiatives to change the old national political guiles and/or political betrayals. In this regard, Frau (2020, May 17) also conforms the important role of "Wizard of the Crow" as follows: "Kamiti is an educated young man, endowed with an extraordinary sensitivity and ability to intuit the true character of people. Descended from a family of herbalist sorcerers, he assumes the role of the Wizard of Crows."

Ogre: The novel, *Wizard of the Crow*, contains the story of ‘*the Ogre and the woman*’ in its narration. In the novel, what does the ogre imply? Ogre can have a variety of implications for different cultures and traditions. In many West and Central African countries, for example, the ogre is a powerful humanoid creature that has unique mythological significance and symbolic meanings. Some symbolic associations of the ogre include duality (both good and evil), morally malevolent force (acts in a cruel manner), selfishness, gluttonousness and rapaciousness (Nnolim, 2010). Usually, the ogre’s appetite for consumption metaphorically represents the selfish desires of those in positions of power who exploit the public resource for personal satisfaction.

The ogre is a fairy creature that is believed to feed on human flesh. It also has two mouths, one at its front and the other at its back. This nature of the ogre has socio-cultural implications in most nations of Africa.

The particular meaning it portrays in this novel unravels based on the context in which it is used. Accordingly, the ogre is employed in the novel to reveal selfishness and oppression, as the following analysis shows.

Accordingly, in Ngugi’s ‘*Wizard of the Crow*’, it is told that a man went to a faraway place, leaving his pregnant wife at home. In the meantime, the woman gave birth to two twin children before her husband came back to her. The ogre, disguised as good at first, took on the responsibility of nursing her by cooking food. However, rather than serving the food to the woman, the ogre ate every meal by saying, “Let me eat for you”. In the end, there were four tummies: one was the ogre’s stomach. Its stomach bloats because it feeds excessively, and the other three were the mother’s and her twin children’s stomachs. They bloat with kwashiorkor, which is resulted from severe malnutrition.

Here, we see that the ogre is such a greedy creature that feeds everything only to itself while there is a hungry woman with her little children who begs for food just in front of it. It gets fatter while the woman gets thinner because she lacks food. She and her little babies suffer from malnutrition because the ogre takes away the food to itself alone.

Hence, the ogre's sympathetic approach to the woman at first turned out to be treacherous when he swallowed the whole meal to itself. This selfish nature of the ogre represents the African rulers in the postcolonial period because they have tricked their people after they have seized power. What they say and what they do are different. It shows the duality nature of the leaders, which results in political anomalies (Conteh-Morgan, 2000). They could not keep the promise they had sworn to prosper and bring about freedom and democracy.

At the same time, it is also oppression because the ogre deprives the food that the woman saved for herself. Confiscating/or dispossessing the helpless like the woman in the story shows that oppression is at its peak condition. It also shows how human values are shattered. Leaving such a helpless woman with her little children in dire poverty undermines humanity and human values. However, African leaders in the post-independent period do the same against their own citizens. The citizenry suffers from poverty while the rulers and businessmen enjoy a luxurious life, or they are involved in accumulating the country's national property for themselves.

Termites: termites are a group of insects that consume a wide variety of materials. The actions that termites outperform are told in the Novel. What socio-cultural implication do they signify? The following discussions explain the implication based on the socio-cultural behaviors given to them. In the rich diversity of African culture and tradition, termites have varieties of implications. They frequently appear in African folktales, myths and legends often as characters of community, cooperation, resilience, perseverance and fecundity/fertility (Fairhead & Leach, 2003). In the Luhya community of Kenya, termites hold similar thematic significance, in addition to being a source of food (Van Huis, 2017).

The "Ruler" of the country (the fictional country) is the mighty ruler that no one could dare to wish his power. If anyone is found to even think this unthinkable and untouchable venue, his final fate would be "self-disappearance". A squad of eliminators that was set to evacuate any dissident against the regime would be given the secret command to eliminate him. Therefore, the nation was found in the grip of total subjugation and exploitation. Knowing his mighty power, the "Ruler" had no a tip of fear about his autocratic government. However, "Wizard of the Crow" came to the rescue of the nation. He has provided a signpost that directed the people how to act. This has shaken the mighty "Ruler". "Even the Ruler seemed shaken. Wouldn't you if you

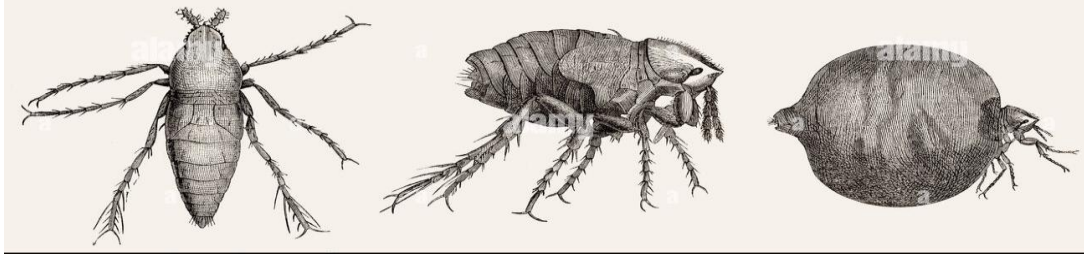
saw termites building anthills on the floor and walls before your very eyes? The Ruler knew as I knew that this was the work of the Wizard of the Crow ..." (p.561). They multiplied and spread from the cities to the Ruler's palace.

What do these termites signify here? They are expressed as "infinite" to show that they are too numerous to put them in numbers. They are normally known to work in colonies or in cooperation. These small insects are also hard workers that they can build mound of mountains on the plain of land. Similarly, they can effectively damage a force that is against them, or they can turn it into decay or bring it into their own use.

By implication, this reminds us that collective power of the masses of the people is more important than the mighty power of the dictatorial regime. In other words, the unity of the populace is central to liberate the country from the grip of dictatorship. Similarly, the socio-political change that the postcolonial nation requires can be achieved by the strong unity of the masses. However, conscious and hardworking campaigner is equally important to incite the campaign and manage the movement of the people in such a way that fair political system can be endured.

Male Pregnancy: One of the absurd scenes that is depicted in the novel is male pregnancy. The *Ruler* of Aburiria, the fictional nation, got pregnant when he failed to achieve the loan from the global bank for the "Marching to Heaven" project. It was strange that a male person became pregnant. So, it was a heated rumor among the people of Aburiria. This scene signifies the following concerns:

One, it shows that the country is ruled by one powerful individual. Or it is a metaphor that signifies monopolization of political power. Two, it underpins the parasitic nature of the African rulers on their own people. This feature can be made to resemble the jigger-flea. Normally, jigger-flea uses to suck mammals' blood. Then, its body puffs up like a balloon as a result of much blood it sucks. It loses its original shape (from thinnest to fattest) and changes into an oval or deformed shape. This is the real comparison of the African rulers with this parasitic creature because it ostensibly attributes their (parasitic) nature.



Retrieved from: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/chigoe-flea.html?sortBy=relevant>

Three, the country is weighed down by a huge loan from international organizations like the IMF and the World Bank. Many African nations are trapped by debt as the result of the irresponsible rulers. This debt is a problem for not only the current generation but also the coming generation. This again perpetuates the economic and political trap of the nations.

In consequence, this becomes the new trend of neocolonial domination by system of privatization and globalization. This appears to be used to take over the African resources and African patterns. At the same time, Westerners use it as a mechanism to inculcate their interest over the Africans. NGO's are playing an important role in this regard like what the missionaries were doing during colonialism. Therefore, it is the new threat that Globalization would turn the developing nations of Africa into the properties of the foreign private owned organizations, or investments.

6.4. Socio-Cultural Symbolic and Metaphoric Elements as National Allegories in *Little Suns*

6.4.1. Representations of Socio-Cultural Symbols and Imagery as National Allegories

The indigenous Umsintsi tree vis-a-vis the colonialist's pine tree: There are elements that carry the socio-cultural symbolic implications of the novel's target community. The first of these is the *Umsintsi* tree. The protagonist of the story, Malangana, decides to search for his beloved, whom he separated since 20 years ago. In his questing for her, he used to walk by the support of crutches made from a branch of the *Umsintsi* tree. It is an indigenous tree that has had different meanings among the colonialists and the native people.

He is hobbling on twisted crutches made from branches of umsintsi, known to the Trek-Boers as the kafir-boom – the tree of the nonbelievers – and as the coast coral tree to the colonists (Mda, 2015,p. 7).

The representation of *the Umsintsi* tree has a socio-cultural symbolic implication in the native culture and belief system. It has given important place in the native people, but colonialists disregard it as the “tree of non-believers”. Therefore, it invites different interpretations, both from the native’s perspective and the colonialist’s perspective. For native people, *the Umsintsi* tree has been given the following properties:

1. It is a drought-resistant tree;
2. It is a lucky bean tree because it is believed to have lucky charms, and
3. It has medicinal and magical properties.

Based on the socio-spiritual significance and contextual use of the tree, we can explore its socio-political implications as follows: One, as a member of the native community, Malangana’s crutches are made from this native tree’s branches because he believes that this luck tree would bring him good fortune when he quests for his lost beloved. Its charm of luck is considered to bring the two separated lovers together again. Two, this tree is also known for its drought-resistant capacity. Hence, it represents resistance in the face of difficulty. In this regard, Malangana faces a number of obstacles. First, when he wants to consummate his love with his beloved, and second, when he goes out to find her. Malangana keeps the crutches made from *Umsintsi* tree with him, indicating his resistance to tackle the challenges. Thirdly, this tree is an indigenous tree that has medicinal and magical values. It, therefore, implies that keeping with one’s indigenous values is crucial to overcoming the socio-political crisis that a nation faces.

On the contrary, the colonialists were working tough to subdue the native’s beliefs and traditions. This is clearly depicted in the novel. After complete victory of the wars, British colonialists engaged in a new project of planting trees imported from “the mother country”. A group of young men was recruited, and a camp was built for them to stay at the hill of the mountain until they completely covered the earmarked areas with new plants. They moved from place to place across the mountainous areas so that every project site got covered with the plants. The ultimate purpose of this company of young men was to create forest and tame the landscape of the native land.

Now that the natives have finally been pacified and the Boers have been defeated and subdued in the second and hopefully final Anglo-Boer War, the British Kaffraria

administration can focus on taming the landscape and making it more **civilised** by planting pine, gum, and poplar trees imported from the mother country...

The tree planters have long dismantled their camp and left to **civilise** other landscapes...

Malangana is taken aback when he realises that the path leads to the site formerly occupied by Mhlontlo's Great Place. He can hardly recognise it though, with all the tall pine trees instead of the umsintsi that used to surround the place (pp. 143&160). The bold is my emphasis

This implies that the White colonialists are establishing their culture and ideology on the land of the natives in order to replace the natives' customs and traditions. The colonialist government trained human power, allocated budgets in order to create a smooth environment to endorse their (the colonialists') culture and thought over the native society because their ultimate goal was to confirm the supremacy of imperial ideology. In due course, the White's governing system overrides the local system, which helps them exploit the local resources and suppress indigenous culture.

Goats: The purpose of Malangana's journey was to quest for his beloved. However, in the middle of his journey, he faced different obstructive challenges that affected his quest. When he started his journey, first he was confronted with goats.

He is confronted by goats. About five of them including a kid. They stand directly in front of him and refuse to give way. 'Ziyadelela,' he says to himself. They look down upon me. They are, in fact, looking up directly into his eyes. They do not even blink as he raises his arms to shoo them away. Even the kid is obstinate. Malangana stares at them, and they stare back unflinchingly. He cannot outbrave them so he shoos them away once more. The billy goat in front raises its forelegs as he lifts his hands. It stands on its hindlegs challenging him directly (Mda, 2015,p.8).

What does the refusal of the goats imply here? What is the possible socio-cultural implication of goats in the society based on the cultural context?

This confrontation between Malangana and the goats is an allegorical confrontation. Goats unflinchingly refused Malangana to continue his journey of questing his beloved girl. There are symbolic representations given to goats in different communities, both positively and negatively. Nevertheless, in this narrative context, they stand for a symbol of defiance, or resistance. This symbolic significance is interpreted against the socio-spiritual beliefs that goats represent. Accordingly, they are a messenger sent for Malangana to give him a hint that he will face with different obstacles on his way to quest for his Mthwakazi, his beloved.

However, they appear in front of the quester to suggest that he must be strong and courageous in the face of difficulties. It indicates that the hero's resistance and determination to restore the lost tradition and land are important. Hence, goats here bear the symbol of resistance because, metaphorically, his victory can be achieved if he is strong enough to face the challenges ahead of his journey. In this regard, his determination is clearly indicated in the novel as follows: "But Malangana vows he will find his Mthwakazi again, just as he found her that first time" (p.14).

On the other hand, Malangana was searching for his lost beloved after 20 years, when or where things radically changed. The appearance of colonialists changed socio-cultural practices. The harsh environment overrode the societal conditions. Although all these things happened, Malangan's plan was to restore the lost culture and land. Ironically, this indicates the resilience of the people whom Malangana represents.

Sacred Drum: The Drum is an important instrument in the '*amaMpondomise*' to achieve different purposes in their different cultural rituals. Particularly, there is a tradition called '*Intlombe*' wherein the spiritual gathering is held. In this gathering, the diviners and healers of the community, along with their acolytes, come to sing, dance, and perform healing rituals. Drum is used to be beaten by acolytes with a special rhythmic pattern. It is believed to address messages to the ancestors of the community in the spiritual world because it is supposed to create a bond between the existing communities in the physical realm with the ancestors of the dead in the spiritual realm. Accordingly, when the community wanted power and support from their ancestors during a period of catastrophe or plague or pestilence, they used to beat drum so that they could be heard.

Once, the 'Queen-Mother' of the community suffered from sickness, which left her life at the brink of death. As a result, the diviners repeatedly gathered to beat the "sacred drum" so that they can invoke the ancestors of the community to send power to relief her from the killing disease.

Therefore, drum is believed to interconnect the physical world and the spiritual world. In other words, it is a spiritual communicative device and carries the spirit and energy of the ancestors. So, it links the spirit of the ancestors with the descendants. The crux of the matter here is that this is one of the community's socio-cultural customs and practices that describes their cultural identity. Cultural identity is one of the determinant aspects of national identity.

The death of the Queen-Mother: When the presence of colonialists appeared in the '*amaMpondomise*' territory, the queen of '*amaMpondo*', the wife of King Mhlontlo, suffered from an ailment. She is also the "daughter of the most revered monarch in the region" (p. 81). Her illness became serious. She was about to die. Anxiety overrode the great place of the king. As a final resort, it was suggested that known traditional herbalists had to be summoned to heal her from the ailment. In this regard, there was a group of indigenous people who were called '*abaThwa*' and prominent in traditional medicine (the orthography is original). These people were also known for producing rain during severe droughts. Nevertheless, the herbs of '*abaThwa*' could not cure the queen. Diviners also failed to rescue her life. Finally, she succumbed to death, although rigorous efforts were made to relieve her of the ailment. Therefore, it was a great loss to the people and the kingdom.

He knew without anyone telling him that they were announcing the death of the Queen of *amaMpondomise*, daughter of Sarhili, King of *amaGcaleka*, they who descended, together with *amaRharhabe*, from an ancestor called Xhosa, and were therefore also known as *amaXhosa*...

He was a man and a king, yet he was crying. The queen had been his partner, companion and adviser. Having been raised in the court of King Sarhili, regarded as the greatest of all the monarchs in the region, she had been wise in all matters of statecraft. (pp, 52-53)

This implies the significant impact of colonialism on the native people and their culture. It reveals the end of a particular socio-cultural heritage. First of all, '*abaThwa*' are the indigenous people of South Africa. They are also called the *San* people or the Bushmen. They are indigenous hunter-gatherers who are prominent in the knowledge and art of local herbal medicines. Therefore, the death of the queen shows the extermination of the rich socio-cultural heritage and the indigenous knowledge system of these people. It also shows their loss of land because the aggression of colonialists forced them to leave their land.

Similarly, with regard to the '*amaMpondomise*', another branch of the Xhosa clan, it infers that they faced the great migration of the Xhosa people because of the colonial violence against the natives. As a result, they dispossessed their land and distinct cultural identity. In addition, these people had a prominent king, who resisted colonial forces. However, later they were defeated, and they lost the king and kingship administration system. The colonial government replaced it. Therefore, the colonial government got a chance to eliminate the natives' socio-political system. Hence, here it indicates annihilation and eradication of the great Xhosa kingdom.

In summary of the above discussions, socio-cultural symbolic representation is used as an important device to reveal the socio-cultural conditions of a certain nation. This further portrays the socio-political circumstances of the nation. In this essence, there are symbolically significant elements in the African culture that are often employed in the African literary works. These elements provide lessons and wisdom. Symbolic illustrations to describe the situations more vividly in the African nations, along with their symbolic implications to reveal the thematic concerns more concretely that the authors want to communicate with their readers, are employed in the novels under study.

Accordingly, Ngugi writes the novel under study by incorporating nationally significant fables. As it is discussed, among others, he refers to the main traits of the Crow, Ogre and termites to describe the socio-political conditions of the postcolonial nation. Similarly, he uses the socio-cultural symbols that these creatures signify in the society to portray the nature of leadership in the post-independent nations. He also indicates the corruptive nature of African leaders can be alleviated by the African indigenous knowledge system and the unity of the people. Whereas Okri's novel is mythical. He uses it to demonstrate the quality of the African culture in the

ancient political administration system. He reminds mythically significant birds and landscapes whose socio-cultural and belief values are important in one of the ancient African societies. By this, he reclaims that Africa's indigenous socio-political administration system eases the Western political influence that was imposed on African nations both ideologically and forcefully. In this regard, Ngugi usually incorporates stories of fables, while Okri depends on mythological stories to achieve their respective goals.

On the other hand, Zakes Mda's recounts the story of the novel, *Little Suns*, based on the legendary story of amaMpondomise clan, during which they encounter the colonialists' incursion. It is fashioned with the oral story tradition of South Africa that passes on from generation to generation. It is a hybrid genre with collections of legends, folktales and traditional songs. Therefore, it reflects the balance of history with story and past with present. It incorporates culturally significant elements that have symbolic implications for society. As such, trees, animals, objects like drum and certain incidents are employed to enrich the socio-cultural symbolic meanings that the author wants transfer.

Generally, African literary writers use culturally significant elements to symbolize their respective nation's socio-political situations. These elements also help us to learn the truths and values of Africans. Therefore, symbolism that is derived from the culture is one of the literary techniques that reveals and addresses the aims of the postcolonial literary writers. In other words, Africans' wit and wisdom exist in African culture and traditions. As a result, writers purposely employ the cultures and traditions of the African nations in their literary works. Therefore, they (African culture and traditions) are found to be important tools to find out solutions for the present socio-political problems of the African nations because they are authentic textures to indicate the way forward about the existing difficulties. Therefore, negotiating with the African culture and tradition is crucial to recreate a sense of harmony and peace on the continent.

CHAPTER SEVEN: NATIONAL ALLEGORIES AS LITERARY TECHNIQUES IN THE SELECTED NOVELS

7.1. Introduction

National allegory is a literary technique that uses a story of a novel to allegorize and explore identity, culture and political history of a postcolonial nation. Hence, it allows a literary writer to reflect the socio-political dynamics and comment the history, ideology, struggles and culture of a nation through allegorical means. This literary technique can be employed in novels in different ways in a way that achieves the aim of the author. Some key strategies that are used in the novels under study include: the use of myths and folkloric elements, representation of symbolic characters, settings and plot structure, satirical and humorous situations and historical and cultural references. The next sections provide this aspect through practical interpretations of the novels.

7.2. National Allegories as Literary Techniques in *Starbook*

The novel employs magical realism, which allegorically embeds national socio-cultural and political history, as a literary technique. The author employs fantastic elements and fragments of socio-cultural stories in the entirety of the novel. At this point, magical elements have national allegory in their symbolic level of narrative.

The novel is told by using short forms of stories. The stories seemed to be incomplete, or it could be said that the novel contains interrupted stories. There are gaps to be filled then. Each fragment of stories, which are divided into chapters and subsections, might give us a certain impression with suspense but without complete imagination or complete information. Statistically, the novel is divided into four books, each of them again divided into different chapters and parts. Book one consists of 26 chapters. Book two is comprised of three parts: part one is composed of 20 chapters, while part two and part three are composed of 12 and 46 chapters, respectively. Again, book three is comprised of 74 chapters, while book four is comprised of 22 chapters. Totally, the novel is composed of 200 chapters. This style of writing could have allegorical significance in the socio-historical realities of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

First, the place where the entire story of the novel took place is a large kingdom that was comprised of many subkingdoms. This may suggest that the African continent comprises

numerous nation-states, each characterized by a multitude of ethnicities and languages. Second, as a matter of fact, there were different kingdoms across present-day Nigeria. In the North, South, East, West and Central parts of the country, historically known ancient kingdoms existed. Thus, for one thing, these fragments of stories are taken from the socio-cultural histories of these kingdoms. For the other thing, the imaginary kingdom shows Nigeria with threads of socio-cultural histories. The long socio-historical incidents that Nigeria as a nation passed through might be represented in this novel. Third, it shows the linguistic disparities in the country. As we can see, today's Nigeria is the home of between 200 and 250 ethnolinguistic groups. These groups are composed from the derivative and separate socio-cultural and linguistic identities. Fourth, it can imply the tumultuous history of the country because the continuous interruptions of the stories can be interpreted as the crises and conflicts that occurred in the country.

Therefore, it seems intentional that many fragments of the socio-cultural stories are collected to be part of the novel's entire structure. This is to indicate that African nations, particularly Nigeria, experienced many historical incidents that are not yet fully explored. As the culture of historical documentation has been meager, there are many socio-cultural histories left unwritten. The rich cultural histories Africans have undergone have passed through word of mouth in the form of oral tradition. Nevertheless, this tradition has been affected by social changes, *time* and *oblivion*. At this point, it is suggested that art of imagination and art of creativity would be the ways to the regeneration and completion of those African socio-cultural histories. In other words, the art of imagination in Africa would rescue its long history.

On the other hand, African writers use magical realistic forms of narration for the following purposes: One, in a magical tale, there are African socio-political realities. African daily realities are often found in their folkloric assets. For example, they would have used oral tradition to reserve and to transmit their socio-cultural and political realities to the coming generations. Therefore, in magic there is reality. The past real story is narrated through the representation of magical objects. Two, a magical form of narration gives freedom for writers in writing literature because it aids them to comment on the socio-political realities of a certain nation anonymously. This is a secret way of criticizing the incumbent regime. They use it to tell untold stories and/or history. There might be stories that could not be narrated or told based on historical facts. To fill this gap, the magic realist form of narration of a story is proper to be adapted as a technique of

writing African literature. As his typical literary style, Ben Okri uses a magical realistic form of narration for similar purposes. In short, magical realism is used in this novel to allegorize the African's socio-historical reality. Mainly, using a dream-like narrative technique, Okri symbolizes hope and quest for knowledge and enlightenment amidst darkness and despair. This method of allegorization is national allegory because it uses the nation's sociocultural and political milieu as a background to produce this literary work.

7.3. National Allegories as Literary Techniques in *Wizard of the Crow*

7.3.1. Black Humor as a National Allegory

Writers use black humor to satirize the stupidity and irrationality of a particular situation. The novel also employs this style of writing to depict the distinctive situations that the African nation-state has faced. He incorporates Absurdity and Obscenity as the following discussions give vivid explanations.

Obscenity: On the occasion of the birthday celebration of “the Ruler”, many important events happened. One of these was the following: expecting him to appreciate and praise “the Ruler”, a chance was given to one of the citizens to speak in front of the crowd. Accordingly, an old man took the chance and came to the platform/the podium to make his speech. However, this man being as if faced with difficulty of pronouncing words, he rather called out embarrassing words into the microphone, like ‘*Rahisi Mkundu*’ in Swahili, which means “cheap arsehole” (take notice of the words ‘**cheap**’, which means poor price, and ‘**arsehole**’ means ‘**anus**’). This caused the hilarious laughter of the crowds. But it resulted in an embarrassing scene for “the Ruler” and his cabinet ministers.

Similarly, the troupe of Women during the day of dedication for the site of “Marching to Heaven” Project was another obscene scene.

There was special occasion prepared for the day of the dedication for the site of “Marching to Heaven” Project. For the celebration of the event, therefore, various performing dramas that could be performed by the group of children, youths and women were arranged. Various dignitaries from Global Bank missionaries, foreign ambassadors and diplomats, cabinet ministers and religious leaders were invited to attend this big ceremony with the huge crowd of the people

of the nation. The “Ruler” was also about to make speech for the crowd. Based on the program, children took first the platform to make their spectacle to the crowd with dances and songs that praise and appreciate the “Ruler”. Then group of women followed to show their expected praises and appreciations of the “Ruler” on the stage with traditional attire that attracted the attention of the huge audience. Once they took the attention of the audience, they together lifted up their skirts and exposed their butts to those on the platform and to the masses of the crowd. They also displayed their “about to shit en masses in the arena”. They together shouted the campaign: “MARCHING TO HEAVEN IS A PILE OF SHIT! MARCHING TO HEAVEN IS A MOUNTAIN OF SHIT!” (p.250), in front of the autocratic “Ruler” who considered himself as the mighty ruler that anyone never criticizes him. (The letters in the upper case are original). The crowd took up this chanting to themselves and intensified to the whole crowd of people. The “Ruler” suffered from humiliation in the public criticism.

Here, “the Ruler” is wishing luxurious while the people are suffering from hunger. It was supposed that he had been given power to serve the people. But after seizing power, he forgot the need and interest of the population. He only wished to satisfy his personal interest even betrayed the people to the foreign allies. Building such a huge tower is nonsense to the masses. They rather wished access for food to eat, clothes to wear, and shelters to live in. In addition, the project is assumed to be constructed by a huge loan from the Global Bank. So, it was **transgressing** for “the Ruler”, who was elected based on the promises he had sworn to improve the socio-economic problems of the people, but forgot them and repeatedly talked about the unattainable luxurious project as it is suspiciously remarked as follow: “The media had two overriding questions: What did the delegates from the bank think about this revival of a scheme (the Tower of Babel) that had proved too much even for God's own chosen? Would the Global Bank come up with the money?”(2006, p.73).

Even this situation clearly shows that the plights the people were facing have not been paid attention by the government, which implies an embarrassing, and humiliation in the face of the reality. This works in almost all post-independent African nations.

Absurdity: In this situation, we can see the level of irrationality or weird thoughts of an individual. The “Ruler” of Aburiria gave important governmental positions to individuals based

on their devotion they could pay to him. Therefore, as a witness to their devotion, individuals from the members of the “Ruler’s” parliament showed their commitment to serve the regime with all their energy and skills. Among the contestants for the “Ruler’s” cabinet ministerial positions, the three were so strange that they touched even the “Ruler” and persuaded him to appoint them. Each one of them took flight to European countries to get body surgery that could give them higher capability to serve the “Ruler”. “Machokali has had his eyes enlarged, Sikiokuu his ears, and Big Ben Mambo his mouth, or rather his tongue”. (p. 111)

One of them, Markus Machokali, went to London Hospital to have his eyes enlarged to the size of an electric bulb so that he would spot “the enemies of the Ruler no matter how far their hiding places” (p. 14) were. The other one, Silver Sikiokuu, on his part, went to Paris Hospital to get his ears enlarged to a greater size than the rabbit’s ears so that he could better hear “the most private conversations” (p. 14) and detect their directions. The third one, Benjamin Mambo, also admitted Berlin Hospital to have his tongue elongated so that he could echo the Ruler’s command to reach out in every Aburirian border. Besides, each of them left their earlier names given at their birthdays, and they were called by their new names. Seeing their commitment, the “Ruler” gave three of them ministerial positions in his government. Starting from the time they have been given the positions, they have entered into fierce political struggle to gain more of the “Ruler’s” favors. “The Ruler was always happiest when his ministers, especially these two, were at each other's throats, for it was during these heated exchanges that he was able to learn a thing or two that may have been hidden from him” (p.533).

First of all, these cabinet ministers are more devotional to serving the ‘Ruler’ and his regime than to serving the people. They gave away themselves completely. Whatever it is, they entirely abided by the rules and orders of the individual ruler/leader. The post-independent African political trend is similar in that rulers give positions based on the loyalty of a person to the regime. As a result, those who seek political power in the continent must be sycophantic for an individual person in an autocratic rule of government that is dominant in Africa. Denying oneself and the people is the criterion to take power. This trend continues in African nations where few political figures are advantageous over the masses of the population.

On the other hand, the political interference of Europeans in the Africans affairs continues up to proxy war. As it is depicted, each cabinet minister admits to different European nations to get medical service. But the irony is that Westerners (secretly) involved in dominating the African political and economic activities in the period of neocolonialism. As they did during colonialism, they have also set apart the contemporary African nations. These body parts (eyes, ears and a tongue) are set to work separately in different persons, while they must do so simultaneously in a normal human being. This implies that lack of unity among the people and the nations prolongs and persists their socio-political exploitations and dependence. This shows the political climate of post-independence African countries.

7.3.2. Symbolic, Satirical and Fantastical Descriptions as National Allegories

As discussed earlier, symbolic illustration to best describe the situation in the African nations, along with its symbolic implication to best reveal the thematic concerns that the author wants to communicate with his readers, is employed in the novel. The abuse of political power in African post-independent nations is equated with the sexual abuse of women. As males culturally abuse women, national bourgeoisie abuses the nations. Here, symbolically, a woman represents a nation. Again, culturally significant elements are also used in symbolizing the socio-political situations of the nation. So, symbolism is one of the literary techniques that portrays and addresses the aims of the writer.

Satirizing on the (narrative) events is the other technique of the author. Creating humors becomes the writer's favorite style to present or/ depict his obsession to the theme and to narrate the story of the novel. For the purpose of satirizing, therefore, the author chooses absurdity. Absurdity in the African case is called black humor. This absurdity is formed from obscenities wherein embarrassing scenes are portrayed, and from oddities in which things, which are uncommon or strange for normal human mindset, are employed. To depict the shameful aspects of African governments, writers like Ngugi employ obscenity. Similarly, to portray the anomalies of these governments, they employ oddity. In the novel, representation of male pregnancy is an odd method of defiling the parasitic nature of the African rulers. At the same time, eyes enlargement to spot out any tiny thing from anywhere, and ears enlargement to hear any rumors against the government so that measures can be taken immediately are among other absurd elements.

By employing the familiar and fantastical elements, “Wizard of the Crow”, also reveals the reality of African nations. Oscillating from reality and fantasy and vice versa, the novel provides the actual socio-political situations of the post-independent nations. By realistic mode of writing, Ngugi portrays the miserable situation that the republic of Aburiria (by implication the African nation) has faced. The real conditions (the plight) of the people are seen by the many social crises that they have confronted including disease, poverty, joblessness, corruption.

In fantastic mode of writing again, magical elements are taken as a recourse of narrating/telling the story. The process of the magical incantations helps to freely interrogate the ruling class. Hence, these elements are used to reveal out the deep-rooted desires of African political rulers by making mockery. Here, it is depicted that the level of personal interest on the part of the ruling class is above the public interest. They behave disgraceful towards the people and their nation. In addition, the magic of sorcery beats all scientific logic to show that the African values and wits are still important to cure the African problems than the imported thoughts from the Westerners. This magic/sorcery hints the way out from the dreadful situation in which the African nations are drowned. Generally, national allegories as a technique of portraying African socio-political matrix and African setting as a venue of creating African literary context in order that the author achieves his aim have played a significant role in crafting the novel.

7.4. National Allegories as Literary Techniques in *Little Suns*

The main purpose of using national allegory as a literary technique in this novel is to enhance the thematic preoccupation that Zakes Mda wants to provide. To achieve this, he uses to create emotional impact on his readers by making the story of the novel poignant and enjoyable. Some of the different literary techniques that he employs to address this aim include: characters’ development, humor and irony, magical realism, historical and cultural references, symbolism, vivid imagery, flash backs and multiple perspectives.

Characters’ Development: This refers to the personalities of the characters. Some of them are portrayed in such a way that they are resilient, strong and wise. These allowed them to struggle with the challenges they faced in the lives of their journey, and they became the triumphant at the end. This again shows that the socio-political crisis the African nation faces is overcome by the emotional and intellectual confrontations of tough individuals who are very much concerned

with the socio-political crisis of their nation. The challenges that the protagonists faced to meet each other, but later they succeeded, support this argument.

Irony and Satire: The use of irony and satire shows the contradictions of life in contemporary South Africa. This exposes the societal flaws and challenges in the country, and this also forces readers to critically reflect the situations around them. Similarly, the creation of humor offers empathy by which the author invites readers to find common ground in the lives of the characters. This can connect the emotions that characters experience with the feelings of the readers. Ultimately, sense of unity on the basis of common understanding can be created.

Magical Realism: Mda incorporates magical or fantastical elements in the novel from the socio-cultural and folkloric resources of the communities. The blends of fantastical and ordinary elements allow Mda to invite his readers to see the world through different lenses. For example, the sacred drum represented in the novel has a magical power to connect the physical world with the spiritual world. Similarly, there is a distinctive ethnic group (abaThwa), who are magically known for making rain during severe droughts.

Historical and Cultural References: The author often engages in South Africa's socio-cultural and historical references. This allows him to describe and infuse the specific socio-political contexts that the country has passed through in the novel.

Symbolism: In the novel, there are objects, events and things that are represented symbolically to signify the deeper socio-political meanings of the country. For example, in the title of the novel, *Little Suns*, the sun implies hope and renewal. It reflects the aspirations and brighter future of South Africa amid different challenges with the collaborative efforts of the South Africa's communities.

Vivid Imagery of Landscapes: In *Little Suns*, the diverse South Africa natural landscapes, including mountains, rivers and districts/territories, are described vividly. These environments reflect the broader socio-cultural milieu of the country. The broader landscapes the characters encounter have a significant impact on their decisions and experiences, which shape again the narrative structure of the novel. These physical environments often remind the roots and heritages of the characters. Therefore, Mda uses them to evoke feelings of nostalgia and

belongingness on the parts of the characters. In this regard, he seeks to connect nationhood and identity with the natural features and locations of the country. On the other hand, the landscapes in the novel provide the multiple backdrops of the communities that comprise South Africa as a nation.

Flash Backs: Zakes Mda also uses the mechanism of narrative flash backs to provide background and histories of the characters. The narrative account based on reciting family genealogy and historical recovery is the most important examples here. This offers readers gain a better understanding of the past socio-historical incidents and emotions of the country. This again allows readers to see the impact of the past history on the present circumstances.

Generally, the multiple techniques that the Mda employs in the novel provide multiple perspectives that allow readers and critics to navigate the multilayered emotional experiences and thematic concerns.

Altogether, the authors of these novels enrich their narratives with different techniques, which allow their readers to engage with the complexities of postcolonial identities and historical experiences.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Postcolonial literature has developed against the gory background of colonialism and imperialism. It has employed various themes and technical features. One of the literary devices that are used in postcolonial literary writing is national allegory. It is an important device that is employed to illustrate the themes of postcolonialism. It is also useful to examine both the thematic preoccupations and literary features that the postcolonial writers employ in their literary works. The main emphasis of national allegory is the socio-political and cultural histories and struggles of post-independent nations.

Hence, studying postcolonial novels against the concept of national allegories is important because it is a critical tool to explore the themes and socio-historical conditions of the nations. This provides a powerful insight into the blends of ideas and dynamics that the postcolonial studies have given. However, a comprehensive and intensive study of contemporary Anglophone African novels against this concept appears to be paid little attention by critics, as it can be seen across different critical works.

Taking national allegory as a critical tool, this study explored the socio-political and cultural conditions that the postcolonial cultures and societies have faced, the ideological structure that is imposed on and practiced in the postcolonial nations, and the literary techniques employed to illustrate the themes and contexts of postcolonial studies. Each author whose works were selected for this study depicts the following main points in their respective novel.

Ben Okri reveals the origins of the Nigerian socio-political problems in his novel, *Starbook*. The human child himself has deteriorated humanity or human life starting from ancient times, and yet it is being debilitated. Many wicked deeds have been committed against humanity across different historical epochs and places in Nigeria. In fact, this is the common problem in the continent. However, Africans and the African diaspora must take the leading role to reveal this situation in this regard. It is taken in cognizance that the ancient truth of Africa is distorted and marginalized by White supremacists in such a way that it is insignificant and valueless to humanity in general. On top of this, local self-centrists have also patronized the foreign agencies

in shattering the African human and cultural values and resources. More than this, they worsen the instability of life in Africa. In this respect, the long practice of slave trade in Africa was the most tragic human trafficking experience that resulted in losses of centuries-old social practices and labor cost consequences for Africa. Although it is relatively a long distance occurrence, slavery is taken as the first incident for the evil deeds against the black race. It was followed by the aggression of colonialism and post-independent anomalies. Again, each of them, in turn, brought further consequences for postcolonial cultures and societies. Hence, we can say chained consequences as the result of chained causes have persisted in the history of African nations.

Among many fragments of the stories in the novel understudy, however, there are many to be told and preserved because they are from the ancient oral tradition that they are taken. These fragments of stories help to trace the long and rich histories and traditions of the African nation. Although in matter of time and the devilish suffering that the Africa race has endured, which again tempted to the survival of these traditions and histories, there are still fragments of witnesses and inheritances both in spiritual and material forms that can be helpful to reimagine and revive the ancient truth of the continent. In this regard, the author of the novel seizes art and art of regeneration is an important aspect.

By using this novel, the author seems to attain the following major purposes: One, as a counterargument against the Eurocentric assumption towards Africa, he revealed his resistance against imperialism. Two, as a recuperation of sociocultural and political history, he reimagined/recreate it in the novel. One's socio-political history can be affected by *time* and *oblivion* in Africa, but it could be recovered in literary works, as postcolonial writers are intentional to consider it in their imaginative works. Three, as a transformation of history, he invoked to write it for socio-political change of Africa in the future. In this sense, Ben Okri engages in historical and cultural retrieval of the past to correct the wrong impression about Africa's "historylessness" as the Westerners projected it. In the same vein, Okri has metaphorically deconstructed the historical and cultural aspects of pre-colonial Africa as forest. Forest is conceptualized as a domain of evil and barbarism by the Western, but Okri uses this text to reconceptualize it as a source of refreshment, knowledge and inspiration. Equally, he deconstructs the hostile nature of the political history of Africa and demands that it needs to be changed for collective social will.

On the other hand, Ngugi wa Thiong'o shows that political leaders are treacherous as they are empirically seen immediately after the advent of independence till now. The implicit meaning behind Ngugi's novel, *Wizard of the Crow*, can be explained as follows. An autocratic government takes the interest of the masses of the people aside but works to satisfy the individual interest of its leader. The social crises in which the people are suffering from do not matter to the political leader who controls governmental authority to '*satisfy his lust of power*'. First, the government made deals with the foreign allies for the sole purpose of an individual interest. It was a deal that pushed the country into a huge national debt. Second, it adapted the dividing rule policy in the nation. It used ethnic disparity as an instrument of ethnic rivalry. Creating envy and hatred among the ethnic groups of the nation became a normal strategy to stay in power because the struggle between the rival factions, which were intentionally established by the governing regime, helped it to sustain its political supremacy over the rival factions. This is a clear '*political guile*' that uses ethnic rivalry for political abuses.

As clearly portrayed in *Wizard of the Crow* in one of the African nation-states, strong desire to monopolize political power drives the African leaders to design a hostile political system that plots conspiracy against any political practice other than the governing political regime. Besides, the presence of multi-party democracy is a threat to this kind of autocratic government.

This is actually the collective nature of the post-independent regimes in Africa. However, the promising socio-political change and transformation can be realized by the commitment and cooperation of the masses of the populace. Thus, the author seems to suggest that the masses of the African people must rise against the hypocritical governments that cause many socio-political crises for the post-independent society. In this regard, robust individuals both male and female who have experienced the anguish of post-independence crises must lead this mobilization.

In same vein, when we unveil the implications of the novel, *Little Suns*, briefly, we can say Zakes Mda depicts the following major concerns: First, he reveals the aggression of colonialists against the native people, culture and traditions. They (colonialists) were committed crime by imposing their socio-political dominance on the native communities. They used military power as an alternative mechanism to put down local chiefs under their control. Furthermore, they worked to subvert the natives' culture and tradition. To do this, they established missionary

schools and churches. These institutions were instrumental in subduing the native people ideologically because they assisted White colonialists in instilling the White culture and religion over the indigenous culture and belief system.

Second, colonialists also deprived the native lands to establish their own settlement and to reshape the contours of the new demography in a way that suited their interests. However, the native resistance against this incursion was an important movement to protect the people and the land from the colonial forces. Nevertheless, the modern military strategy along with the ideological machinery they used helped them to disintegrate the unity of the local communities, which again provided the colonial forces with the power to deteriorate the heroic fighting of local chiefs. Consequently, the native people migrated. They left their land and territory to live in exile. They were also prohibited from their cultural practice; on the contrary, they were forced to learn and accept the Whites' culture. Then they faced huge socio-political alienation for many years to come.

What makes it more terrible is that the impact of colonialism also left scars on the present-day societies of South African nations. Ethnic conflict persists among different ethnic groups. The identity crisis is also another remaining challenge that postcolonial society has faced because of their long-term deprivation of their socio-cultural heritage. Nonetheless, it is suggested that a strong effort to re-establish or reinstall the lost heritage is vital to getting rid of this crisis. This is again helpful to create peaceful coexistence in the society. Similarly, it is also important to solve the socio-political crises that are left behind by colonialism. In this regard, psychologically robust characters, like Malangana, the protagonist of the novel, are portrayed to lead the march for socio-political transformation that the African nations still aspire to.

Altogether, Okri, Ngugi and Mda suggest that the nation is the most important matter for every citizen. Okri demonstrates the problems in the mythical kingdom, while Ngugi reveals the crises in an imaginary nation called the '*Republic of Aburiria*'. They embrace oral traditional forms of narration from the cultures of their respective homelands. They depend on the tradition of the community for their narrative background. Therefore, they provide traditional values as a resource of stories and means of resolving the problems of the nations'. Hence, they suggest that

regenerating African socio-historical monuments and values is vital for the reawakening of Africans for the present socio-political change and transformation.

Younger generations, both males and females, are implied to be equally important to take a forefront role to struggle the injustice system that affects the people. Okri employs a young prince and a maiden as the major actors of change and transformation, while Ngugi uses two younger main characters who become a couple to fight the incisive regime that causes many problems in the country. In this regard, employing robust and young characters in both novels shows that an optimistic effort is crucial to bring about success for future generations.

Similarly, in both novels, the forest is taken to be a source of purity, energy, dream and wisdom. It is also taken as a place of tranquility. This is also the counter discourse against imperialists' assumption that takes forest as a sign of *barbarism* and *primitiveness*. Briefly, the two authors have similar positions in that African socio-cultural and political values should be reconsidered for sustained change and transformation.

In a similar manner, Zakes Mda is preoccupied with the socio-cultural and political histories of African society. In addition, he employs the African oral tradition stylistically. The African method of telling tales is used to shape the narrative structure of the novel. He crafts this novel on the basis of oral storytelling tradition, particularly on the legendary story of the 'amaMpondomise' clan. It is divided into several incidents that reimagine the challenges that happened to a particular legendary figure of a nation. He depicts the resilience of African society by employing typically persevering characters that are persistently working in the face of difficulties to quest for their lost heritages and identities. This form of writing is influenced by the writer's literary background. Therefore, to explain the implication of the novel, understanding the socio-cultural and historical context in which it is written is crucial.

Therefore, from the above critical observations we have seen so far, we can summarize the final thought of this paper based on the basic similarities and differences that are identified in the process of interpretations. Accordingly, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Ben Okri and Zakes Mda, who produce significant literary works in postcolonial literature, reflect the following common thematic concerns in their respective novels selected for this study. They depict themes of

identity, culture, history and the impact of colonialism in post-independent cultures and societies. The protagonists in each novel grapple mainly with the issues of identity and freedom. Specifically, they struggle to ease oppression, exploitation and societal challenges. Essentially, Okri and Ngugi criticize misuse of power and political corruption in the African nations.

Similarly, these writers employ magical realism and African socio-cultural and historical contexts as their literary backgrounds. This makes their literary styles similar. It seems that they incorporate elements of magical realism in the novels purposely because they blend fantastical elements with everyday realities to reflect the authentic experiences of postcolonial societies. Hence, the narratives of the novels are deeply rooted in African culture and traditions. African folklore, myths, fables and legendary forms of storytelling are employed. This, in turn, intends to show the cultural conditions and richness of African nations. This also reflects the national identities.

However, the discrepancies between these writers are pointed out based on the following specific parameters: the use of a specific narrative technique, the main thematic focus, the specific cultural reference and the method that each writer uses for his characterizations. Accordingly, in terms of narrative technique, Okri uses a mythical dimension for his philosophical view of human conditions in Africa. Ngugi, on his part, uses a more satirical and allegorical approach in his *Wizard of the Crow*, whereas Mda integrates more straightforward historical incidents in his *Little Suns* to reflect the existing challenges of the South African communities.

Thematically, Okri tries to bring to light the interplay between spirituality and reality in the presence of chaos and suffering. Ngugi, on the other hand, focuses on the struggle against an authoritative regime to bring about freedom and democracy, while Mda attempts to address themes of love, loss and community resilience in the face of real challenges.

Coming into the specific cultural reference each author takes for granted, Okri employs Nigerian folkloric and oral traditions for his philosophical outlook. On the other hand, Ngugi draws on the Kenyan history and culture to reflect the socio-political climate of the country, whereas Mda subjects to the South African culture and historical contexts to reflect the dynamics of life in contemporary South Africa.

Lastly, in terms of characterization, Okri's method is developed on the personal and spiritual quest of the characters amidst societal confusion. Characters in Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* embody reflecting the socio-political crisis as the main triggering cause against authoritarianism. On the other hand, in Mda's *Little Suns*, characters are grounded on the challenges of the post-independent communities.

In conclusion, three of these writers are commonly subjected to the socio-cultural and historical background of their respective countries' communities, whose socio-historical impact is significant. By now, all of them are found in the realm of contemporary trends of African literature, where African literature should use psychologically strong characters that can confront socio-political problems of their countries. Along with this, the characters must also be good at signposting solutions for the socio-political predicaments that post-independent societies have faced. Therefore, the socio-historical movements and the cultural dynamics of the continent are the main backdrops for the contemporary African novels. In this regard, national allegory as a critical tool of analysis for postcolonial novels is appropriate because it primarily deals with the national culture and history of postcolonial countries. Thus, it sheds light on the role of literature in postcolonial society.

Recommendations

National allegories are important literary strategies to reflect the complexities of national identity, culture and history of the postcolonial world. Despite the idea of national allegory emerged and was popularized by Fredric Jameson and his successors in the 1980s, it is still a developing critical tool in examining postcolonial culture and society that form the basis of postcolonial literature. One of the main reasons for this is that postcolonial literature itself continues to evolve. It resumes adding new voices and narratives that incorporate diverse experiences and perspectives within the contemporary socio-political circumstances of postcolonial nations. As such, meanings that would be constructed from the interpretation of national allegories may also evolve. Therefore, critical scholars in the area can use this critical tool to examine literary works that depict the contemporary socio-cultural and historical conditions of these nations. This would, in turn, make national allegory a well-developed critical tool to respond to the literary texts of the nations in a viable way.

National allegory can play a dual role. First, it is a mode of writing for postcolonial literature. Hence, it is used to articulate and reflect postcolonial themes and aims. Second, it is also a critical device to evaluate how these themes are reflected and investigate these themes as they are represented in the postcolonial novels. Therefore, it provides a powerful insight to understand the literary texts profoundly. Therefore, by using national allegories, readers can enrich their understanding and enhance their interpretative skills.

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