Addis Ababa University
College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication
Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

A Postcolonial Look at African Literature: Case Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Works

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This work is dedicated to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
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Abstract

Peacefully positioned in the post-independence era of African literature and writing with a salutary derivation of earlier writers but also with a brilliantly creative artistic skill at storytelling, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is one of the leading contemporary writers on the continent. Postcolonial theory emerged as an interrogation tool and with the goal of putting right the harming effects of colonialism which are manifested in the postcolonial condition of postcolonial societies today. The literary branch of this pursuit is where theory meets writer and which is also the concern of this paper. This study attempts to weigh the works of the author from the standpoint of Postcolonial theory and answer the questions: are her works postcolonial and how so? In the analysis chapter, I argue that her fictions are postcolonial and beyond. In so doing, I also show how the works are shot with postcoloniality in the most typical ways such as the issue of hybridity, language politics and uncommitted art as well as attempt to identify innovative techniques used by this author which might form a new trend in postcolonial writing including her extensive use of untranslated Igbo and English transcription of Igbo dialogue.

Chapter One

Background: What is African Literature?

The name African literature is a huge generalization in that the literatures under the banner 'African literature' are numerous and very diverse that each one is a topic of study on its own. African literature houses, only to name a fraction of the whole, Swahili Literature, children's literature, diasporic literature, central African literature, Apartheid literature, Afrikaans literature, Ethiopian literature, Idi Amin literature in Uganda in the 1970s, Francophone literature, Portuguese literature, Indian descent literature and Arabic literature. These related but worlds apart literatures are found under the 'African literature' title complicating various issues of definition, method of study, medium of study and so forth.

Many attempts have been made to define African literature, including the famous Makerere conference of 1962 where scholars coming from different positions on the issue tried to give definition to this growing field of study. At this conference, they tried to answer the questions such as, is African literature that which is written by Africans only? Is it literature *about* Africans only? Is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* classified under African literature? What about an African who writes from and about other locations? Which languages can carry African literatures? Are sub-Saharan countries only considered African or can literatures from the Arabic-speaking Maghreb regions also be authentically African?

All these and other issues continue to inspire debate. But debate or no debate, African literature continues to grow and gain ground in world literature–African literature here being the widely accepted African literatures in European languages such as English, French and Portuguese. But we should bear in mind that there is also an equally contending definition of African literature which seeks to give primary position to literatures written in African vernacular languages.

When we come to the history of African literature, we find that Africans´ writing in European languages began in the 18th century. Typically, these writings are of slaves/ ex-slaves writing in Africa or from where they were enslaved. Many of such writers (but

interestingly not all) namely, Olaudah Equiano, Quobna Ottobah Cuguano and Johannes Capitein wrote in opposition of slavery and domination. These slave narratives have been found in Africa, the Caribbean, in the New World and other parts of the world.

For many, this might imply an understanding that African literature began in the 18th century but that would be a major misconception. African literature has been around for as long as Africans have existed as societies. The extensive reservoir of oratures and performances, however unfortunate that promoting and studying them poses a huge challenge as they have not been adequately recorded, are what make up centuries of African literature in indigenous languages produced by Africans before the slave trade and before contact with Europe. (But this is not to mean that African languages never developed writing, as there are those that developed writing alphabets in early times including ancient cave engravings in west Africa.) These non-written but told and performed literatures of Africa come from over ten thousand small civilizations and societies that existed all over the continent before the emergence of the nation states as a result of European colonization. (Arowolo 2010; Williams 2003) Africans sustained their literatures and posterity through their vibrant storytelling - stories, legends, folktales and proverbial wisdoms were passed down to generations through the word of mouth. There also existed forms of literature that never fit with established types of literatures in Europe.

Most African literatures found expression in the written form only after European missionaries flooded the continent. With a mission to Christianize (which later turned into a mission to civilize and modernize as we shall see shortly), missionaries of the Anglican church of Britain and the Catholic church of France and Portugal arrived as saviors of 'poor black Africans'. They built churches which later opened schools which taught in European and local languages. These missionary schools teaching in European languages realized and made use of the power of literature to acculturate. As Gikandi puts it, "It was not unusual for colonial headmasters to argue that Shakespeare and Moliere were more important than scientists and inventors" (2003: 124).Through these schools, European literature was indelibly introduced into Africa as the model of literature which future African writers and poets were to emulate. The British promoted the likes of Shakespeare and the French of

Moliere, making these figures the standard against which African literary productions were to be measured. Apart from educating Africans in this manner, missionaries also carried out projects that were going to leave long-lasting effects on what was to become 'modern' African literature. According to Gikandi, (ibid.) they set up printing presses and books shops that galvanized local writing, including translation of the Holy Bible into indigenous languages. African writers started to write in European languages, had their materials printed at the missionary presses and sold at missionary book shops. Some native languages also found standardization, orthography and grammar books with the help of these same missionaries.

By the time European powers had scrambled Africa among themselves in Berlin in 1884 and colonized almost the entire continent, the missionaries had been well-established and were producing students that were literate in European terms. Missionaries in the continent supported the colonization project as they saw it as a well-prescribed modernizing and civilizing project to the 'primitive', 'barbaric' and 'uncultured' societies they were in. The late 19th century and early 20th century saw the opening of some of the major colonial universities in Africa such as Makerere University in Uganda, the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and the University of Ghana. These higher level education institutes made possible the printing of serialized stories by African writers and further nurtured young Africans in European literatures. Thus, African literature became institutionalized and started being studied as such after the 1950s. This was also when it became "the latest addition to global literary culture." (Gikandi2003:xi)

As we have seen above, the slave trade and colonization in Africa were the course of events that fundamentally affected the nature, language, theme and purpose of modern African literatures. A continent that used to be dominated by storytellers which told, in native tongues, moral stories to children, legends of past heroes, told and performed autobiographies (still the term autobiography falls short of explaining the African type said here) were replaced by written literatures, predominantly in European languages, that mourned the lost culture of ancient African societies, literatures that resisted and hated colonization, literatures that supported and mobilized independence movements or anti-

colonial and nationalist writing which we will see in the next section, literatures that became disillusioned with post-independence African reality and to this day, literatures that lament the existing socio-economic problems of Africa in connection to the developed world. Indeed, African literature is authoritative and rich in its socio-economic elements that even outside disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology and sociology studies on Africa extensively refer to it for data.

In other words, pre-slavery or pre-colonization Africa had literature that did not, at least not on a racial and continental level, deal with issues of subalternity. During the slave trade from the 16thto the 19th century, African literatures continued with non-resistance themes alongside some slave narratives. Beginning with late 19th century, African writers' issues became resistance, colonization and the glamorizing of pre-colonial Africa as in the case of Negritude. Like Achebe said, African literature was to show that Africans had a beautiful, deep and valuable philosophy and culture before Europeans shown one to them. In the 1950 and 1960s, African literatures supported independence movements but soon began to be disillusioned by the fruitlessness of independence. In the 1970s, they wrote about the post-independence trauma as well as other national problems which were more or less all caused by the experience of colonization and its aftermath - globalization. They also wrote prescriptive (sometimes Socialist views emanating from Kwame Nkrumah) writings to the new independent nations. During this period, many writers faced imprisonment or harassment by their states for their works and some also had to go in exile to western countries. In the 1980s and 1990s, Africans were writing from the orientation of postcoloniality and their writings were becoming more 'global' but still narrated the African problem. All in all, one can say that domination and colonization were the key turning points in what is understood by African literature

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to understand that the modern African literature has no relevance or reliance on the old traditional literature. The latter has served as an important background against which modern African literature flourished and it has indeed lent its words, techniques, customs and style to modern African literature.

- **Anti-colonial and Nationalist Writing**

Anti-colonialism and nationalism are important tenets and pillars in the study of African literature. They are really two sides of a coin as one entails the other. Like said above, the nation states in Africa were products of the colonial period, when borders were drawn where borders didn't exist before, sometimes dividing societies into two and sometimes putting together societies that did not belong together. However, when Africans began anti-colonial movements, they did so by reinforcing and capitalizing (perhaps uncritically) on the notion of nation handed down to them by colonizers. In fact, this nationalism was oftentimes beyond the nation and even continental. Examples of this are the many pan-African movements that rose in the continent and elsewhere such as Negritude, Ethiopianism and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Negritude, while it is primarily a nationalist (black race-wide) movement, it could also be understood as an anti-colonial energy inspired by the cultural and racial colonization in Africa, the US and the Caribbean. Its celebration of African values, black aesthetics and moral has fueled anti-colonial sentiments in the continent. Furthermore, Sedar Senghor, one of the architects of negritude, has himself turned to politics when he became the first president of free Senegal.

Coming to anti-colonial or nationalist writing within African literature, we see that these two have been intertwined at many occasions. Right before decolonization, writers of modern African literature have produced a large body of anti-colonial and nationalist writing that matched the time's zeitgeist. In this period, African writers wrote about the evils of colonialism and depicted the aggressed masses of their nations and black Africa in general. This was however, soon to change in the post-independence era. As Adebayo Williams puts it, the literature of this period "was no longer a question of how colonialism ruined Africa, but of how African leaders aborted the great hopes and expectations of indigenous rule." (2003: 359) Other than negritude, another manifestation of anti-colonialism and nationalism in African literature is the notion of 'the novelist as a teacher' headed by Chinua Achebe. This mainstream model of criticism of African literature which promoted the social function literature should play, which we will see in better detail later, has high anti-colonial stakes embedded in its intention. Even in the 1970s, when

independence had been gained and this notion was still popular, it was maintained in, nationalistically, dealing with the post-independence illusion.

Introduction: Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is one of the most recent developments in the evolution of philosophical and cultural theories. It emerged in the later part of the twentieth century; a decade or so after most formerly colonized parts of the world gained their political independence mostly through freedom movements. This nationalism (which motivated peoples to fight for their independence) was shared by nations across continents but the embitterment of these first-generation freedom fighters is different from the less nationalistic, less emotion-driven academic critique of the very notion of colonization that Postcolonial theory embarked upon. Postcolonial theory is therefore, an organized body of inquiry into the colonial past. Made possible by the non-urgency of the activity, it is a calm, objective revisiting of the colonial experience with the aim of critically and deconstructively reflecting upon its ambivalence, its discourse and its legacy as well as a search for ways forward.

According to Leela Gandhi (1998), postcoloniality is a situation that occurs due to the collective suppression of the colonial experience in the minds of formerly colonized peoples. This suppression or 'self-willed amnesia' as she calls it, was the colonized's mechanism of checking the persistence of mental colonization after independence. Postcolonial intellectuals or intellectuals studying the postcolonial are, then, able to remember colonialism as they are a step away from this amnesiac generation and are therefore in a non-urgent position to study and diagnose it as the root cause of the continued marginality colonized people suffer from as well as what essentially holds the key to recovery. In other words, they are the beginning of Albert Memmi's 'new man' of his description below,

> And the day oppression ceases, the new man is supposed to emerge before our eyes immediately. Now I do not like to say so, but I must, since decolonization has demonstrated it; this is not the way it happens. The colonized lives for a long time before we see that really new man.(Cited in Ghandi 1998: 6)

This new man clearly is at a relatively better luxury to contemplate the colonial experience and reveal its underpinnings as well as find more effective mechanisms of mitigating the negative heritage of colonization than suppressing it.

Before we venture further in talking about Postcolonial theory, let me first clarify the temporal specifics of colonialism and the decolonization moment. Generally speaking, European colonialism refers to the period of time when imperialist western countries such as England, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany and Italy travelled distances to politically, economically and mentally conquer and colonize civilizations and peoples around the world. In the development of their own nation-states, these European countries invaded foreign places and instituted in them nationhood before the decade of independence in the 1960s. But apart from this, racial slavery that has a much longer history, spanning as extensively as the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, is also in many accounts considered a manifestation of colonization. Somehow similar to this situation is how South Africa was declared independent from colonial rule in 1910 but the country continued to be ruled by white majority settler descendants up until 1994 when the country gained black majority rule. Regarding the decolonization moment or independence, for African countries, it came in the 1960s as a result of many unified national struggles.

Decolonization was a process instigated by the colonized and it had been building up since the very moment of invasion. But more visibly, the struggle for liberation was felt after the First World War took place involving most of the world powers. African soldier returnees, who had fought on their colonizer's side in the war, brought with them the impetus to struggle the enemy at home. In addition, western-educated African intellectuals and elites also supported the liberation movements which at the eve of independence were widespread throughout Africa. From the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya to the Algerian war against French rule and Julius Nyerere's Tanganyika's struggle, the 1960s was a time of Africa's reclaiming her land from the hands of colonizers. After Ghana first gained independence in 1957, most colonized African countries followed one after the other. Zimbabwe was the last country to gain independence from direct colonial rule in 1980. These times and periods leading up to independence, the sovereignty of states and the official date of independence

when black native statesmen were elected as leaders and colonizers were dislodged, are what are generally considered the moment of decolonization.

However, there are those who debated the legitimacy of such decolonization and if it truly could be called so. Fanon for one, equated decolonization, like Memmi and Ghandi, to the "vertitable creation of new men." (1963: 36) For such postcolonial thinkers, decolonization had to be more radical, mental and not limited to the physical riddance of the colonizer. They were concerned with the psychological legacy of colonization that would still continue in postcolonial societies. For Fanon, this inferior mentality of the colonized could only be eradicated through violence that will invert the existing bipolar dichotomy of the oppressor/oppressed. This violent struggle is to create a radical change in the native's land where the "the last shall be first and the first last." (37) Therefore, he suggests that the decolonization moment is truly a moment - the instant where the tables are turned and "the colonized becomes man." (ibid.) For the sake of argument here, we might say, because this never materialized, because the tables were never turned, at least not in the manner that Fanon suggested, and, post-colonial societies emerged with new, unforeseen characteristics, Postcolonial theory came to the task of studying this new postcolonial condition.

Postcolonial theory is concerned with the secondary, the minor and the subaltern peoples of this world as created and sustained by colonization and imperialism. As it shall be seen in detail in the next section dealing with the history of Postcolonial theory, many theories have conceded their explanation of exactly how this 'subalternity' and subjugation was created and maintained, and to some theorists, why it is also almost impossible to eradicate. But Postcolonial theory is rather more concerned with the *experience* of domination. In Leela Gandhi's words, it is concerned with a certain 'historical condition'; this condition being what is called 'postcoloniality' – the condition of having been colonized. Postcolonial societies are fraught with postcoloniality. This condition is characterized by a history of subjugation including political, cultural and psychological dominion of the humanity of that society by colonial powers through colonial discourse and cultural hegemony. This might seem, like it does to Ahmad, to mean all that is 'non-white, not-Europe' is postcolonial. (1996) However, other mainstream postcolonial proponents argue that postcoloniality

cannot be explained as neatly and generally as this. For them, postcoloniality is a more complex state of being that needs emancipatory measures, a condition that has symptoms that can only be diagnosed and healed through the careful examination of the past.

The beginning of the history of western domination in the world is marked differently by different scholars and theorists use their preferred date of the onset of colonization to the benefit of their argument. For instance, the critic Aijaz Ahmad (1996) likes to support his arguments with claims that colonialism is as old as the Incas, the Ottoman Turks and the Chinese. Such lines of thinking allow for deeming all forms of domination since the beginning of time as well as most contemporary of times as colonization. While obvious instances of western domination such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the apportionment of Africa in the 1896 Berlin conference are easier to accept, less-obvious or harder to accept could be US's colonization by the British (or the fact that the US was once a colony), Australia's colonization by the British and even, close to the precincts of the present research, Eritrean liberation fighters have claimed the word 'colonization' to explain Ethiopia's former relationship with that country.

This loose temporal demarcation of the period of colonization which sometimes seems to include everything and everyone, inevitably creates a problem related with material for study. Materials of which period and which regions are truly colonial and therefore can be profitable to postcolonial probing? Despite such debate of when colonization began or which societies can be rightly categorized as colonial, Postcolonial theory has surely continued its mandate to study the most subjugated of societies that still continue to be subjugated and marginalized by imperial powers. In other words, even if the fact that the US is, strictly speaking, a postcolonial society as it shares the history of having been colonized (and although it has emerged into an imperialist state itself) is one that is hard to accept, many countries in Africa, for instance, that still suffer from the legacy of colonization have a lot to benefit from the arguments of Postcolonial theory. In general, after centuries of domination and being treaded upon, non-European or non-western countries of the world seem to be finally finding a voice in Postcolonial theory that says, "We are human too!"

Here, it would be a misconception to think of Postcolonial thinking as only or mainly a counteractive force of victimized formerly-colonized peoples of the world. Postcolonial theory is also importantly concerned with making a positive turn in the history of the human race by trying to see to the "humanity-in-the making, the humanity that will emerge once the colonial figures of the inhuman and of racial difference have been swept away" (Mbembe 1992: 2) Mbembe adds, "postcolonial thinking, the critique of European humanism and universalism, is not an end in itself. It is carried out with the aim of paving the way for an enquiry into the possibility of a politics of the fellow–creature" although it is faced with the difficulty of "organizing…in the service of the resistance of the dominated without…falling into the trap of racialization and race glorification." (3)

- **A Brief History of Postcolonial theory**

Although Postcolonial theory emerged in the form that it exists today only in the late 1970s, the condition it studies (postcoloniality or marginality) began in BC times. In outlining its geneology, Leela Gandhi takes us back to Ciceroean times, where Cicero's privileging of 'letters' or literary knowledge over all other knowledges, to the extent of his concession that the statesmen should also be in possession of such knowledge to effectively lead states, was highly reflected in his time's *Studia Humanitatis.* This was later invoked by Renaissance fathers such as Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca) who planted humanism that is based on the advancing of literary knowledge over that of the Middle Ages' natural science focus. When he and other Italian philosophers retrieved letters of classical times from European monasteries and based their humanism on that reading, Cicero's favor to literary studies was reiterated in Renaissance humanism and with that also continued the notion of the perfect man who is literate in 'letters' deserving statesmanship.

With such otherwise well-meaning beginnings, the roots of secondary knowledges and secondary humanity started springing in European history of humanism. Petrarch and his contemporaries' privileging of literary studies, however, was dissipated by the Enlightenment thinkers. The focus that had been given to the 'human arts' during

fourteenth century Renaissance shifted into a focus on reason, objectivity and science in seventeenth century Enlightenment with powerful personalities such as Immanuel Kant, John Locke, Voltaire and Montesquieu. This age of reason insisted on reason as the sole premise to acquiring knowledge. Physics, mathematics, technology, medicine and psychology all grew in this era of scienticity. This 'reasonable' move away from what was to Enlightenment scholars, unexplainably abstract, traditional, unintellectual and primitive, found favor throughout Europe and was seen as the torchlight towards technical and spiritual advancement. This trust in the absoluteness of reason as the way to knowing, led Kant to write the following words which Poststructuralists will later say are too sweeping a statement. He said Enlightenment (or Reason) is "Mankind's final coming of age, the emancipation of the human consciousness from an immature state of ignorance and error." (1784, Wikipedia)

Mitchel Foucault, the poststructuralist French philosopher, reacted to Kant's enlightenment decree with a reaction that could also be befitting to Renaissance proponents as well as the Ciceroean literary vantage point, by saying,

> A…difficulty appears here in Kant's text, in his use of the word 'mankind', *Menschheit*. The importance of this word in the Kantian conception of history is well known. Are we to understand that the entire human race is caught up in the process of Enlightenment? In that case, we must imagine Enlightenment as a historical change that affects the political and social existence of all people on the face of the earth. Or are we to understand that it involves a change affecting what constitutes the humanity of human beings? (Cited by Norris 1997: 167)

With such a disturbing question, the grand Enlightenment notion of reason as the only salvager of the immaturity of 'unreasonable' ways (or the 'childhood' in the childhood vs. adulthood bipolar) is questioned. This tendency of Enlightenment to homogenize all of humanity with (European) reason as its single savior, made its argument defenseless in the interrogation by the Other. The Other questioned, what about knowledges acquired outside (European) reason? What about other ways of coming to know? What about other ways of being mature; human? As the postcolonial Other came to answer the questions for himself,

he came to know that in the face of European humanism, by the parameters set by European civilization, he is not human.

Through the doors opened by Poststructuralism's criticisms of western civilization, burgeoned in Postcolonial studies and Postcolonial theory. Again when we talk about the emergence of Postcolonial theory, we are simply referring to the academic organization of postcolonial thinkers and their finding a voice in the intellectual world. Because the real emergence of Postcolonial thinking, as Mbembe has it, goes back to the very onset of anti-colonial struggles. "Postcolonial theory derives both from anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles on the one hand, and from the heritage of western philosophy and of the disciplines that constitute the European humanities on the other" (1992:1).

The next section will highlight the inauguration of Postcolonial theory into existence with the publishing of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Although there are other Postcolonial figures such as Fanon and Mahatma Gandhi who precede Said's *Orientalism*, theirs was a cultural activism focused fanatically on dislodging western cultural hegemony from colonized peoples. Somewhat differently, Said's writing was a more academic theorizing of "imperialism/colonialism as the epistemological and cultural attitude which accompanies the curious habit of dominating" with the intention of "unmasking the ideological disguises of imperialism."(Gandhi 1998)

- **Edward Said and his *Orientalism***

Said began his research of what he calls the 'Orientalizing project of the west' (the west here being mainly England, France and lately, the US) with the postulation that "as much as the west itself, the Orient [mainly the middle east] is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West." (Said 1971: 23) Said seems to be suggesting that there are two Orients. The real Orient as it exists to be known by its own parameters of consciousness and knowing and the second Orient, the Orient created by and through the above mentioned 'tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary' of the west.

While his work, as a byproduct, offers an opportunity for the Orient to emancipate himself from the imposition of his imposed definition, it is primarily concerned with uncovering "the internal consistency of the ideas about the Orient despite, beyond and lack thereof of correspondence with the 'real' Orient". A second key postulation in his book is that the Orientalizing project is essentially made possible because of the hierarchy of power in which the west was atop. In his words, the occident orientalized the Orient because "it could*"* (25) One source of this power to orientalize can be said to have come from the west's wealthier status. A third claim of *Orientalism* is that "western consciousness" which sustains itself through its bipolarity with the Orient [a bipolar which privileges the west with positive attributes] has come to be the prevailing world view. He says that the orientalizing project which did not come out of thin air but had substantial "material investment" that made to make it a cohesive idea, enabled it to be the overarching body of reference under which orientalists and oriental people themselves came to explain the Orient. (24) In conclusion, what Said has done in this work, in Mbembe's words, is to show that "the colonial project was not reducible to a simple military-economic system" but a domination drawn along the lines of race and power which is also why the Marxist theory failed to explain the postcolonial. (6)

- **Criticisms to Postcolonial theory**

Like almost every other theory, Postcolonial theory has also sustained a considerable amount of criticism. Critics include Marxists, subaltern writers and black intellectual history writers who attacked different aspects of the theory. One prominent voice in the questioning of Postcolonial theory is the self-criticism of Gayatri Spivak. While a major Postcolonial theorist herself, she agrees that the very act of studying the third world from the first world might be a reassertion of the first world's 'centerness' and the marginality of the third world. She concedes that these subaltern studies located in the 'center' cannot possibly be a selfless act on the part of the west but that the only reason the west is making room for the margin is for the interest of further objectifying the third world.

A critique that is reiterated by many scholars, and one which is truly concerning is the issue of western 'third-worldism'. Marxists such as Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad have presented arguments which question the very need for such a discipline if it's not only to benefit the third world intellectuals who migrate to western universities wearing the 'representative of the native' cloak. Indeed Dirlik was being sarcastic as he says, "Postcolonial theory happened when third world intellectuals arrived in first-world academe." (1996: 282)This spatial removal of postcolonial intellectuals from where the real postcolonial realities exist on the ground, has raised protests that these intellectuals are merely engaging in philosophical mental flights "at the cost of social agency" (Gandhi 1998: 57)

But Ahmad's reservation with Postcolonial theory goes beyond the location of practice and more importantly on the fact that postcoloniality is too homogenizing a label that can be attached to all societies that have been colonized. The reason why the fact that the US and Kenya for instance, are both former colonies of the British is unsettling, is because, Ahmad contends, it is not subjection to colonization that makes one 'postcolonial' (to call upon all the characteristics of what it means to be postcolonial) but the fact that he/she was subjected to imperialist hegemony. Ahmad seems to be suggesting that instead of the colonial/postcolonial dichotomy, the capitalist/proletariat division is more explaining to this condition which to Marxists, is a condition that has existed since the beginning of human race and hence does not require Postcolonial theory to explain it.

Indeed the argument Ahmad(1996) calls upon to support his Marxist views which says that some two-thirds of the population in sub-Saharan Africa today are said to be living below the living standards of the colonial period can also be demonstrated in the case of Ethiopia which is suffering very similar economic challenges as other African states as well as facing the effects of neocolonialism, all while Ethiopia has never been colonized.

Anthony Bogues raises the concern that Postcolonial studies present critiques of the hegemony of western knowledge, and that they do so themselves grounded in and armed with western philosophy. This "internal" resistance, he contends, repeats the western error of leaving out or dismissing indigenous black intellectual traditions. He asks,

> What do those who were 'outside', who have been 'objects amongst objects' have to say? What are their discursive practices, and how should we study them? Do they form an intellectual tradition that we need to recognize and then critically engage? Finally can we lump the discursive practices of these thinkers only in the category of the Postcolonial?(2003: 3)

Perhaps there is a lesson to be learnt from the fact that African literatures cannot be expounded in American/European literary periods and theories such as Classicism, Romanticism, Victorian and so forth but only with continental parameters that consider Africa's history and literary culture. Likewise, it seems, Black or other non-European conditions of 'postcoloniality' also require to be addressed with native approaches grown out of local knowledges.

- **The Author Behind the Texts: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**



The literary landscape which served as a backdrop to the emergence of Adichie as a writer is the one discussed above. She was born in 1977 and raised in post-independence Nigeria with all the literary and social realities of this time directly related to her making as a writer. She produced her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, in 2003, her second and highly celebrated one, *Half of a Yellow Sun* in 2006 and her last collection of short stories, *The Thing Around Your Neck* in 2009. She has received several awards and acclaim for her works including winning the Orange Prize for fiction in 2006 and also being nominated for the Booker prize. All of her published works will be texts to be studied in this paper.

Like many diasporic African writers, Adichie is US-taught, having gained her four degrees from American universities where she has also taught creative writing. Her fictional works have also been published in many journals.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's books, as some of the most recent literary productions on the continent, should be looked at from Postcolonial theory point of view. The author takes nationalistic stances in her feelings about the colonial past of Africa and Nigeria in particular. As her fiction reflects, and she also confirms in interviews, she has a very keen need to resist the historying of Africa by non-African outsiders. She believes the telling of Africa's story should be left to Africans that are by definition in better position to capture and re-present the African psychology. Her works share many characteristics of the modern African novel such as the editorial intrusion of native language and thematic engagement with Africa's social wrongs. Nonetheless, studies should be carried out to uncover if her works have aspects that make them stand out from other African novels/postcolonial literatures which is a matter that will be seen in the analysis chapters of this paper. She obviously enjoys the privilege of writing from and belonging to the most recent generation of modern African writers while her works are grounded in the most traditional of issues and lives of Africans.

Statement of the Problem

Owing to the fact that Adichie is albeit new, a major writer on the African continent today, this study will work to explore if this writer is a postcolonial writer and show the major ways her work can be categorized as postcolonial. It will attempt to arrive at a solid conclusion as to whether Adichie's works are yielding in postcolonial literature studies and if they are pointing to any new trends in postcolonial writing.

Research Questions

The paper will explore and assess the various features of Adichie's works from the stand point of Postcolonial theory. The paper will pursue and its objective focus will be the following research questions.

1. What is the texts' (implicit or explicit) comment on colonialism? How - do the texts imply - colonialism has affected societies and individuals?
2. In what ways do the texts try (if they do) to rectify the ill-representation of Africa in colonial discourse and begin to contribute to the more positive and realistic representation trend of Postcolonialism?
3. What do the texts' language use reveal when evaluated in terms of the existing language politics in African literature?
4. How are the issues of hybridity and globalization reflected in the texts?
5. Where do the texts stand in relation with other 'postcolonial' literatures? Or do they have a standard/are they setting a trend of their own?
6. How is the issue of decolonization addressed in the texts? Does the author suggest measures to be taken towards decolonizing Africa and African minds?

Methodology

This work of research relies highly on the writer's close reading of the selected texts and the simultaneous reading of what constitutes Postcolonial theory in order to arrive at insightful elements and excerpts of the texts that will lead to reliable conclusions in light of Postcolonial theory. Firstly, a comprehensive understanding of Postcolonial theory (which has been demonstrated in the first chapter) will be gained as this is what forms the critical and theoretical underpinning of my investigation. Secondly and concurrently, I will explore the works of Adichie, opening up to the texts as informants to establishing what their main Postcolonial theory topics are that will lead to yielding discussions. Thirdly, I will carry out further readings on these topics and demonstrate it in the conceptual framework. Finally, in awareness of the outlined analytical framework, I shall return to the texts for a critical

engagement geared towards producing findings and analysis that will both enrich Postcolonial theory as well as the interpretation of the author's works.

Objectives of the study

This paper should be seen as an experimentation with Postcolonial theory. The main aim for this paper is to conduct a reading of Postcolonial theory and attempt an application. It will pursue to comprehend the topics in Postcolonial theory and with that understanding, approach the selected texts. The study will also attempt to produce a sound analysis of Adichie's works in light of Postcolonial theory. The paper's specific objective is to answer the individual research questions identified above.

Significance of the Study

This study has some significant contributions to make towards understanding the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from the view point of Postcolonial theory. As some of the newest additions to the African literature scene, her works serve as analysis/research material for the understanding of the latest trends in African literature. In light of criticisms to Postcolonial theory, her works might even offer valuable insight into what Postcolonial theory has failed to explain. As a de-jure postcolonial writer, she enjoys the benefits of writing about Africa's past in hindsight with a conscious enlightenment of Postcolonial issues. As this paper attempts to unlock the ideologies found in these contemporary works of this Nigerian author and do a thorough critique of them from Postcolonial standpoints, an important compilation of information will be reached of the up-to-date inclinations of African literature, the topics of Postcolonial theory and postcolonial literatures. Taking into account the fact that the author's works have not received wide criticism and analysis as one would expect from the international acclaim the author and her works have received, this paper has significant contributions to make towards the same.

Scope of the study

While drawing from the general and wider application of the theory as groundwork for understanding what Postcolonialism is, the paper is interested in arming itself mainly with the literary leanings of Postcolonial theory. The scope of the study of this paper will be limited to the 'postcolonial' aspects of the texts and not of other issues outside that. It may look into topics such as the narratology or style of the texts, but only in ways that lead to finding postcolonial issues unfolding in them. Also, while Adichie as an African female writer can be analyzed from feminist perspectives and even better yet from African feminism perspectives which might have a relation with Postcolonial theory, I shall not go into exploring such perspectives except when it genuinely emerges under the postcolonial reading of her works, nor shall I deal with other established literary criticism theories, as I wish to solely dedicate this analysis to a postcolonial reading and also because the other criticisms should not be done only passing but as a comprehensive works of their own.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

The area of concern in reviewing related literature and works of research is the intersection of Postcolonial theory and Author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. As a relatively new literary figure in Africa, Adichie has not been widely researched by Nigerian, African or other international researchers, and much less by Ethiopian researchers especially in the present institution. Her works have however received some analysis, exploration and criticism in light of various topics in scholarly journals and unpublished dissertations apart from the several magazine articles and reviews.

The overarching trend in the research works on Adichie seems to have stemmed out of issues related with the country of her origin and the issues surrounding it. These include Biafran[1] war narrative studies, Nigerian literature studies, Igbo literature studies and so forth. These were the main preoccupations of Adichie's researchers. One can identify an unfilled gap in the body of research works on this author in the topic of Postcolonial theory as few studies of her works from postcolonial theory standpoint were found and even those either made a postcolonial analysis of characters only and in another case, of the postcolonial gothic setting in *Purple Hibiscus*. This is not to mean that no issues of Postcolonial theory origin were raised and studied in connection to her; postcolonial studies are pervasive and tend to surface in most literary studies of works written in the post-colonial period. Topics related with language politics, hybridity, decolonization and the Other have been touched upon in the reviewed studies although only in a less-focused and single novel-specific manner than this thesis intends to achieve. This study aims to offer a valuable contribution to the body of research works on the author and her works by strictly adhering to the prominent schools in Postcolonial theory and carrying out a blanket application of these theories to all of the three books by the author as well as some of her works unpublished in book form but are available online and in magazines. In so doing, the paper embarks on presenting a general and comprehensive analysis of the author and her literary œuvre in accordance with Postcolonial theory.

Beginning with a few earlier writings on Postcolonial theory alone in relation to literature and certain writers, I shall move into reviewing more relevant and recent scholars' research works.

Boxill, in his article entitled "Commonwealth literature and V.S. Naipaul" concedes part of the literary greatness of Naipaul owes to the fact that he was one of the earliest to challenge the western canon, to dare to write without trying to imitate it and thus spearhead the postcolonial writing trend. He writes that for Naipaul, "it took courage to refer to local names and local customs, because they embarrassed him, convinced as he was that they were second-rate and ridiculous." (1975: 1) This courage, although evident, was hard to come by for Naipaul as he laments that, quoted by Boxill, "Every writer is, in the long run, on his own, but it helps, in the most practical way to have a tradition. The English language was mine; the tradition was not."

Naipaul's bold assertion "The English language [is] mine" may raise questions in language politics topics while offering an insight into the illegitimacy of Commonwealth Literature's umbrella, under which discussion of postcolonial literatures first took place. Naipaul's assertion reflects an affinity and acknowledgement of one's existence under the auspices of Britain. Indeed Kaye explains such half native half Western 'elitism' such as the one in the Commonwealth Literature lot as being occupied by people who are "egoist, victim-exploiters of the system…so that they may more fully benefit from being absorbed by the institutions which uphold the cultural dominance of Europe." (1975: 49)

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, three prominent Australian scholars on postcolonial literary tradition, also prefer the term postcolonial literature over others such as Commonwealth literature. They contend that 'postcolonial literature' is better at addressing "the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and effects of this on contemporary literatures." (1989: 2). According to Ashcroft and company, early postcolonial literatures were dependent on Western canonical works for discourse and material support, and therefore although they had anti-colonial intentions, they were not fully able to "explore their [anti-] imperial potential" because they were produced 'under

imperial license.'(ibid.) If we take this as truth, then it could also be true to say that, given the continued economic dominance of western countries, none of the current 'postcolonial' writers are completely free of being indebted to the west in one way or another in terms of discourse and material support to publish. This might lead us into the issues of negotiating identities. Although Ashcroft et.al. say that "modern postcolonial literatures are unique in that they abrogated the patronage constraining power of the colonizer of their literature and appropriated language for writing for new non-imperial usage," it will be worthwhile to look into if this has really ever happened. (6)

In an article titled "Postcolonial Literature and the Western Literary Canon", John Marx (2004) identifies three characteristics of postcolonial literature. One is that they sought to write against canonical works by recovering ancient traditions. The second is that they revised and critiqued canonical works to the extent of rewriting some of them such as *Heart of Darkness*. The third and possibly most important is that in so doing, postcolonial literatures made continued attempts to obliterate western canon as it was known and re-constructed a new multicultural canon with a broadened horizon of what is understood to be Literature. Marx says that "instead of opposition or revising it from outside, postcolonial literature increasingly defines a new sort of canon from an established position inside its boundaries." (85) This holds true although this might remind us of the fervent Postcolonial theory critiques who deemed this 'fighting from the inside' notion highly negative and subversive to the very cause of surpassing postcoloniality.

From the three books by Adichie, the earlier two, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* are what have received much attention in research. *Purple Hibiscus* has attracted a lot of research in Ideology, *bildungsroman*[2] and third-generation-writers studies, Igbo-English literary studies, household-nation analogical relationship studies and several other topics relating with gender, religion and silence. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, on the other hand has received several studies in relation to its setting during the Biafran War, Women and war studies, as demonstration of characteristics of third-generation (women) Nigerian writers and the use of literature in conflict management issues. Her final book, *The Thing Around Your Neck* is her least researched book, in all probability because it is a recent work published in 2009. The

only work of research (dissertation) I found on this book was carried out on the topic of Stylistics.

To begin with Krishnan, he categorizes the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* as postcolonial and says that such works "seek to make sense of the present tensions and ethnic strife in their country through an interrogation of the past."(2010: 185) However, Krishna's attribution that this novel is postcolonial is based on another interesting typicality or feature of postcolonial literatures which he confirms in his investigation. He argues that postcolonial literatures don't and fail to give readers a good sense of closure in the story (which readers vigilantly expect out of any good read) because of the very nature of what it means to be postcolonial. He says that we are led to conclude that Adichie's work is postcolonial because it lacks closure and this is in turn is due to "the instability and uncertainty of existence in the postcolony" today. (189) Krishnan points to the lack of a proper ending in the story of *Half of a Yellow Sun* where the final fate of an important character in the novel, Kainene, (who disappears at the end of the novel) remaining unknown as an evidence of an atypical way of concluding a novel which can only be found in postcolonial writers and this being due to the lack of closure in their own identity. He explains, "By forcing the text to remain open and unsolvable, questions of history, identity and community asked in the text remain in a constant state of negotiation." (190) or in other words, "By refusing the narrative compulsion of closure and tidy endings, these narratives and their representation of individuals and conflicts highlight the importance of continued negotiation and interrogation necessary in the postcolonial condition." (194)

Another study relating symbolisms in Adichie's texts to deeper, more far-reaching issues is Christopher Ouma's (2007). Ouma contends that the familial silence that is found in the household of Kambili (the protagonist in *Purple Hibiscus*) is a demonstrating example of the national silence in the postcolony. He sees the family in the novel as an 'alternative site for discourse of marginality and can give a …critique of the post-colony' (ii) He says, "If things fell apart in the traditional Igbo kingdom, Adichie seems to imply, they still fall apart decades later in post-colonial Nigeria" (10)

An interesting piece of research work in the arena of language politics is that of Dawson and Larrivée (2010). Their study tries to prove that Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is *beyond* the postcolonial by highlighting on her confident use of an authentically Nigerian English which in *Things Fall Apart* times was used in literatures as the 'pidgin English' spoken only by 'traitors' in colonized societies. Her mainstreaming of Nigerian English (as well as Igbo words) in the novel puts her among the trend-setters. They declare her *post-postcolonial* thanks to her 'fresh' fusion of Igbo, Nigerian English and Standard English. (6) This 'fresh' use of these languages is what leads Dawson and Larrivée to suggest that Adichie is a member of an "emerging literary institution" that is "shak[ing] the Establishment." - the Establishment being the politically committed works of the likes of Achebe and Soyinka. (L. Nkosi cited in Dawson and Larrivée 2010: 5)

In Achebe's works, there's only the Black Igbo speaker and the white English speaker, argue Dawson and Larrivée, whereas in Adichie's, there's the many layers of English knowledge implicating a character's class/status/education and even color, which shows her liberty at taking for granted the 'localness' or "Nigerian-ness" of (Nigerian) English. (5) Furthermore, they detail in considerable depth, instances where Adichie blends Igbo and Nigerian English 'without apologizing'. As one can see in their analysis, Adichie used such 'foreign' expressions sometimes without even italicizing them, offering definition in English or providing a glossary at the end of the book unlike was the case with Achebe. To use John Marx's words, she doesn't "do a 'thick' description of local culture" which "presume[s] a reader unfamiliar with" the locale. (Marx 2004: 84)

A finding somewhat similar to that of Dawson and Larrivée is Anyokwu's (2011) research which deals with the liberal *Igboization* of the new Nigerian Literature. He says that "the Adichian aesthetics points the way to the future of literature in Africa."He praises her following the "pragmatic example" of Achebe in *nativising* Nigerian literature that is "shot" with Igbo. (80)

Moving away from language politics, we find Willem Smit's work (2009) which recounts the coming of the third generation of writers in Nigeria (Africa) and how their own

experience growing up in the post-independence era has affected the way they wrote their *bildungsroman* and how they even created a variant of the European *bildungsroman*. In this study, Smit investigates how this genre was redefined by Nigerian authors and how the process of producing such adolescent character identities as well as the finished characters are very similar, if not identical, to what third generations writers themselves went through. He goes on to say that these third generation writers "challenge social and literary conventions". Similarly, their works "continuously invite being read as national allegories, while just as often problematizing such a reading." (11) At this point, we find Krishnans' findings relevant which concluded that third-generation writing is 'inconclusive' in its story line because of the continued 'inconclusiveness' that surrounds such identities in such nations. Smit also seems to make a similar suggestion in that the third-generation writers' own *bildungsroman* has had problems with nationhood and therefore, so do the *bildungsroman* they write in their books. Moreover, Smit contends that hybrid identities in novels are typical in third-generation writers as they themselves live between Africa and the US or Europe. He says,

> The third-generation transnational novel tends to celebrate cultural hybridity and migrant communities, and to probe the individual's personal negotiation conducted in trying to establish a transnational, hybrid identity. (11)

He suggests that Kambiliis a postcolonial subject as she is negotiating between various identities (native and imported) and therefore is a typical depiction of the third-generation writers. According to Smit, this shift into "probing" into the 'multi-faceted identity' within a single individual from what Achebe and his contemporaries used to probe into only collective 'group identities' is what marks an important step in Nigerian (African) literary history.

More closely related with Postcolonial theory analysis of Adichie's works is Westman's "Postcolonial effects on the Characters of Purple Hibiscus." (2008) Westman's paper "questioned if there were signs of hegemony, hybridity, ambivalence, the Other and mimicry, terms frequently used in postcolonial criticism, in the novel." (2) However, his

paper offered weak description and analysis of the novel with too much reliance on far-fetched ideas of symbolism. His study presented everything white (from bath tubs to mansions) as symbolic of the west while everything black or non-white (including gates and the purple color of the hibiscus in the novel) as of African. At the same time this is not to mean that there is no genuine symbolism in *Purple Hibiscus* and that Westman did not discover and analyze them. It only means that it seemed that Westman read too much into the text and pointed to non-existent symbols at times. Nonetheless, Westman has made some interesting points that are worth mentioning here. He proved that Eugene (Kambili's father in *Purple Hibiscus*) and Grandfather (Kambili's maternal grandfather) are hybrid personalities, that Amaka (Kambili's female cousin) is a naïve nationalist who tries to retain a purely native identity, that Ifeoma (Kambili's aunt) is a realistic hybrid who doesn't try to attain either of her native and modern identities in its purity, that Father Benedict (the English priest who raised Eugene) is a pure white who despises local language and culture, and therefore negative, and finally, that Papa-Nnukwu (Eugene's 'heathen' father) is a pure Black or native while positive, is dying out.

Another excellent point made by Westman is that Eugene "despises everything that is not in sync with the colonizer" and thus he "turns against his own blood" (his father, wife and children) when they behave like the native because he wants to be an "equal to the colonist and to distance himself from the Other" which he sees in his own family. (14)

In conclusion, we have seen that all of the articles and dissertations dealing with Adichie which I have reviewed have not dealt with her exclusively and with Postcolonial theory in focus with the exception of Daniel Westman's work. Even this, like all of the other research works, dealt with a single book by Adichie and never her whole corpus of work. Therefore, we are led to see the significance of this work. What makes this thesis particularly different and a useful contribution is its width of scope in theory as well as the study material. Daniel Westman's work dealt only with the characters in *Purple Hibsicus*, while this study aims to consider all elements of fiction in all the works written by Adichie to date.

[1] The Biafran war (read Bee-afra) was a Nigerian civil war from 1967-1970 in which the south eastern Igbo region tried to secede from the country but was defeated.

[2]Bildunsgroman is an originally German word which is defined as a narrative account of the coming of age of a young person and their transition into a more mature person able to cope with the real world.

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework of Analysis

Language Politics in Post-colonial African Literature

- **Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Conviction**

Ngugi Wa Thiong'O[3] has for long argued for the abandonment of European languages in African literature and especially so in his book *Decolonizing the Mind: Language Politics in African Literature.*"This book is part of a continuing debate all over the continent about the destiny of Africa" he writes in the preface. (1986:1)

This book comes from highly anti-imperial sentiments and holds the view that imperialism is the root of all problems in Africa. Ngugi writes out these views in extremist words without feeling the need to gloss his language with the civility of academic arguments as can be seen in his statement "Imperialism, led by the USA, presents the struggling peoples of the earth with the ultimatum: accept theft or death" or another one,

> The freedom for western finance capital and for the vast transnational monopolies under its umbrella to continue stealing from countries and people of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Polynesia is today protected by conventional and nuclear weapons. (3)

Coming back to the topic at hand, Ngugi continues, "But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb" of which of course language is part and parcel. (3) He continues,

> Berlin in 1884 saw the division of Africa into the different languages of the European powers. African countries, as colonies and even today as neo-colonies, came to be defined and to define themselves in terms of the languages of Europe. (4)

Ngugi begins his pro-vernacular language African literature argument with an in-depth analysis of language and its nature that makes it especially profitable to the colonial project of cultural colonization. Firstly, he explains the two faces to a language, one as "a means of communication" and another as "a carrier of culture." (13) Language as a means of

communication facilitates production and development, and allows for humans to relate and communicate with one another. He likens language to a hand in the man-nature interaction. This written and spoken language as a means of communication is the day-to-day tool of operation. When we come to language as a carrier of culture, he says that the repetition of day to day activities in this language form a culture over time. Attitudes, values; moral, aesthetic and ethical issues in a society are laid down as culture in the passage of time and communicated down to generations through every day language. Therefore, he contends that "Culture is a product of the history which it in turn reflects." This culture is "transmit[ted] or impart[ed] to the child...through the spoken and written language." (17) "Images of the world and reality" of a society are passed down to posterity through the 'hand' of language. So, what colonization did is destroy both language as a means of communication for daily life and language as a carrier of culture. At this point, Ngugi relates a personal account of his childhood where a child found speaking Gikuyu in the colonial school was flogged, thereby associating native languages with shame and punishment in the tender minds of children. When these children were forced to speak English in school but went home to their 'illiterate' family and community to continue to interact in Gikuyu, the "harmony" between their language of communication and language of intellect was "broken". "Learning for a colonial child, became a cerebral activity and not an emotionally-felt experience" He argues. (ibid.)

From this we understand what he intends to establish when he argues, "Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world." (16) He is fundamentally saying that because literature carries culture, what foreign European literatures did to Africa is impose on it the foreign European culture. When this happens, Ngugi tells us, the African child begins the insidious act of seeing himself and his place in the world through the lens of Europe and European literature. And he continues,

> But obviously it was worse when the colonial child was exposed to images of his world as mirrored in the written languages of his coloniser. Where his own native languages were associated…with low status, humiliation, corporal punishment¸ slow-footed intelligence and ability or downright

> stupidity, non-intelligibility and barbarism, this was reinforced by the world he met in the works of such geniuses of racism as Rider Haggard or a Nicolas Monsarrat; not to mention the pronouncement of some of the giants of western intellectual and political establishment, such as Hume ('…the negro is naturally inferior to the whites…'), Thomas Jefferson (… 'the blacks…are inferior to the whites on the endowments of both body and mind…'), or Hegel with his Africa comparable to a land of childhood still enveloped in the dark mantle of the night as far as the development of self-conscious history was concerned. (18)

Ngugi's concern is obvious, that the second pitfall for the African child studying European literature was that he would encounter such racist outlooks inscribed in the very literatures given to him, and ones he accepted, as first-rate.

African writers who write in English and other European languages, which according to him are producers of the so-called 'Afro-European literature', are part of the "petty-bourgeoisies/comprador bourgeoisie that became the scholarly industry of writers who explained Africa to the world." This to him had "strengthened rather than weakened the economic links with imperialism in what was clearly a neo-colonial arrangement." With this Ngugi begins his attack on 'Afro-European' writers calling them "docile intellectuals" who suffered from "bastardization" citing David Diop. He repeats Diop's powerful assertion that "if Africa was truly independent, African writers would instinctively write in native languages rather than in European." (25)

But because they are suffering from a mental condition of "torn-between-two-worlds-facedness', he argues that they infest their fictional characters with the same issues. "This European language-speaking peasantry and working class, existing only in novels and dramas, was at times invested with the vacillating mentality, the evasive self-contemplation, the existential anguished human condition, or the man-torn-between-two-worlds-facedness of the petty-bourgeoisie" (22)when they had no such issues in reality. "No, the peasantry had no complexes about their languages" he says and that

> "In fact, when the peasantry and the working class were compelled by necessity or history to adopt the language of the master, they Africanized it without any of the

> respect for its ancestory shown by Senghor and Achebe, so totally as to have created new African languages, like Krio in Sierra Leone or Pidgin in Nigeria..." (23)

Ngugi does adopt a condescending tone to the group of writers he calls 'petty-bourgeoisie'. He makes them second-rate oppressors of African peoples while putting 'true Africans' such as peasants, working class and native language writers on a pedestal. He equals them with traitor African puppet politicians when he asks "what is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages?" (26) He calls on all Kenyan and African writers to return to writing in native-languages and future African literature conferences to dwell on this issue of grave importance.

Ngugifinally discusses his practicing of what he preaches in his return to Gikuyu novel writing through his work translated as *Devil on the Cross*. He relates, with admirable power and beauty, the commercial, relevance and acceptability success of *Devil on the Cross* in Kenya.

Ngugi is not new to being a realist as we remember his argumentative piece written with Taban Lo Liyong and Owuor Anyumba titled 'On the Abolition of the English Department' which called for the same. They argued for the drastic move of incorporating in school curriculums African literatures written in the different native languages and for Africans to study them first (through the medium of translation) before 'emanating' from the African center outwards to meet other European and foreign literatures on the periphery.

- **Chinua Achebe's Appropriation**

Apart from being the leading symbol of Post-colonial modern African literature, Chinua Achebe is also a well-established critic with several essays and articles published including his much-quoted collection of essays *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. (1975)

Achebe was in time to also comment on the goings on of language politics in African literature beginning in the early 1960s. Achebe takes almost the exact opposite position to Ngugi's regarding African writers' use of English (or other European languages). He doesn't

deny that colonialism had its evils, including factors "that[have] conspired to place English in the position of national language in many parts of Africa", (1997: 344) but he is not prepared to deem the English language one such evil. On the contrary, he believes that English was a tool, a positive inheritance that came in the evil 'package' of colonialism. He contends, "But on the whole, it [colonialism] did bring together many peoples that had previously gone their several ways, and it gave them a language with which to talk to one another." (344) For him, present day African nations have no option but to tame and make one's own the language(s) imposed upon the continent's literature.

He begins to argue for the inevitable, saying, "There are not many countries in Africa today where you could abolish the language of the erstwhile colonial powers and still retain the facility for mutual communication," (ibid.) for which problem Ngugi has little to offer except the facility of translation. Indeed, according to Chinua, authors who write in the colonizer's language are not victim-exploiters like Kaye suggested. “They are by-products of the same process that made the new nation-states of Africa." (344)

Coming back to non-English African texts, Chinua laments "Where am I to find the time to learn the half dozen or so Nigerian languages, each of which can sustain a literature?" and the Swahili books he keeps and the East African writers he couldn't connect with because of their literature written in African languages he does not speak. "I am afraid it cannot be done." He regrets. And probably much to Ngugi's dislike suggests, "These [native] languages will just have to develop as tributaries to feed the one central language enjoying nationwide currency." (345)

Achebe subscribes to what has been called, chiefly by Ashcroft et al. (1989), the Appropriation of English, the turning of Standard English into many 'englishes.' He argues, "The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use." (1997: 347) To him, to appropriate is to write in an english "which is at once universal and able to carry his [the African's] peculiar experience." In describing the specific techniques of making English 'submit to many different kinds of (African) use', Achebe cites James Baldwin who said,

> Perhaps [English] was not my own because I had never attempted to use it, had

> only learned to imitate it. If this were so, then it might be made to bear the burden of my experience if I could find the stamina to challenge it, and me, to such a test. (Cited in Achebe 1997: 349)

Indeed Achebe practices and encourages such appropriation of English and making it tell the unique African experience. This skill at appropriation he suggests is a new site of creativity for African writers and thus comparable. He says, "I have in mind here the writer who has something new, something different to say. The nondescript writer has little to tell us, anyway, so he might as well tell it in conventional language and get it over with." (347) He praises the writer who grapples with the English language in such manner creates a new breed of African literature. He suggests that a true writer has the artistic instinct to undertake this task while the issue of native language vs. colonizer's language for lay people may materialize differently. He explains,

> Of course it is true that the vast majority of people are happier with their first language than with any other. But then the majority of people are not writers. We do have enough examples of writers who have performed the feat of writing effectively in a second language. (346)

In the appropriation of English, Achebe is not alone but has many explicit and implicit followers who have appropriated English and subdued it to their national literatures. Ezekiel Mphahlele, Sedar Senghor, Gabriel Okara, Derek Walcott and Adichie herself as well as a number of other African, West Indian, Indian writers who are in support of appropriated English are only few examples.

But once the acceptance of English in African literature was widespread, another sort of disagreement occurred in relation to what seems to be the *degree* of appropriation that should be admissible. The three scholars, called the 'troika', Jemie Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike in an article called *Decolonization of African Literature*c alled for a return to pre-colonial African aesthetics and imagery in the language of modern-day African literature. While they commended writers like Achebe who incorporated rich Nigerian landscape, folktales and proverbs in their works as well as wrote in simple, ‘African-style’ language, they criticized others like Soyinka for a “Poundian allusiveness”, “Eliotesque obscurantism" and “Hopkin’s Disease” seen in their writing.

(Cited inAnyokwu2011: 81) They argued, in a view that seems to also subscribe to cultural essentialism, for what Soyinka rephrased as an "African poetic landscape...of elephants, beggars, calabashes, serpents, pumpkins, baskets, towncriers, iron bells, slit drums, iron masks, snakes, squirrels...a landscape portrayed with native eyes to which airplanes naturally appear as iron birds." (Cited in Soyinka 1975: 38) Soyinka's response in his article entitled 'Neo-Tarzanism: the Poetics of Pseudo-tradition' was one filled with sarcastic tones towards the troika as we shall see next.

- **Wole Soyinka's Aesthetics**

Soyinka responded to the troika's criticism with a complete rejection of their arguments. "I am not at all certain how this proves more acceptable than the traditional Hollywood image of the pop-eyed African in the jungle- "Bwana, bwana me see big iron bird". (38) He wrote to their suggestion of the above mentioned 'authentic African' landscape to be moved to "the dramatic center of poetry." He blamed Chinweizu and the other two critics as lacking thorough familiarity with their subject matter - African poetry. He wrote, in great enthusiasm, characteristics of pre-colonial African poetry which are in likeness with the modern African poetry the troika dismissed as too introspectively private and obscure. He makes an interesting and possibly little-known point about an Mbari-house sculptor of Africa who isolates himself away from contact with his society in order to receive divine inspiration for his work which is later consumed by the society. He implores,

> No, for many critics, the concept of individual experimentation which contributes to what may be judged as a social achievement - is anathema. Some have even gone so far as to declare, solemnly and categorically, that the concept of the individual performer or creativity is alien to African traditions. This, for a culture whose poetry constantly celebrates outstanding creative talents in every art-form, whose oral history of art records most faithfully the achievements of carvers and griots, whose art criticism, alive till today distinguishes, between the technique and refinements of one smelter and another, between one father and a son in the same line of profession!(43)

Coming to the issue of the position of European languages in African literature, by criticizing their underdeveloped stand in the appropriation of English lot, Soyinka gives us useful insight into his own logic related with the syncretistic nature of present day African societies behind his appropriation of the English language.

> The troika pronounce themselves willing to accomodate the use of English in African literature but fail to understand that language is shaped by a number of factors including the religious one. English, like other European languages, is impregnated by centuries of service as a christian vehicle. Compound that with the fact that in those African countries where English (or French, Spanish, Portuguese) is used, the christian religious fact has become an organic reality. The radio carries hours of religious instruction, services, admonitions; the newspapers answer questions in special columns for the confused faithful; each national event is celebrated by the ceremony of religious worship; the bible (and the koran) are basic equipment for the school-boy; in times of national crisis - drought, civil conflict etc. etc. - days of national prayer are declared and all available media given over to the propulsion of indigenous anguish to alien gods. To pretend therefore that curses pronounced in the 'anathemisation' idiom of Lenten service on an occasion which the troika itself declares 'this most important national occasion' is not a most effective way of transmitting, to such an audience, a direct condemnation of a national impiety denotes either ignorance of the social reality of that environment or a stiff-necked defence of an arbitrarily adopted position.(42)

The Theory of Hybridity

The issue and term of hybridity in post-colonial societies has much relation with the problematics of nationhood and nationalism after independence. Fanon, Said, Gandhi and Parry have it that while nationalism was a sentiment fruitfully harnessed in the anti-colonial struggle, it will not be as useful in postcolonial times as it gets in the way of a greater, global harmony. Anti-colonial nationalism needs to be “transitional and transitory” leading to an “ethical and politically enlightened global community” as Gandhi puts it. (1998:123)

By the same token that makes it counteractive in the pursuit of global harmony; nationalism is problematic in that it implies pure origins, pure identities or in other words, cultural essentialism. According to Gandhi, for Fanon, national consciousness is not equal to nationalism as the latter was a tool and the earlier a possible threat. As Stuart Hall rightly calls it, nationalism was only and needs to move forward from being a "necessary fiction" or 'strategic essentialism." (Cited in Gandhi 1989:124)

Moving away from the impasse of nationalism in the post-colonial and exploring for a possible solution, we find the term postnationalism. Postnationalism assumes that colonialism was mutually transforming for both the colonizer and the colonized and then building on this positive note, seeks to join global forces to fighting human bondage anywhere and everywhere. Postnationalism is expected to "produce a postcolonial ethic, devoted to the task of imagining an inter-civilizational alliance against institutionalized suffering and oppression" that is occurring due to globalization. (Gandhi 1998: 125). This call for a global ethic reminds us of Foucault's agreement regarding the fact that a simple inversion of dominated knowledge systems to the level of privilege is a mere repeat of the unjust distribution of power.

> …these fragments of genealogies are no sooner brought to light, that the particular elements of the knowledge that one seeks to disinter are no sooner accredited and put into circulation, than they run the risk of re-codification, of re-colonization. (Cited in Gandhi1998:53)

Postcolonial theorists' favoring of postnationalism is because of the co-option of cultural essentialism by the so-called 'neo-Orientalists' who have invested interest in such an elusive view, much the same way Soyinka accused the troika of having. "The trouble is that, being rather unsure critics and superficial traditionalists, they have wielded that stick with a destructive opportunism rather than with an intelligent concern for poetry," he says of them. (38) Here, one might implore this issue with Ngugi. Is Ngugi (and other like-minded critics) attempting a return to nationalism and therefore anti-postnational in his call for indigenous writing?

All this avoidance of nationhood and nationalism and ethical disciplining towards

postnationalism leads us to the middle ground of hybridity. All the retroactive interrogation of the past that postcolonialism does – it does without racism, cultural essentialism and as a way of progressing towards a global equity in the relationship of peoples hence the allowance of 'multiple nationalities' to exist within a (postcolonial) individual. But Fanon (1965), for one, attributes this hybridity of cultures not to a modern, twenty first century kind of problem, but to the first generation of colonized people who had to resist colonization. He contends that the very anti-colonial struggle seriously mutated colonized cultures and persons that they became "a political object that is new; neither the one, nor the other" in Bhaba's words. (1994: 25) Fanon explains, "The challenging of the very principle of foreign domination brings about essential mutations in the consciousness of the colonized, in the manner in which he perceives the colonizer in his human status in the world." (Cited in Ghandi1998: 30) This statement seems to ruefully also be saying that the colonized man's struggle itself is a confirmation to himself (and the colonizer?) that he is inferior because he had to be defeated in the first place to have to get up and fight.

Therefore, it is safe to say, that the fate of the colonized man to hybridity was determined not in postcolonial times, but at the onset of colonization as that is when anti-colonial struggles began and simultaneously the mutation of the colonized man into a forever 'new entity'. This seems to be what Bhaba is referring to when he says that the hybrid is created in a 'third space' of challenging the colonizer. The native had to step out of his 'settlement' and enter this third space of resistance to meet and confront the west. This idea is also repeated by Mbembe (2008) when he speaks on 'entanglement and concatenation' which he says is a characteristic of postcolonial thinking,

> Colonisation no longer appears as the mechanical and unilateral domination forcing the subjugated into silence and inaction. Quite the reverse…the colonised person is a living, talking, conscious, active individual whose identity arises from a three-pronged movement of violation, erasure and self rewriting. (3)

Hybridity in the current state of things has a much more flowery connotation and is associated with such positive terms as diaspora and migration. Casting the history-laden ramifications of the *postcolonial* label, hybrid individuals who are now 'citizens of the world'

indeed seem befitting of young people's colloquial name for it - 'Poco'. As we shall see in the following chapter, while Adichie's and many other contemporary writers' engagement with hybridity, characters dealing with two contending cultures - African and European, Nigerian and American and so forth – serve as evidence of the situation in reality also being similar, it also might have added to the glorification of the very notion of being a hybrid. Bhaba and other critics indeed have also made hybridity appear contemporary and even trendy in the twenty first century globalized world.

Unfortunately, even hybridity or postnationalism do not seem to be the final answer to the predicament of the postcolonial. They might as well be only *by products* of the search for an answer as they too come with limitations. The big problem with hybridity is that "celebrations of hybridity generally refer to the destabilizing of colonized culture. The west remains the privileged meeting ground for all ostensibly cross-cultural conversations." (Ghandi 1998:136)

The African Post-colonial Novelist as a Teacher

The modern African writer, by some unwritten rule, has been assigned with the role of working for the good of his society through his art. This can be said to have been heightened in the post-colonial period when Africa needed such heroes in its challenging times in the post-independence era.

Achebe for one, has been a prominent and most vocal proponent and exemplar of such role assignation. His words are most telling: "Art for art's sake is just another piece of deodorized dog-shit." (1973: 617) He does not, however, deny attributes of euphoria and creative satisfaction attached to the reading and writing of poetry. He only suggests that art should *also* have a positive utility to offer the society that undoubtedly, in one way or another helped produce it. As he explains,

> Our ancestors created their myths and legends and told their stories for a human purpose (including, no doubt, the excitation of wonder and pure delight)…Their artists lived and moved and had their being in society, and created their works for the good of that society. (ibid.)

But by this 'good' artists are to bring about in their communities, Achebe is not talking about simplistic or naïve functions like the good one finds in 'moral of the story' in a children's story, although he says this could also be a part of it. "I mean good in the sense in which God at the end of each day's work of putting the world together saw that what he had made was good…*Good* in that sense does not mean pretty." (ibid.)

He then expounds, in gentler terms, his statement about Europe's art for art's sake. He argues that the notion of art for art's sake is an artificial, man-made characteristic of art that gave rise long after the human race began producing art within and for a society. By presenting this redeployment of art to the service of one man rather than the society at large as a European enterprise, he suggests that African aesthetics by nature is of the utilitarian kind and that for an African writer to work against this is to suffer from a 'contemporary condition' that may not fit well with a genuine African identity.

The Mbari culture of Igbo related with communal artistic production is also mentioned by him towards a similar argument as that made by Soyinka earlier. He says that the artistic interaction that follows an Mbari house building and display of art performed jointly by 'artists' chosen by a goddess and the society, teaches us two major points. One, that "the making of art is not the exclusive concern of a particular caste or secret society," and two, "there is not rigid barrier between makers of culture and its consumers. Art belongs to all, and is a function of society." So the European brand of art that applauds an artistic production that begins and ends with the artist's seclusion from society, for him, is destructive. He despises the art that 'ignores' society only to come back to it requiring its consumption and appreciation of its work.

While some African writers try to be prophets of the world (Europe and the west) by saving it from this highly individualized and lone art production, others have developed "a near pathological eagerness to contract the sickness of Europe in the horribly mistaken belief that our [Africans'] claim to sophistication is improved thereby." (624)

What Achebe calls European 'sickness' is the human condition that has 'over-reached itself in technical achievement without spiritual growth' which is the matter behind their artists' disregard to the society they produce their art for and which in turn is the main problem

with art for art's sake. And since Africa has not reached this level of 'over-reaching itself in technical achievement' and loss of its 'spiritual growth', it is 'un-African' to write lamenting such a pre-mature misfortune. Although Africa is heading to the same fate as Europe, he argues that we have not yet reached that degree of 'despair' and that the most we can afford for now is to feel 'disappointed.'

Another critic, Ezekiel Mphahlele, while on one hand acknowledges art's function as a service to man, he problematizes it on the other saying that this "unified social function" of art can be difficult to provide as societies are not "homogeneous anymore." But interestingly, he said this only a year after Achebe made the above arguments and it is puzzling how the latter saw and made no mention of such a homogeneity. (1974: 47)

Wole Soyinka assumes a similar position in society which Achebe prescribes regarding the social function of literature. However, after a period of occupation with writing for and with the society however, he asks to be accorded some freedom to write unoccupied, uncommitted 'private' art. He opines,

> It is time also that critics and social commentators alike recognised that the more-committed-than-thou breast-thumping, in all its various forms, has become boring and suspect. Social commitment is a citizen's commitment and embraces equally the carpenter, the mason, the banker, the farmer, the customs officer etc., etc., not forgetting the critic. Yet none of these thousand and one categories of contributors to social progress spends twenty-four hours a day being 'socially committed.' That non-stop mandate is miraculously reserved for the artist alone. It does not matter that the bulk of his total work, his life is devoted to urgent social issues; every posturing critic is privileged to haul out one 'uncommitted' work, wave it aloft, mount the rostrum and bleat: "What is this doing here? How dare this artist define one moment of private reflection?" (1975: 48)

Ashcroft et. al. also make a fresh point worth seriously considering and studying about art for art's sake in postcolonial literatures. They concede that the very circumstances that allowed the creation of postcolonial literatures are highly social and political. Therefore, for

them, it is impossible for postcolonial literatures to take a step outside their enclosing disposition and write as though they occupy one without that. They say that there can be "no art for art's sake in postcolonial literature because the traversal of the text by these [social] conditions becomes so clear and crucial in postcolonial literature that the idea of art existing for its own sake or of literature appealing to some transcendent human experience are both rejected" (1989: 41)

Ashcroft et.al.'s Approach to Postcolonial literatures

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin are three Australian university professors who are extensively published and authoritative around the topic of Postcolonial literatures. Their book titled '*The Empire Writes Back* to the center' after Salman's Rushdie's words, has provided widely accepted assessment of the rise and sustainment of postcolonial literatures as well as models of postcolonial criticism of literature.

Postcolonial theory has been, as have many other cultural theories, highly relevant to the study of literature. This is partly due to the relatively fast and voluminous productions of postcolonial literature in post-independence societies. As their book title suggests, postcolonial literatures are those works of literature written in rejection, appropriation of the central, canonical European literature (and later American literature). The other reason for the ascendance of postcolonial literature to being a point of high focus in postcolonial studies is the view held by critics that the colonial project was made possible mainly through the use of literature to do so. Especially the British are known for aggressive literary washout of indigenous literatures to replace them with the then canonical, British literature in Standard English. Like Said's *Orientalism* and others have shown, post-Renaissance European literature and art were distinctive in their depiction of the non-European Other in ways that were later going to go hand in hand with their colonialism of the same.

Ashcroft et. al. introduce the following four types of critical models for postcolonial literatures - national and regional models (which identify national features of postcolonial literatures), Comparison between regions, Black writing and Models of Hybridty and Syncreticity. (1989) They add that these four models may be employed at a time and/or that

their employment may not be explicit but rather "operate as assumptions within critical practice rather than specific and discrete schools of thought." (15)

They also offer a rather highly subjective but still useful method of demonstrating language appropriation in a text. This is done by contrasting it to a western text. According to them, how contrasting it is, is indicative of the extent [as well as the author's cleverness] in capturing a 'sense of a different place.' We are therefore to ask: how British, Romantic, Victorian, Modernist is/is not a certain postcolonial text?

Aschcroftet. al. are however, most useful in outlining in detail the specific techniques of appropriation of English by postcolonial writers. These techniques are: Glossing, Untranslated words, Interlanguage, Syntactic fusion and, Code-switching and vernacular transcription as we shall see each of them below.

Glossing: is the 'coloring' of a text with foreign words (although they might be translated in brackets or elsewhere), adding ethnographic color or detail and vernacular metaphor. One may also mesh into a text elements representative of the native without rendering them 'different' and sometimes by rendering 'different' that which is Standard but still in all of this the aim would be to attain alterity via appropriation.

Untranslated Words: is best described by the authors as "selective lexical fidelity" (64) where a postcolonial writer seems to be writing in two languages as he also uses words from his native language without translating them in his english text. This, they say, is "a clear signifier of the fact that the language which actually informs the novel is an/Other language" and this in turn forces the reader into an active engagement with the horizons of the culture in which these terms have meaning." (65) Like all other techniques of appropriation, using untranslated words is also a political act because it shows audacity and 'unapologeticness' on the writer's part.

Interlanguage: is an interesting technique which claims that postcolonial writers, most of whom may be learners of the European language as their second language, may develop what might be called a new language in their process of attempting to master the master's language. It is a "genuine and discrete linguistic system employed by learners of a second language." (67) This third language created in the pursuit of a second language is "cohesive

and distinct from both source language and target language."(ibid.) This might also be stretched to suggest that when such writers writing in their second language make a mistake repeatedly, this mistake is not dismissed but harnessed as possibly reflecting the (linguistic) culture found in their native language.

Syntactic Fusion: is the "marrying [of] syntax of the native language to the lexical forms of English." (68)This is used by writers who wish to stay in connection with the 'rhythms of the vernacular voice." (69) Such fusion might include using nouns as verbs, metonymic use of adjectives, using double comparatives as found in native language constructions. West Indian and particularly Caribbean writing is said to be full of this technique which indicates the 'tension' between the two contending structures.

Code switching and Vernacular Transcription: This technique is about the method a writer uses in relation to narration. He might use direct transcription in the vernacular language alone or code switch between english and English within his text. The latter happens when an author 'reports' in standard English but transcribes dialogue in a heavily-appropriated vernacular language. This is also useful in transcribing hybridity of identities in a society by transcribing speech of persons of several contrasting identities.

Outside these models of criticism and techniques of criticism, Ashcroft et.al. encourage text-specific theorizing of literary postcolonial theories while providing basic survey of regional indigenous literary theories that might also be used as spring boards for criticism. Of African indigenous theories, Aschcroft et.al. raise the following seven core topics in African literature as indigenous theories - Negritude, Achebe's appropriation and attribution of a committed social role for the artist/writer, African oral literatures, a return to African/Black traditional aesthetics, a rejection of an African essentialist aesthetics in African literature and the Marxist criticism against elitism and detachment of African writers.

In general, their summary for the postcolonial literary critic are the same as the postcolonial reading that postcolonial writers did in embarking upon producing books after books of postcolonial writing and these are: to uncover colonial writing, rewrite colonial works and also writing that is subversive/diluting to the European canon.

In going back to the issue of language politics in postcolonial (African) to their position on

the issue of using European languages in non European literatures, Ashcroft et.al. clearly are in support of Achebe's appropriation of English as they repeat his argument in saying "english has therefore become an efficient tool for conveying cultural complexity as well as functioning as an inter-regional language." They seem to discourage Ngugi's 'back to native languages' call as they think it "may not extend beyond a reversal of the assumption of privilege" (38) as "syncretist critics argue that even a novel in Bengali and Gikuyu is inevitably a cross-cultural hybrid and that decolonizing projects must recognize this," and "not to do so is to confuse decolonization with the reconstitution of pre-colonial reality" (30) They replace the sense of the word abrogation used in these contexts with a new one saying that appropriation "is based on an abrogation of the essentialist assumptions of that norm and a dismantling of its imperialist centralism." (44)

One should note the english with a small e that Ashcroft and Co. have creatively used to signify postcolonial literatures in English. For them, English is like the original that only few were gifted to possess until imitations of it were mass-produced and everyone now had copies of englishes.

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[3]To show the level of conviction he had to his cause, it is worth mentioning here that Ngugi Wa Thiong'o was baptized, raised and even published some of his early works under the name James Ngugi. As he found this christening with European names to be a colonial act, he later officially changed his name to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

Chapter Four

A Postcolonial Analyses of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Works

Equipped with a reading of the major tenets, complexities, histories and questions of Postcolonial theory, as well as the conceptual frameworks that govern our approach to the selected texts, this chapter will grapple with the application of those theories to the analyses of Adichie's fictional works. I will discuss three main issues born out of the area of concern of literary Postcolonial theory: hybridity, language and uncommitted art; and then confer about the general aspects of the selected works that are of interest to the postcolonial reader. We shall begin with synopses of the works of Adichie that I analyzed in order to allow the reader unfamiliar with the author's works to follow with the analyses.

Synopses of the Works

Half of Yellow Sun: is a 433-page long novel about the 1967-1970 Biafran war in Nigeria. It is narrated with alternating characters in focus including the less obvious characters such as Ugwu, a house boy. The story opens in a post-independence Nigeria where the beautiful and London-educated Olannaand her twin sister Kainene are based with their affluent parents. After her return from London, Olanna moves to Nsukka, a small university town in the south eastern part of the country where she teaches and lives with her Mathematics professor lover, Odenigbo and Ugwu, his houseboy. Kainene also moves into the southeast region to handle some of her father's businesses with Richard, the localized Englishman who is a failed writer and a lover of Kainene. As the civil war erupts and the state of Biafra is born in the minds of fighters and few other outside states that officially recognize it, the southeastern region fiercely fights to secede from the larger state of Nigeria. Olanna and Kainene's stay in the region to make their contributions to help the war-torn Biafra. All the while as the war is going on and bomb shells are raining on them, each of these characters manage to suffer heartbreaks and little joys in their own private lives irrespective of the war, which is in fact the major focus of the novel: to show that life goes on despite how ruffled a nation's politics is. Therefore, Odenigbo and Olannafail to conceive a child in a suspicious connection to his mother possibly putting a traditional curse on Olanna, Odenigbo

impregnates a young village girl again as a result of his mother's mischievous involvement, Olanna unfaithfully sleeps with Richard, Ugwu loses his childhood sweet heart, and Kainene goes missing. Through such ups and downs of the main characters, Adichie beautifully and engagingly tells the human story of the people as well as their national circumstance. An important and perhaps unique feature in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is that at the end of ten random chapters, a synopsis of another book in progress, a non-fiction historical book about the pre and post colonial Nigeria is given. Although throughout the book one expects to find out that Richard is the author of this second book, Adichie makes a surprise twist by making Ugwu the writer of that book in the end.

The Thing Around Your Neck: contains twelve short stories written by the author at different times. The stories in this book are mostly related with the modern-day relationship of Nigeria and the US involving immigrants. Hybridity is a recurring theme in this book with many of the stories and characters dealing with the fusion of African and American cultures. In the short story *Imitation*, for instance, a Nigerian woman living in the US whose life and identity is dependent on her wealthy Nigerian businessman, due to incidents related with his extra-marital relationship with a younger Nigerian in Lagos, learns to find a voice with which to speak back to her husband with a new sense of self. In *Ghosts*, a veteran university professor in his seventies encounters an old friend believed to have gone missing and his deceased wife whose ghost visits him. In the short story *The Thing Around Your Neck*, a story interestingly narrated in the second person singular, Akunna is disillusioned by the reality of being an immigrant in the US versus what she and her family had expectations of before she travelled. She meets an eccentric American young man who is exceptionally not racially ignorant unlike most American people as reflected in the story then her father passes away and she is pulled back home. Another story, brilliantly and bravely set in nineteenth century Nigeria is *The Headstrong Historian*. In this story which is almost entirely *told* rather than *shown* by the writer, Nwamgba, a pre-colonial strong village widow looks for the means to halt her former husband's cousins' attempt to inherit all that her husband owned. To this end, she sends her son to colonial missionary schools. She also looks and fails to find the

spirit or *chi* of her late husband in her son and her husband's wife before she finally sees his buoyantly curious spirit returned in her granddaughter, Afamefuna.

Purple Hibiscus: is, to use the words of *The Times* review, an 'immensely powerful' story of fifteen-year-old Kambili's coming of age. Raised and living under the watchful eyes of her extremely conservative Catholic father, Eugene, who is also a successful businessman and publisher of newspapers dissident to the regime, she doesn't know other pastimes than to study, read the bible or pray. This is until a coup breaks out and she and her brother, Jaja, get the chance to stay an extended period of time with their Aunty Ifeoma in Nsukka where they find a house full of mirth and activities and above all, normalcy. She soon falls in love with a young catholic priest, Father Amadi. These experiences lift her out of the bondage of silence and fear, and into the world of love, sense of self where she questions her father's strict principles. In the end, the family is liberated from the colonial-like Catholic suppression of Eugene when Kambili's mother poisons Eugene but Jaja confesses that he killed his father and is sent to serve a sentence.

My Mother, the Crazy African: is a short story published online. It is narrated from the first person point of view of Ralindu, a teenager who moved to the United States with her mother to join her father who had been living there for some years. She changes her name to Lin in order to better cope with the racist/discriminatory inquisition of her American counterparts at school. The only thing keeping her from appearing as American as she would have liked is her mother, whose presence creates 'Nigerianness' that doesn't leave Ralindu alone.

Hybridity

Hybridity in the postcolonial sense, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, is the third location created out of the fusing of two or more locales. This third location of course, exists not on maps but in the minds and hearts of peoples exposed to these conflicting two cultures. Hybridity or postnationalism has been dubbed the future of postcoloniality despite its limitations. With the speed with which globalization is gaining popularity and force around the world, hybridity is fast becoming the unstoppable fate of many postcolonial societies.

When we inspect the present author's works in light of this we find that she too, suggests that hybridity is the future of postcoloniality. She says, "Cultures evolve and things change of course." (2009: 11)She believes in the retention of native languages and cultures and histories, but not by stopping the expansion of foreign cultures in the native land. We see this evolution and change of cultural course in practice in *Purple Hibiscus* first with the theme of Catholic Christianity. In the book, we see an admission of Christianity as having come as part of the colonization mission but its overarching depiction in the novel is not as a foreign and alien religion as it is in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. In Adichie's generation of writing, Christianity (Catholicism) has obviously evolved and changed into a less foreign culture and because its indigenization has lapsed history, it is therefore nearing the stage of seeming and being depicted as 'organic' in the Nigerian society.

Regarding the manifestation of hybridity in her fictional works, the springboard of Adichie's creativity can be said to be the topic of hybridity. Hybridity is the theme informing many of the plots and sub-plots in her stories. This is most visibly seen in her collection of short stories in *The Thing Around Your Neck*. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that all of the stories in the book are made possible because of the existence of the notion of hybridity. The storylines, plots and conflicts that power the stories were founded on the experiences of Nigerians with the US, 'the in-betweeness' and the individual's struggle to accommodate the two contrasting identities within himself. In the short story *The Thing Around Your Neck* for instance, the major conflict of the major character is with her American surrounding and its culture. As a Nigerian living in the US, her identity is continually in conflict with her country of migration where she experiences a sort of depression due to her being mocked,

undermined, exoticized, unwelcomed and forced to assimilate. The plot line in *Purple Hibiscus* is also highly reliant on the becoming hybridity of Kambili; the impetus of the story being the process she undergoes in negotiating and weighing traditional and modern identities in present-day Nigeria.

But it is not only plots that are based on cultural hybridity, characters in these works are also related with the predicament of being a hybrid in one way or another. Here, I would like to argue that when it comes to hybridity, the characters in Adichie's fictions can be classified into six major groups. These are: the pure native, the hybrid resister, the perfectly balanced hybrid, the mimic men, the pure colonizer and the exceptionally good white. I shall describe each and offer examples from the works.

The pure natives are indigenous (Nigerian) and still exist in the form that one imagines pre-colonial Africans to have existed. Not only are these characters highly traditionalist, they are also unequivocally good. They are wise, beautiful, content, stable and they always know the right thing to say. The author portrays these untainted, essentialized personalities in a way that shows she is protective of their characteristic as one thing only – purely good. Papa-Nukwu in *Purple Hibiscus*, Nwamgba in *The Headstrong Historian*, Uncle Mbaezi and Aunty Ifeka in *Half of a Yellow Sun*are epitomes of the pure native. To take Papa-Nukwu as an illustration, he is an aged grandfather of the main character Kambili but is shunned by his wealthy catholic son, Kambili's father, because of his heathen ways. Throughout the story, we see him exhibiting the sense of humor that makes his cosmopolitan grandchildren laugh and giggle, tells them delicious folk stories in the dark and yields profound wisdom and integrity as he quietly, unprotestingly forgives his son for ostracizing him. We see the respectable and honorable quality the author has endowed him with in the following excerpt where Kambili is watching in hiding, as he prays to his 'heathen' gods or ancestors at sunrise.

> Papa-Nukwu was on a low stool, his legs bent into a triangle…A kerosene lamp, turned to its lowest, was right next to him…He leaned down to draw a line on the floor with the nzu in his hand. He was speaking, his face down…." "Chineke! I thank you for this new morning! I thank you for the sun that rises." His lower lip quivered as he spoke…He bent down to draw

> another line, with a fierce determination that shook the flesh on his arm, "Chineke! I have killed no one, I have taken no one's land, I have not committed adultery." He leaned over and drew the third line. "Chineke! I have wished others well. I have helped those who have nothing with the little that my hands can spare."…A cock was crowing… "Chineke! Bless me. Let me find enough to fill my stomach. Bless my daughter, Ifeoma. Giver her enough for her family…Chineke! Bless my son, Eugene. Let the sun not set on his prosperity. Lift the curse they have put on him." …I was surprised that he prayed for Papa with the same earnestness that he prayed for himself and Aunty Ifeoma. (2004: 167-8)

The second type of character we encounter is the hybrid resister. Such characters think they can remain a pure native and therefore 'unspoiled'. Often, they are naïve teenagers who hold idealist views about Africa and blackness. Amaka in *Purple Hibiscus* and Nnedi in *A Private Experience* are examples of characters who resist becoming a hybrid. Amaka, the cousin of the main character Kambili, wants to reclaim her past and erode the colonialist ideology; she is a native who takes pride in the *good*, native, pure tradition. The following quotes, the first about Amaka and the second about Nnedi demonstrate this.

> She turned the cassette player on, nodding to the polyphonic beat of drums. "I listen mostly to indigenous musicians. They're culturally conscious; they have something real to say. Fela and Osadebe and Onyeka are my favorites. Oh, I'm sure you probably don't know who they are. I'm sure you're into American pop like other teenagers." She said "teenagers" as if she were not one, as if teenagers were a brand of people who, by not listening to culturally conscious music, were a step beneath her. And she said "culturally conscious" in the proud way that people say a word they never knew they would learn until they do. (2004: 118)

> Nnedi is not lost in a riot, …Nnedi is safe somewhere, probably making one of her political arguments. Like how the government of General Abacha was using his foreign policy to legitimize itself in the eyes of other African

> countries. Or how the huge popularity in blond hair attachments was a direct result of British colonialism. (2009: 47)

The third types of character we find are the perfectly balanced hybrid. We find many of these in Adichie's works which might serve as an additional evidence that she too as an artist sees hybridity as the way forward and the ideal to strive for. They seem to be her most preferred mouthpiece for the philosophies that are her own. These characters have the perfect, unconflicting blend of native and imported culture, tradition and global thinking, and respect for the indigenous but also an eye for the world. Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Aunty Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*, Professor James Nwoye (interestingly named after the author's father's name) in *Ghosts* and Afamefuna in *The Headstrong Historian* are ideal examples of the perfect hybrid. However, there are also many characters that are set to become the perfect hybrid in the course of a story like Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* or Akunna in *The Thing Around Your Neck*.

The narrator Professor James Nwoye's opening to the short story *Ghosts* offers an interesting insight into the kind of balance such characters implicitly muster to emerge as the perfect hybrid.

> Today I saw Ikenna Okoro, a man I had long thought was dead. Perhaps I should have bent down, grabbed a handful of sand, and thrown it at him, in the way my people do to make sure a person is not a ghost. But I am a Western-educated man, a retired mathematics professor of seventy-one, and I am supposed to have armed myself with enough science to laugh indulgently at the ways of my people. (2009: 57)

Later in the story we read that the professor believes not in science's totality and does not either laugh at the traditional ways of his people as we see him believe in and encounter with his wife's ghost.

The fourth types of character we observe in Adichie's works are the mimic men, to borrow V.S. Naipaul's words. These men are portrayed as pitiable and sometimes laughable for their insistence on mimicking the white man. Such characters are characterized by their

need to cleanse themselves from any form of ancestral tradition or nativism and whitewash their identity. Eugene, Kambili's father, the main character in *Purple Hibiscus*, is a principal mimic man. His very identity is founded on his struggle to be as white (British) as one could get. His avowal of the Catholic faith and the superiority of the white priests who gave it to him is so strong that it dictates the rest of his being. Other mimic men are Grandfather (Kambili's maternal grandfather), Anikwena in *The Headstrong Historian*, Harisson and then Ugwu's initial stage in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Ralindu (or Lin as she called herself) in *My Mother, the Crazy African*. A description that half captures such mimic men is given by Ugwu's aunt.

> For breakfast, they had eggs that were not cooked well, so that the yolk danced around, and…they used hot combs to straighten their hair…because they wanted to look like white people, although the combs ended up burning their hair off. (2006: 19)

We also hear the houseboy character, Harrison saying, "The food of white people makes you healthy, it is not like all of the nonsense that our people eat." And later we see Ugwu looking up to the white man and using him as a tool to impress his sweetheart.

> The tear gas fascinated Ugwu. If it made people pass out, he wanted to get it. He wanted to use it on Nnesinachi when he went home with Mr Richard for the *ori-okpa* festival. He would lead her to the grove by the stream and tell her the tear gas was a magic spray that would keep her healthy. She would believe him. She would be so impressed to see him arrive in a white man's car that she would believe anything he said. (2009: 210)

Of course what is different here about the portrayal of characters like Ugwu and Harisson, is that they are somehow excused for their attitude for the reason that they are a colonial product and because they are ignorant and generally harmless. While characters like Eugene also have a hatred for the traditional as a product to colonization, their attitude takes on an active role and harms those around them.

The fifth type of characters that Adichie characterize is the white foreigners. They are condescending and come from a racist orientation. Father Benedict in *Purple Hibiscus*, the

Americans and the missionaries in *The Thing Around Your Neck* and Matt in *My Mother, the Crazy African* are all racist white subjects filled with the stereotypes attached to being African.

> They [Americans] asked where you learned to speak English and if you had real houses back in Africa and if you'd seen a car before you came to America. They gawped at your hair. Does it stand up or fall down when you take out the braids? They wanted to know. All of it stands up? How? Why? Do you use a comb? You smiled tightly when they asked those questions. Your uncle told you to expect it; a mixture of ignorance and arrogance, he called it. (2009: 116)

The sixth and the last type of hybrid characters are again white but not racist. They come with the colonizer's lot, like Richard (in *Half of a Yellow Sun*) who was in Nigeria in the Biafran civil war, but by virtue of their own individual benevolence, they are characterized as amicable. Other such positively portrayed white characters are the white man and his parents in *The Thing Around Your Neck* as well as a caring missionary in *The Headstrong Historian*. Let us see here a description of Richard,

> She had never liked any of Kainene's boyfriends and never liked that Kainene dated so many white men in England. Their thinly veiled condescension, their false validations irritated her. Yet she had not reacted in the same way to Richard Churchill when Kainene brought him to dinner. Perhaps it was because he did not have that familiar superiority of English people who thought they understood Africans better than Africans understood themselves and, instead, had an endearing uncertainty about him – almost a shyness. (2006: 36)

When we look at the different kinds of hybrids we see in the texts, we can say that Adichie deals with hybridity in her characters in a hybrid manner. One might also say that the leading feature of characterization with the author is the degree of hybridity she assigns to characters. From there, everything else seems to fall into place. This is a hugely postcolonial

attribute to make about the works of Adichie and her works because the topic of hybridity is a major characteristic of postcolonial societies and hence an important topic under Postcolonial theory. Therefore, the characters development in terms of a strong reference and relation with this issue leads us to say that her whole body of works is strongly situated under postcolonial literatures.

Apart from characters, the setting of the novels and short stories of Adichie are also in remote/non-urbane places in Nigeria as well as in highly cosmopolitan western centers such as American cities. In the below extract we see a place in between, the home of the wealthy parents of Olanna in Lagos - a modern/western-like setting in the postcolonial nation of Nigeria.

> There were garish balloons in her parents' living room. The party was underway. Stewards in black and white walked around with trays and fawning smiles, their heads held inanely high. The champagne sparkled in tall glasses, the chandeliers' light reflected the glitter of jewellery on fat women's necks, and the High Life band in the corner played so loudly, so vigorously, that people clumped close together to hear one another. (2006: 134)

Then, below we are transported to a contrasting place in Nigeria, a traditional town, market and village in rural Kano.

> Olanna chose not to fly up to Kano. She liked to sit by the train window and watch the thick woods sliding past, the grassy plains unfurling, the cattle swinging their tails as they were herded by bare-chested nomads. When she got to Kano, it struck her once again how different it was from Lagos…Here, miles of flatland went on and on, tempting the eyes to stretch just a little farther, until they seemed to meet with the silver-and white sky…On the narrow market paths, she manoeuvred between small boys carrying large loads on their heads, women haggling, traders shouting… (2006: 37)

From setting to religion and fashion, in *The Headstrong Historian* we see an interesting example that demonstrates what has been said about hybridity having begun in the African continent with religion and fashion.

> As he [Father Shanahan] poured some water on the boy's head, he said, "Michael, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
>
> He gave the boy a singlet and a pair of shorts, because the people of the living God did not walk around naked…He disliked the shorts and shirt that made him sweat, the fabric that was itchy around his armpits…
>
> Perhapbs it was because he began to notice the admiring glances his clothes brought in the clan but Anikwenwa's attitude to school slowly changed. (2009: 209-10)

Taking into account the level of Adichie's problematizing hybridity in her works in the different ways we have seen above, postcoloniality can be said to be a major characteristic of her works as they repeatedly and vividly and consciously deal with second-generation Nigerians grappling with the responsibility of reconciling between their parents and their past (who are traditional) and their western or western-influenced contemporary environment which seems to be their future.

Language

To establish Adichie'sposition on the use of European languages in Africa and African literature, we need only to see her words below,

> What is worrisome is not that we have all learned to think in English, but that our education devalues our culture, that we are not taught to write Igbo and that middle-class parents don't much care that their children do not speak their native languages or have a sense of their history. (2009:11)

Furthermore, the English language is not depicted as a negative colonial product in her works, to the contrary, she seems to uphold Achebe's notion that rather than being an evil, the English language has serviced Africans by providing a medium with which people of different tribes and languages can communicate with one another. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Abdulmalik who is from the Hausa tribe had to speak in English with Olanna because the local language she could speak well was Igbo. "You come my house. My wife cook very sweet *kuka* soup" He said to Olanna. (ibid. 40)

When directly asked what she thought of language arguments raised by scholars such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Adichie has replied,

> The first thing for me is that I belong to a generation of Africans, really, who no longer speak only one language – I go back to Nigeria, and I'm speaking Igbo, and I can't speak two sentences in Igbo without throwing English words in there. And that's become the norm for my generation. I'm very sympathetic to Ngugi's argument, but I think it's impractical. And I think it's limiting. The idea that only Gikuyu, for example, can capture the Kenyan experience is just no longer true. (2009 Interview)

One might rightly ask how it is that all Adichie can do to Ngugi's arguments is sympathize when we are reminded of Afamefuna, the character who 'returns back to her roots' to the extent of giving up her colonial baptism name from Grace to Afamefuna. One can easily imagine the character Afamefuna, like Ngugi, also embarking to write in Igbo only and without seeming 'impractical', without seeming 'limited' at all.

But we observe that language is very much an important issue for Adichie and that it is directly and explicitly mentioned and discussed by her characters several times. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, for instance, we see the houseboy Ugwu's impression of his master's language. "Master's Igbo felt feathery in Ugwu's ears. It was Igbo colored by the sliding sounds of English, the Igbo of one who spoke English often." (2006: 4) Also is in *My Mother, the Crazy African*,

> I used to make her [an American friend] say words so I would practice and get the right American inflections. I wish Nigerians hadn't been a British

> colony, it is so hard to lose the way they stress their words on the wrong syllables. (Undated: 3)

Another example is in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, "She wished she were fluent in Hausa and Yoruba, like her uncle and aunt and cousin were, something she would gladly exchange her French and Latin for." (39-41)

To look at the more implicit ways language is infused in the Adichie's works in a postcolonial sort of way, I shall now employ two of Ashcroft el. al.'s language techniques of postcolonial literatures as identified in the conceptual framework.

Glossing: Adichie widely uses Igbo words, Igbo cultural metaphors and norms, to diffuse and gloss her texts with native culture. The Igbo language and Igbo- influenced style of writing is highly interplayed in the English works to the level where Standard British or American speeches are portrayed as the different or the marginal.

Look at the excerpt below of how the American speaking to *Nkem* in *Imitations* is made to stand out as the different, almost the Other.

> She sits at the edge of the leather sofa and looks around the living room, remembers the delivery man from Ethan Interiors who changed the lampshade the other day. "You got a great house, ma'am," He'd said, with that curious American smile that meant he believed he, too, could have something like it someday. (2009: 26)

But on the other hand, we look at the extract below in which English infused with Igbo culture and figure of speech is used as the type of language that is closer to the adopted mainstream language of narration.

> Olanna laughed. 'So why are you talking marriage –marriage like this, Ari? Have you seen anybody you like? Or should I find you one of Mohammed's brothers?'
>
> 'No, *no*!'… 'Papa would kill me first of all if he knew I was even looking at a Hausa man like that.'

> 'Unless your father will kill a corpse, because I will start with you first,' Aunty Ifeka said, and rose with the bowl of clean rice.
>
> 'There is someone, Sister.' Arize moved closer to Olanna. 'But I am not sure he is looking at me, oh.' (2006: 42)

While there are no Igbo words in the above extract, the text is glossed with a clearly appropriated English that reflects a native Nigerian culture, a visible 'different sense of place.' Again in *The Headstrong Historian*, the white missionaries arriving in pre-colonial free Nigeria (a tribe before the formation of the nation of Nigeria), simply by being described from the point of the view of local, are presented as alien, different and the Other. Let us look at the passage,

> The day that the white men visited her clan, Nwamgba left the pot she was about to put in her oven…and hurried to the square. She was at first disappointed by the ordinariness of the two white men; they were harmless-looking, the color of albinos, with frail and slender limbs. The companions were *normal men*…one…said that he was from Elele; the other normal men were from Sierra Leone, and the white men from France, from across the sea….He [the white man] spoke about their god, who had come to the world to die, and who had a son but no wife, and who was three but also one. Many of the people around Nwamgba laughed loudly. (Italics mine) (2009: 205)

Mind the powerful description of the black African men accompanying the white men as 'normal men.' It serves as a strong marker of a 'them' and an 'us'; a sense of the African as the central and the point of view, and the white man as the outsider, the point of exotic examination.

Untranslated Words: Through her use of untranslated words, we observe that Adichie is a more subversive postcolonial writer as she uses Igbo words at length without translating them. Although at times translations are offered, many times the reader is given the

meaning of the foreign word from the ensuing context. Sometimes the foreign words may have been translated but the reader would not know it because there would be no sign of such doing such as the use of brackets. Below is an example,

> 'My aunty!*Kedu*?'
>
> 'I am even better now that I see you.'
>
> 'Arize is not back from her sewing class?'
>
> 'She will be back anytime now.'
>
> 'How is she doing? *O na – agakwa*? Is her sewing going well?'
>
> 'The house is full of patterns that she has cut.' (2006:38)

In the above example, *Ona – agakwa* for instance, may mean 'Is her sewing going well?' or have a totally different meaning at all but the reader has no way of knowing as the Igbo words were left free without any clear indication of a translation nearby. Other examples are, "Madam!" Amaechi screams. "*Chim o*! Why did you cut your hair?" (2009: 29), "Your *oga* Obiora has a girlfriend who has moved into the house in Lagos." (33) In the surrounding contexts of the latter passage, we understand that *oga* is some kind of a title. But there is no hint as to what the title signifies.

There is also a potentially seminal issue of the reader being given the impression that the language of dialogue is Igbo (in some of the works) as few selected utterances are especially marked as being said in English giving the implication that the rest of the speeches were in Igbo; this can be seen below.

> We drove home in silence and, when he parked in our long driveway, I stopped to pluck some ixora flowers while Nnamabia unlocked the front door. I went inside to find him standing still in the middle of the parlor.
>
> "We've been robbed!" he said in English. (2009: 3-4)

Another example for this is,

> 'Yes, but these [natural flowers] are better, *famakali*,' Olanna said.
>
> 'How better, mah? He always responded in English to her Igbo, as if he saw her speaking Igbo to him as an insult that he had to defend himself against by insistently speaking English….
>
> He finally started to speak Igbo to her on the day she rearranged the photos on the wall. A wall gecko had scuttled out from behind the wood-framed photo… '*Egbukwala*! Don't kill it!'
>
> 'What?' She turned to glance down at him from the chair she was standing on.
>
> 'If you kill it you will get a stomachache,' he said. She found his Opi dialect funny, the way he seemed to spit the words out. (2006: 47-8)

In the beginning of the above example, the reader is told that the dialogue in the quotation marks were spoken in Igbo, and indeed one or two Igbo words are seen, but the rest of the speech is transcribed in English. This reminds of us Ngugi's accusation of 'Afro-European' writers writing unrealistic fiction and drama where peasants speak English. While we have just seen that her characters too also speak in English which in reality is known they do not, Adichie seems to have gone a step better in this regard in boldly asserting an utterance was spoken in a local language (Igbo) but transcribing it in English. This is important in that it may mean that perhaps a new trend and yet another technique of appropriating language (apart from those identified by Ashcroft et.al.) is started by her for the use of the postcolonial writer.

Looking further at the linguistic style of the author, we observe that Adichie's works showcase wordy sentences in non-simple lexis; but this has been in the interest of her works which oftentimes had to carry and describe very delicate and sometimes hair-splitting details in her character's emotions. This leads us to say and complements the argument that Adichie's writing is not simple, particularly not as simple as the style of earlier writers such as Achebe who did not deal so much with the interiors of characters. This complexity of style can also reflect the complexity of the ideas and issues the author deals with in the

fictions. Like what Krishnan's arguement stated in the Review of Literature section about the lack of closure in postcolonial literatures reflecting the reality that postcolonial identities are still undecided; here also we can claim that the author's complexity of style represents the complexity, fragility and subtlety of being a postcolonial. In such attempts to describe the complex, one would expect to find the tone of the writing effortful or laboring. The absence of this tone of the narrator working hard at narrating is precisely what makes this author's works powerful with lasting effects and reminds us of the non-urgency of the postcolonial agenda as compared to the (literary) anti-colonial struggle. Her narrative, semantically coherent rather than explicitly linked, also heavily relies on adjective word types probably to facilitate what has been called her "signature emotional wisdom" (2009: back cover blurb).

Uncommitted Art

We have seen in several examples above that show that Adichie cares about the society, the politics and state of the nation. However, the one goal she is also equally, if not more, committed to is art – uncommitted art. We had said earlier that the ancestral and the traditional characters in her works are treated with dignity and respectability. And yet we find Odenigbo's mother in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, a traditionalist that is portrayed negatively. The old traditional woman mistreats the kind and sweet Olanna by saying to her, "I hear you did not suck your mother's breasts," and "Please go back and tell those who sent you that you did not find my son. Tell your fellow witches that you did not see him," (2006: 96-97) One can attribute this shift in position in handling traditional characters to a commitment to being artful. For a skillful suspense and dramatization, and indeed a successful one, Adichie temporarily forgoes her commitment to a positive social function.

But almost immediately, Adichie rescues the traditional and the native image when later, Olanna expresses her anger at his mother, Odenigbo, responds by saying, "You can see that my mother doesn't know what she's doing. She's just a village woman. She's trying to make her way in a new world with skills that are better suited for the old one,'…Olanna then says, possibly as the author's mouthpiece here, "Why is your mother's behavior

acceptable because she's a village woman? I know village women who do not behave this way.' (100-1)

In observing her work's commitment to her society and comparing her works with other more 'committed' writers, we see that Adichie's works are positioned between Chinua Achebe's prescription of 'The Novelist as a Teacher' and his slightly less directive stance that "There is no rigid barrier between makers of culture and its consumers. Art belongs to all..."(1973: 621) Her subtlety and passivity in 'teaching' any lesson about an African good suggest that her works are not actively interested in being a vehicle of change for the society, while on the other hand her art belongs and is highly derivative of the culture and aesthetics of the society she came from. We see this in her response when asked if as a writer, she felt she had a political role to play. She neither conceded a deliberate choice to play a political/social role nor did she insist on a pure art for art's sake kind of argument where her work would have an irresponsible relationship to society in Achebe's parameters. She replied by saying that as a writer of 'realist fiction set in Africa', she cannot escape assuming a political role (2004) but in several accounts, she has related her interest and vision to writing 'human' or artistic stories out of the social and political realities of her country. "I hoped…that it [*Half of a Yellow Sun*] would be the kind of character-driven war novel brave enough to engage subtly with politics" (2006: *About the book* 9) She expresses awareness of a possible need on writers' part to write towards fundamentally changing their society for the good but that she strove to write artistic works just as importantly. "Perhaps it is because to write realistic fiction about a war, especially one central to the history of one's country, is to be constantly aware of a responsibility to something larger than art." She concedes, but that "if fiction is indeed the soul of history, then I was equally committed to the fiction and the history, equally keen to be true to the spirit of the time as well as to my artistic vision of it." (11) She continues, "If you were writing about Zimbabwe, you had to write about the horrible Mugabe, but…Mugabe is a disaster obviously but people are falling in love in Zimbabwe and the job of fiction is to tell those human stories" (2009: 13")

Adichie has spoken at several occasions that Chinua Achebe is the greatest of her inspirations. She says that reading his fiction at a young age opened her eyes to the possibility of having African characters in literature. She said that before reading him, she

assumed that "Literature by its very nature had to have white characters in it." In her widely viewed speech on Ted Talks, entitled *The Danger of a Single Story*(2010), she discusses this and how at a young impressionable age, she read books written by English people set in England and how in her own writing, she had also begun to imitate such writing. It was only after reading Chinua Achebe and meeting characters "who looked like [her]" that she began to write about the things she knew well. Chinua Achebe is a writer known for assuming and advocating a political and teacher-like role for his writing. However, in this regard, Adichie makes the distinction between her and possibly Chinua Achebe's committed writing when she says that his influence on her work was "not so much of style but of the permission to write about myself." (The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie website. Interview)

IndeedAdichie is not an African writer with no care to Africa's political and social issues. She in fact does show strong nationalist/ pan-Africanist sentiments in the point she makes about Africans being the rightly disposed to write African history when she makes Ugwu in *Half of a Yellow Sun* the author of the snippets of Nigerian history throughout the book. Adichie also admits that she is directly engaged with political issues in her fictions as she says, "I wrote this novel because…many of the issues that led to the war remain unresolved in Nigeria today…because the brutal bequests of colonialism make me angry…" (2006: *About the Author* 2)

Although her employing postcolonial writing techniques in her fiction, techniques identified by Ashcroft et.al. may make her and her work seem committed to counter-hegemonic discourse, we see that the themes and points of deliberation in her books are only subtly so. The reader never senses an aggressive need to negate colonialism in her work like he might find in Chinua Achebe's or Ngugi's novels. In other words, she doesn't go the distance to where the colonizer is to claim her rights of equality, of equal culture, equal knowledges; instead, she writes to what seems to be with her intended audience of her own people, celebrating and grappling with their own societal matters irrespective of the rest of the world. This is seen in how much detailing is involved in her narrating the terrains within the individual, a luxury earlier authors did not frequent because it was implied, thought and expected that African art was for cultural and for the collective and never for the private. We can say, then, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie belongs to the third generation of African

writers who are taking strides into a new generation of postcolonial African literature that is not only uncommitted and less political but also one that is, through problematizing hybridity, finally being allowed and accepted for embracing the intricacies of the struggle within an individual.

Further Postcolonial Topics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Works

Generally speaking, we can say that Adichie's works are highly postcolonial. Postcolonial in that they regress in time to probe the colonial past, postcolonial in that they deal with the contemporary issue of hybridity which is a direct product of colonialism, postcolonial in that they appropriate the colonizer's language and adapt it to 'bear the burden of the [African] experience' and postcolonial in that they 'write back to the center' re-positioning it not as Center but as the Other. Let us see further evidences for this.

A most visible postcolonial characteristic of the works of Adichie, is how fundamental postcolonial topics are directly discussed in the dialogue of the characters (like was the topic of language), that one cannot evade postcolonialism in her works. Look at the below example of the highly nationalistic and supporter-of-the-oppressed kind of characters that hold frequent evening talks in Odenigbo and Olanna's home in *Half of a Yellow Sun*,

> 'We should have a bigger pan-African response to what is happening in the American South really-' Professor Ezeka said.
>
> Master cut him short. 'You know, pan-Africanism is fundamentally a European notion.'
>
> 'You are digressing,' Professor Ezeka said.
>
> 'Maybe it *is* a European notion,' Miss Adebayo said, 'but in the bigger picture, we are all one race.'
>
> 'What bigger picture?' Master asked. 'The bigger picture of the white man! Can't you see that we are not all alike except to white eyes?'

> '…my point is that the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe,' Master said. 'I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am *black* because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his *white*. But I was Igbo before the white man came.' (2006: 20)

We note the profound statement made by Odenigo in his saying "the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe." This is a highly controversial issue that can conjure up long debates in Postcolonial theory. And in a way that reminds us of Ngugi's citing Hegel in his book *Decolonizing the Mind*, the characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* continue with their politically and philosophically charged conversations revolving around Africa.

> 'Did not that great thinker Hegel call Africa a land of childhood?' Professor Ezeka asked, in an affected tone.
>
> 'Maybe the people who put up those NO CHILDREN AND AFRICANS signs in the cinemas in Mombasa had read Hegel, then,' Dr Patel said, and chuckled.
>
> 'Nobody can take Hegel seriously. Have you read him closely? He's funny, very funny. But Hume and Voltaire and Locke felt the same way about Africa,' Odenigbo said… (2006 :50)

Again,

> 'Rex Lawson is a true Nigerian. He does not cleave to his Kalabari tribe; he sings in all our major languages. That's original – and certainly reason enough to like him,' Miss Adebayo said.
>
> 'That's reason *not* to like him,' Odenigbo said. 'This nationalism that means we should aspire to indifference about our own individual cultures is stupid.'

Throughout *Half of a Yellow Sun*, we see a lot of political conversations that seem to deconstruct and show the greed of western states, the betrayal of African puppet politicians and the suffering of the African mass – all charged with fervent tribalism and occasional

nationalism. All these issues have much to do with postcolonialism and their obvious inclusion in the text leads us to believe that the work is evidently shot with postcoloniality.

Another even more direct intrusion of colonialism-related issues in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is the snippets of Nigerian (Biafran) history given at the end of ten chapters. This synopsis colors the work with a strong sense of postcolonialism in its direct interrogation and deconstruction of the colonial past. They revisit the rule of the day whose impact is still felt in the current of the setting of the novel. One episode reads,

> …the British soldier-merchant Taubman Goldie…at the Berlin conference of 1884 where Europeans divided Africa, he ensured that Britain beat France to two protectorates around the River Niger: the North and the South. The British preferred the North…the Hausa – Fulani were narrow-featured and therefore superior to the negroid Southerners, Muslim and therefore as civilized as one could get for natives, feudal and therefore perfect for indirect rule. Equable emirs collected taxes for the British, and the British, and the British, in return. Kept the Christian missionaries away…In 1914, the governor general joined the North and the South, and his wife picked a name. Nigeria was born. (2006: 115)

In this particular excerpt, we sense a tone of anger and condescension towards the hypocrisy of the British crown and about the oppressive imperial system. This, added with what we have been saying regarding hybridity in the author's work, leads us to say that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a politically, colonialism and postcolonialism-conscious Nigerian writer trying her hand at making good sense of it all.

We might also be able to derive some postcolonial characteristics of the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie from the fact that she belongs to the postcolonial generation herself. This generation being the one that was born or raised in the post-independence era but having inherited the legacy of colonialism, the generation that is less in a position of rage about colonialism but more in a position to contemplate about it. When we look at stories such as *My Mother, the Crazy African*, about a Nigerian student studying in America, we cannot help reading the story as possibly/partially autobiographical. As a Nigerian born in the 1970s and having acquired two Bachelor of Arts and two Master of Arts degrees from

US Universities, we deduce that Chimamanda is in fact, a postcolonial individual writing postcolonial stories.

Yet another aspect of postcolonial African literature that is not commonly studied is the depiction of homosexuality in a non-negative, neutral way. Because of the widespread myth that sexualities in pre-colonial Africa were purely heterosexual and that gay or lesbian sexual orientations are results of Europeanization, post-colonial societies have been homophobic. As Guarav Desai writes, "evidence suggests that in many cases homosexual behaviors, while not always explicitly discussed or identified as such in the larger public sphere, were often treated with more tolerance in precolonial Africa than in Africa after the colonial period." (2003: 223) He also presents the irony that Africa's increased encounter with the outside world in post-colonial periods of globalization has in fact increased homophobia on the continent. This is also reflected in the literature of Africa. Where earlier works have negatively represented homosexuality, from Wole Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* to Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and Camara Laye's *A Dream of Africa*, as gay rights and consciousness are increasingly promoted by human rights activists all over the world, so has recent African media begun to represent homosexuals as healthy and normal. Desai gives us the example of *Dakan*, a film from Guinea as one of the earliest developments of mainstream media to do so. (2003)

In Chimamanda Ngozi's works, we find an example of this post-colonial neutral depiction of homosexuality in the short story *The Shivering*. A female and male Nigerian students meet at Princeton University in the US. Both in trauma from lost lovers, a heterosexual and a homosexual partner respectively, they serve as each other's friends in need. When we see as Ukamaka, the female character learns about Chinedu being gay, we observe that she is only slightly surprised. She asked him,

> "So tell me. Tell me about this love. Was it here or back home?"
>
> "Back home. I was with him for almost two years."
>
> The moment was quiet. She picked up a napkin and realized that she had known intuitively, perhaps from the very beginning, but she said, because she thought he expected her to show surprise, "Oh, you're gay."

> "Somebody once told me that I am the straightest gay person she knew…"
> He was smiling…
>
> "So tell me about this love."
>
> The man's name was Abidemi…
>
> (2009: 159)

The female character's momentary surprise followed by an acceptance of Chinedu's homosexuality is continued throughout the story where they share a vibrant friendship and he is never depicted as a social failure, an immoral or a Europeanized native. This is a very telling act on the part of the author, the postcolonial nature of the material and the new trend readers and critics should expect from African literature regarding alternative sexual orientations.

Lastly, an issue that goes to the heart of postcolonial theory is her dealing with the science/tradition dichotomy in the short story *Ghosts*. The professor character is a carrier of this dichotomy within his hybrid personality. While being a university professor, he also believes in the traditional and 'unscientific' ways of his people. This could be seen as an important invocation of the Kant/Foucalt argument; the first disregarding all things 'traditional' as 'immature' and the latter arguing that science as the only way of knowing is colonial.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Although African literature has a history dating back to ancient times, as far back as any other society may have begun its literary production; its better-documented, studied and popularized segment is the relatively very late modern African literature - this to the extent of the term African literature standing for names, trends and history of the last century. The factors behind this are many while most importantly are colonization and the fact that much of traditional African literature were predominantly oral literatures.

Colonization was a fate-changer not only for Africa but for many other parts of the world that suffered decades if not centuries (and still continue to suffer) of western dominion over their culture, human organization and resources. This western invasion of indigenous societies throughout the world on an unprecedented scale, met with instinctual resistance by invaded peoples, was only critically and in an organized manner revisited and contemplated years after colonial governors left the newly-independent nations and returned home. However, Postcolonial theory derives its sentiment from anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles while its intellectual critique arm deals with the heritage of western philosophy and of the European humanities and universalim. It was in the late 1960s that a wave of post-colonial critics started to properly examine the most basic ideologies of colonialism and begin a search for a cure to the postcoloniality condition that was uniformly inherent across formerly colonized societies. Begun by Edward Said with his book *Orientalism*, this wave of criticism of the foundations of western civilization in relation with colonized peoples worked as tributaries to what was to become known as Postcolonial theory.

This theory concerned itself with the critical remembrance of the colonial past, deconstruction of the colonial ideology and ways forward for the post-colonial societies bearing the legacies left behind. One of the various lines of scholarship that this theory found ways into was literary studies. In fact, postcolonial literary studies is one of the most important branches of postcolonial theory due to the instrumentality that literature is believed to have wielded in the colonizing project; for some critics this is even to the point of the colonial mission being a literary mission. Postcolonial literature is therefore an

important area of study to Postcolonial studies in general and many scholars have specialized in this domain as we have seen in preceding chapters.

Recalling what has been said about modern African literature virtually being a study inextricably dependent on the political and social realities in the history of the continent, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie then automatically becomes a writer whose works will be studied in light of Africa's history of which most looming is colonialism. In other words, studies of modern African literature almost always are, quintessentially, a postcolonial study. But in addition to that too, our analysis has shown that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a writer whose works are shot with the postcolonial condition.

Highlights of the different themes of the thesis and of the novels are hybridity, language and the social function of (African) literature.

Regarding the notion of hybridty, which is the juxtaposition of two or more cultures within an identity, we have seen the way mainly characters but also plot and setting unmistakably colored with hybridity common to postcolonial societies. We have seen the different types of characters that were inherently linked to hybridity in one way or another in order to form the backbone of the theme of the works, more so in *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

I have then detailed criticisms, with Ngugi, how the author is turned towards hybridity with her unequivocally choosing English for her writing. Regarding **language**, we have seen the author's language use proving to be in trend with language use employed by other global postcolonial writers. In these regard and also with some innovative language techniques employed by the author, we have dubbed Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie not only part of the trend-setting third generation African writers' group, but also a possible trend-setter of her own notably in her presentation of dialogues as spoken in a local language when in the book, they are transcribed in English.

In the way the author handled her role as a social teacher or the **social function of (African) literature**, a role assigned to all writers by some major African writers, we have seen that the author's work is one of the trend-setters as the 'third-generation of African writers' who

are giving voice more to the individual self rather than the collective self dealt with earlier generations of writers. This in fact, as stressed by the author herself and as readers we have sensed, is the excellence of her craft. We have seen how so doing have meant a complexity in style that at the same time seems effortless.

After exhaustively looking at the points raised earlier, we have come to conclude that her books *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *My Mother, the Crazy African* can be placed in the postcolonial writing tradition and be potentially pushing the horizons to a future of a new trend in postcolonial writing. Furthermore, these new trends she we have said that she is introducing into African literature as an individual or as a generation of writers, can be a point of further research by fellow researchers who wish to take up this author's works.

Under a topic about the general postcoloniality of the author's works, I have presented many proofs that the author and her works are highly postcolonial and how that is so. We can therefore arrive at the conclusion that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie can be categorized as a writer significantly dealing with the postcolonial condition in her works, commenting and taking a side on colonialism, accepting hybridity and globalization as the inevitable fate for the postcolonial and pushing the frontiers of African literature into new developments.

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