PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

ABOUBEKR BELKAID UNIVERSITY OF TLEMCEN

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

# DECOLONIZING THE MIND: POST-COLONIAL DISCOURSE IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF CHINUA ACHEBE, NGUGI WA THIONG'O AND V.S. NAIPAUL

*Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of* **DOCTORATE IN LITERATURE**

*Submitted by*                    *Supervised by*

**Bachir SAHED**            **Prof. Ilhem SERIR MORTAD**

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**2021-2022**

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# DEDICATIONS

**\*\*\***

*To the souls of my dear brothers Aboubaker Rebai and Rachid Hannachi...*

*To my beloved parents...*

*To my family and friends...*

**\*\*\***

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All the praise to Allah, who guided me and gave me the strength to accomplish this work, Alhamdulillah!

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# ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis investigates the issues of identity and writing back to Eurocentric discourse through the selected works of African and Caribbean writers, namely Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1980), and V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967). While colonial discourse stands in favour of the values, assumptions, and habits of the colonizer at the expense of those of the colonized, writers like Achebe and Ngugi stress the necessity of creating a different historiography by contesting the representations of Africa and Africans. Besides, V.S. Naipaul narrates the scepticism and fragmentation ensuing from the wreckage of colonialism in such a way that depicts the ambivalence of postcolonial subjects striving to construct an identity. Thus, the present research aims at unveiling the ways in which the works under scrutiny contribute to a rewriting of an African and Caribbean historiography, and to an understanding of postcolonial identity. To achieve this end, the research employs the postcolonial approach which helps to answer a plethora of questions concerning cross-cultural encounters and the conflicting power relations throughout and beyond the colonial experience. As such, the selected works are analysed in the light of the ideas and theories of Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. The findings show that despite their different views about the complex notions of culture, language, history, and identity, these writers have set out to dismantle the Manichean structures of power between the colonizer and the colonized and to offer ways of contesting colonial discourse and the constructions of otherness and stereotyping.

**Keywords:** Achebe; decolonization; Eurocentrism; identity (de)formation; Postcolonial discourse; Naipaul; Ngugi

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# INTRODUCTION

> History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake
> (James Joyce, *Ulysses* 24).

The traditional divide between text and context in literary criticism has been redefined to suggest that the meaning of the text resides not in itself, but is unavoidably linked to and affected by its context. Texts exist in relation to those forces of history, culture, and language. Hence, there is no writer who writes without an ideology, and there is no text that is merely a monologue. Texts are culturally and ideologically loaded, and they coexist in the battlefield of cultures, in which the definition of civilisation and barbarism rests upon the creation of conflicting binaries of "black" and "white", "self" and "other".

Literary texts play a crucial role in constructing a cultural authority for the colonizers, both in the metropolis and in the colonies. Literature written on both sides of the colonial divide often absorbs, appropriates, and inscribes aspects of the "other" culture, creating new genres, ideas and identities in the process. It is also an important means of appropriating, inverting, or challenging dominant means of representation and colonial ideologies. Therefore, colonial authority focused on generating a discourse based on stereotyping the "other" as rapist, savage, and primitive (Loomba 72).

Colonial discourse, in addition, employs different tropes which represent the indigenous populations as childlike or feminine, and hence in need of paternal or husbandly masculine governance. The image of the colonial relationship in terms of a family was a common one, and functioned in terms of both parent-child, and husband-wife relationships as they were defined in the nineteenth century. Therefore, these

imperialist tropes were used as a pretext and justification for colonial intervention (Bruce 123).

Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, views Western discourse about Africa as Eurocentric, and denounces the process of dehumanization of the African "other" through imperial processes of stereotyping and silencing. As a Nigerian young boy in the Igbo society, Achebe recalls how British colonialism employed language, education, and literature as imperial means so as to subjugate the native populations. Classical texts from British literature such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) were introduced to Achebe at university; and he was deeply affected by how Africans are treated in these novels.

> At the university I read some appalling novels about Africa […] and decided that the story we had to tell could not be told for us by anyone else no matter how gifted or well intentioned (Achebe, "Named for Victoria" 70).

As a matter of fact, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has long been accused for its dehumanization of Africans as the peripheral "other". Achebe, in his seminal essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*", argues that Conrad is a bloody racist and that *Heart of Darkness* is a racist novel,

> *Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as "the other world", the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality ("An Image of Africa" 3).

Achebe asserts that *Heart of Darkness* depicts Africa as the metaphysical setting and the backdrop for the disintegration of a beautiful European mind, strengthening the image of Africa as a place of darkness devoid of all recognizable humanity.

Moreover, Africans in the novel are denied a "voice"; they rarely speak and when they speak, they say horrid things. As such, African characters in *Heart of Darkness* in particular and in British texts in general were defined as "other". Achebe and other postcolonial writers have all responded to particular works from the English "canon" with a view to restructuring "realities" in postcolonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire* 2, 33).

These nationalist writers started forging national consciousness in order to rid their peoples of the colonizer's dehumanizing perceptions and enable them to participate in their own cultural project of self-definition. Hence, these literatures were seen to share a common textual subversion of imperial polarities. The body of postcolonial works challenging the hegemony of Eurocentric Imperial discourse latent in classic literary works from the English canon, and attempting to redefine the "other" world are often referred to as "writing back", "counter-discourse", "oppositional literature", or "con-texts" (Thieme 1).

To achieve such redefinition, Achebe focused on the appropriation of the English language as a literary medium for the revitalization of African Igbo culture and traditions. Furthermore, he aims at creating a different historiography of the colonial period. Achebe, too, emphasized the idea that Africans should tell their own stories in part because they have that great heritage of oral tradition and storytelling, and more importantly because it is urgent for African fiction to replace the Eurocentric point of view with those of local focalizers.

*Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) in particular depict Nigerian Igbo society reflecting local idioms. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe employs a local

narrator who could well be a local villager. He also sets the novel in the context of British colonialism in the Igboland to highlight the discrepancy between precolonial and colonial eras and how the white man interrupted the social life of the Igbo people. Besides, the novel offers a predominantly complex reconstruction of its codes of manhood. Achebe's village novels, namely *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* attempted to save Africa from the derogatory discourse of the European canon. In these works, Achebe invests his Igbo people's past with a dignity previously denied to it in Anglophone writing about West Africa.

Moreover, *Arrow of God* is a novel that depicts the complexity of Igbo social life through layers of circumstantial detail, which both fulfils Achebe's educative purpose, and explores moral and psychological difficulties that result from trying to adhere to traditional social codes in a changing environment. Ezeulu, the protagonist of the story, is a complex character torn between his role as a protector of his people's culture and the need to adapt to the changing social situations caused by the intervention of English colonizers. The tragic end of Ezeulu concludes the firm adherence of Igbo people to the traditional way of life. Hence, interruption and change are core elements to postcolonial literature.

Therefore, in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God,* Achebe is mythicizing a past. Both novels epitomise the essential character of colonial encounter, an encounter grounded in a continuum of the politics of language and culture. It is this politics that transforms the community or cult practices into historical markers (Saswat 3). Recreating the past is also a main theme in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1980) as the characters strive for a sense of identity.

Nevertheless, the use of the dominant language, literature, and culture for subversive purposes has generated so much debate within postcolonial discourse. Achebe asserted that given the multilingual colonial nature of most African states, "the national literature of Nigeria and of many other countries of Africa is, or will be, written in English" ("English and the African Writer" 344). Achebe invokes the creative hybridity of African writers who moulded English to their experience rather than the other way round, and concludes that

> for me there is no other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it. ... I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience (348).

In response to Achebe, Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, after his fifth novel, *Petals of Blood* (1977), ceased writing in English and wrote his later novels in Gikuyu, a local Kenyan language. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngugi expresses his fears of the multiple connections between language and culture. Ngugi argues that colonial powers attempt to dominate cultures through control of language as a means to establish neocolonialism or what he called the metaphysical empire (Loomba 80). He considers English as a means of spiritual and mental subjugation because it carries with it the cultural assumptions of imperial power (Walder 54).

Ngugi declares, "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?" ("The Language of African Literature" 26). Thus, he divides writers into two groups: writers writing in indigenous tongues and others who adopt a foreign language to write about the colonial experience. He concludes that there is a strong relationship between language as a medium of literary expression and the expression of political and cultural identities (Loomba 81).

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Ngugi, in his novels *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1980), portrays freedom struggle in Kenya before and after independence. Just like Achebe, Ngugi is concerned with challenging colonial authority using a third person narrative voice that is identified with that of a local villager. *Devil on the Cross* questions independence and denounces neocolonialism.

Thus, cross-cultural encounters raise issues of alterity in which (ex)colonized subjects are viewed as inferior by the (ex)colonizer, and in which an imperial discourse is sustained in contrast to that of the native subjects. Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, commonly known as V.S. Naipaul, is a renowned Trinidad-born English writer, with an Indian descent, who wrote many novels, set in ex-colonized places in the world, scrutinising the colonial and postcolonial predicament. His novel, *The Mimic Men* (1967), recounts the memories and experiences of Ralph Singh, a writer born on a Caribbean isle and exiled to London. Singh represents the plight of the West Indian individual striving for home and belonging. In his re-writing of the self, the past, and history, Naipaul focuses on the fragmentation of the postcolonial condition.

As such, the emergence of postcolonial discourse has attracted considerable attention over the last two decades, especially as nationalist writers engaged in a writing back process to the imperial canon in order to redefine their fellow colonized people who have been considered as "other" during the colonial period. Hence, the motivation driving the present research is to uncover latent ideologies and attitudes in European discourse and see how modern African and Caribbean writers, namely Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and V.S. Naipaul responded to them in their selected works.

Thus, this research sets out to explore how Africa's nationalist writers, namely Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as well as the Indo-Caribbean writer V.S. Naipaul, attempted to respond to Europe's imperialist discourse that defines Africa and the Caribbean as inferior, lacking, uncivilized, and "other". Thus, the present research scrutinizes novels written by these writers in order to highlight how they use fiction as a counter-discourse to put forward a redefinition of (ex)-colonized subjects free from the biases of European colonial discourse.

Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1980), as well as Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967) have been chosen for specific scrutiny for the obvious reason that these works reflect the novelist's commitment to write back and restore dignity to their people.

Therefore, this research endeavours to put flesh on the bare bones of the following questions: In the face of European stereotyping of the African and Caribbean as "other", how do modern African writers like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and V.S. Naipaul cater for a redefinition of the colonized? This main question leads us to consider other sub-questions: How do Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul establish themselves as a postcolonial "voice" responding to and countering European racist ideologies? What literary strategies does Achebe employ in his novels *Arrow of God* and *Anthills of the Savannah* in order to confront colonial stereotypes of alterity? How does Ngugi appose colonial discourse through his novels *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*? And how does V.S. Naipaul represent London and the Caribbean in his novel *The Mimic Men*?

So much criticism has been addressed to the works of Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul. This thesis, however, is different in the way it examines the issue of decolonization in the works of the three writers simultaneously. It aims to uncover the different views and assumptions of these respective writers as far as postcolonial discourse is concerned. Furthermore, the study highlights the different approaches the three writers have taken to counter hegemonic discourses of colonialism and imperialism, and to provide a different historiography.

There is a plethora of studies that examined Achebe's work. Among the most famous critics who worked on Achebe we can name: Simon Gikandi, Innes, C. L., Thomas J. Lynn, and David Carroll examined Achebe's artistic qualities in his fictional narratives. They also focused on Achebe's attempt to recreate African literature dwelling on issues related nationalist literature, the politics of narration, and the identity crisis. In 2014, Elleke Boehmer published an article entitled "Chinua Achebe, a Father of Modern African Literature". In this article, Boehmer stresses the uniqueness of Achebe's work in its resistance to Western discourse and historiography.

Previous work on Ngugi has also highlighted different issues and ideas related mainly to culture and the politics of language, the relationship between fiction and history, the oral tradition, decolonization, the language of African literature, and woman representation. Particularly Simon Gikandi, James Ogude, and James Currey have scrutinized Ngugi's life and writings. In 2016, Gbemisola Adeoti published a seminal article entitled "Demystifying the Future in Africa's (Un)vanishing Past: A Study of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Novels". In this article Adeoti examines Ngugi's fiction in the light of the dialogism between Kenya's past and future.

Among the critics who scrutinized Naipaul's work are Bruce King, Anthony Boxill, Mohit K. Ray, Paul Theroux, and William Walsh. They have put forward different readings and critical analysis of Naipaul's work. With a specific focus on postcolonial identity, these critics analysed Naipaul's life and writings. Through Naipaul's fiction, they examine the literature of diaspora, hybridity and mimicry, home and belonging, as well as the politics of language. In 2008, Kavita Nandan wrote an article entitled "V.S. Naipaul: A Diasporic Vision" which scrutinizes how Naipaul represents the experiences of the diaspora in the postcolonial world. Besides, in 2006, Fadwa AbdelRahman published an article entitled "V. S. Naipaul: The White Traveler under the Dark Mask" in which she stressed the ambiguity and scepticism of Naipaul's work.

To undertake this research, postcolonial discourse criticism is employed to examine the selected works of Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul. It was Frantz Fanon who first addressed the issue of the tension between the colonized and the colonizer. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon describes the colonial world as a Manichaean world, in which the world of the colonized is the antithesis of that of the colonizer. His ideas on colonialism are of a paramount importance to postcolonial thinking mainly because he wrote from the perspective of a colonial subject, and also because he considers the cultural and literary aspects of colonial and postcolonial history as central to his ideas (Walder 57). Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965) argue that colonized subjects develop an inferiority complex which leads them to define themselves according to the values of the colonizer giving way to a hybrid form of identity through a process of mimicry and self-alienation (Bohata 22).

In his seminal books, *Orientalism* (1978) as well as *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said argues that European writers' works portray the colonized as the "other" creating a hegemonic discourse that is based on the superiority of Europe and Europeans. Hence, Said asserts that these works "were immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences" (*Culture and Imperialism* xii). Said, influenced by French philosopher and theorist Michel Foucault, points out the interrelatedness of knowledge and power. Knowledge about non-Western cultures strengthened Western stereotypes and images about them, and generated an endemic ideological colonial discourse that projects the "Orient" and Africa as the "Other" world.

Structures of binary oppositions of "Self" and "Other" are derived in part from deconstruction and are widely used now in postcolonial theory in order to highlight colonial attitudes towards Africans, Native Americans, Caribbeans, and other non-European peoples. Edward Said explains that this opposition is paramount to Europeans' self-image. Hence, if colonised people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europeans are civilised, self-controlled and hard working. Said demonstrates that the politics of language and literature promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, Africa, "them").

As such, this allows us to see the ambiguous dance of power and knowledge through the play of language, literature and culture. Said further argues that images of the "Orient" in European literary texts, travelogues and other writings contributed to the creation of a dichotomy between Europe and its "others" (*Culture and Imperialism* 42, 45).

Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) is another influential work of postcolonial theory. Bhabha's work focuses on the resulting identit(y,-ies) from cross-cultural encounters. His theories of hybridity and mimicry are quiet significant. Hybridity is the cultural mixture that shapes the identity of postcolonial subjects. For Bhabha, the postcolonial subject mimics because he or she has internalized the notion that their cultural values are inferior to that of the colonials. He believes that mimicry is "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (*The Location of Culture* 85).

Another influential postcolonial feminist theorist is Gayatri Spivak. She is well-known for her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in which she explains her idea of "silencing" colonized peoples or the subaltern[1] subjects. Spivak also explores the possibility of restoring "voice" to the oppressed (Loomba 48). Besides, Richard Terdiman in his theory of counter-discourse asserts that culture is a field of struggle. Building on Saussure's and Foucault's hierarchy of binary oppositions, Terdiman believes that a discourse is never a monologue. It always presupposes a horizon of competing, contrary utterances against which it asserts its own energies. So, according to Terdiman discourses come into being in a structure of counter-discursive practices (*The Empire* 168-9).

In their inspiring book, *The Empire Writes Back*, influential postcolonial critics Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin believe that language carries hierarchical power structures, and that it is the medium through which conceptions of "truth", "order", and "reality" become established. Postcolonial national writers attempt to reject these power structures prevalent in colonial discourse (*The Empire*

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[1] "Subaltern" was a military term used for officers under the rank of captain and its origin is somewhat inconsistent with its current use, borrowed from Gramsci, as a shorthand for any oppressed person.

7). Dennis Walder, in his book *Postcolonial Literatures in English*, argues that the main point to be taken from *The Empire Writes Back* is that there is no escape from global power-structures, because there is no escape from writing, discourse or language (68).

Postcolonial literary criticism is quiet effective in uncovering structures of imperial hegemony expressed in common tropes and stereotypes of the "other". It is also quite convenient in examining the endeavour of modern African and Caribbean writers to redefine and re-create the "other" in their works, and to examine his dilemma of belonging. Therefore, the present research adopts postcolonial discourse theory in order to scrutinize the strategies used by the writers in order to subvert European racial representations pervasive in European intellectual discourse.

> Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of "minorities" within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South (Bhabha, *The Location* 6).

Thus, postcolonial discourse can be employed to examine many important questions concerning large-scale historical phenomena encompassing cross-cultural encounters and conflicting power relations. Indeed, it analyses the colonizer-colonized relationship throughout and beyond the colonial experience. Works by notable modern African authors, namely Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as well as Caribbean writer V.S. Naipaul will be analysed. Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) and Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1980), as well as V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967) have been chosen for specific scrutiny.

The research will have recourse to major practitioners in this approach and their respective works, namely Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism*; Gayatri Spivak's *In Other Worlds: Essays on Cultural Politics* (1987) and *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990); and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) and "Of Mimicry and Men: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" (1984).

Therefore, the thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter one examines the necessity of writing back, counter discourse, the rise of the postcolonial, cross-cultural encounters, and the discourse of otherness. It explains the process of "othernization" of the colonized through stereotyping, discrimination, and invisibility. It further demonstrates the infamous representation of the colonized as "other", and presents a theoretical background of postcolonial discourse theory. It outlines the pioneering figures in Postcolonialism such as Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Richard Terdiman, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Albert Memmi.

This chapter highlights Edward Said's theory of Orientalism which examines the interrelation between knowledge and power structures. Said asserts that knowledge about non-Western cultures strengthened Western stereotypes and tropes, and engendered an ideological colonial discourse that projects the "Orient" and Africa as the "Other" world. Moreover, this chapter uncovers Richard Terdiman's counter-discourse theory. Terdiman's idea about discourses as fields of struggle will be considered.

The second chapter examines colonial imagination and ideological perceptions. It analyses African and Caribbean writers' attempts to represent colonial experience and its aftermath. It discusses the question of language in African literature through a scrutiny of Achebe and Ngugi's views about the use of the colonizer's language as a

means of resistance. As such, this chapter intends to highlight the African writer's commitment to redefine the African "other". It also examines V.S. Naipaul's depiction of the Caribbean plight through his novel *The Mimic Men*. The chapter spots light on how the (ex)colonized subjects strive for home and for return to their roots.

The third chapter analyses the poetics of decolonization through thye selected works of Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul. The chapter focuses on the study of the writers narrative discourse by examining the appropriation of the English language, transforming the form of the Realist novel, reliance on orality, the politics of language, the use of allegory, the narrative voice, cultural displacement, and fragmentation. An examination of narrative voice in Achebe's *Arrow of God* demonstrates the change caused by the interruption of the Igbo social life after the coming of the white men. It deals with the complex psychic plight of Achebe's hero, Ezeulu. It also delves into Achebe's appropriation of the English language and transformation of the Realist novel.

The third chapter also examines Ngugi's attempts to redefine and decolonize the African "other" in his works namely *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*. It analyses Ngugi's decisive turn to orality and the native language to portray African experience. His use of allegory in *Devil on the Cross* highlights the political blend of fiction writing and ideology. His novel proves to be a striking denouncement of neocolonialism. This chapter culminates with a scrutiny of V.S. Naipaul's conception of the past in his novel, *The Mimic Men*. As such, the chapter unveils how the narrator, Ralph Singh, who is the protagonist of the story, conceives his past and his roots. His portrayal of the non-European in the novel raises a lot of questions concerning reception and reading of V.S. Naipaul's art.

The fourth chapter examines identity issues and the burden of Englishness in the selected works of Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul. It scrutinizes how the three writers depicted the quest for identity in the selected works. The chapter analyses Achebe's representation of the impact of cross-cultural encounters on the identity of the oppressed in his novel, *Arrow of God*. It further examines the theme of identity crisis in his novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*.

The fourth chapter also explores how Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and *Devil of the Cross* present the conflicting identities of the colonized. It highlights the role of the past or history in forming the future of African nations. The chapter also examines the themes of national betrayal and the scepticism of Westernization in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood*.

Furthermore, the chapter focuses on V.S. Naipaul's depiction of the mimic men in his famous novel, *The Mimic Men*. It uncovers the themes inherent in diasporic writings and the resulting notions of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, and liminality. The chapter analyses the hybridity of the characters' identities and their struggle for wholeness and self. In *The Mimic Men*, the discourse of mimicry is also examined through an examination of the characters' identity (de)formation and their act of mimicking the colonizer's culture, language, and behaviour.

The general conclusion presents a synthesis of the four chapters focusing on the African writers' artistic endeavours to redefine the African "other" through portrayal of African suffering under colonialism, through pride in African culture and tradition, and also through subverting latent notorious images and tropes endemic in European discourse. It also presents an examination of V.S. Naipaul's depiction of colonial experience in the Caribbean through his novel, *The Mimic Men*.

# CHAPTER ONE: COUNTER DISCOURSE AND THE RISE OF THE POSTCOLONIAL

> Well-bred post-colonials much like myself, adrift in the new world (Bharati Mukherjee, *Darkness,* 1985, 2).

The traditional divide between text and context in literary criticism has been redefined to suggest that the meaning of the text resides not in itself, but is unavoidably linked to and affected by its context. Texts exist in relation to those forces of history, culture, language or the unconscious (Walder 58).

Roland Barthes' influential 1968 essay on "The Death of the Author" initiated such readings of literary texts in relation to their contexts. Barthes' ideas anticipate the post-structuralist or deconstructionist turn which broadened the attack upon Western norms of thought. These Western norms spin around a belief in centeredness which focused upon white or at least European, bourgeois, male attitudes and behaviours, while marginalizing black, non-European, working-class, female attitudes and behaviour (Walder 58).

Barthes' celebration of the death of the author is just one example of the changing world in which everything is relative, everyone matters, and nobody could claim authority. Concerning the literary work, this shift implies that the organic unity formerly found and praised when found, was an illusion. The text is rather a "site of struggle", full of gaps and contradictions of an unstable linguistic entity (Walder 59).

Hence, literature is basically a communicative and political activity, which cannot be grasped without an analysis of both the present and the past, including the

colonial past. Postcolonial writers exposed the particularity of their condition or experience and thus they try to engage an audience with what they think of this experience. Postcolonial discourse emphasises the continuity of neocolonial forms of control across and within national boundaries. This is due to the accelerated changing relations between every part of the world linked as much by economic and technological change as by the politics of modernity (Walder 1, 6).

The new interest in literature, language, history, culture and society has had a deep impact upon literary studies in general and the rise of the postcolonial in particular. The 1970s marked the appearance of new ideas and theories, which challenged traditional methods of Anglophone literary study (Walder 57, 59).

Postcolonial theory, as a field of literary and cultural study, emerged as a result of the decentring tendency of post-1960s thought in the West. It was also part of the colonial response to the successful liberation movements of colonized peoples worldwide from the 1950s onwards. Franz Fanon's voice in *The Wretched of the Earth* and his earlier *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952, first translated 1967), as well as Jean-Paul Sartre's support for these movements, is a clear indication of European awareness of the condition of the colonized as decolonization proceeded (Walder 59).

According to the structuralist tradition, inaugurated by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), in a lecture series delivered before the First World War, language is not directly connected with the reality outside itself, but refers to it according to a set of rules. Saussure points out that language constructs reality, and that literary texts came to be seen as texts referring to each other, rather than to some external reality (Walder 58).

Benita Parry asserts that postcolonial studies is indebted to critical tradition such as Foucauldian idea of western power and knowledge as discourse, Derrida's poststructuralist theories of language and the deconstruction of western metaphysics, as well as the efforts of western Marxism and British cultural studies to theorize economic and cultural determinations, hegemony and counter-hegemony (Parry 27-58).

Marxist critic Terry Eagleton believes that postcolonial discourse is the result of global historical developments such as the decline of the European empires and their substitution by American hegemony, alongside an increase in mass migrations, and the creation of diverse and multicultural societies. Eagleton argues that the politics of race, language, and identity obscure the "vital material conditions which different ethnic groups have in common" (*Literary Theory* 205). Fanon comments on the Marxist analysis of the postcolonial situation stating that when dealing with the colonial problem, "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched" (*The Wretched* 40).

The three most well-known representatives of postcolonial theorizing are Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, the authors, respectively, of the influential *Orientalism* (1978); *In Other Worlds: Essays on Cultural Politics* (1987) and *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990); and *The Location of Culture* (1994). Robert Young's *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (1990) also offers a critique of Western historiography from Hegel and Marx to Said, Spivak and Bhabha.

Postcolonial discourse considers all the writings which have emerged since the onset of colonization. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire*

*Writes Back* (1989) examined the first writings from settler colonies of the seventeenth century. They are considered to be the first authors to mark the beginning of the writing back process (Walder 5).

One of the main contributions of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's influential notion of "writing back" has been the recognition of the role of literary creativity in the former colonies. The significant increase of postcolonial writings since the Second World War has led readers worldwide to see that their own communities could produce writings of great power and relevance, even if in the language of the former colonizers. V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967) and R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) are very good examples of such thriving literature (Walder 60).

Postcolonialism implies that canonical works by Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, the Brontës and Dickens ought to be read through situating them in the modern and changing multicultural world of today. Edward Said's brilliant work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) focuses upon the analysis of European canonical texts of the colonial era, from Austen to Dickens, and from Conrad to Kipling so as to unveil the latent ideologies in European imperial discourse (Walder 4-5).

Hence, in its subversive attitude towards the canon, celebrating the neglected or marginalized, postcolonial writing brings with it a particular politics, history and geography. In its anticolonial fervour, postcolonialism covers all parts of the world touched by Empire, and examines these works from the onset of colonisation. Hence, classical works of the literary canon from Shakespeare onwards can be approached by postcolonial readings (Walder 60).

The literary and cultural expression of the struggles of decolonization produced some of the first writings in English to have a major impact abroad, namely the fiction, drama and poetry of Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Nigerians Wole Soyinka, Chris Okigbo, and Chinua Achebe (Walder 61-62).

Ex-colonial writers who have set up home in Britain, such as V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Timothy Mo, are said to represent the impact of "writers and subjects from the old colonial Empire". Hence, new literary works originating from newly independent nations, such as Nigeria, Kenya, and the Caribbean started to be important in the West (Walder 61).

Cultural studies in Britain has vigorously informed a kind of interdisciplinary postcolonial studies that is historicist in method, often materialist in analysis, and explicitly concerned with the links between discursive regimes, social identities, and political categories, including empire, colony, and anti-colony, nation and globe, local community and diasporic network (Cooppan 6).

## 1. Time, Race, and the (Post)colonial

Some scholars take the *post* in postcolonial as after the departure of the colonizers. Indeed, *post* holds the notion of *after*. However, the identity crisis, the resistance to a prescribed identity coming from the empire, the ultimate quest for an identity, and the need to formulate a voice do not come only after the departure of the colonizer. Hence, the *post* in postcolonial applies to the beginning of colonization as identity is shaped and reshaped by colonial encounter and persists to the present moment and beyond. Texts that were produced after the onset of colonization and up

to the shaping of identity can contribute much to articulating and understanding the postcolonial condition (Duncan 325).

Hence, Postcolonialism does not mean 'post-independence', or 'after colonialism' because this would inaccurately put an end to the colonial process. Postcolonialism nonetheless begins from the very first moment of colonial contact. It is the discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brings into being. This idea concludes that the imperial process of eurocentrism it still active (Saswat 77).

Nayantara Sahgal, an Indian writer interested in the complexities of time and history, asserts that British colonialism is just one layer of the nation's history and culture. This layer of British culture which is added to Indian consciousness has been the concern of most of his novels. Sahgal affirms,

> First we were colonials, and now we seem to be post-colonials. So is 'post-colonial' the new Anno Domini from which events are to be everlastingly measured? My own awareness as a writer reaches back to x-thousand BC, at the very end of which measureless timeless time the British came, and stayed, and left. And now they're gone, and their residue is simply one more layer added to the layer upon layer of Indian consciousness. Just one more (Sahgal 30).

Postcolonialism implies that the former colonized areas of Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, as they became independent states during the 1950s and 1960s, are different yet related by their colonial experience as, say, Ghana and Singapore, or Pakistan and Sierra Leone. Recently, postcolonialism has received much interest due to the fact that the colonial experience persists despite the withdrawal of political control (Walder 3). Therefore, Postcolonialism is much more related to power structures rather than linear time (Duncan 326).

Duncan (1994) defined postcolonial writing as the writing that emerges from non-European cultures once colonized by white Europeans (Duncan 321). In her 1988 essay, Helen Tiffin defines the postcolonial as "writing and reading practices grounded in some form of colonial experience occurring outside Europe but as a consequence of European expansion into and exploitation of 'the other' worlds" (Tiffin 170). These definitions of the postcolonial condition fail to represent cultures that do not fit the continental and colour parameters (Duncan 321).

Edward Said asserts that the issues of race are imaginative creations of those in power. Said's idea of binary oppositions between East and West should be taken in abstract terms rather than in physical geopolitical location or skin colour (*Culture and Imperialism* 52, 106). Therefore, since race is no longer a defining factor in who can have a voice in a postcolonial dialogue, then a whole blend of voices that includes the Irish, Koreans, Native Americans, the Caribbean and a multitude of others whose skin colour, geographic location, or same-race connection to their colonizers has left them standing outside the borders (San Juan 13).

San Juan believes in "a 'Third World' domain of subjects-in-process that is not so much geographical as political and social" (San Juan 16). As such, "Third World" is no longer a physical concept, it becomes "a trope as well as the site of dissent and insurgency […] that anticipates change and renewal" (17). San Juan asserts, "Race is the mask of class, in the analysis". He believes that the fictional construct of race functions as a mask to create an underclass. Thus, Juan sees race as "a property of dominance relations between groups" (119).

After his first trip to Ireland, Charles Kingsley observed,

> I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along
> that hundred miles of horrible country. […] But to see
> white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one
> would not feel it so itch, but their skins, except where
> tanned by exposure, are as white as ours (Kingsley 111-
> 12).

Kingsley's observation denotes how the Irish are conceived as different and "other" despite their *whiteness*. Thus, the rise of the postcolonial condition begins after the point of colonization and is not limited to constraints of place or race, continent or colour (Duncan 329).

## 2. Rewriting History and Subject-ive Narrative

> Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it
> is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being
> based on the reality of forms and the observation of
> social phenomena, whereas history is based on
> documents, and the reading of point and handwriting –
> on second-hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth.
> But let that pass. A historian may be an artist too, and a
> novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the
> expounder, of human experience (Conrad, *Heart of
> Darkness* 6).

The process of writing and rewriting history has long been biased and influenced by unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation. Representation of the past through history can be influenced by our present day perspective, as well as by language or the rhetoric used. History has been created not merely in time, but also through time. Therefore, the flow of time gave each generation a new perception on the past (Saswat 130-1).

The violent annexation of the non-European world found in history the prominent instrument for the control of subject people (Saswat 122). Foucault asserts that to

have a history has to do with the consciousness of Western man and ultimately with "our modernity" (*The Order of Things* 239). He also believes that to have a history is to have a legitimate existence. So, history and legitimation go hand in hand (Foucault 226-7).

Robert Young, in his survey *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West,* shows that the construction of history and historiography are the main problematic in the shaping of a modern Eurocentric world view. He argues that Hegelian historicism "articulates a philosophical structure of the appropriation of the other as a form of knowledge", which postulates a single, unifying "governing structure of self-realization in all historical process" (Young 3-4).

In *Nations and Nationalism,* Gentler asserts that history becomes a crucial problem for the post-colonial writer. He argues that in addition to the questions of truth and fiction, narrativity and indeterminacy, time and space, there is the political dimension of postcolonial life which impresses itself so urgently. It is, therefore, the historical narrativity which structures the forms of reality itself (Gentler 27). Das. S. Saswat, in his book *The Postcolonial Empire: Continuity of Colonial Discourse*, states that "The map of the world can be seen as a palimpsest on which Europe has written its own dominance through the agency of history" (122-3).

Wilson Harris believes that "a philosophy of history may well lie buried in the arts of the imagination" (Harris 20). Therefore, in postcolonial societies the term "literary" has come to operate as a mode by which the objectivity of narrative, and particularly the narrative of history, is contested (Saswat 123).

In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man," Bhabha believes that language is a discourse of power because it provides the terms and the structures by which

individuals have a world, a method by which the "real" is determined. Hence, it becomes imperialistic reflecting a certain history, a certain way of seeing, and a certain worldview where triumph is for the colonizer victor (Bhabha 7).

In his essay, "The Occasion for Speaking", George Lamming reminds us of Hegel's assertion that the African is somehow outside of History, that Africa is no historical part of the world. He argues that history is a story of "Civilisation" written in a language that is appropriated by other cultures, suggesting a more universal, heterogeneous face of civilisation. This fact raises a lot of questions about the very concept of history (4).

In his very influential book, *Masks of Conquest,* Gauri Viswanathan asserts that the concept of universalism became part of the fabric of Empire. When the introduction of Christianity was considered by the colonial administration to be too great a threat to good order, the "universal" discourse of English literature was consciously adopted as the vehicle for educating the elites in tenets of civilised morality. Hence, the "universal" discourse of English literature is loaded with imperialist ideology latent in language (32). Hence, postcolonial societies are increasingly cautious of that neo-universalist internationalism which includes them within monocentric or Europe-dominated systems of politics and culture (Saswat 127).

Discussions of history lead us to an analysis of its relation to place. Place and displacement are one of the most formative experiences of the twentieth century. They are fundamental features of postcolonial discourse. Place in postcolonial discourse does not simply mean "landscape". It is rather the complex interaction of

language, history and environment. There is an immense role of culture in the construction of place and displacement (Saswat 124).

Displacement, or the lack of "fit" between language and place, may be experienced by both those who possess English as a mother tongue and those who speak it as a second language. This is created by a sense of dislocation from a historical "homeland" as well as a sense of dislocation created by the dissonance between languages. This concomitant difference is a continual reminder of the separation, and yet also of the hybrid interpenetration of the colonizer and colonized (Saswat 124).

Robert Koretsch in his book *Unhiding the Killer,* asserts that the postcolonial text is the outcome of this sense of "lack of fit" between language and place constructing a new language (43). The postcolonial text, negotiating the space between the textual language and the lived space becomes the metonym of the continual process of reclamation, as a cultural reality is both posited and reclaimed from the incorporating dominance of English (Saswat 125). Thus, language always negotiates a kind of gap between the word and its signification. Harris Wilson asserts that language and the process of "naming" not only reflect or represent place but it is rather involved in the process of its creation (Harris 125).

A characteristic feature of postcolonial literatures is the concern with either developing or recovering an appropriate identifying relationship between subject and object, between self and place (Saswat 125). Land is a palimpsest, a kind of parchment on which the process of history is inscribed and re-inscribed generation after generation. In *The Middle Passage*, V.S. Naipaul sees that the history of the Caribbean is signified in the land, "There is slavery in the vegetation. In the

sugarcane, brought by Columbus on that second voyage when, to Queen Isabella's fury, he proposed the enslavement of the Amerindians" (Naipaul 61-2). Thus, Naipaul demonstrates the complex way in which history is embedded in place.

Therefore, the language of travel, of exploration, of settlement, indeed naming itself, turned empty space into "place". In postcolonial experience, the linkage between language, place and history is far more prominent because interaction is so much more urgent and contestatory (Saswat 125-6).

The conflict between the former imperial centre or the "metropolis", and the former colonies or "periphery", became the central idea of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989) (Walder 66). The main idea in *The Empire Writes Back* is that there is no escape from universal power structures, because there is no escape from writing, discourse or language. Ashcroft et al., define the process of universal hegemony as "the conscious or unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" (*The Empire* 8).

Loomba believes that "the notions of the "universal" can be extremely ethnocentric because they are articulated in the image of the dominant culture (Loomba 125). So the term postcolonial is used to encompass all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. Every national literature has emerged out of this imperial process and asserts the differences from the assumptions of imperial centre. And hence writing back is the main drive for this approach to postcolonial writings (Walder 168).

Ashcroft et al. assert that postcolonial writers interrogate the "metaphysics" of the West by rewriting versions of the English canon, thereby offering a more radical "writing back" than mere "nationalist assertion",

> The "Empire writes back" to the imperial "centre", not only through nationalist assertion, proclaiming itself central and self-determining, but even more radically by questioning the bases of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view. […] Writers such as J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, Patrick White, Chinua Achebe, Margaret Atwood, and Jean Rhys have all rewritten particular works from the English 'canon' with a view to restructuring 'realities' in post-colonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based (*The Empire* 2, 33).

Texts such as Nkosi's *Mating Birds* and Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* articulate the impossibility of evading the destructive and marginalizing power of the dominant centre and the need for its abrogation, which is the act of refusing the categories of imperial power (Said, *The Empire* 110, 115). Hence, *The Empire Writes Back* offers a "radical critique" towards "Eurocentric" assumptions about race, nationality, language and literature. Mishra and Hodge assert that "the post-colonial is reduced to a purely textual phenomenon, as if power is simply a matter of discourse and it is only through discourse that counter-claims might be made" (Mishra and Hodge 5, 3).

Ashcroft et al. see reading for "resistance" as a main principle for theorizing postcolonial texts. They consider "language [as] a medium of power"; they argue that post-colonial literary language has to "seize the language of the [imperial] centre and [re-place] it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (*The Empire* 38, 77). They put forward a theory of literary resistance that has to do with an inevitable

hybridization within, and "continuity of preoccupations" between, those cultures "affected by the imperial process" (*The Empire* 2).

This discursive replacement begins with an "abrogation" or refusal of the normative standards of the imperial culture – the standards of "correct" grammar, syntax, and pronunciation, for example – and then by an "appropriation" of the colonizer's language, to the cultural and political ends of the colonized. They assert that there are some resistance strategies latent in postcolonial writings, namely figurative literary silence (as in Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds*), exorbitant rewriting of canonical literary texts from the other side of the colonial divide (as in Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, or J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*), portraying the distortions that occur in colonized cultures when imperial languages have not successfully been abrogated and appropriated (as in V. S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*)" (Bruce 188).

Hence, in Tiffin's words, the "writing back" process mediates between Foucault's model which focuses on the discourse of power imbedded in postcolonial writing, and Richard Terdiman's thesis which is based on the literary textual repetition or "counter-discourse" (Tiffin 17-34).

Besides, Postcolonialism covers the domains of history, economics, colonial and imperial discourses, the condition of colonized peoples, and strategies of domination and decolonization. Postcolonial literary criticism is involved with postcolonial writing in any language, but most commonly in a European language, trying to force a reassessment of the literature of colonialism and the metropolitan 'centre' (Bohata, *Post-Colonialism* 2).

Postcolonialism has been established as a growing field in the metropolitan centres by scholars working on European colonialism in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Chrisman and Parry 37). Postcolonial discourse is concerned with certain themes related basically to the depiction of certain anticolonial struggles, the articulation of structures of domination both internal and external, and the decolonization of the mind.

In her book, *Post-Colonialism Revisited*, Kirsti Bohata asserts that, "in its engagement with cultural, geographical, political, gendered, sexual and temporal specificities, postcolonial writing (be it creative, academic or political) may be read as forming complex discourses which deconstruct and reimagine personal, cultural and national identities" (2). These complex discourses create a growing concern with shifting identity, "remembering" the self, or a self-conscious imagining of nation.

Hence, postcolonial studies diagnoses the textual workings of not only binarized colonial, anticolonial, and neocolonial struggles, but also of such blurry markers of 'the postcolonial experience' as national expatriation, linguistic appropriation, cultural syncretism, and identity fragmentation (Chrisman and Parry 2-3).

The postcolonial merges several distinct eras and arenas of colonialism and imperialism, individual struggles of decolonization, subsequent regimes of neocolonialism and neo-imperialism, and various post-World War II movements of exile, migration, and diaspora into a collective critical entity that effectively homogenizes differences of history and geography, place and politics. Though the main aspects of 'postcoloniality' are heterogeneity, difference, alterity, hybridity, it has compressed the differences of other people's history on a methodological and discursive level (Chrisman and Parry 1-2). Raka Shome affirms that the prefix "post"

in 'postcolonialism' implies a thinking through and beyond the problematics of colonialism and neocolonialism (Shome 19). Anne McClintock adheres to the idea of progressive linearity suggested in the prefix 'post' in 'postcolonialism' moving from colonization and colonial literature to decolonization and postcolonial literature (McClintock 1).

## 3. Otherness and the Politics of Representation

Postcolonial discourse theory exposes latent ideologies and mechanics of imperial hegemony which find expression in common tropes and stereotypes within the metropole and its colonies. It is so useful in deconstructing and demystifying categories of knowledge-as-power formed by Orientalizing discourses. It has given rise to the well-known concept of "the colonial other" (Bohata, *Post-Colonialism* 18).

In the study of colonial discourse, "Otherness" or "the other" simply signifies difference. In postcolonial understanding of the term, it is derived from Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis, with a distinction between the "other" and "Other" (18). In postcolonial terms, the Other can be described as the imperial centre of Empire itself since it "provides the terms in which the colonized subject gains a sense of his or her identity as somehow 'other', [and] it becomes [...] the ideological framework in which the colonized may come to understand the world" (Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies* 170-1).

The colonialist's military power confirms a total projection of his self on the "other". He destroys, without any doubt, the indigenous economic, social, political, legal and moral systems and imposes his own. Subjugation of the colonial other guarantees recognition of the colonialist, and allows the colonial subject's identity to

become deeply dependent on his position as a master. This preoccupation with the inverted self-image marks the relations that characterise the colonial encounter (Saswat 2).

Denigrating images and stereotypes are used in the colonial text to maintain a sense of moral difference. They also allow for the transformation of social and historical dissimilarities into universal, metaphysical differences. Due to these vast differences, colonial existence would last for long. Hence, the role of this strategy is to prolong colonialism, to dehistoricize and desocialize the colonial world, as well as to present it as a metaphysical "fact of life", that the colonizer has no hand in, and that he has to alleviate it through the process of civilization (Saswat 2).

Abdul JanMohamed asserts that the "othering" of colonized subjects by European colonialist thought, through stereotypes of backwardness and inferiority, rested on the "Manichean allegory", in which a binary discursive opposition is created between the races. Hence, such Manichean binaries lead to creating images of the non-European, as well as to the construction of the European "superior self". Many anticolonial and postcolonial critiques are preoccupied with exposing the way in which they work in colonialist representations (JanMohamed 60).

Loomba (2002) believes that traditional racist ideas were intensified, expanded, and reworked in European imperialism and colonialism. Colonial powers interacted differently with the native populations, producing varied racial discourses and identities. For instance, the Spanish in America and the Portuguese in India settled down in the colonies, adopted local manners and intermarried in a way that the English disparaged. According to some commentators, this showed a "lack of racial feeling" on the part of the Portuguese or the Spanish (Loomba 96).

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British colonialism, nonetheless, did not allow for easy social or sexual contact with local peoples. This policy mirrored the nature of British colonial administration, which operated mostly through local authorities and existing power structures. In countries like Namibia and South Africa, there was yet another pattern where racial divisions were maintained along with direct and powerful intervention (Loomba 97).

Albert Memmi asserts that the colonized subjects are referred to by the "mark of the plural". The colonized are never characterized in an individual manner, but rather in an anonymous collectivity; "They are this"; "They are all the same" (Memmi 88). The individual European faces the alien masses, and if he identifies too much with them, he transgresses the boundary between "self" and "other" and regresses into primitive behaviour, into madness (Loomba 118). Vaughan believed that colonial medical discourse represented Africans as members of groups "and it was these groups, rather than individuals, who were said to possess distinctive psychologies and bodies" (Vaughan 11).

In Freud's writings, especially *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), "Primitives" are like to children, and to the civilized "neurotic", having not achieved the psychological growth of the adult European. In the primitive mind, "the deed […] is a substitute for thought", and pleasure is primary. Thought and reflection are not available to "primitive men". Hence, psychic and reflective growth are understood according to cultural and racial difference (Loomba 118).

Megan Vaughan asserts that, in colonized societies, "the need to objectify and distance the 'other' in the form of the madman or the leper, was less urgent in a situation in which every colonial person was in some sense, already 'Other' ". Hence,

"the literature on madness in colonial Africa was more concerned with a definition of "Africanness" than with a definition of madness" (Vaughan 10, 119). Vaughan explains that madness, as in the case of the European who goes native, was regarded as a transgression of supposed group identities (Loomba 119).

Modernization in colonial societies eroded traditional structures. For this reason, colonial authorities introduced indirect rule, whereby Africans would be controlled through their "traditional" leaders and customs. Cooppan believes that writings on African psychology and psychiatry served the need to define Africans as fundamentally different from Europeans. Hence, it is not surprising that anticolonial resistance is coded as madness, dependency or infantile regression within the frameworks of psycho-Analytic discourse (Cooppan, *Inner Territories* 1).

Recently, Franz Fanon has been viewed as the most important anticolonial writer activist. His comrade and critic Albert Memmi described him as, "a prophet of the Third World, a romantic hero of decolonization" (Memmi 39). In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon is concerned with the psychology of the oppressed. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, however, he is an anticolonial activist concerned with the revolt of the oppressed, adopting the Algerian cause of liberation and depicts a unified people who have overcome the devastating effects of colonialism (Loomba 124-5).

At the beginning of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon states, "At the risk of arousing the resentment of my coloured brothers, I will say that the black man is not a man" (8). The colonial experience annihilates the colonized's sense of self, "seals" him into "a crushing objecthood", which is why he is "not a man". Fanon

argued that in fact colonialism was the cause which produced psychic difference along racial lines and annihilated the black subject into nothingness (239, 250).

Fanon defined the psychological condition of self-alienation, which is the result of the internalization of the colonizer's perception. This is what Lacan describes as the production of the subject in the gaze of the Other (Bohata, *Post-Colonialism* 23). Indeed, Fanon reproduces the Lacanian schema of the "mirror stage", which is considered as the vital stage in the construction of the subject. This Lacanian schema implies that as the infant envisions itself for the first time in the mirror, it sees a reflection smoother, more co-ordinated and stable than itself. The subject constructs itself in the imitation of as well as opposition to this image. Fanon writes:

> When one has grasped the mechanism described by Lacan, one can have no further doubt that the real "other" for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely, only for the white man the "other" is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the not-self, that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable. For the black man […] historical and economic realities come into the picture (*Black Skin* 161).

For the white subject, the black other is everything that lies outside the self. For the black subject, however, the white other serves to define everything that is desirable, everything that the self desires. This desire of whiteness is rooted within power structures, therefore "the white man is not only the Other but also the master, real or imaginary" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 138). Hence, blackness confirms the white self, but whiteness empties the black subject.

For the black man, colour and racial identity occupies every aspect of his life. Fanon recalls that when a child on the streets of Paris pointed to him, calling out "Look! A Negro", he felt "responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for

my ancestors [...] I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin"" (*Black Skin* 112). The black person seeks to cope by adopting white masks that will somehow make the fact of his blackness vanish (Loomba 124).

Hence, the West's efforts to define itself in opposition to alterity has created a broad and varied range of stereotypes, including those of Africa as the "Dark Continent", Asia as "the exotic Orient" and Australia as a "Down Under hell" (Thieme 4). Clough's long poem *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* (1848), Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), and Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860) are classic examples of colonial literature (Bruce 108-9).

The crossing of boundaries has been considered a risky endeavour in novels and non-fictional narratives lest the European would "go native" in the wilds. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, for example, dramatizes how the European prodigy, "Mr. Kurtz", goes mad in the "wilderness". Africa is depicted as a primeval jungle and a source of power and wealth which fascinates and maddens the colonialist hero, Kurtz. Marlow, the narrator of the story, tells us that while Kurtz's "intelligence was perfectly clear […] But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and by heavens! I tell you it had gone mad" (95).

Although Kurtz's dislocation has been read as a product of colonialist greed, and the novel as a critique of imperialism, it can also reflect the primitivism of classical psychoanalysis. Chinua Achebe, in his essay "An Image of Africa" (1989) called it "a story in which the very humanity of black people is called into question" (1). In this novel as in much colonialist fiction, Africa is a place where

the European mind disintegrates and regresses into a primitive state. Africa, India, China and other alien lands induce madness, they are madness itself.

The emergence of postcolonial literatures in English is of a paramount importance in examining how the colonizers and colonized viewed each other, and how the colonized established or renewed their claims to a separate and distinctive cultural identity (Griffiths, "The Post-colonial Project" 164). The move towards the assertion of political independence was accompanied by an extraordinary efflorescence of literary creation and cultural assertion in these nations (Innes 121).

Many cultural nationalists emphasize the existence of a culture which is the antithesis of the colonial one. What is problematic about this is that this antithesis culture is derived from and confirms the antithetical images already constructed by the colonizer in order to justify his presence. Instead of refuting the idea that the Celt, Australian, or African is incapable of reason and self-discipline as the Englishman, cultural nationalists celebrated the characteristics for which they were denigrated: emotionalism, irrationality, primitiveness (Innes 123).

Senghor asserts that cultural nationalists scornfully dismissed the native as belonging to the natural rather than the human world. They declared their culture fundamentally rural in contrast to the urban and mechanistic civilization of the colonizer. The colonizer, thus, holds that the native is devoid of history. Indeed, the native is out of the linear development of history because of what they described as an unchanging tradition, a timelessness, or a circular history which would reinstall the pre-colonial past. Hence, the colonizer boasts the superiority of his written records and evolving civilization. The colonized, on the other hand,

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emphasized oral traditions, which were claimed to preserve the past; and celebrated the language and voice of the non-literate 'folk' (Innes 123).

Therefore, the written text became an essential tool in this Othering process, whose power exceeded its objective content. The indigenous culture continued to exist alongside this new construction of a dominant culture. It was metaphorically 'silenced'. Its voice ceased to be heard in the arenas of power, and its values ceased to be recognized. It was frequently described as traditional and exotic. Modernization, on the other hand, became synonymous with the promotion of the cultural values of the colonizer, and the development of the so-called civilization (Griffiths, "The Post-colonial Project" 166).

This Othering process is part of the so-called civilizing mission that attempted to bring the 'native' out of darkness into light. Indigenous cultures and languages continued to exist, though with a growing tendency to create new hybrid forms within the colonized culture, usually in modes which reinforced their inferior position in the newly evolving power structures (Griffiths, "The Post-colonial Project" 166).

Postcolonial works rewriting other classic English works have been identified as "counter-discourse", "writing back", "oppositional literature", and "con-texts", as a strategy for interrogating and contesting latent imperial mythologies in the English canon (Thieme 1). According to Helen Tiffin, these texts are not merely "writing back" to an English canonical text, but to the whole discourse. The term "writing back" has become popular in the early 1980s by Salman Rushdie, playing on the title of the Star Wars sequel, *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980); he entitled a newspaper article on British racism, "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance".

It subsequently became fairly generally associated with the project of dismantling Eurocentric literary hegemonies (Thieme 3).

Richard Terdiman's *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (1985) is an examination of the problematics of presumed adversarial discourse (1). Terdiman examines the ambivalent nature of the struggle of nineteenth-century French writers to achieve "separation" from the dominant discourse of the middle-class. Terdiman asserts that dominant discourses are contested and interrogated by counter-discursive practices (1).

Edward Said's contribution to postcolonial literature is very apparent in theorization of the creation of the concept of the Orient and the mode of knowledge of Orientalism in European imagination. Thus, Orientalism yielded a model for examining how peoples and cultures could be partly coerced and partly persuaded into defining themselves by the stereotypes offered by a dominant alien culture. Therefore, Said is concerned with the relationship between textual representations and social practice, and how power structures or power relations come into play in the battlefield of the text (Griffiths, "The Post-colonial Project" 165).

Edward Said applied Foucault's idea of the existing interrelatedness of knowledge and power to an analysis of European imperialism's hegemonic control over the colonies. This very apparent in his two books *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Said combines his theory with the Hegelian dichotomy of Self/Other to argue that colonialism created non-mutual and hierarchical relations in which the colonizer was always and obviously the Self to the marginalized Other of the colonized (Griffiths, "The Post-colonial Project" 165).

## 4. Fanonian Politics of Liberation

Edward Said is recognized as the founder of postcolonialism, but there are a number of influential postcolonial figures whose writing precedes Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and who are, of course, considered "postcolonial" retrospectively. Famous writer and activist, Frantz Fanon (1925-61), is one of such writers, whose psychological and anticolonial works has been very significant (Bohata, Post-Colonialism 13). Long before Said, Fanon pronounced his indictment of colonialism maintaining that Europe "is literally the creation of the Third World". Its material wealth and labour comes from the colonies, "the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians and the yellow races that have fuelled the 'opulence' of Europe" (*The Wretched* 96). In his works, Fanon describes the colonial world as a Manichaean world, in which the world of the native is the antithesis of the world of the settler.

Fanon had first-hand experience of the psychological effects of the colonial situation in Algeria on the edge of decolonization. He reported that the Algerians were the victims of violence in all its forms, namely rape, torture, and death. Fanon explained that colonial violence is a symptom of sadistic, racist anger, basic to the colonial system. Fanon wrote from the perspective of a colonial subject in the heyday of decolonization. He emphasized the cultural aspects of the colonized in their quest for identity. Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* has been an anticolonial work which forcefully spoke of the misery of the colonized (Walder 73-74).

Fanon's works, namely *Black Skin, White Masks* (originally *Peau* noir, *masques blancs,* Paris, 1952), *The Wretched of the Earth (Les damnes de la terre,* Paris, 1961), *Studies* in *a Dying Colonialism (L'an cinq de la revolution algerienne,* Paris,

1959) and *Toward the African Revolution (Pour la revolution africaine,* Paris, 1964), developed Marxist and psychoanalytic accounts of the crippling consequences of colonization. Fanon was also an active supporter of the "Negritude" movement led by Francophone writers namely, Aime Cesaire of Martinique, Leopold Senghor of Senegal and Leon Damas of French Guiana, who attempted to celebrate black cultural and literary attitudes (Walder 73).

*The Wretched of the Earth* offers a harsh criticism of the false humanity of Europe and of the emptiness of the mimic men who have installed themselves as captains of the postcolonial state. It also gives poignant hopes for overcoming the debilitating forms of social and psychic wretchedness that haunt the colonial and postcolonial worlds (Scott 200). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon brings together psychoanalytic notions of the alienation of the colonized, with Marxist notions of the economic and historical forces such as poverty which have brought about that alienation (Walder 75).

In his Preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre, a supporter of liberation movements, asserts that, in this book, "Third World finds itself and speaks to itself through his voice", addressing the European reader who "pretends to forget that you own colonies and that in them men are massacred in your name" (*The Wretched* 10, 14).

Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* remains a very significant work for postcolonial thinking because Fanon wrote from the perception of a colonial subject in the midst of an independence struggle. It is also very significant because Fanon addressed the cultural aspect of colonial and postcolonial history giving it a central place. Indeed, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon has spoken

more directly, profoundly, and lastingly than any other single anticolonial work on behalf of and to the colonized (Walder 57).

On the other hand, *Black Skin, White Masks* is thought of as the earlier meditation on the psycho-political *aporias* of black identity (Scott 196). Fanon believes that colonial institutions repress the colonized self and prevent the colonized people from achieving a higher and unifying consensus. Hence, the colonized are alienated from a harmonious identity (Scott 204).

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon dramatizes the instability of psychic identification under colonialism's hegemonic rule of racist stereotype and primitivist fantasy. His prophetic accounts of anticolonial nationalist struggle influenced a world of revolutions (Cooppan 5-6).

Both Fanon and Memmi theorized about an inferiority complex associated with colonized peoples. Thus, the colonized values oneself according to the standards of the colonizer. The former embodies a sense of inferiority through internalizing the perspective, values and ideology of the colonial or imperial hegemony. Memmi asserts that the "myth of the colonized" is maintained by the colonizer as an instrument of colonial power (Bohata, *Post-Colonialism* 22).

What is paradoxical is that the colonized seeks a sense of identity that stems from identification with the colonizer, "for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 12). In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon describes how "the negro of the Antilles will become proportionately whiter in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language" (18). The desire of the black Antillean to become white turns out to be very helpful in understanding self-alienation and inferiority complex (Bohata, *Post-Colonialism* 23).

Fanon also stresses the association of vice and virtue with black and white respectively.

> the Antillean has recognised himself as a Negro, but by virtue of an ethical transit, he also feels (collective unconscious) that one is a Negro to the degree to which one is wicked, sloppy, malicious, instinctual. Everything that is the opposite of these Negro modes of behaviour is white (*Black Skin* 192).

Fanon's concepts of whiteness and blackness are also signifiers of wider cultural attributes and the dynamics of power. He asserts, "Furthermore, I will broaden the field of this description and through the Negro of the Antilles include every colonized man [sic]" (*Black Skin* 18).

Fanon offered an insight into the cultural aspect of the postcolonial condition. According to Fanon, "native" cultural producers would go through three phases in relations with the dominant, colonial culture. Firstly, the native demonstrates complete assimilation of the culture of the occupying power. Then, in the second phase, the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is. Finally, in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native fights for a nationalist self-assertion. This last phase is opposed to the first phase calling for a revolutionary literature such as that expressed in the writings of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the Trinidadian Michael Anthony (*The Wretched* 222-3). Hence, Fanon's cultural paradigm has been more influential among writers and critics in the newly decolonized nations of the Caribbean, and Africa (Walder 78).

Nation and nationalism has been a crucial focus for liberating the colonized from imperialist oppression through creating an "imagined community" and inventing a self-image. Fanon explains that "a national culture is the sole body of efforts made by

a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself in existence" (*The Wretched* 233).

Benita Parry views Fanon and his fellow Martiniquan Aime Cesaire as,

> "authors of liberation theories... [who] affirmed the intervention of an insurgent, unified black self, acknowledged the revolutionary energies released by valorising the cultures denigrated by colonialism and, rather than construing the colonialist relationship in terms of negotiations with the structures of imperialism, privileged coercion over hegemony to project it as a struggle between implacably opposed forces (Parry 179).

Fanon is *par excellence* the revolutionary architect of anticolonial liberation. Narrative of liberation links a past and a present of domination to an expected future of Freedom through such generative tropes as alienation, repression, consciousness, awakening, resistance, struggle, and realization. Narrative of liberation works through the creation of an oppressive power that denies the subjugated their essential humanity. Therefore, the colonial subject moves from alienated dehumanization to self-realization (Scott 200-1).

Colonized subjects are physically and psychologically dehumanized. The reaction to this process of domination is immature in the form of more or less disorganized violence (Scott 202). Colonialism, as Fanon puts it, "is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence" (*The Wretched* 61).

There is a necessary correlation between the structure of the dehumanizing power that constitutes the colonial order and the project of decolonization. In this project therefore decolonization can have little meaning unless it, like the power it is

displacing, is total, absolute (Scott 203). Fanon believes that, "In decolonization, there is therefore the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation" (*The Wretched* 37).

Narrative of liberation represents the moment of consciousness; the moment of awakening – the creation of what one might call an anticolonial will. Fanon stresses the fact that independence constitutes the privileged political space of freedom, that space in which the ex-colonized are restored to their own history, and their humanity (Scott 202-3). Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* is one of the great texts through which narrative of liberation is articulated (Scott 198). In it Fanon believes that a nation's quest is a quest for autonomy and self-determination (Scott 203).

Albert Memmi asserts that Fanon's revolutionary struggle is due to his cultural rootlessness. He explains that Fanon is alienated from the French culture he was brought up to admire, the Martiniquan culture he was brought up to reject, and the Algerian culture he adopted but was never familiar with. He adopted a universalist humanism, being the voice of all oppressed subjects in a Messianic tone (Memmi 1).

## 5. The Postcolonial Dance of Discourse and Power

> Has colonialism really placed civilizations in contact?
> [...] I answer no. [...] No human contact, but relations of domination and submission (Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* 11, 21).

Edward Said's 1978 publication of *Orientalism* was an attempt of colonial discourse analysis to expose the hegemonic power relations between the colonizer and the colonized (Cooppan 2). Said argues that knowledge is closely related to

the operations of power. In his book *Orientalism*, Said believes that knowledge about the Orient was an ideological accompaniment of colonial power. Said's work spins around the idea that knowledge about non-Western peoples and cultures was accompanied by the ideological process of exerting power over them. Hence, Said attempts to problematize colonialism as a discursive formation enduring into the present (Scott 14).

In *Orientalism,* Said argues that the Orient was never a place but rather an "idea", "a creation with no corresponding reality." What brought that purely conceptual space into being, argues Said, is a European "style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction" made between "the Orient" and "the Occident". Said's name for that "style of thought" is Orientalism (Slemon, "Post-colonial Critical Theories" 193).

Orientalism is a discipline that is concerned with the misrepresentation of non-Western cultures in colonial discourse. Said exposes how this discipline is sustained by many other disciplines such as philology, art, economic and cultural studies, history, anthropology, philosophy, archaeology and literature (Loomba 42). *Orientalism*, along with the shifting perspectives on ideology and culture, is very crucial in explaining the making and functioning of colonial societies. Young asserts that, "colonial discourse analysis […] forms the point of questioning of Western knowledge's categories and assumptions" (Young 11).

Many Western intellectuals such as Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt had also examined the relationship between the production of knowledge about the colonial world and the ideology of domination (Williams and Chrisman 7). Even though Said's critique is anticipated by others, it was new in its

wide focus, its recourse to Foucault's work of the link between knowledge and the exercise of power, its use of literary texts to debate historical and epistemological processes. Indeed, Said's exploration of how culture and knowledge are used to interrogate colonial power inaugurated colonial discourse studies (Loomba 44).

Therefore, Orientalism is a Foucauldian "discourse" which puts forward the idea that colonial relations might be interwoven with, produced by, and productive of a "colonial discourse" that can be analysed through textuality (Slemon, "Post-colonial Critical Theories" 193). Said asserts that certain texts are given

> the authority of academics, institutions, and governments. […] Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it (*Orientalism* 94).

Thus, Said's *Orientalism* is influenced by the French post-structuralist Michel Foucault (1926-1984), who theorized the way power over the colonized is internalized through ideology, discourse, or language (Walder 70).

Said examined French and English canonical texts from the end of the eighteenth century to show their construction of the "East" by the "West" as inferior and "other" (Walder 71). He finds "what is silent or marginally present", reading them afresh in the context of imperial histories (*Culture and Imperialism* 78). Said, like Foucault, connects literary and cultural texts to structures of thought and the workings of power. He brings together a range of creative writers, statesmen, political thinkers, philologists and philosophers who contributed to Orientalism as an institution which then provided the lens through which the "Orient" would be perceived, and

controlled. Hence, power over colonized lands is reinforced by literary and cultural texts and ideas about the power of the West over the Orient (Loomba 42-3).

Said asserts that images of the Orient in European literary texts, travelogues and other writings contributed to the construction of an opposition between Europe and its "others". Hence, this representation of the Orient was vital to the creation of European culture as superior over other cultures and hegemonic towards other lands (Loomba 43). Said believes that these canonical texts should be interrogated and reinterpreted in terms of the "revolutionary realities of the world today, in which post-colonial societies were embattled and marginalized. Criticism should, according to Said, 'situate' literature in terms of emerging connections across national boundaries and other 'coercive' global power-structures" ("Figures" 3-17).

Discourse analysis exposes how power works through language, literature, culture and history. In this way, Said succeeded in showing how colonial authority functioned through producing a discourse about the Orient. Said analyses the structures of thinking manifest in literary and artistic production, in political and scientific writings and, more specifically, in the creation of Oriental studies (Loomba 45). Said's basic theory is that Orientalism, or the 'study' of the Orient, "was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")" (*Orientalism* 43).

Said emphasizes the fact that knowledge of the Orient could never be objective because it was embedded in colonial history and power relations. The Indian nationalist Bipin Chandra Pal asserted that:

When […] the European scientist studies the physical features of our land, when he mensurates our fields, trigonometrates our altitudes and undulations, investigates our animal, our vegetable or our mineral kingdoms, the records of his study are accepted as true and authoritative. But the study of man belongs altogether to a different plane. […] Here also the eye sees, the ear hears, but the real meaning of what is seen or heard is supplied not by the senses but by the understanding, which interprets what is heard in the light of its own peculiar experiences and associations (8-9).

Therefore, Orientalists' knowledge about non-Europeans is culturally biased and not objective but

a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them'). […] When one uses categories like Oriental and Western as both the starting and the end points of analysis, research, public policy […] the result is usually to polarize the distinction – the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western – and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies (*Orientalism* 45-46).

Nevertheless, *Orientalism* is not without its critics. Porter (1983) asserts that *Orientalism* suggests that a binary opposition between East and West has been a more or less static feature of Western discourses from classical Greece to the present day. Thus Said's book is seen to flatten historical nuances into a fixed East versus West divide (Porter 46).

There are three charges to Said concerning his work *Orientalism*. First, Said inflates the role of literary, ideological and discursive aspects, implying that colonialism was largely an ideological construct. Second, Said's work focuses on canonical Western literary texts. Finally, Said stresses the imposition of colonial power rather than on the confrontation to it (Bohata 200).

*Orientalism* is fundamentally concerned with how the Orient was constructed by Western knowledge, and not with how colonial subjects resisted such construction. However, this does not mean that colonialist discourse is all pervasive. In other works, Said examines anti-imperialist theorists such as Fanon in order to think about resistance and decolonization (Loomba 48).

Foucault himself asserted that power and resistance are inextricably linked. Hence, Said's work proves to be incomplete. Hence, colonial discourse studies nowadays are trying to locate and theorize oppositions, resistances and revolts (successful and otherwise) on the part of the colonized (Loomba 48).

Anticolonial nationalists depended on certain epistemological assumptions regarding culture, class, subjectivity, history, and knowledge to start the new theoretical practice of postcoloniality. Edward Said's *Orientalism* was the text that played a crucial role in opening it up and making it visible as a space of criticism.

The colonized had been reshaped, materially and psychologically, and the mission of the anticolonial project was the restoration of the colonized to full self-possession. The problem of the relationship between colonialism and knowledge consisted in the problem of the discrepancy between Europe's (mis)representations and the reality of the colonized: the problem, in other words, of the *inauthenticity* of colonial knowledge (Scott 11).

If colonial power had produced this representation/reality split (the well-known split of colonial alienation in which the colonized subject is divided from his/her authentic self, and the whole problem, derived from that split, of the "national culture"

of the colonial *intelligentsia*),[2] then the task of decolonization consisted in the demand of self-representation, a process of restoring an authentic relationship between representation and reality (Scott 11).

What the anticolonial moment demanded, therefore, was first and foremost a theory of politics, a theory of liberationist politics that would bring about this restoration. The goal of the anticolonial project is the decolonization of the conceptual apparatus (Scott 11-2).

As a political-theoretical project, postcoloniality has been concerned principally with the decolonization of representation; the decolonization of the West's theory of the non-West. This space of postcoloniality has profoundly altered our ways of thinking about colonialism. Postcoloniality altered the question about colonialism and provided a new set of conceptual tools with which not merely to revive colonialism as a going problematic, but to reframe it in terms of the relation between colonial power and colonial knowledge. Hence, Postcoloniality endorsed a systematic rethinking of contemporary practices in terms of the extent to which they reproduced forms of knowledge that emerged as part of the apparatus of colonial power (Scott 12).

What postcolonialism urges is to restore to the colonized the "agency" denied by Eurocentrism. The postcolonial story attempts to show that European power was never all-encompassing, never total, and that the colonized always resisted, always made their own history (Scott 16).

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[2] This is famously theorized in the work of Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Vintage 1967); and Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral* (New York: Africa Information Service. 19731.

Said shows that this antagonism is crucial to European self-image. He points out that colonized peoples are viewed as irrational, barbaric, sensual, lazy, uncivilized, and static. The colonizers, on the other hand, are seen as rational, educated, hard-working, developing, and civilized (Loomba 45). Many colonial and postcolonial novels deal with the problematic of a cultural encounter. The narrative of Eurocentrism is toppled by a new paradigm of cultural politics. The "dominating", "dominated" binary remains the perpetual theme of cultural encounter and its persistence textualises history and historicises texts (Saswat 1).

## 6. Recovering Subaltern Speech

Postcolonial critics think of the native subject in the postcolonial condition as powerless, passive, and voiceless. Gayatri Spivak, for instance, put forward the idea that the subaltern cannot speak (Goldberg and Quayson 327). In her famous essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak theorizes about the production and retrieval of subaltern speech. Spivak's aim is, in her words, "to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the non-elite" (Spivak, 1988a, 271).

Using "sati", an ancient Indian practice of the self-immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre, Spivak presents as symbolic of the subaltern[3] the case of a political activist who sought to communicate her personal predicament through her suicide, but whose communication was foiled by the codes of patriarchy and colonialism in which her actions were inevitably inscribed (Chrisman and Parry 40). Spivak depicts her situation in the following terms:

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[3] Subaltern was a military term used for officers under the rank of captain. It is borrowed from Gramsci to refer to any oppressed person.

A young woman of sixteen or seventeen, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, hanged herself in her father's modest apartment in North Calcutta in 1926. The suicide was a puzzle since, as Bhuvaneswari was menstruating at the time, it was clearly not a case of illicit pregnancy. Nearly a decade later, it was discovered that she was a member of one of the many groups involved in the armed struggle for Indian independence. She had finally been entrusted with political assassination. Unable to confront the task and yet aware of the practical need for trust, she killed herself ... Bhuvaneswari had known that her death would be diagnosed as the outcome of illegitimate passion. She had therefore waited for the onset of menstruation. While waiting, Bhuvaneswari, the brahmacarini who was no doubt looking forward to a good wifehood, perhaps rewrote the social text of sati-suicide in an interventionist way (Spivak 307).

In her essay, Spivak confirms rather than counters the silencing effect of domination (Chrisman and Parry 40). She believes that the subaltern's voice/consciousness cannot be recovered, since the subaltern cannot be heard or read. Young explains the impossibility of recovery,

Rather than speak for a lost consciousness that cannot be recovered, a paternalistic activity at best, the critic 'can point to the place of woman's disappearance as an *aporia*, a blind-spot where understanding and knowledge is blocked. Complicating the assumption that the gendered subaltern is a homogeneous entity whose voice can be simply retrieved, Spivak demonstrates the paradoxical contradictions of the discourses which produce such *aporia* in the place of subject-positions, showing that the sati herself is at best presented with the non-choice of the robber's 'your money or your life!' 'Voice' is of little use in this situation (Young 64).

Here, Spivak suggests that the subaltern is mute by definition. Active agency or organized resistance cannot apply to subalternity. Spivak states, "To that extent, the subaltern is the name of the place which is so displaced from what made me and the organized resister, that to have it speak is like Godot arriving on a bus. We want it to

disappear as a name so that we can all speak" (Spivak 91). Indeed, Spivak seems to reconstitute the subaltern not only as a unified subject which cannot speak, but as a mute object – positioned outside agency (Chrisman and Parry 40).

Spivak asserts that we cannot retrieve a sense of colonised peoples as subjects of their history since our understanding of those subjects and their own history depends on colonial texts. She concludes that, "the subaltern cannot speak," and that "representation has not withered away" (Spivak 308).

Gayatri Spivak asserts that it is difficult for the colonized or "subaltern" subjects to recover "voice" or "agency". Spivak argues that to achieve "recovery" of "voice" would be of a paramount importance in challenging the devastating impact of colonial power, which was so persistent that it re-wrote intellectual, legal and cultural systems (Loomba 48-9). Henry Louis Gates suggests that for Spivak, therefore, "all discourse is colonial discourse" (Gates 466).

Spivak's assertion that the subaltern cannot speak has been read as "an expression of terminal epistemological and political pessimism" (Lowe et al. 83). In a later interview, Spivak said that she was misunderstood. She claimed that her purpose was to solve the problem of political subjectivity by romanticizing the subaltern as problematic and complex (Spivak 90).

## 7. Homi Bhabha and the Hybrid Identity

Many critics, notably Homi K. Bhabha, have asserted that the colonized has failed in creating stable and fixed identities. They rather put forward the idea of the "hybridity" of identities and the "ambivalence" of colonial discourse. JanMohamed argues that ambivalence itself implies a Manichean dichotomy between the colonizer

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and the colonized, and this is what really structures colonial encounters and relations (Loomba 91-2). Thus, while Abdul JanMohamed stresses the "Manichean" antagonism between colonized and colonizers. Homi Bhabha, however, suggests the fuzziness and ambiguity of this division (Loomba 127).

Bhabha attempts a shift towards a reading of the "in-between" spaces, the spaces in excess of the sum of the parts of social and cultural differences. His critical method aligns itself with the demand now being made by all kinds of "in-between" groups in the present-day post-colonial world – diasporic and minority communities, as well as disidentified social collectivities of all descriptions. Hence, theory must discover new and articulate ways to come to terms with these groups' experiences, past and present. Moreover, it must learn how to articulate a politics of cultural, racial, religious, or sexual differences without simply celebrating plurality at the expense of a cognizant description of social power and the differences it makes (*The Location* 2).

The figure of the hybrid (individual, text, cultural expression) is associated with ideas of exile (including a metaphorical exile from one's native culture brought about by alienation from language, landscape or the like) and the concomitant experience of self-division, dislocation or alienation experienced by the colonized (Bohata 129). Thus, hybridity results from cultural contact and exchange. Though it is a painful and troublesome for the individual to undergo this process, creating a hybrid liminal space proves to be a very exciting and fertile arena of cultural production (25).

Bhabha's use of the concept of hybridity has been both the most influential and the most controversial in postcolonial studies. Bhabha recalls Fanon to suggest that liminality and hybridity are necessary aspects of the colonial

condition. According to Fanon psychic trauma results when the colonized subject realizes that he can never attain the whiteness he has been taught to desire, or shed the blackness he has learnt to devalue. Thus, Bhabha emphasizes that colonial identities are always a matter of flux and agony. In an essay about Fanon's importance for our time, Bhabha asserts that "It is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated." Furthermore, Bhabha expounds that Fanon's image of black skin/white masks is not 'a neat division' but

> a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once which makes it impossible for the devalued, insatiable *evolue* to accept the colonizer's invitation to identity: "You're a doctor, a writer, a student, you're *different*, you're one of us". The ambivalent use of "different" that the Unconscious speaks of the form of Otherness. It is not the Colonialist Self or the Colonised Other, but the disturbing distance in between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness – the White man's artifice inscribed on the Black man's body. It is in relation to this impossible object that emerges the liminal problem of colonial identity and its vicissitudes (Bhabha 117; Loomba 148).

Terry Collits asserts that Fanon reminds us that "Skin is not just assumed like a mask: it is god-given even if its meanings are social, discursive. What skin and masks have in common is that they mark the interface between the self and the world: they are the border" (Collits 65-6; Loomba 148-149).

For Fanon, the image of "black skin/white masks" evokes not a hybridity but "a violated authenticity". For Bhabha, nonetheless, this image suggests an ambivalence that indicates not just the trauma of the colonial subject but also the workings of colonial authority as well as the dynamics of resistance. Colonial authority undermines itself by not being able to replicate its own self perfectly (Loomba 149).

In his essay, "Signs Taken for Wonders", Bhabha discusses the transmission of the Bible in colonial India, and how the book is hybridised in the process of being communicated to the natives. Bhabha concludes that "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference" (149). Hence, the Indians can mimic but never exactly copy English values. According to Bhabha, this is an image of the failure of colonial discourse and a site for resistance:

> resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or the exclusion of the "content" of another culture, as difference once perceived ... [but] the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference (149).

According to Bhabha's work, the hybridity of both colonizer and colonized can be conceived only by tracing the vicissitudes of colonial discourse, or the mutations in European culture (Loomba 151). Thus, the transaction of the postcolonial identity is not a one-way process in which the colonized oppresses or silences the colonized absolute terms. In practice, postcolonial writing stresses the mutuality of the process. It stresses the survival of the distinctive aspects of the culture of the oppressed. These distinctive aspects become an integral part of the new formations which arise from the clash of cultures characteristic of imperialism (Saswat 128).

Moreover, postcolonial studies have been interested in the issues of hybridity, creolization, and *mestizaje* – with the in-betweenness, diasporas, mobility and cross-overs of ideas and identities generated by colonialism (Loomba 145). Hybridity deals with the black diasporas or "the movements of black people [from

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Africa to Europe and the Americas] not only as commodities but engaged in various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy and citizenship" (Gilroy 146). Problems of cultural adjustment and adaptation immediately arose because of the movement of peoples of different cultures (Rupert 9). Therefore, these movements of people created what Gilroy calls "a black Atlantic", which he defines as an "intercultural and transnational formation" which "provides a means to re-examine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory" (Gilroy 16). Gilroy demonstrates the extent to which African-American, British and Caribbean diasporic cultures mould each other as well as the metropolitan cultures with which they interacted. Such diasporas have generated new and complex identities whose analysis demands new conceptual tools (Gilroy 16).

Stuart Hall points out that "the black subject and black experience are […] constructed historically, culturally, and politically". The term "ethnicity" has dominantly been used to indicate biologically and culturally stable identities, but Hall asks us to decouple it from its imperial, racist or nationalist deployment and to appropriate it to designate identity as a constructed process rather than a given essence. For Hall, the new black ethnicities visible in contemporary Britain are results of the "cut-and-mix" processes of "cultural diasporaization" (Hall 1996c: 446-447; Loomba 147-8).

Thus, ironically, the split, ambivalent, hybrid colonial subject projected in Bhabha's work is in fact curiously universal and homogeneous – that is to say he could exist anywhere in the colonial world. Fanon's critical ideas stem from his own experience, as a French-educated Martiniquan who became an Algerian

nationalist, which reflects themes of alienation, national longing and transnationalism that mark the experience of diaspora (Loomba 151).

Immigration is perhaps the definitive characteristic of the twentieth century. George Lamming asserts that since "exile is a universal figure", it is always tempting to present this experience in universalised terms (Lamming 12). However, there are significant differences between different kinds of diasporic experiences and exiles. For example, the experiences and traumas generated by the single largest population shift in history – the 1947 Partition of India and Pakistan – are quite different from immigration from once-colonised nations to Europe or America (Loomba 151).

Besides, anticolonial movements and individuals drew upon Western ideas and vocabularies to challenge colonial rule and hybridised what they borrowed by juxtaposing it with indigenous ideas. They ultimately use these ideas to assert cultural alterity and an unbridgeable difference between the colonizer and the colonized. Gandhi's notion of nonviolence or passive resistance, for example, was forged by his reading of Emerson, Thoreau, and Tolstoy. Moreover, the theory of Negritude was articulated in a very French idiom, and drew upon French intellectual traditions (Loomba 146).

Hybridity or *mestizaje* is more self-consciously invoked as an anticolonial strategy by some Caribbean and Latin American activists, most notably the Cuban writer Roberto Fernandez Retamar. In a landmark 1971 essay, Retamar writes that "our *mestizo* America" is unique in the colonial world because the majority of its population is racially mixed, it continues to use "the languages of our colonizers",

and "so many of their conceptual tools […] are also now our conceptual tools" (Retamar 9-11).

In Bhabha's work, mimicry is an effect of the cracks within colonial discourse (with discourse being understood in entirely linguistic terms). Resistance is a condition produced by the dominant discourse itself. Bhabha's writings are indeed useful in insisting that neither colonizer nor colonized is independent of the other. Colonial identities – on both sides of the divide – are unstable, agonized, and in constant flux. This undercuts both colonialist and nationalist claims to a unified self, and also warns us against interpreting cultural difference in absolute or reductive terms (Loomba 149-50).

The idea of ethnic pluralism, that everyone in a society is 'ethnic', does not reject the idea that some ethnic groups exercise dominance in a society. Indeed, this idea of ethnic pluralism goes against the idea of "essentialism" or the "dominant centre group" (Saswat 129). Stuart Hall asserts that due to the increasingly complex politics of representation and old binarisms of black/white, conceptions of the "essential" dominant ethnic subject are now increasingly open to question (Hall 129).

However, critics such as Benita Parry (1994a) assert that current theories of hybridity and ethnic pluralism work to downplay the bitter tension and the clash between the colonizers and the colonized. Thus, such theories distort the dynamics of anticolonial struggle. Nationalist endeavours as well as pan-nationalist movements such as Negritude were triggered by the alienation and the anger of the colonised, and cannot be understood, according to this view, within the parameters of current theories of hybridity (Parry 152).

Last but not least, hybridity can be seen as one contribution of the postcolonial. It helps in evading the reproduction of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth (Saswat 128). V.S. Naipaul and Bharati Mukherjee, Jamaica Kincaid and Lauretta Ngcobo, have emphasized "hybridity" as the characteristic feature of postcolonial histories, cultures and literatures (Walder 80). Therefore, the "post" in postcolonialism does not shut off the historical process. It is being reinterpreted towards the future (Walder 82).

# CHAPTER TWO: Colonial Imagination and Ideological Perceptions

Because of the derogatory discourse of colonialism and imperialism, postcolonial African and Caribbean writers have set out to write back by sketching a new (re)presentation of the oppressed. Their novels are replete with ideology and politics in such a way that they influenced the rewriting of history and literature. Indeed, Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul have expressed the plight of the colonial experience and postcolonial condition through the art of the novel.

## 1. Challenging Western Imperialist Discourse in *Arrow of God*

The fictionalization of history caused the misinterpretation of Africa which calls for the quest for cultural recovery. Abiola Irele's argues that,

> Imaginative literature in particular has functioned side by side with historical writing in the African assertion of an indigenous historicity, in the challenge to Western discourse which has sought to deny us true historical existence before our encounter with Europe (Irele, 1993, 167-8).

Achebe rejects the "monologic" form of Cary's novels to create his own kind of "dialogic" novel (Innes, 1990, 18). Ashcroft *et al.* state that Frantz Fanon

> "was able to characterize the colonial dichotomy (colonizer-colonized) as the product of a 'manichaeism delerium' [a term used in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*], the result of which condition is a radical division into paired oppositions such as good-evil; true-false; white-black, in which the primary sign is axiomatically privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship" (*Empire* 124-25).

The importance of Achebe's works is apparent in his challenging Western Imperialist discourse about Africa. Simon Gikandi asserts that, "it is through words that colonial

culture inscribes its presumed superiority over the African culture" (Gikandi, 1987, 162). Elleke Boehmer asserts that the uniqueness of Achebe's works is reflected in its resistance to Western discourse,

> His reputation as a great world writer rests centrally on his staggering success in wresting Africa into non-African frameworks of cognition through the medium of the novel form, yet, importantly, with-out ever compromising or substantially changing his novels' structures of religious and cultural reference (Boehmer 239).

This is also due to his infusion between Igbo language traditions and literary English creating a cultural impact in most of his works. His engagement with African and Western discourses fashioned his consciousness as a writer as well as his moral urgency (Lynn 1). Indeed, Achebe's use of African cultural and linguistic traditions creates an African viewpoint, and generates a more inclusive narrative consciousness. In his essay "The Truth of Fiction" (1989), Achebe states, "actually, art is man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him; an aspiration to provide himself with a second handle on existence through his imagination" (139, Achebe's emphasis).

Moreover, Harry Garuba emphasises that "the struggle between the colonized and the colonizer for the power to narrate [is], as Edward Said tells us, ... the major connection between imperialism and culture" (247). Obiechina states that Achebe could recognize that "the African writer has to correct the false impressions of African life contained in foreign writing on Africa" (Obiechina 24-25). Achebe asserts that the most fundamental role of the writer is that of a teacher. He states, "what I think a novelist can teach is something very fundamental, namely to indicate to his readers … that we in Africa did not hear of culture for the first time from

Europeans" (Achebe 1972, 7 "Interview by Donatus"). Achebe stresses the essential rationality of precolonial African societies as a way to challenge racist colonial stereotypes (Amoko 3-4). Achebe states in *There Was a Country: A Memoir*,

> Writing has always been a serious business for me. I felt it was a moral obligation. A major concern of the time [the independence era] was the absence of the African voice. Being part of that dialogue meant not only sitting at the table but effectively telling the African story from an African perspective – in full earshot of the world. ... It was important to us [writers] that a body of work be developed of the highest possible quality that would oppose the negative discourse in some of the novels we encountered. By "writing back" to the West we were attempting to reshape the dialogue between the colonized and the colonizer. Our efforts, we hoped, would broaden the world's understanding, appreciation, and conceptualization of what literature meant when including the African voice and perspective (53, 55).

He attempts to rewrite the whole discourse written about Africa. He states,

> Here then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse – to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. ... For no thinking African can escape the pain of the wound in our soul. ... I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them (Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher" 71-72).

Irele points out that, "A title like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is sufficiently indicative of our thematic preoccupation with the pathos of our historical experience" (Irele, 2002, 87). After dropping his European name and rejecting the Westernization evident in his early life, Achebe states that, "although I did not set about it consciously in that solemn way, I know that my first book, *Things Fall Apart*,

was an act of atonement with my past, the ritual return and homage of a prodigal son" (*Hopes* 38).

Achebe states that "in the colonial situation, presence was the critical question, the crucial word" and that the denial of African 'presence' in European discourse "was the keynote of colonialist ideology" (Achebe, 1991, 4). The symbolic code of *Arrow of God* proceeds through a chain of oppositions: Winterbottom/ Ezeulu (colonial power/traditional power); Nwaka/ Ezeulu (political power/sacred power); John Goodcountry/ Moses Unachukwu (desacralization/ retaining the sacred); Oduche/ Nwafo (conversion/ fidelity) (Mathuray 51). *Arrow of God* dramatises how Ezeulu and other members of his community attempt to compromise the colonizer's rule and religion with their native culture and heritage (Lynn 15).

In *Arrow of God*, Achebe is concerned with the consequences of colonialism and not its process. He focuses on the colonial impact on the state of Umuaro (Nwoga 38). Ezeulu's power has been weakened by the British administration. As a result, the political and social life of Umuaro is disrupted. What is ironic is that the new colonial system gets to destroy the most enlightened member of Umuaro community (Awuyah 217). Gikandi dismisses the mythico-religious dimension of *Arrow of God* stating that "the conflicts in Umuaro are not a rivalry between two gods Ulu and Idemili" but "actually a struggle between two conflicting ideological interests and authorities," echoed by Nwaka and Ezeulu (Gikandi, 1987, 153).

Furthermore, the British colonialists in *Arrow of God* exhibit arrogance and racism towards the Igbo people (Nwoga 38). The idea of the white man's burden to civilize the Africans is expressed by Captain Winterbottom in noting the transformation in his houseboy, Boniface,

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> 'He's a fine specimen, isn't he? He's been with me four years. He was a little boy of thirteen – by my own calculation, they've no idea of years – when I took him on. He was absolutely raw' (*Arrow* 35).

Oduche's education represents a powerful tool to fight against the presence of the colonizer. Therefore, the attempt of Achebe and other African writers to reclaim culture and history is due to the work of the likes of Oduche (Awuyah 218).

## 2. Nation-building through Tradition in *Anthills of the Savannah*

Achebe attempts to suggest a solution to his troubled society through a new vision of the past. In the 1970s, Achebe saw himself as a protest writer who had "moved from criticizing his society to directly taking a hand in remolding it" (Ogungbesan 40). In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe attempts nation-building through tradition. He depicts the importance of history to the present and the future. He saw the African tradition as a store of values and a source of stability for the future. Therefore, African tradition and culture can be the remedy to the problems that the community suffers from, namely corruption, deterioration, division, and alienation (Podis and Saaka 107).

C.L. Innes and others have referred to "the gap between the contemporary and the traditional novels" which suggests that "Achebe saw little organic continuity between past and present". This changed with *Anthills of the Savannah* where "the traditional is seen to be living and continued in new and viable forms in the present" (Innes, 1990, 171, 172). In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe implies that the journey towards the future must be based on a return to the past, to the tradition. In the novel, rural Abazon symbolizes the tradition that is depicted in opposition to modernity in the

capital of Kangan. The old wise man of Abazon suggests the possibility of mending the tradition and learning new thing.

> We do not fully understand the ways of today yet but we are learning. A dancing masquerade in my town used to say: 'It is true I do not hear English but when they say Catch am nobody tells me to take myself off as fast as I can'…. 'So we are ready to learn new things and mend our old, useless ways. If you cross the Great River to marry a wife you must be ready for the risk of night journey by canoe…. (*Anthills* 127).

Achebe seeks solutions for the present in the frameworks of the past. This is part of his decolonizing process and national fortifications. Ikem, Chris, and Beatrice get disillusioned because of the state of chaos and corruption in Kangan. Elewa's baby symbolizes hope for the future as well as a testimony to the failures of the past (Cooper 86, 59).

Achebe believes that the problems affecting modern Nigeria can be solved through the value system embodied in the traditions of the Igbo culture. He depicts characters as types of the varied values embodied in the narrative. He maintains that the source of trouble of modern Nigeria can be attributed to the conflict between an Igbo value system and a colonial one. The characters in the novel debate their pasts, plan political strategy, and attempt to build a community. Most of the characters from the ruling class are from the African elite who have received Western-styled education. For example, Chris, Ikem, and Sam, His Excellency, all have attended Lord Lugard College (Podis and Saaka 105, 107).

The novel reveals ambivalence towards sociocultural modernization highlighting its attraction, and criticizing its liability to corruption, and failure to fit traditional values and cultural needs (108). Beatrice is the symbol of the duality between tradition and

modernity in the image of both a clever Westernized sophisticate and a "village priestess" (*Anthills* 105).

The presence of the delegation, the kolanut, as well as the childbirth in the novel is very significant to the understanding of the novel. The presence of the kolanut in the Elewa's baby naming party gives power to the tradition and creates the feeling of a unified community. Indeed, the ceremony had a great spiritual effect on Abdul the officer of the repressive state security agency, "Abdul, a relative stranger to the kolanut ritual, was carried away beyond the accustomed limits of choral support right into exuberant hand-clapping" (*Anthills* 228). The birth of Elewa's daughter amidst death and tragedy is a symbol of hope and redemption (Podis and Saaka 107, 109).

Although the last chapter begins with a ghastly portrayal of "a baby born into deprivation" (*Anthills* 217), it culminates with the baby naming ceremony that brings all the community together and aspiring to a better future, and proclaiming the baby to be "the daughter of all of us" (228). The main attempt of Achebe is to suggest a cultural and community regeneration based on indigenous roots (Podis and Saaka 109-10).

The delegation from Abazon is meant to bring the characters in Bassa with the Abazonians as a way to depict community formation. *Anthills* is based on the legend of Idemili, daughter of the almighty, who is sent to earth to restore order and stability (*Anthills* 102), and to ease the people's pain from the symbolic drought caused by the corrupt ruling elite afflicting "parched settlements all the way to Orimili" (103). The "bearded old man" (122) in the delegation from Abazon propagates the tradition of Idemili in the novel. In the delegation, he proves to be the fundamental connection to the community through his brilliant oration, and whose stories are "reminders from

which future generations can learn" (Innes, 1990, 163). In his skilful use of proverbs and storytelling, the bearded old man revives the spirit of the past and strengthens oral tradition. Achebe's depiction of the elder's skill, though he "do[es] not know ABC" (*Anthills* 122), echoes the writer's reliance on the store of the oral tradition to launch his protest and call for change (Podis and Saaka 111).

Achebe's characters in *Anthills* live in a state of spiritual exile though they belong to the ruling elite. They are alienated and disenchanted. They are preoccupied with discussing ideas to change the status quo, help create new order, and improve the lives of the people. As such, they tend to be true participants in community building. Ikem can be the epitome of social progressivism. He ponders,

> The prime failure of this government […] can't be the massive corruption though its scale and pervasiveness are truly intolerable; it isn't the subservience to foreign manipulation, degrading as it is; it isn't even this second-class, hand-me-down capitalism, ludicrous and doomed; nor is it the damnable shooting of striking railway-workers and demonstrating students and the destruction and banning thereafter of independent unions and cooperatives. It is the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being (*Anthills* 141).

Ikem is a promoter of tradition in the novel. He can be read as the writer's political mouthpiece. Despite the fact that he is presented as a modern reformer, he venerates tradition. His presence at the elder's oration reveals his connection to the tradition (Podis and Saaka 112-3). Moreover, in his speech at the university, Ikem tells the audience,

> "May I remind you that our ancestors--by the way you must never underrate those guys; some of you seem too ready to do so, I'm afraid. Well, our ancestors made a

fantastic proverb on remote and immediate causes"
(*Anthills* 159).

Therefore, Ikem voices the political views of Achebe.

## 3. Ngugi's Homecoming: Writing Back to Eurocentric Discourse

Modern African writers have been writing back to Eurocentric narrative practices as an attempt to recover Africa's history and culture. Chinua Achebe called this act of writing back "an act of atonement" (Awonoor 251). Basil Davidson calls it the reconstitution of a "shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system" (155). Edward Said calls it "restor[ing] the imprisoned nation to itself" (*Culture and Imperialism* 215).

According to Fanon and Memmi, the main characteristics of the early postcolonial are located in the notion of the colonial-imperial dialectics. Hence, the act of writing in postcolonial discourse is subject to the political, imaginative, and social control involved in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized (Nagy-Zekmi 130). Fanon also believes in the need to redefine the self; what Ngugi describes as an exercise of the "right to name the world" (*Moving the Centre* 3).

In his comment on adopting Okonkwo, Chinua Achebe's hero in *Things Fall Apart*, as a symbol of national resistance, Ngugi uses the phrase "the Okonkwos of the new literature". This comment reveals the emergence of the African and Caribbean writers who formed the new literature of the 1960s (McLaren 390). Ngugi thinks that the African diaspora expresses its political stand through writing by rejecting the articulation of some cultural views as universal, "The problem arose only when people tried to use the vision from any one centre and generalise it as the universal reality" (*Moving the Centre* 4).

Ashcroft, Boehmer, and Harlow, view writing as an act of resistance that assumes the existence of a centre and margin(s). As such, postcolonial discourse wavers between the two poles of cultural decolonization, abrogation/appropriation. The choice and use of language are of a paramount importance to postcolonial writing (Nagy-Zekmi 129).

Abrogation is the rejection of normative forms of the colonizer's language as opposed to non-standard and dialectal use in the colonies, "a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words" (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back* 37).

Appropriation is the adaptation of the colonizer's language in postcolonial writing that might involve different strategies of subversion of the colonial ideology. According to Ashcroft et al., "appropriation is the process by which the language is made to 'bear the burden' of one's own cultural experience […] Language is adopted as a tool and utilized to express widely differing cultural experiences" (38).

One of the issues that African writers faced in their endeavour to define Africa and to provide a different African historiography is nationalism. The latter was the very basis of a new African historiography. Frederick Cooper asserts that this is an effort to "put together 'Africa' in the face of general perceptions of everlasting and immutable divisions" (1519). Said describes it as "an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and customs; and, by so doing, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages" (*Reflections on Exile* 176).

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Hence, the debate over identity in the colonized world has spun around two conflicting concepts, Afrocentrism as against Eurocentrism. Ashcroft *et al.* argue that Afrocentrism questions the discourse of imperialism and decolonization. It is concerned with "a search for an essential cultural purity" (*The Empire* 40). The argument for Afrocentrism has been started by Chinua Achebe in the 1970s and was continued by other thinkers, including Ngugï wa Thiong'o who announced his epistemological break with English and chose to write in his mother tongue, Gikuyu. Ngugi's step was meant to decolonize African literature and to reach a non-foreign audience (Kalua 26).

In 1960s, when Chinua Achebe published his novel *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugi recognized in Achebe a great novelist who had set about reclaiming the African past. Later, Ngugi wanted to transfer some of Achebe's ideas into his works, namely the criticism of political corruption and the contestation of Western historiography. Nevertheless, Ngugi started to distance himself from the project set by Achebe. He thinks that although Achebe was critical of the appropriation of Western culture as well as postcolonial corrupt governments, he could not provide adequate radical critiques of neocolonialism or suggest revolutionary solutions (Podis and Saaka 104).

When Ngugi published his novel *Petals of Blood* in 1977, David Maughan-Brown viewed it as "a decisive ideological shift," (180) creating a clear gap between his approach and that of Achebe. Later, in *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngugi classified Achebe with those writers whose use of European languages meant "a servile worship of what is foreign" (19). Indeed, in his later phase, Ngugi views language, rather than history or culture, as structuring human life and enabling human consciousness,

> The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to the entire universe. Hence language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century (*Decolonising* 4).

He sees language as the most important apparatus of imperialism and "the most important vehicle" for maintaining colonial power (9). In *Decolonising*, Ngugi remembers his school days and reflects upon the problem of language hegemony, "Thus, one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school" (11). Just like Ngugi, Molefi Kete Asante also declared his rejection of the Eurocentrism of culture (McLaren 388). By deciding to write in his native language, Gikuyu, Ngugi has immensely contributed to the revival of Gikuyu ethnic consciousness (Ogude, "Ngugi's Concept of History" 103).

Ngugi contends that workers and peasants are marginalised in the country's narrative history. Thus, he sought to reclaim the history of the colonized from colonial domination. Cooper asserts that Ngugi tries to "recover the lives of people who are forgotten in narratives of global exploitation and national mobilisation" (1516). Ngugi's postcolonial project of questioning Eurocentric narratives about Africa is described in his novel, *Petals of Blood*,

> For there are many questions in our history which remain unanswered. Our present day historians, following on similar theories yarned out by defenders of imperialism, insist we only arrived here yesterday. Where went all the Kenyan people who used to trade with China, India, Arabia long before Vasco da Gama came to the scene and on the strength of gunpowder ushered in an era of blood and terror and instability – an era that climaxed in the reign of imperialism over Kenya? But even then these adventures of Portuguese mercantilism were forced to build Fort Jesus, showing that Kenyan people had always been ready to resist foreign control and exploitation. The story of this

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heroic resistance: who will sing it? Their struggles to
defend their land, their wealth, their lives: who'll tell of
it? (67).

In *Moving the Centre*, Ngugi puts forward a historical-political explanation of the

shift from Eurocentrism into a "tri-continental" vision in the Third World in the post-

independence period (McLaren 390).

This was the sixties when the centre of the universe was
moving from Europe, or, to put it another way, when
many countries particularly in Asia and Africa were
demanding and asserting their right to define
themselves and their relationship to the universe from
their own centres in Africa and Asia (*Moving the
Centre* 2).

*Moving the Centre* is very important to the expression of Ngugi's resetting out of

cultural centres and challenging Eurocentric patterns of cultural dominance. He

strives to position African and diasporic languages in the foreground of cultural

discourse (McLaren 396).

Ngugi states that his writing is very much related to Kenya's (and thus Africa's)

historiography and thinking about its political economy. It is not confined to culture,

but also to fundamentally "revised visions of the past tending toward a postcolonial

future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the

formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory reclaimed as part of a general

movement of resistance, from the colonist" (*Culture and Imperialism* 256).

Ngugi asserts that fiction serves history as it lays the foundations for contesting

our ideas about national identities, role of history, as well as the way they are

embedded in power relations. Ngugi advocates the idea of writing history from below,

having a specific focus on the story of workers and peasants. For him, Kenyan history

should focus on the colonized's struggle and resistance to colonial and neocolonial domination (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 2).

Asante asserts that Ngugi's discourse is relevant to Afrocentricity. He refers to him to support his views concerning language, "Therefore, when the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o gives up writing in English to write in Gikuyu, he is on the path to Afrocentricity" (125). Moreover, he also refers to Ngugi to back up his idea on cultural colonization through linguistic dominance, which decreases "chances for mental liberation" (167). Besides, Nilgun Anadolu Okur alludes to *Decolonising* to question Eurocentrism in the syllabus of the English departments in African schools (93).

Besides, Ngugi and other writers were among the first to criticise corruption in the postcolonial state and to target mainly the national bourgeoisie or the ruling class. According to Fredrick Cooper,

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

Berman and Lonsdale assert that global imperialism implies that the problems of the Third World are "depicted as part of a self-reproducing global system in which the perverse underdevelopment of the periphery was the necessary mirror of genuine capitalist development at the centre" (Berman and Lonsdale 197).

## 4. Decolonizing the Wor(l)d: Ngugi's Break with English and Englishness

> Gatuiria spoke Gikuyu like many educated people in
> Kenya – people who stutter like babies when speaking
> their national languages but conduct fluent
> conversations in foreign languages. The only difference
> was that Gatuĩria was at least aware that the slavery of
> language is the slavery of the mind and nothing to be
> proud of (*Devil on the Cross* 56).

After his graduation from the University of Leeds, Ngugi was appointed as a teacher in the English Department at University College, in Nairobi. He later grew very critical of the centrality of European literature in the university's syllabus. He started his project to "move the centre" and to root literary studies in an African epistemology based on Kenya's and East African traditional verbal arts and cultural epistemology. As a result, the English Department was abolished and replaced with the Department of Literature (Adams 137).

The literature debate in Kenya in the 1970s was mainly about the status of English and Englishness in the postcolony. Discourses on national identity had questioned the teaching of English literature in the English Department. The latter was the last to be decolonized (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 261). Hence, the type of literary texts to be introduced to the curriculum had to be selected carefully in order to curb the ongoing denigration of African literatures (Ogude, "Homecoming" 165).

In March 1970, Ngugi opened his talk to the Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Nairobi by saying, "I am not a man of the Church. I am not even a Christian" (Ngugi, *Homecoming* 31).  An old man in the Presbyterian Church rose to remind him that he was Christian and that an evidence of

that was his first name, James. This led Ngugi to change his name, and ultimately, to start a journey towards decolonization (Ime Ikiddeh 53).

After rejecting the Christian tradition and changing his name, which is considered to be a major homecoming, Ngugi adds to his identity as a writer, and creates the space for the radical Marxist thinking. His publication of *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, co-authored with Micere Mugo (1976) and *Petals of Blood* (1977) marked the beginning of his radical aesthetic. His collection of essays in *Writers in Politics* (1981) and *Barrel of a Pen* (1983) focused on interrogating the place of the dominant English literary culture in Kenya (Ogude, "Homecoming" 165).

Later, Ngugi published *Homecoming* in 1972. His focus is on the rebuilding of a national culture and the rejection of the idea of liberal culture, because the latter favours bourgeois individualism over collective consciousness. What makes culture indispensable to Ngugi's narrative of decolonization is its connection with history. Ngugi attempts to restore a cultural history that has been for so long denigrated by European colonial discourse (Ogude, "Homecoming" 164).

Although Ngugi had started to address an audience of Kenyan peasants in his works, he still wrote in English. This is undoubtedly an act of enriching the English language and its literary tradition. Therefore, Ngugi is in need for a fundamental homecoming by rejecting English as a medium of literary expression (Ogude, "Homecoming" 166).

Ngugi's dramatic performance of plays, especially *I Will Marry When I Want* (1979), with a local peasant group in his hometown of Limuru led to his arrest and imprisonment. The peasant people of Limuru were active participants in the theatre and this did not appeal to the ruling class who denied them performing rights and

razed the community-built theatre. Ngugi was later forced to exile (Adams 138). He was arrested and detained because of his criticism of Kenyan capitalists in *Petals of Blood* and in his peasant theatre (Gugler 338); the Kenyan government accused Ngugi of engaging in politics under the guise of culture (Gikandi, "On Culture and the State" 155). While in prison, the news of the publication of his play in Gikuyu pleased Ngugi a lot. He is glad that his ideas will reach his audience of peasants and workers. He succeeds in voicing their hopes (Cancel 28).

In 1979, Ngugi no longer considers national consciousness as being embedded in ideology, or in the literary practice, or even in the role of literature in education. The languages African writers used had become quite revealing about "patriotic" and "authentic" African literature. Through Ngugi's view, we understand that language has both a material and a historically-determined role as well as a metaphysical or spiritual aspect (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 270).

Ngugi's paper "Return to Roots", which he has written after his release from detention in 1979, resonates with Obi Wali's questioning the place of English and French culture as the inexorable medium for the African elite's writing (*Writers in Politics* 53-65). Later on, Ngugi continues his epistemological project and inaugurates a new cultural aesthetics writing *Devil on the Cross* (1982) and *Matigari* (1987) in his mother tongue, Gikuyu (Ogude, "Homecoming" 166). Ngugi considers his return to his native language as a reassertion of self in a multilinguistic, multicultural world. Ngugi, however, dismisses one characteristic of linguistic relativity which is that of the untranslatability of languages (K. Williams 60).

Ngugi aims at redefining African literature in terms of its ideology and language. He draws on Obi Wali's 1962 questions concerning the language of African literature.

Voicing the problem first raised by Obi Wali in 1962, Ngugi stresses the significance of African languages and African history to literature,

> Whose language and history will our literature draw upon? Foreign languages and the history and cultures carried by those languages? Or national languages - Dholuo, Kiswahili, Gikuyu, Luluba, Kikamba, Kimasai, Kigiriama, etc. – and the histories and cultures carried by those languages? (*Writers* 61).

He later comes to conclude,

> Only by a return to the roots of our being in the languages and cultures and heroic histories of the Kenyan people can we rise up to the challenge of helping in the creation of a Kenyan patriotic national culture that will be the envy and pride of Kenyans (65).

After being a firm believer in the great tradition, Ngugi turns to look for ways of shifting his artistic ideology from morality and sensibility to history and epistemology. Ngugi later rejects the great tradition and associates himself with other African, Asian, and Caribbean writers as they quested, he noted in *Moving the Centre*, "the right to name the world for ourselves" (3). Ngugi decides upon his epistemological break with English following the publication of *Petals*.

In *Petals*, effective language harmoniously originates from song and dance in a pre-lapserian precolonial age. As put by the character,

> There was a time when things happened the way we in Ilmorog wanted them to happen. We had power over the movement of our limbs. We made up our own words and sang them and we danced to them. But there came a time when this power was taken from us. We danced yes, but somebody else called out the words and the song (115).

Indeed, language origin offers a historical site for liberating it from the post-lapserian imperialist conventions that have shattered Gikuyu culture (K. Williams 58).

*Decolonising the Mind* explains how Ngugi came to this decision. He showed his resentment for Afro-European literature including his own novels written in English as well as novels by other writers such as Chinua Achebe, Kofi Awoonor, and Ayi Kwei Armah. He stressed the fact that "African literature can only be written in African languages" (*Decolonising* 27). Some critics have accused him of being unrealistic and reactionary for the fact that Gikuyu, as a Bantu language, is spoken only by twenty percent of the population. Ngugi insisted on his decision stating that his novels have been translated into many European languages as well as Kiswahili (Wise 33).

Ngugi's decision to write in Gikuyu can be understood as an attempt to reconsider the place of national culture in postcolonial Kenya, and to challenge the Kenyan state in her practice of fetishizing national culture. Indeed, as in Ngugi's portrayal of it in *Petals*, national culture was employed by the state as rituals of power to reinforce their political authority. Ngugi's *Petals* was written in English, and intended for a middle class audience, because he believed in the ability of the middle class to help him realise his project. His shift to Gikuyu represented a threat to this class because such cross-class discourse will pose a threat to the ruling class in the postcolonial state (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 37).

Therefore, Ngugi's epistemological break stresses the idea that language is of a paramount importance to national consciousness. Gikandi contends that Ngugi's "epistemological break" was projected to create a perception of language that would enable him to write fiction after he had lost faith in the tradition of the "realist" European novel as a mode of social critique ("Ngũgĩ's Conversion" 139).

Ngugi affirms that colonialism has alienated Africans from their language and culture and, colonized their minds. The literature of nationalism and decolonization endeavoured to present a new African identity by Africanising European languages. Nonetheless, this literature was already bound to the features carried by these languages. Ngugi's involvement in the language debate stems from his effort to scrutinise the relation between language, ideology, and modes of production. This led Ngugi to "an epistemological break" with his past, starting to write in his mother tongue, Gikuyu (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 266).

Hence, Ngugi likes D. H. Lawrence for his ability to "enter into the soul of the people, and not only of the people, but even of the land, of the countryside, of things like plants, of the atmosphere" (Duerden and Pierterse 121, 122). Gikandi pointed out that reading Conrad enabled Ngugi to question colonial realities through language (*Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 266-7). Ngugi's view concerning language choice opposes the essentializing program of Enlightenment philosophies that affect the modern movement (K. Williams 60). In "The Language of Struggle", Ngugi asserts, "What is really happening now is that African thought, literary thought, is imprisoned in foreign languages" (146).

Thus, *Devil* is believed to mark Ngugi's epistemological break with the English language and with the culture of Englishness. In the novel, Gatuiria thinks of the historical progression of his people from pre-colonial through colonial into a dimly seen future where "Sounds and voices of a new struggle/*would rise* To rescue the soul of the nation" (229; emphasis added). He voices Ngugi's pleading for a literature "written in the alphabets of our national languages" (58). Ngugi has written *Devil* on toilet paper,

> Writing on toilet-paper? Now I know that paper is about the most precious article for a political prisoner, more so for one like me who was in detention because of his writing. At Kamiti, virtually all the detainees are writers or composers … These prisoners have mostly written on toilet paper. Now the same good old toilet-paper – which has been useful to Kwame Nkrumah in James Fort Prison, to Dennis Brutus on Robben Island, to Abdilatif Abdalla in G Block, Kamiti, and to countless other persons with similar urges – has enabled me to defy daily the intended detention of my mind (*Detained* 6).

After being released from prison, Ngugi decides that all his works should be published first in Gikuyu, despite the fact that it was difficult to sell titles in Kenyan languages (Currey 113).

In his book, *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi argued that language mediates Being, and that writing in the native language has restored his origins and liberated him from the prisonhouse of the colonial language. He put forward the idea that it is necessary for literature to be written in African languages so as to be accepted as African literature. This reflects Ngugi's dilemma as a writer in exile (Gikandi, "On Culture and the State" 155).

Ngugi's choice of language and audience had enabled him to make the workers and the peasants actors in their own history, and to leave "no barrier between the content of their history and the linguistic medium of its expression" (*Decolonising* 45). Ngugi has justified his choice of language in his theoretical essays. What is worth mentioning is that Ngugi's theories about language have some political implications and cannot be separated from his politics. This reminds us that European language theory is also embedded in politics (K. Williams 58).

## 5. Mapping Decolonization through the (M)other Tongue in *Devil*

> Literature is […] a nation's soul, preserved for her
> children to taste forever, a little at a time! (*Devil*
> 62).

Postcolonialism is considered to be a blessing on the ex-colonized because it extends the analysis of the effects of colonialism beyond what was believed to be an endpoint. Postcolonial discourse criticizes the neocolonial processes of exploitation like capitalism, corruption, excessive militarization, and male dominance. Ngugi's rethinking of the nature of knowledge production in postcolonialism is of a paramount importance. His work, *Decolonising the Mind*, is considered to be a crucial text in the process of decolonising black literary and cultural theory (Davies 144, 146).

Ngugi believes that Eurocentrism and European languages served as important tools for colonialism, affecting the writer's thinking as well as his literary production, "The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised" (*Decolonising* 16). Hence, he defies Western epistemologies and paves the way for the process of decolonization and a literature of decoloniality.

During a presentation at Cambridge University, Ngugi put forward his idea of the close relationship between language and the construction of knowledge. He stated,

> I find it contradictory in Africa today and elsewhere in
> the academies of the world to hear of scholars of
> African realities but who do not know a word of the
> languages of the environment of which they are experts.
> Do they think the Cambridge here would give me a job
> as a Professor of French Literature if I confessed that I
> did not know a word of French? ("Europhonism" 7-8).

This paradoxical situation, that knowledge about Africa can be attained through non-African languages, implies the African dependence on European languages in the

construction of knowledge. This leads us to understand that knowledge about Africa continues to be constructed and interpreted according to Western epistemologies (Mazrui 151). In addition to the epistemological and cultural dimensions of language, Joseph Raz, in his famous essay "Multiculturalism", has also stressed the fact that there will be no socio-economic development as long as scientific knowledge is stored in foreign languages (202).

In his famous essay, "Ngũgĩ's Conversion: Writing and the Politics of Language," Simon Gikandi asserts that the discourse of history was controlled by the colonizer; it is extremely Eurocentric. Hence, when trying to rewrite the history and representation of Africa, nationalist writers addressed a field of study that was articulated in European terms. New literatures in Africa were written in European languages following European forms and style (142). Ngugi states in *Decolonising*, "I believe that my writing in Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples" (28).

There was a debate over the question of language in African literature in the 1960s and even before. It was the main issue at the 1962 Conference of Writers of English Expression at Makerere, and it was the subject of study and publishing by many African writers, namely Achebe, Senghor, Okara, and Mphalele. Fanon had also discussed the problem in the 1959 Congress of Black African Writers at Rome. Besides, Achebe, in "The African Writer and the English Language," argued for the appropriation of the English language to depict the Igbo culture (Jackson 5).

The European intervention in Africa alienated speakers from their language and environment, and colonized their minds. The literature of nationalism and decolonization attempted to articulate a new African identity through the

Africanization of the European languages. Nonetheless, this new literature was already affected by the categories and forms of these languages because any language carries a certain value system. Ngugi's program of decolonization calls for a re-examination of the relation between language, ideology, and modes of production (Gikandi, "Ngũgĩ's Conversion" 133).

In the 1970s, Ngugi did not concern himself with language as the main principle of African literature. He rather focused on the ideology of language. He endeavoured to express a more coherent materialist theory of linguistic practice and to Africanize the colonial language to liberate African culture from imperialism ("Ngũgĩ's Conversion" 136-7). Ngugi criticized the content of the educational syllabi in Kenya and sought to decolonize it. He asserted,

> The truth is that the content of our syllabi, the approach to and presentation of the literature, the persons and machinery for determining the choice of texts and their interpretation, were all an integral part of imperialism in its classical phase, and they are today of the same imperialism but now in its neo-colonial phase (*Writers* 5).

Gikandi argues that the decolonization of the African mind can be possible only through the consideration of the division of the consciousness of African literature as an educational tool ("Ngũgĩ's Conversion" 137).

Ngugi highlights the relationship existing between language and consciousness. It enables people to establish social relationships, "spoken words mediate between human beings and form the language of speech" (*Writers* 14). When he is asked about the issue of language choice, Ngugi affirms,

> I think language is a key. I think the dividing line is really the issue of language, and when any people talk about colonialism or decolonization they must first and

foremost address themselves to the issue of language and language choice ("The Language of Struggle" 154).

Thus, Ngugi's discourse of decolonization aimed at parting with the Eurocentric conventions of writing. In his *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi put forward the idea that colonial legacy had disconnected the Africans from their language and colonized their minds, and the ultimate task of the African writer is to come to terms with a nationalist literature to free the African identities from the chains of Eurocentrism (Ogude, "Homecoming" 166). Ngugi is interested in using language as a way of "entering into the spirit of things" and creating unity with his environment (Duerden and Pierterse 121, 122). In *Writers in Politics*, Ngugi asserts, "If a Kenyan writer writes in English − no matter how radical the content of that literature − he cannot possibly reach or directly talk to the peasants and workers of Kenya" (54).

Besides, the discourse of decolonization provides "an Afrocentric means of reading and understanding texts" (Berger 142). Ngugi distinguishes between an authentic African literature in African languages and Afro-European literary practice. This is due to his belief in language as a structuring category of culture, thought, and experience (Gikandi, "Ngũgĩ's Conversion" 133). Ngugi asserts that writing in European languages suggests being involved in the neocolonial process, employing a language of a foreign culture, limiting African languages and cultures (Almeida 82). Self-colonization happens when one discovers that he knows very little of one's own language, and knows more of the foreign language (Ngugi, "On Writing in Gikuyu" 152).

> So I thought that the best way of keeping alive in those
> circumstances was to resist that social disconnection by
> attempting to reestablish my links with the community.
> And the only connection I could think of now was
> language. I felt I had to write in that very language that

was responsible for my imprisonment. And in terms of content, I had to seek the kind of material, or the kind of attitude toward my material, that was in harmony with what I conceived to be the needs of the peasantry. This is how I came to write *Caitaani Mutharabaini* (or, *Devil on the Cross*) in Gikuyu while I was in prison (153).

Therefore, Ngugi asserts that to be accepted as part of African literature, a literary work must not just be rooted in African art, tradition and culture, but it must also be written in an African language (Kasanga and Kalume 51). He criticized African literature written in European languages as "the literature of the petty-bourgeoisie" (*Decolonising* 20).

Since it is widely known that history is written by the victor, the challenge for Ngugi and other African writers is not only to employ African languages, but also to create a type of literature that would reclaim African history. In doing so, they will be inspiring young African writers to embrace the struggle for language, history, and culture (Mazrui 154-55).

Ngugi's ideas in *Decolonising the Mind* are based on his view of language and its relationship to culture. He asserts that "Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture" (*Decolonising* 13). Ngugi points out the misapplication of language as a carrier of culture as the literature, art, technologies, and education of a people become dominated by the colonizer's language (MacPherson 642).

He explains how the colonizer could dominate over the colonized militarily, politically, and economically, "But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world" (*Decolonising* 13). Ngugi

figures out two main ideas about mental control, which are destroying the native culture and imposing the colonizer's language. Hence, in a postcolonial world, it is necessary to decolonize not only communities but also people's minds (MacPherson 643).

Ngugi's argument for choice of language theoretically explains the imperialism latent in Enlightenment language theories. The debate over the relationship between language and culture led to the emergence of the notion of linguistic relativity. It puts forward the idea that language is culturally constructed (K. Williams 54-5). As such, Ngugi's conception of the language debate lies not merely in the dialectic opposition between the individual and the social, but transcends it to other relations, "Language as culture is thus mediating between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature" (*Decolonising* 15).

Thus, Ngugi creates a dialectic of language process that is both historical and communal. He asserts that "Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture." He adds,

> Language as communication and as culture are then products of each other. Communication creates culture: culture is a means of communication. 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 (*Decolonising* 13-16).

As such, cultural and educational institutions are used as instruments of mental slavery. They are employed to maintain mental control of the colonized in the postcolony. In *Devil*, the native bourgeoisie represents the blind imitation of Western values. This is very apparent in the character of Kihaahu, the alienated black who seeks to be white in all respects. In the novel, Kihaahu changes his name as an act of

mimicking Western values. Hence, Kihaahu's nursery school project can be considered the best example of Ngugi's satire on Kenyan bourgeois attitudes as it is associated with everything white (*Devil* 113).

Decolonization has for so long debated the nature and role of intellectuals in anticolonial struggles and newly independent states. Education played a major role in the process of decolonization and in anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggle. In the Gikuyu culture, forms of knowledge were viewed as foundations of power. Knowledge controlled by the *mbari*, clan elders, was called *kirira* (P. Williams 205).

Thus, Ngugi's novels depict the rise of the intellectual as an activist. In *Devil*, Gatuiria says of the fatal effects of European education on the colonized, "The kind of education bequeathed to us by the whites has clipped the wings of our abilities, leaving us limping like wounded birds" (*Devil* 63). Karega in *Petals* doubts the effectiveness of formal education in the nation's struggle, "He had already started to doubt the value of formal education as a tool of a people's total liberation" (252).

In *Petals*, Karega's change from teacher to manual labourer and from educator to activist and trade union organizer can be a good example of the emergence of the intellectual. Muturi, in *Devil*, is both a student and a worker. Ngugi's use of popular forms in his narrative, such as the meeting of thieves and robbers in *Devil* is also part of his intellectual activist practice. Ngugi's activism as an intellectual can be seen in his "The Quest for Relevance" and *Decolonising the Mind* (P. Williams 216-7). His aim is the indigenization of culture apparent in his shift from English to Gikuyu in his play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I Want*) in 1977, and *Caitaani Mutharabaini* (*Devil on the Cross*) in 1982, and later *Decolonising* the Mind marking "[his] farewell to English as a vehicle for any of [his] writings" (*Decolonising* xiv).

Munira's failure and disillusionment can be read as an indictment of decolonization. Indeed, in creating subjects incapable of fulfilment, Ngugi implies that the process of decolonization has failed and has collapsed. Munira is portrayed as the prisoner of both the colonial past, described as "that long night of unreality" (*Petals* 88), and of postcolonial deceit. It is through Munira that Ngugi succeeds to narrate the crisis of national consciousness, and to highlight the failure of the postcolonial state. However, since he turns this failure into the situation of possibility of his identity, he is not fully capable to present an intelligible criticism of decolonization and its outcomes (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 156).

Just like Munira, both Karega and Wanja have suffered the events of postcolonial failure. Unlike him, they attempt to transcend the failures rooted in these events. Hence, Munira symbolizes Ngugi's use of the form of the bourgeois novel. On the other hand, Karega and Wanja are his first attempts to create the allegorical heroes of socialist realism (156).

## 6. Influence and Ideology: Ngugi, Marx, and Fanon

It is evident that Ngugi's ideas are rooted in his Marxist thinking. Indeed, the later Ngugi is influenced by Marx and Fanon. He is a socialist who advocated socialist realism. In his novels, Ngugi tries to come to terms with the social and cultural forces of his colonial experience and his postcolonial present (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 2).

Reading Ngugi's works, one is expected to recurrently come through his criticism of the exploitation of the peasant masses and urban workers by the ruling class (Ime Ikiddeh 54). It was Leeds that shaped Ngugi's ideological framework through his

readings of the Marxist and postcolonial works of Frantz Fanon. His works resonate with Fanon's ideas (55). Ngugi's encounter with the works of Marx and Fanon during his studies at the University of Leeds offers the ideological basis for his second-phase novels. His immersion in the life and languages of his community led him to question the place of English in his narrative (Wilkinson 544).

Fanon has influenced Ngugi's ideas about resistance and neocolonialism. His scathing criticism of the national bourgeoisie and their expected neocolonial practices is reflected in Ngugi's postcolonial novels. His idea of the "native poet" as the keeper of national culture also reverberates in Ngugi's novels and essays (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 10). The significance of Fanon's work lies in his preoccupation with issues such as subject formation, otherness, and identity politics (Nagy-Zekmi 133).

It is through Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* that Ngugi got introduced to the politics of socialism and developed a language for depicting colonialism and arrested decolonization. *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) is a visionary study of the move from colonialism to neocolonialism in Africa. Fanon focuses on the failure of independence to break with colonialism, and the supremacy of national culture (Gikandi, "On Culture and the State" 152).

Ngugi's reading of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, particularly the chapter on the "Pitfalls of National Consciousness," enabled him to discover that his concerns about postcolonial betrayal had been practiced in many African states. Fanon's analysis of national betrayal helped Ngugi understand the phenomenon of arrested decolonization. As a result, Ngugi launched his scathing criticism on the black bourgeoisie, who came to power through negotiated decolonization, for not trying to alleviate the lives of the working class (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 31). Indeed,

Fanon's work provides a systematic explanation of the reasons of the failure of decolonization. Fanon explains that,

> [n]ational consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been (*The Wretched* 148).

Ngugi also believed that the middle class, who gets to power, is liable to political betrayal as well as economic submission,

> The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an underdeveloped middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace (147).

As such, thanks to Fanon's writings, Ngugi became aware of the betrayal and disillusionment existing around him. Ngugi could recognise how the new postcolonial government is instituting a social and political system based on ethnic chauvinism rather than equality and democracy. This stems from the ruling class's desire to legitimize its position. Hence, the hopes of Pan-African unity were fading into "the mists of oblivion, and a heartbreaking return to chauvinism in its most bitter and detestable form" (*The Wretched* 157). Moreover, Ngugi could perceive how the party that prepared the people for independence and decolonization had established itself as "the modern form of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, unmasked, unpainted, unscrupulous, and cynical" (165).

Fanon also explained how a leader who had represented struggle against colonialism could be easily turned into "the general president of the company of profiteers impatient for their returns which constitutes the national bourgeoisie" (166).

According to Fanon, the ruling elite who replaced the colonialists are worse exploiters of the local people (Mwangi 31).

In addition to the influence of Marx and Fanon, Ngugi's works and thought, by the mid-1970s, have also been affected by two movements, namely pan-Africanism and the black power. His study of West Indian literature had also influenced his literary production (Currey 109). Ngugi says of George Lamming in *Homecoming*,

> He evoked through a child's growing awareness a tremendous picture of the awakening social consciousness of a small village. He evoked, for me, an unforgettable picture of a peasant revolt in a white-dominated world. And suddenly I knew that a novel could be made to speak to me, could, with a compelling urgency, touch cords deep down in me (81).

Moreover, in the 1970s, there were many debates about the nature of the political economy of Kenya. Most of these debates ran in the framework of dependency and underdevelopment. Two important works influenced these debates in general and Ngugi's writings in particular, namely E. A. Brett's *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa* (1973) and Colin Leys' *Underdevelopment in Kenya* (1974) (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 11).

Hence, African writers raised many questions about the persistence of colonial domination and the corruption of postcolonial governments. Indeed, they theorised about underdevelopment, locating the wretchedness of the colonized in the capitalist world system (Cooper 1524).

## 7. Conrad and Naipaul: Postcolonial Journeys into Darkness

In an essay entitled "Conrad's Darkness," Naipaul claims how he came "round to Conrad," another non-British born writer, after the influence of both Dickens and Wells' social comedy (*Return* 207). As a writer, Naipaul could make his romantic career as abdicating his early "Fantasy" (216). In addition to that, he figures out kingship spirit in Conrad with whom Naipaul shares a sense of cultural dislocation which manifests itself on the levels of both theme and style.

Unlike earlier English novels, Conrad's use of a first-person narrator has created a relativistic atmosphere. Similarly, Naipaul uses a first-person narrator to represent the Third-World life in negative way, and to show his cultural relativism. Moreover, Naipaul considers Conrad as his most significant literary precursor, having a strong familiarity for his subjects which in turn make him an apt critic of the modern world's social and psychological disturbance. Talking about the great novelists who wrote about highly organized societies, Naipaul neither has such a community, nor could share the allegations of these writers. He, simply, cannot see his world reflected in theirs (Thieme 23).

Conrad's ability to indulge in a strange language and his moral relativism are what really impressed Naipaul. He, aptly, was able to overcome a language that was not his own in different ways and that could express the material and moral meaning of his world, despite the fact that he knew his first English word at the age of nineteen. Moreover, Naipaul also shows admiration of Conrad's exploration of moral questions such as the concepts of action, success, and decision making (Duerden and Pieterse 124-126).

As such, Conrad's influence is ubiquitous in Naipaul's work. He has revisited the geographical terrain of *Heart of Darkness* through his novella *A Bend in the River* which is set in Central African Republic. Similarly, his novella *In a Free State* (1971) is an apparent intertext to Conrad's book, where two British expatriates, at a time of crisis, journey by road through a newly independent East-African country. However, it is in *The Mimic Men* that Conrad's influence is the most overt. Indeed, *The Mimic Men* echoes Conrad's *Nostromo* in its use of the fictional island, Isabella. The other Conoradian prototype in *The Mimic Men* is its structural use of fragmentation and unchronological narrative. Such devices are used by Conrad in his novels such as *Lord Jim* and *Nostromo* (Thieme 24).

Naipaul may share with Conrad some characteristics, including education, a clerk, and a disappointed feeling with London. Thus, the question of how to read his characters divided the critics, viewing him, for example, as an alternative ego for Conrad. Nonetheless, Singh clearly shares his point of view of the world's 'half-made' societies that Naipaul writes about in Conrad's essay, and hopes to convey it in the history of the Gibbonesque Empire, which will express the deep chaos of their community. Similar to Conrad's *Nostromo*, *The Mimic Men* reflects Naipaul's vision of "the world's half-made societies", "corruption of causes", the "moral degradation of the idea", as well as Singh's unsuccessful quest and pursuit for a perfect system, which gives way too easily to nasty sexual encounters and political cynicism (Thieme 25).

According to the hybridization theory, both Naipaul and Conrad are considered as analysts of the cultural incision lines and coalition produced by European colonialism. Naipaul, nevertheless, identifies the negative results of such contacts which have been

reflected in his characters who look back nostalgic to racial purity. For instance, *The Mimic Men*'s protagonist, Ralph Singh, dreams of a pure Aryan time (Thieme 23).

Conrad's influence on Naipaul's work is very apparent in *The Mimic Men*. This is clear in his use of allusions, his use of a fragmentary and unchronological narrative structure, as well as in his use of a first person unreliable narrator to tell the story and filter the events. Conrad and Naipaul are both expatriates and alien to the language they are using. Both are non-English writers marked by their characteristics of displacement. The latter is manifest in both formal and thematic levels. The use of an unreliable narrator and a fragmented narrative render their works as different from most traditional English novels. On the other hand, in *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul dramatizes socio-historical, socio-political, as well as psychological effects of imperialism (Thieme 1360). In *The Mimic Men*, Ralph Singh expresses his idea about Empire,

> It was my hope to give expression to the restlessness, the deep disorder, which the great explorations, the overthrow in three continents of established social organizations, the unnatural bringing together of peoples who could achieve fulfilment only within the security of their own societies and the landscapes hymned by their ancestors, it was my hope to give partial expression to the restlessness which this great upheaval has brought about (*The Mimic Men* 32).

Singh voices his views concerning the displacement of individuals and the ensuing restlessness because of colonialism. Thus, *The Mimic Men* presents a deep reflection on the psychology of colonialism as Ralph Singh strives to restore order to his life. By the end of the novel, he learns that the act of writing has indeed helped him establish order and stability. Thieme states that Singh searches for order in different ways and places,

> he looks for it in London […], the Aryan past of his
> ancestors, the Edenic state of pre-Columbian America,
> the pastoral world of Latin literature and even, when he
> dreams of retiring to one of the few cocoa estate houses
> remaining on Isabella, in the heyday of the plantocracy
> (Thieme 1360).

Nonetheless, Singh states that "All landscapes turn eventually to land, the gold of the imagination to the lead of the reality" (*The Mimic Men* 9). He seems to be unable to find order in all these forms of quest and gives way to escape, and to scepticism about the colonial idea (Thieme 1359-60).

In "The Return of Eva Peron", Naipaul presents the predicament of colonialism in Argentina, Trinidad, and the Congo. He also examines his affinities to Conrad.

> Not as a man with a cause, but a man offering, as in
> *Nostromo*, a vision of the world's half-made societies,
> as places which continuously made and unmade
> themselves, where there was no goal, and where always
> 'something inherent in the necessities of successful
> action .. carried with it the moral degradation of the
> idea' (Naipaul, *Return*, 1980, 216).

As such, both Naipaul and Conrad meet at the levels of theme and style to unveil the moral degradation of the idea of colonialism and imperialism. They both use writing as an escape from the socio-political and psychological disorder witnessed by their unreliable narrators (Thieme 1360).

## 8. Imagining Home in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*

> The empires of our time were short-lived, but they have
> altered the world for ever; their passing away is their
> least significant feature (*The Mimic Men* 32).

*The Mimic Men* dramatizes the socio-historical effects of colonialism in Trinidad. It focuses on the plight of Ralph Singh's in the postcolony and in the Metropolitan city of London, the place of his exile. It deals with many questions and themes which

are related to cultural survival and identity formation as interwoven with issues of race, class, ethnicity, and nation (Ceraso and Connolly 110). King asserts that, in *The Mimic Men*, themes of freedom, politics, self-creation, psychology, writing, autobiography, history, mimicry, race and origins work together to create conflicting significances in the text (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 71).

In *The Mimic Men*, the narrator and protagonist Ralph Singh is an adult man of Indian heritage who came to Isabella (a fictional British-dependent Caribbean island) and carries on his studies in England. He experiences hard times in his childhood, a failed marriage, and an unsettled career as a minister. His evocation of his memories represents his doubt and disenchantment with his postcolonial condition. He strives for a sense of cultural identity (Ceraso and Connolly 110). Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* is narrated by Ralph Singh, a writer born on a Caribbean isle and exiled to London. In the novel, Singh muses on his condition as an ex-colonial minister adopting a first person narrator throughout the novel (Pritchard 463).

The novel epitomizes the failure of the postcolony as an independent entity both culturally and politically. The novel depicts how the postcolony is presented as a space that turns the private into the public undermining the spatial discourse of decolonization. Singh's preoccupation with race is a private articulation of his public failure (Bhattacharya 264).

The instances of his failures are various, and his individual obsessions reflect the absence of a national framework through which he could express his personal politics. This discourse of private and public failure is a sign of rejection to the prevalent practices in Singh's world. He experiences a crisis of identity and a trauma of

belonging. Singh's comments on the postcolonial condition of the postcolony render its independence crumbling and illusive (Bhattacharya 264).

Critics of Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* are able to make the distinction between the narrator and his previous self. Naipaul wrote *The Mimic Men* after his painful journey to India. This journey is described in his book *An Area of Darkness*. It helped him realize that his Hindu self is the root of his sense of detachment. In his childhood, Singh feels that he is alienated from his family just like his father, the lost Aryan chief shipwrecked in the New World (Thieme, 1984, 516, 518).

Singh is depicted as both intellectually aware about his Indian roots and at the same time as a victim of the weakening of his ancestral culture. Nevertheless, Singh's loss of traditional values does not lead to his Creolization. He considers himself as irrelevant to the Caribbean (Thieme, 1984, 509). As a politician, he sees himself as an intruder in the politics of his country, Isabella. He thinks of himself as a "picturesque Asiatic born for other landscapes" (*The Mimic Men* 225), excluded from "the mutual and complete comprehension of master and slave" (233).

Besides, Singh's predicament is depicted through the use of the shipwreck metaphor. In Isabella, he feels as an Indian castaway, and in London he gets a sense of rejection and abandonment. Writing his memoir, he feels that his journey has "ended in the shipwreck which all my life I had sought to avoid" (*The Mimic Men* 6). The shipwreck metaphor indicates that Singh's fate is located elsewhere far from his native culture and heritage. He is deserted and left alone to live in the New World. Indeed, the shipwreck metaphor implies the spiritual condition of Singh. He is both physically and spiritually abandoned. He is much like the castaway in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. The difference between Robinson Crusoe and Singh is that the

latter is totally abandoned and cast away in London at the end of his touring back and forth between the Caribbean and Europe (Thieme, 1984, 510).

Singh appears to be fascinated by America before its encounter with the Europeans. In his first voyage to London, he believes that he is wrong as he thinks that he has been shipwrecked, and that the New World still awaits Columbus for discovery. Singh's allusion to Columbus implies the cruelty and the violence ensuing from the European colonization. Likewise, when he is back at Isabella, he could envision it as "the Technicolor island of The Black Swan, of cinema galleons, and men-o'-war, of rippling sails and morning music by Max Steiner" (*The Mimic Men* 31). The Black Swan is a famous swashbuckler of the 1940s which is set in Jamaica in the seventeenth century (Thieme, 1984, 511).

Moreover, Singh is also fascinated by trees which symbolize his quest for wholeness and identity (Thieme, 1984, 511). As a boy, he feels concerned about the state of his family's house after a storm as he recounts the destruction of a large tree,

> I thought of our house again, more urgently now; and,
> above drama, I felt alarm. A tree in the park groaned in
> a series of accelerating snaps and then slowly collapsed,
> rocking to rest on its branches. It was a great tree, one
> of those with a history. Its leaves were green and
> shining with wet, its shallow, lateral roots shaggy with
> earth (*The Mimic Men* 164).

The tree imagery is linked to the shipwreck metaphor. Singh identifies himself with the trunks of great trees as he stands on an abandoned beach. The trees are washed up by the sea and left in the sand (Thieme, 1984, 511-2).

> Here lay the tree, fast in the sand which was deep and
> level around it; impossible now to shift, what once had
> floated lightly on the waters, coming to the end of its
> journey at a particular moment; the home now of scores
> of alien creatures, which scattered at my approach. Here

> the island was like a place still awaiting Columbus and discovery (*The Mimic Men* 120).

> And what was an unmarked boy doing here, shipwrecked chieftain on an unknown shore, awaiting rescue, awaiting the arrival of ships of curious shape to take him back to the mountains? Poor boy, poor leader. But I was not unmarked. The camera was in the sky. It followed the boy, tiny from such a height, who walked at the edge of the sea beside the mangrove of a distant island, an island as lost and deserted as those which, in films like The Black Swan, to soft rippling music, to the bellying of sails of ancient ships, appeared in the clear morning light to the anxious man on deck (*The Mimic Men* 120).

When Singh is told that the tree has been washed up by water a few months earlier, he tends to be curious about its origin (Thieme, 1984, 512). The image of the tree is again present in Dalip's threat to Singh.

> Not my element, and I was ending here. And I had a vision of the three of us shipwrecked and lost, alien and degenerate, the last of our race on this island, among collapsed trees and sand, so smooth where no one had walked on it (*The Mimic Men* 176-77).

In *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul implies that the discovery of America has brought the continent much chaos and destruction. Singh envisions himself as the Christ figure performing an act of atonement (Thieme, 1984, 512). He sees himself playing the role of Grail quester and Messiah,

> there came a picture of myself in some forest clearing, dressed as a knight, dressed as a penitent, in hermit's rags, approaching a shrine on my knees, weeping, performing a private penance for the man in front of me, for myself, for all men, for whom in the end nothing could be done (*The Mimic Men* 40).

> The compassion of the messiah, the man doing penance for the world: I have already explained the absurd sentiments which surprised me at the moment of greatest power and self-cherishing (226).

However, Singh feels a sense of despair because it is impossible to change the consequences of history as there is no link between man and the landscapes he inhabits.

> Weeping because he had no more worlds to conquer. I can enter into those tears of Alexander. They were real tears, but they came from a deeper cause. They are the tears of children outside a hut at sunset, the fields growing dark; they are the tears of men in the middle of great achievement, men who are made weary by a sense of futility, who long to be the first men in the world, who long to do penance for the entire race, because they feel the lack of sympathy between man and the earth he walks on and know that, whatever they might do, this gap will remain (*The Mimic Men* 78).

As such, *The Mimic Men* voices Singh's displacement as an important theme. This is derived from Singh's feeling that the Caribbean condition is due to "the unnatural bringing together of peoples who could achieve fulfilment only within the security of their own societies and the landscapes hymned by their ancestors" (*The Mimic Men* 32). Furthermore, Naipaul relates Singh's sense of insecurity to empire,

> The scale was small in time, numbers and area; and here, just for a moment, the rise and fall and extinction of peoples, a concept so big and alarming, was concrete and close. Slaves and runaways, hunters and hunted, rulers and ruled: they had no romance for me. Their message was only that nothing was secure (*The Mimic Men* 131).

This sense of insecurity is due to the lack of racial purity as Singh strives for a sense of identity. He feels nostalgic towards the racially pure world of his fancies about the Aryan past. Singh's Hindu roots follow him throughout his political career. He is elected because he is Gurudeva's son. His fellow Indian people help him realize his Aryan chieftainship. After his political career and his eventual flight to England, and as he starts writing his memoir, he is able to see his chieftainship as the quintessence of the ideal Hindu life (Thieme, 1984, 512, 516).

> It does not worry me now, as it worried me when I
> began this book, that at the age of forty I should find
> myself at the end of my active life. I do not now think
> this is even true. I no longer yearn for ideal landscapes
> and no longer wish to know the god of the city. This
> does not strike me as loss. I fed, instead, I have lived
> through attachment and freed myself from one cycle of
> events. It gives me joy to find that in so doing I have
> also fulfilled the fourfold division of life prescribed by
> our Aryan ancestors. I have been student, householder
> and man of affairs, recluse (*The Mimic Men* 273-74).

By recovering history through memory, Naipaul sets out the general history to represent individuals and their past.

> Men need history; it helps them to have an idea of
> who they are. But history, like sanctity, can reside in
> the heart (*The Enigma of Arrival* 353).

History was built around accomplishment and innovation, and nothing was created in the West Indies. In fact, Naipaul's travel gave him the changing world and took him out of the colonial shell, becoming the alternative for all that his background disowned him. Francis Bacon says, if someone is decorous and truthful to strangers, he/she is a citizen of the world and his/her heart joins all of them. These simple words can, often, fit Naipaul through recognizing his intertwisted histories (Qtd. in Dennis 201-2).

## 8. V.S. Naipaul: The Double Agent

*The Mimic Men* (1967) is Naipaul's novel which focuses on the experiences of a Caribbean Indian politician who is exiled in London due to racial conflict on his island, Isabella. The narrator analyses ideas related to decolonization, freedom, achievement, self-definition. Characters are greatly influenced by the powers of history. Naipaul examines the reasons behind the insecurity of the newly independent nations. In *The Mimic Men*, themes of freedom, politics, self-creation, psychology,

writing, autobiography, history, mimicry, race and origins work together to create conflicting significances in the text (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 71).

Nonetheless, the protagonist, Ralph Singh, shifts to ponder upon his own past and on writing itself. *The Mimic Men* depicts Singh as obsessed by the idea of the dying out of the Caribbean Indian. In a school in his island of Isabella, Singh is presented with India as his home and his lost history. In London, he gets disillusioned because of the quality of his life and surroundings. Like Singh, Sandra, his English wife, has a similar experience. Desiring fame, she leaves her family and lives in London. She is depicted as hopeless after failing her exams and getting attached to Singh (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 72-3).

Like Singh, Naipaul fails to attach himself to India, and he is unable to return to England. He lives in a state of permanent homelessness and exile. The writer's double quest is to recreate a sense of personal and national identity. He writes about the traumatic experiences of the colonial and postcolonial world. He attempts to create order through his writing. Order is a central theme in his novel *The Mimic Men*. It is described as missing in colonial societies due to the lack of cultural, racial and historical uniformity (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 73). As such, Singh feels alienated personally, culturally, and racially. This leads to his cynicism, "this feeling of abandonment at the end of the empty world" (*The Mimic Men* 114).

Naipaul alludes to T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", "The Waste Land", "The Hollow Men", and "Gerontion". These allusions suggest that the meanings of the novel are both personal and cultural. This literary mimicry reflects Singh's personal discontent as well as the analysis of cultural politics (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 75-6). Just like Eliot, Naipaul is disillusioned by England. This is reflected in

Singh's quest for a sense of order in London (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 82). Literary mimicry is manifest in *An Area of Darkness* in Naipaul's remarks concerning Indians, "they defecate on the beaches; they defecate on the hills; they defecate on the river banks; they defecate on the streets" (*The Mimic Men* 114). It is a comic allusion to Churchill announcing the English people as ready to defend their country against Nazi Germany (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 81).

In the New World, Singh is disturbed because of his Indianness. He attempts Anglicization, and dreams about the idealized Indian past. He is afraid that he might lose his racial and cultural identity. He usually leans on moments of indifference, negativity, and Hindu spirituality. King asserts that "Singh's lack of wholeness, of identity and authenticity, leads to his posturing, dandyism and flights into exile. No place is home. Everywhere he is shipwrecked, washed up" (*V. S. Naipaul* 76-81).

*The Mimic Men* proves to be about the postcolonial world and the exiled individuals who think they are writing about the world as in fact they are writing about themselves. As such, Naipaul transcends the realist discourse of colonial fiction into the reflection on the disorder of the postcolonial world (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 77).

The opening section of the novel deals with Singh's memories as a student in London mixed with his memories of his return to London as an exile. Chapters from four to six recount Singh's marriage to Sandra and his return to Isabella. The story in the second section of the book deals with his childhood and education. The third section examines Singh's memories of exile and his political career in Isabella. As such, the narrative proves to be very disorderly, complex, unchronological, and circular. This is due to the fact that the narrative is based on the protagonist's memories (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 78).

Singh reflects upon the construction of his own identity. He ponders whether his identity is a product of racial, colonial, educational and family past. In *The Mimic Men*, there are recurrent references to Christopher Columbus voyages as if the latter were the main source of Singh's troubles. Singh is also obsessed by his father's abandonment of the family, which is part of the disorder Singh lives. Isabella's Independence leads to a state of disappointment, disorder, violence, and Singh escapes to England. As such, Naipaul's father and the state of racial havoc in Trinidad are main influences on Naipaul's writing (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 78).

Naipaul knows the impact of his English education on his writing and worldview. It indeed affects his values and literary forms. At school, instead of studying about his history and culture, Singh learns about Liège, "There, in Liège … was the true, pure world" (*The Mimic Men* 157).

The mimicry in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* is clear in the fact that the novel is written in English. Naipaul himself is educated in English. He is necessarily influenced by the European tradition. The latter is employed to express his personal situation. The very pertinent question to ask is "How to avoid the mimicry inherent to art?" (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 83).

In *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul is cynical about the political and racial solutions to alleviate the condition of the mimic men. He suggests that independence led to racial politics, and that economic strength remained in the hands of the colonizer. Local people are unable to rule themselves, and are in fact trained by the colonizer. King states,

> "The Caribbean was a place in which people were
> divided by race, filled with resentments and lacked
> shared myths. They had no history of cooperation, or

the wealth to provide comfort to losers of office.
Politics in such a situation could only be brutal and
disillusioning" (*V. S. Naipaul* 194).

This is very much related to the idea of neocolonialism in which local elite would

turn to be the main source of violence, poverty, resentment and tyranny. In this way,

independence can be considered a failure and a disappointment. Hence, Naipaul

appears to be sceptical about independence and its racial affirmations (King, *V. S.

Naipaul* 194).

Naipaul's vision of West Indian independence affected his idea about other

regions, especially Africa. The independence of many African nations was preceded

by high expectations which would later be a disappointment because of corruption,

civil wars, the fragmentation of the states, and chaos that ensued from independence

(King, *V. S. Naipaul* 195).

Most of the criticism directed towards Naipaul focuses on the world divide

between centre (England, imperialist, Western civilization) and margins (colonies,

Third World, black). These critics most of the time read literature as politics (King, *V.

S. Naipaul* 195). Indeed, Naipaul's characters are depicted as victims of colonial

exploitation and modernity. As such, any reader of Naipaul has to consider the

presence of ideas of history and the subaltern in his writing. His narratives are replete

with culture and history. Therefore, the subaltern's identity is also replete with

fissures and he/she is in desperate need of wholeness and unity. The figure of the

subaltern subject is represented in the character of Singh (Nandan 79).

Bhabha believes that the colonized subject's past haunts his/her colonial culture.

This state of haunting creates what Bhabha terms the uncanny "double". Bhabha

states,

the spectacle of colonial fantasy sets itself up as an uncanny "double." Its terrifying figures - savages, grotesques, mimic men - reveal things so profoundly familiar to the West that it cannot bear to remember them. It is in that sense, and for that very reason, that "The horror! the horror!" said in the heart of darkness itself, and the "Ou-boum" of the empty Marabar caves will continue to terrify and confound us, for they address that "other scene" within ourselves that continually divides us against ourselves and others (*Representation and the Colonial Text* 119-120).

Bhabha states that in mimicking the colonizer, the colonized is in the process of challenging, destabilizing, and undermining the colonizer because he tends to be different despite the similarity. As such, the Other is there to haunt the colonizer as his grotesque creation. He is there to emphasise the difference between the Self and the Other. According to Porter, "Naipaul at his best is, therefore, one of our most alert chroniclers of difference" (Porter 332). His novel *The Mimic Men* is a captivating and a powerful study of the Other (Nandan 80).

According to Nandan, Naipaul depicts reality as fragmented due to colonialism. The mimic men are always in a quest for the self in the debris of their colonial imagination. They want to fulfil the desire of self-realization, to find the remaining parts of their identity. Nandan believes that identity is formed through escaping the self in a state of independence and creativity (Nandan 80).

However, Naipaul's writings revolve around the fact that the West Indies suffers a crisis of identity. This condition of loss and suffering is due to the "monstrous wound" (*The Mimic Men* 63) of enslavement and genocide left in its history (Nandan 78). Dennis Porter asserts that Naipaul "brings a highly politicized consciousness to bear on the human problem of growing up as a colonial subject in a minority culture that was cut off from its roots in another continent" (Porter 326). Porter affirms that

Naipaul's writing is in affinity with the discourse of power, "its passage from one set of rulers to another, its abuse, its spectacular failures and its lacks" (307). Thus, Naipaul ponders upon the idea that power is ephemeral (Nandan 79).

Besides, Glyne Griffith asserts that postcolonial writers such as Naipaul "ultimately limit the possibility of West Indian selfhood and presence in the West Indian novel ... [by obscuring] the politics of West Indian difference within the binarist paradigm of history vs historylessness" (*Deconstruction* 81). Griffith made his conclusion because he thinks that Naipaul believes that power and history reside in the European colonizer and that the West Indian is incapable of creating his/her own history. He/she is a mere subject to others' histories. Thus, Naipaul, Griffith explains, denies the West Indian characters a sense of history and depicts them as lacking self-awareness (Nandan 78).

The writers of *The Empire Writes Back* doubt that Naipaul sides with the tendency to celebrate the new national cultures and societies that accompanied political decolonization. Ashcroft et al. state that Naipaul has "one of the clearest visions of the nexus of power operating in the imperial-colonial world" but "he is paradoxically drawn to that centre even though he sees it constructing the 'periphery' as an area of nothingness. He is simultaneously able to see that the 'reality', 'the truth', and order of the centre is also an illusion" (88-91).

Indeed, Naipaul presents the postcolonial world as complex. These critics, nonetheless, see him as betraying the West Indies by living in England and starting a career in writing there (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 196). Besides, Naipaul was criticized for not being supportive of nationalist sentiments. Edward Said has made negative remarks concerning Naipaul's presentation of the endeavours of national

decolonization as "fraudulent public relations gimmicks, half native impotence, half badly learned 'Western' ideas" (Said, *Reflections on Exile* 100).

Naipaul can be considered as a good example of a writer who can tell the truth about the Third World. Said and his supporters see that Naipaul presents the postcolonial world as he sees it, rather than explaining it as they want others to see it (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 196).

> "he can be counted on to survey the Third World … its follies, its corruption, its hideous problems … he prefers to render the ruins and derelictions of postcolonial history … to indict guerrillas for their pretensions rather than indict the imperialism and social injustice that drove them to insurrection, he attacks Moslems for the wealth of some of their number and for a vague history of African slave trading …." (Said, *Reflections on Exile* 100).

King asserts that Said does not want Naipaul to discuss Muslim trade slave because he does not want his idea of the victimized "helpless innocent Third World" to be dismissed. Said's view about Naipaul is due to the fact that the former considers Western literature and knowledge about the Third World as basically directed towards imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism (*V. S. Naipaul* 197).

Besides, Said considers Naipaul as an enemy of the Muslim world. In his review of Naipaul's book *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples*, Said states that the book is "the kind of demystifying, thorough exposé of Islam for which Western readers seem to have a bottomless appetite" it is based on "idiotic and insulting theory" (Said, "Ghost Writer", 40-42).

Said believes that Naipaul writes according to the horizon of expectations of Western readers who are anti-Muslim. He sees Naipaul as

> "a man of the Third World who sends back dispatches from the Third World to the implied audience of disenchanted Western liberals who can never hear bad enough things about all the Third World myths – national liberation movements, revolutionary goals, the evils of colonialism" (Said, "Ghost Writer", 40-42).

Naipaul's act of writing in *Beyond Belief* is viewed by Said as a betrayal of the cause (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 197).

Said asserts that Naipaul writes "so stupid and so boring a book, full of story after story illustrating the same primitive, rudimentary, unsatisfactory and reductive thesis". He believes that the only publishers and Naipaul himself will benefit from writing such a book and that Naipaul "will make a lot of money" and "more Muslims will suffer and be insulted" (*Reflections on Exile* 116).

As such, just like Conrad, Naipaul is regarded as one of the twister and wickedest writers of the diaspora. Though being accepted for his immensely, modernist, and international fiction, there still some of those who see him changing his astute in understanding of the colonized's condition and seeing history through English eyes, as if he is betraying them as stated by Sivanandan, a "Double Agent" for the colonizer, or more than that as "an agent provocateur" (Dennis 199). This gem, prize-winning British writer and whose identity is always in process, is being rewritten as not British, nor Trinidadian, nor Indian, nor Caribbean, nor black, nor white. The latter is earnest in pursuing the questions of his own voice that is neither local aesthetic paradigm, nor Western (Dennis 195).

# CHAPTER THREE: THE POETICS OF DECOLONIZATION IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF ACHEBE, NGUGI, AND NAIPAUL

To dismantle the classical polarities of the colonizer and the colonized, postcolonial African and Caribbean writers employed language and the form of the novel in different ways and for different purposes. This diversity in their literary production reflects their differing views and ideologies as far as language and decolonization. African writers like Ngugi and Achebe use the form of the novel blended with elements from the oral tradition to voice the story of colonisation and decolonization. On the other hand, V.S. Naipaul sceptically narrates the impact of cultural displacement on the character's identity.

## 1. Achebe's Appropriation of the English Language

The use of the dominant language, literature, culture and philosophic ideas to subvert European colonial discourse has been a burning issue in postcolonial discourse studies. In literature, one of the best known debates on the subject is the one between Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe (Loomba 80). Emphasizing the status and history of the English language in Africa, Achebe suggests in his essay "English and the African Writer" that "the national literature of Nigeria and of many other countries of Africa is, or will be, written in English" (Achebe, 1997, 344). Achebe praises the creative hybridity of African writers who appropriated English to their experience. He states that,

> for me there is no other choice. I have been given this
> language and I intend to use it.... I feel that the English
> language will be able to carry the weight of my African
> experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in

full communion with its ancestral home but altered to
suit its new African surroundings" (Achebe, 1997, 349).

In his response to Achebe, the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o explains his choice to write in Gikuyu rather than English. Ngugi invokes the relationship between language and culture, and argues that colonialism made inroads into the latter through control of the former (Loomba 80). Ngugi asserts that, "literature by Africans in European languages was specifically that of the nationalistic bourgeoisie in its creators, its thematic concerns and its consumption" (*Decolonising* 20). He distinguishes between those writers who use indigenous languages, and those who hold onto foreign languages, implying a close relationship between political and cultural identities and the choice of language.

However, the choice of language does not entail any particular political or cultural position. Writers who express themselves in indigenous tongues are not necessarily anticolonial or revolutionary, and they too may be "contaminated" by Western forms and ideas (Loomba 81).

The choice of language is closely related to the powers of history. Textual representations of history involve ideological and rhetorical strategies. Loomba likens the interrelatedness between text and history to textile. Critical analysis highlights the historicity of the text as well as the textuality of history. Hence, colonisation should be analysed as if it were a text, full of representational as well as material practices in the form of scientific, economic, literary and historical writings, official papers, art and music, cultural traditions, popular narratives, and even rumours (Loomba 82).

Because of the debate of the language of African literature, and at the conference of African writers of English expression held at Makerere University College,

Kampala, in 1962, Achebe announced his differentiation between "national" and "ethnic" literature,

> A national literature is one that takes the whole nation for its province and has a realized or potential audience throughout its territory. In other words a literature that is written in the national language. An ethnic literature is one which is available to one ethnic group within the nation. If you take Nigeria as an example, the national literature, as I see it, is written in English; and the ethnic literatures are in Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, Efik, Ijaw, etc. etc. (Achebe, 1997, 343).

Achebe's definition of national literature is different from Ngugi's. The latter views the nation in tribal terms. Therefore, Kenya is not a nation for Ngugi but a country of different nations, whose literature can only be national if created in a dialogic translation with other national literatures such as Igbo-Yoruba, Dholuo-Maasai, or Yoruba-Maasai and Dholuo-Igbo translation, without English mediation. In this way, national literatures will create a genuinely African novel (Tageldin 462).

Since Africa is very rich as far as language, culture, religion, and style, the term "African literatures" is most of the time preferred (Mazrui 97). Mazrui describes this state of cultural wealth as something of a "bazaar" (154). Klein explains, "the plural form 'African literatures' helps chart the range and the variety; the singular form helps lend coherence to the field of study" (Chapman 163).

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* testifies to an aesthetic project that consists of fashioning a new language appropriate to its setting, which serves therefore to give life and substance to the narrative content and thus to enforce the novelist's initial gesture of cultural reclamation. As a consequence, the manner of presentation became integral to the narrative development to a degree that must be considered unusual in novelistic writing. As Emmanuel Obiechina remarked, "the integrative technique in

which background and atmosphere are interlaced with the action of the narrative must be regarded as Achebe's greatest achievement" (Obiechina, 1975, 142).

What is considered to be a breakthrough in *Things Fall Apart* is Achebe's success to fashion a new language appropriate to African setting. This is clear in Achebe's project of cultural reclamation that the story of Africa must be told by Africans (Irele, 2002, 116). Emmanuel Obiechina states that "the integrative technique in which background and atmosphere are interlaced with the action of the narrative must be regarded as Achebe's greatest achievement" (Obiechina, 1975, *Culture, Society* 142).

Achebe's use of English does not only aim at highlighting the cultural and linguistic resources in African language and culture, but also to Africanize the English language (Lynn 9).

> I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings (Achebe, *The African Writer and the English Language* 1975, 62).

His use of orature expresses the Igbo verbal style. It is more than decorative and ornamental. They play a crucial role in conveying communal views and unveil the colonial impact on Igbo identity (Lynn 10-1). It is due to the interrelation between the forms used in Achebe's novels and Igbo communal life that Bernth Lindfors describes the language of Achebe's world as "a grammar of values" (Lindfors, 1968, 77).

The situation of the African writer employing a European language results in three types of audience: First, we have the European audience to which the African writer is bound by language and generic forms. Second, there is the African audience educated in the European languages, which represents a minority, and which shares with the

writer both the system of references and the background. Third, we have the African population which represents the majority, and which shares with the writer the experience but not the linguistic means of expression. This aesthetic situation will necessarily lead to questions of ideology and politics (Irele, 2002, 60). As such, Achebe believes that colonialism had presented the colonized with a linguistic weapon to use to counter the discourse of empire: an English language with an African heart or sensibility (Nwosu 101).

## 2. Indigenizing the Realist Novel in in *Arrow* and *Anthills*

Achebe asserts that the novel would be the discursive mode that infuses the oral tradition with the established novel European forms to create a cultural practice that would express the conditions of postcolonial Africa (Msiska 50-1). Simon Gikandi contends that Achebe introduced African literature as a cultural practice by sustaining that "the novel provided a new way of reorganising African cultures, especially in the crucial juncture of transition from colonialism to national independence" (Gikandi 1991, 3).

Achebe shows a masterful command of realist strategies. Many readers find the world he creates very real. His novels are read through mimetic and anthropological lenses because of their documentary quality (Goyal 303-4). Just like Ngugi, Achebe is introducing a new epistemology even though it is presented in a Western discursive mode, the novel. The latter represents a space of argumentation and debate, as well as a statement of an emergent class and culture (Msiska 53-4).

Both Achebe and Ngugi worked on indigenizing the form and the language (the novel as well as the English language) of the African novel (Lewis 87). Gikandi

contends that, in their reaction to colonial deformation, African writers attempted to redefine and Africanize the realist novel. They tried to find new forms to challenge the realist template put into place at the birth of the new nations (Yogita 303).

Achebe's works represent the Africanization of the novel form to voice the issues and preoccupations of Africa and Africans (Irele 9). The historical, political, and cultural context has urged a new discourse of resistance in the African novel. The latter has aimed at voicing the pathologies of power in postcolonial times. The resulting critical consciousness may be termed "the new realism" in the African novel (Irele 10). Postcolonial writers such as Chinua Achebe and V.S. Naipaul employ realism and modernism as instruments to counter Western colonial discourses about Africa and the Caribbean in the works of writers like (Charles Dickens, Daniel Defoe, Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary, and Charlotte Brontë) (Mwangi 443).

The fusion between realism and the oral tradition is mythically and symbolically presented in the image of drought in *Anthills of the Savannah*. The severe drought that affects the province of Abazon is reflected in the story through the clash between the earth and the sky. This led the people of Abazon to travel to the capital city of Bassa in order to complain to His Excellency. It is this aspect of *Anthills* that inspires Ikem Osodi's "Hymn to the Sun" (Irele 21-2).

Achebe has recourse to the Igbo setting and history to increase the level of realism in his novels. Subsequently, he succeeds to establish his theme and world view (Nwoga 39). George argues that, "To talk of recreating or translating a "Western" form in a non-Western space is to adopt a questionable understanding of the dynamic of cultural encounter and historical change" (George 345).

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Realism is reflected in *Anthills* through grouping the characters in a journey. Indeed, Achebe puts his characters in a commuter bus in order to make them experience the daily life of ordinary people in Nigeria. Chris Oriko, for instance, flees from the city of Bassa to the countryside in a commuter bus. This scene in the novel highlights the discrepancy between life of the ruling elite and the Nigerian masses (Irele 22).

George asserts that Achebe succeeds to depict collective life in Africa in an objective way, in which the future is neither excluded nor guaranteed,

> Achebe opens up a way of conceiving and representing collective life in Africa, such that the continent's failures appear, not primarily as a catalogue of woes but, very specifically, as temporal flashes in an uncanny continuum, where a different future can neither be foreclosed nor guaranteed (George 345).

Achebe states that he would be satisfied if his historical novels "did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" (Achebe, *Hopes*, 45). As such, Achebe trusts the ability of the realist novel to tell the story of Africa and to challenge Western racist discourses. Indeed, realism could break into colonial deformation through restoring order, moral complexity, and aesthetic beauty to the African past.

Achebe nonetheless does not only follow the criteria set for nineteenth-century European realism of social texture, three-dimensional and well-rounded characters, and social relationships with psychological depth. He transforms the form of the realist novel by making it communal rather than individual employing elements of epic, romance, and tragedy. Besides, though realism in Europe is based on literacy, Achebe and African writers aim at preserving orality not replacing it. Achebe's uses

elements from Greek and African oral tradition in the image of the African griot to create a sense of community rather than an individualist consciousness.

In *The Novel in Africa and the Caribbean Since 1950*, Yogita Goyal asserts that

> extensive use of proverbs to code moral values…, the oral rhythms in the text, embedded folktales and mythic stories, and his patterns of temporality tied to the natural rhythms of agriculture and harvest, further help construct what may be called the Africanness of the novel's realism, which uses narrative conventions long associated with the genre of romance (Goyal 304-5).

As such, Achebe transforms the realist novel into, if not an indigenous African genre, a culturally hybrid one.

Moreover, Achebe counters those who question the existence of the sociological conditions like a developed bourgeois class and a literate readership, which are prerequisite to the European realist novel. Through his appropriation of the English language, the infusion between orality and literacy, as well as his focus on the communal rather than the individual, he could successfully restore Africa to the discourse of history and the African as a subject of history. Achebe creates a world that is concrete, detailed, and exhibiting intricate relationships and psychological depth in a realist form. He, however, depicts this world as mythical, historical, and romantic.

Achebe's depiction of rituals like the masking ceremonies, the Yam planting, the breaking of the kola nut, and naming the seasons and the harvesting associated with them create an organic temporality. Nonetheless, he also describes the interruptions that threaten the community's existence. Though romantic novels follow a cyclic time which is in harmony with the seasons, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, represent a charmed community at a time of crisis (Goyal 305).

Chantal Zabus states that *Arrow of God* contains as many as 129 proverbs. In *Arrow of God*, Achebe uses an Igbo proverb, "We are like the puppy in the proverb which attempted to answer two calls at once and broke its jaw" (*Arrow* 188). This proverb is clearly traditional and rural, for it reveals a social reality which has disappeared in urban centres (Zabus 488-9). In *Arrow of God*, Achebe contextualizes Igbo words by explaining them to the non-Igbo reader. He puts the Igbo word or phrase in dialogue and has the non-Igbo reader make an inference.

For example, Ezeulu in *Arrow* refers to his ancestors' achievements: " 'Did not my grandfather put a stop to  ichi in Umuaro? He stood up in all his awe and said: We shall no longer carve our faces as if they were ozo doors' " (*Arrow* 132). The reader is expected to infer that ozo doors are decorated the way facial marks (also called "scarification" in the colonial context) decorate the face (Zabus 491).

As such, in Achebe's novels, the form and content artistically capture the key moments of African history from colonialism to postcoloniality. Besides, these novels depict the linguistic and political consequences of the encounter between European and African cultures. Even though Achebe employs forms of realism and modernism, he rarely shows interest in formal experimentation for its own sake.  He uses these forms in order to deconstruct the colonial and postcolonial issues. He is influenced by realism because it helps him imagine African cultures (Gikandi, *Encyclopaedia* 9-12).

Thus, through the novel form, Achebe dramatizes the colonial encounter between traditional Igbo society and colonial modernity. He highlights the weaknesses of the African society on the eve of decolonization, and depicts the fascination of young Africans with modernity. In writing *Arrow*, Achebe aims at describing colonization and decolonization from the inside. He also attempts to present the Igbo identity as

complex as any other identity of a society undergoing change. As such, the Igbo value system is presented as the main source of stability for the community. It is nonetheless presented in conflict with a changing history and culture (Msiska 53).

Nonetheless, Achebe's discourse also functions under the influence of modernism and modernity because he was writing as a response to some modernist works. In addition, Achebe is influenced by the spirit of Modernism because he himself was taught according to the western modernist tradition (Gikandi, *Encyclopaedia* 12). Gikandi asserts that Achebe's early novels were written,

> in response to a set of modern texts, most notably Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in which African "barbarism " was represented as the opposite of the logic of modern civilization. Since he was educated within the tradition of European modernism, Achebe's goal was to use realism to make African cultures visible while using the ideology and techniques of modernism to counter the colonial novel [on] its own terrain (Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe* xiv).

As such, Novels written during the post-war era of the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s were part of the cultural process of problematizing modernity, as well as a new form of subjectivity and representation. In decolonization, the novels would function as a space for cultural, intellectual, and political debate, as well as a site where modernity is viewed as a threat to African identity and culture. Besides, these novels are a way of rethinking the past and forging an African cultural renaissance (Msiska 53-4).

## 3. Achebe's Search for Authenticity

> "Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly" (*Things* 7).

> "Stories are not about ogres or about animals or about men. All stories are about human beings" (*Devil* 61-62).

Achebe's statement that proverbs are "the palm oil with which words are eaten," is an indication of the centrality of proverbs in African speech and conversation. Achebe's statement reflects the aesthetic importance of proverbs. Indeed, proverbs play a major role in mental processes and cognitive orientation. This is due to the fact that proverbs are a set of compacted experiences representing a minimalism of thought. This function of proverbs is reflected in the Yoruba metaproverb: *Owe I'esin oro; ti on ba sonu, owe I'a fi nwa* (Proverbs are the horses of thought; when thoughts get lost, we send proverbs to find them) (Irele, *The African Imagination*, 32). Roscoe believes that proverbs represent a "versatile device" employed to direct behaviour, to teach, and to unify people. In debates, they are used to support orality (Roscoe 124).

Oyekan Owomoyela confirms that "traditional African discourse tends to rely to a considerable degree on proverbs" (Owomoyela 358-59). Achebe perceives in traditional Igbo proverbs an effective form of discourse to convey the narrative in a unique African voice (Lynn 30). George asserts that Achebe's use of proverbs in Igbo language and culture help in unifying the story line. They are sources of the wisdom of the ancestors (George 355). Achebe combines the traditional and the modern fusing proverbs and other aspects of folklore into fiction. He enlarges the scope of the English-language novel to accommodate African culture (Moss and Valestuk 115). Kalu states,

> Oral traditional genres range from the oral tale to the re-enactment of myth during festivals in which many different art forms are employed. Contemporary and

written Igbo literature uses most of the oral narrative techniques but has yet to achieve the unity of festival drama. Achebe tries to achieve this unity through explanations of the people's world view, descriptive images of customs and traditions, transliteration of the Igbo language into English, and a combination of Igbo oral narrative techniques with those of the Western novel (Kalu 61).

According to Gikandi, the turn to orality as an indigenous resource base is a matter of political necessity. Their nationalist writings require resistance poetics in the form of oral tradition and popular sources. Even third generation of African writers continue to write rehearsing "a particular trope of liminality" (Quayson 1997, 160). What is evident is that even contemporary African writers have recourse to indigenous forms. What unites these writes with the foundational writers like Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Amos Tutuola, is their exilic condition. Hence, if contemporary African writers write from a diasporic position where "the need to negotiate multiple identities becomes most acute" (Quayson 1997, 150), the foundational writers write from an internal exile, colonial rule (Ogude 241-42).

In a conversation with Bill Moyers, Achebe highlights the importance of storytelling as an art about survival. He uses the image of the "anthill" to show how tales are reminiscent of the past.

> If you look at the world in terms of storytelling, you have, first of all, the man who agitates, the man who drums up the people—I call him the drummer. Then you have the warrior, who goes forward and fights. But you also have the storyteller who recounts the event— and this is one who survives, who outlives all the others. It is the storyteller, in fact, who makes us what we are, who creates history. The storyteller creates the memory that the survivors must have—otherwise their surviving would have no meaning… [The anthill survives] so that the new grass will have memory of the fire that devastated the savannah in the previous dry season (Achebe in Moyers 337).

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Therefore, storytelling guarantees the survival of the storyteller and his/her listeners. The storyteller survives to tell the story, and the listeners survive as they learn from it (Nnaemeka 7).

Nevertheless, Achebe asserts that the use of the oral tradition is not measured by the knowledge of tales and proverbs. He rather highlights the importance of its use in conversation.

> If one takes the Igbo society, which I know best, it seems quite clear that  the finest examples of  prose occur not in those forms [folktales,  legends, proverbs and riddles]  but in  oratory and in the  art of  good conversation. Riddles and proverbs (*inu*) are cast in a rigid mould and cannot be varied at will.  Legend (*akuko ani*) and folk tale (*akuko iro*) are more flexible but only within a certain framework. This more or less rigid form is important because it helps to insure the survival of these categories of prose. It also makes it possible  for  a  speaker  to  employ  convenient abbreviations. For instance, he might say: "If an old woman stumbles and falls twice..." and leave it at that. His audience would know the rest of the proverb: "... the  contents  of  her  basket  would  be  numbered (Whiteley 1964).

As such, Achebe demonstrates that folklore is used as verbal shorthand in communication. It is viewed as the oral formulas employed by the individual speaker for his communicative needs (Ferris 25). Eileen Julien asserts that, "It is no longer viable and certainly not instructive to read 'traces' (the forms) of oral traditions as signs of African authenticity" (Julien, 1992, 154). She suggests that critics should closely investigate the influence and value of orality as it is used in the text.

The authenticity of African literature is evaluated by its reliance on the oral tradition, and sometimes by its use of native languages. In the Francophone context, some writers in the 1930s like Aime Cesaire, Leopold Senghor, and Leon Damas had

embraced the negritude movement to cater for a racialized view of a transatlantic black culture.

In the Anglophone context, the negritude movement was less influential. Wole Soyinka, for example, once remarked that a tiger does not need to proclaim its "tigritude". The South African writer Ezekiel Mphahlele showed some affinity with the ideas of the movement. Ngugi wa Thiong'o advocates the use of orature and African languages. Chinua Achebe on the other hand refused to be put in a straitjacket, given his English education; he chooses to Africanize the English language. In doing so, Achebe transforms the English language as well as the realist novel genre creating an aesthetic that would tell the stories of the communities he depicted. He warns against setting norms and criteria for African writing in the name of authenticity, "What I am really saying boils down to a simple plea for the African novel. Don't fence me in" (*Hopes* 99). Achebe's stand prompts the flourishing of the African fiction in both its reliance on the European genre of the novel as well as its infusion of orature and folklore to transform it (Desai 517).

> Critical discussion of African literature and of Achebe's fiction in particular commonly values orality as the bearer of vernacular tradition and the cultural expression of the unschooled majority, and therefore the sign of a general Africanness (Kortenaar 467).

Julien asserts that the oral tradition is a practice of the present. She distinguishes between Achebe's and Ngugi's approach to orality. She suggests that Achebe employs orality in his first novels as a complex stage before colonialism. Ngugi, on the other hand, uses orality in *Devil on the Cross* as a quality of Kenyan culture in the present.

> With *Devil on the Cross* ... oral language is a quality of Kenyan culture now. The temporal and spatial setting

of each story means that with regard to Achebe's first novels, orality becomes identified with what Achebe shows to be a complex time before colonialism (read often as the millennium "before the fall"), while Ngugi's situation of orality in the present challenges such interpretations. The contemporaneity of Devil seems to me singularly important, for it demonstrates that orality is neither of the past nor the elementary stage of an evolutionary process (Julien 143-4).

Hence, Julien affirms that while Achebe presents orality as an essential aspect of African culture, Ngugi's narrative renders it as situational presentist. Amoko views the very fabric of *Devil of the Cross* as schizophrenic. He explains that this is mainly due to the novel's oral eclecticism. He states that Ngugi draws on different sources and traditions namely, "Gikuyu oral discourses, biblical narratives, contemporary urban stories, the European novelistic tradition, the medieval trope of the Ship of Fools, and feminist political criticism" (Amoko 105-6). Gikandi contends that *Devil on the Cross* takes,

"the close connection between these discourses for granted, shifting from one to the other regardless of the different historical and ideological circumstances that produced them, and oblivious to the assumed opposition between tradition and modernity in African literature" (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o*, 212).

Besides, Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* presents stories as instruments of memory and historical testimony for the future. It relies on the oral tradition, and this is depicted in the character of the Old Man of Abazon (Ogude 239). The Old Man demonstrates facility in the use of proverbs and in the art of storytelling. In the following quote, the Old Man of Abazon explains why he awards the eagle feather to the storyteller rather than to the warrior or the beater of the battle drum,

The sounding of the battle- drum is important; the fierce waging of the war itself is important; and the telling of the story afterwards -- each important in its own way. But if you ask me which of them takes the

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> eagle-feather I will say boldly: the story… . Because it
> is only the story that can continue beyond the war and
> the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of
> war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the
> story, not the others, that saves our progeny from
> blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of cactus
> fence. The story is our escort: without it, we are blind
> (*Anthills* 123-24).

The Old Man of Abazon views storytelling as the store of the community's history. Indeed, stories represent their historical presence as a counter discourse to the colonial and official narratives. This is portrayed in the fable of the leopard and the tortoise. In his attempt to explain to the leopard that he is throwing sand in all directions that "*even after I am dead I would want anyone passing by this spot to say, yes, a fellow and his match struggled here*" (*Anthills* 128 emphasis by Achebe). The same idea is repeated by the Old Man of Abazon, "My people, that is all we are doing now. Struggling. Perhaps to no purpose except that those who come after us will be able to say: *True, our fathers were defeated but they tried*" (*Anthills* 128 emphasis by Achebe). Hence, Achebe implies that struggle is important, but he also emphasises the importance of struggle as it is embedded in a story that can be passed from one generation to the next (Ogude 239-40).

By juxtaposing the story of the Old Man of Abazon with the animal folk tale deep-rooted in the local lore, Achebe reactivates an indigenous source base and introduces it to a present event. As such, the oral tradition equips the African writer with a very important ideological weapon to affirm Africa's presence in the world's cultural stage, a world that threatened to suppress all Africa's stories.

Achebe is suggesting that mapping literary history in Africa is impossible without having recourse to indigenous forms of the oral tradition. The infusion between

literacy and orality can be read through the incident in *Arrow of God* as Ezeulu tries to explain to his son why it is necessary to send him to the mission school,

> I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring my share. The world is like a Mask, dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow (*Arrow* 46).

This image of the mask dancing reflects Achebe's use of the African oral tradition in order to cope with a changing world. According to Gikandi, "Achebe had used the metaphor of the dancing mask to capture the confusing moment of transition and tension between tradition and colonial modernity" (Ogude 248). This proverb also emphasises the importance of balance and complementarity in Igbo philosophy (Lynn 6). This is relevant to Achebe's statement in *Things Fall Apart*, "'The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with others '" (141).

As such, *Arrow of God* represents the cultural changes within the Igbo society from purely tribal and more communal to modern and complex (Soile 283).

In addition to orality, Achebe could appropriate the written word to his cultural and aesthetic project. Achebe successfully appropriates the Igbo proverbs in his attempt to Africanize the Western form of the novel. He also connects the roots of wisdom represented by the African oral tradition with literacy. In so doing, Achebe is voicing an age of transition as he is educated in both styles and as he also lives in both worlds. He succeeds to assimilate both forms: orality and literacy. His biographer, Ezenwa-Ohaeto, expresses Achebe's security to exist in two worlds, "you can be a Christian and yet be able to worship your own ancestors" (Irele 33-4).

In writing the African story, Achebe transforms the art of fiction from traditional storytelling into the modern form of the novel. This transformation is reflected in the evolution of the terms of reception from seeing into reading (Irele 34). The transformation in reception is reflected in Achebe's *Arrow of God* as Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to learn the literacy of the white man. What is ironical is that Oduche starts to feel alienation as he is introduced to literacy. As such, he gets detached from the art of conversation even in the presence of his family. He is influenced by the change, and he learns to interact with an absent interlocutor through literacy. Conversely, Ugoye is faithful to the art of storytelling, representing Oduche's foil and the contrast between storytelling and the written word (Irele 35).

African Christians were given the opportunity to get access to education,

> "literacy gave the elite access to the scientific and social thought of the western world, equipped them to enter into dialogue with the colonial powers over the destiny of Africa, and familiarized them with the social fashions of Europe which made their lifestyle an example to be emulated by their less fortunate countrymen" (Afigbo, 1985, 496).

Achebe himself has been shaped by the complex history of his time. He has received mission education in childhood, lived under British colonialism, studied at regional government colleges and at the young University College, Ibadan (Irele and Gikandi, 2004, 486).

Ezeulu's statement to Oduche about the importance to learn western literacy echoes Fanon's idea of language as power,

> I saw a young white man who was able to write his book with the left hand; he could shout in my face; he could do what he liked. Why? Because he could write with his left hand. ... I want you to learn and master this man's knowledge so much that if you are suddenly

> woken up from sleep and asked what it is you will
> reply. You must learn it until you can write it with your
> left hand (*Arrow* 189).

Ezeulu is also very decisive in telling his children to keep local customs. He tells Oduche,

> When a handshake goes beyond the elbow we know it
> has turned to another thing. … Your people should
> know the custom of this land; if they don't you must
> tell them (*Arrow* 13-4).

Ezeulu desires social balance between the local and the foreign, the old and the new, the traditional and the modern. Ezeulu declares, "a man must dance the dance prevalent in his time" (*Arrow* 189). By sending his son, Oduche, to the mission school, Ezeulu admits the power of the white man.

> 'The world is changing,' he had told Oduche, 'I do not
> like it. But I am the little bird, *Eneke-eti-oba*. When his
> friends asked him why he was always on the wing he
> replied: "Men of today have learnt to shoot without
> missing and so I have learnt to fly without perching." I
> want lone of my sons to join these people and be my
> eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back.
> But if there is something there you will bring home my
> share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to
> see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells
> me that those who do not befriend the white man today
> will be saying *had we known tomorrow*' (*Arrow* 45-6,
> emphasis by Achebe).

As such, Ezeulu succeeds to foresee the potential power of the white man, but he fails to weigh the possibilities of Oduche's turning on his traditional value by killing the sacred python of Idemili (Soile 287).

> Now Ezeulu was becoming afraid that the new religion
> was like a leper. Allow him a handshake and he wants
> an embrace. Ezeulu had already spoken strongly to his
> son who was becoming more strange everyday. Perhaps
> the time had come to bring him out again. But what
> would happen if, as many oracles prophesied, the white
> man had come to take over the land and rule. In such a

case it would be wise to have a man of your family in
    his band (*Arrow* 42).

Ezeulu's mistake is evident in his inability to grasp the universal truth that no matter how one stands one cannot see all the sides of a dancing Mask (Soile 288).

In Achebe's works, and due to the shift in the spirit of the age, it is clear that the Information Age interacts and competes with the Age of Wisdom. There is a dialectic between the old and the new. As such, Achebe's protagonists, namely Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and Obi in *No Longer at Ease*, represent the end of the Age of Wisdom and the early foundations of the Information Age. The ideological implications of the transition are unveiled in *Anthills of the Savannah* as he tries to unite both modes of both systems through the character of the bearded old man who is a type of the African storyteller as well as an Ancient Mariner (Irele 35).

*Anthills* represents all characters from all bulks of the Kangan society. All members of the subaltern class have a voice in the novel including women, the underprivileged, and the ancestors. Achebe uses the narrative technique of multiple narrators to cater for his objective of giving voice to this unprivileged class.

The problem of leadership in the novel makes Achebe give voice to three first-person narrators, namely Christopher Oriko, Ikem Osodi, and Beatrice Okoh. These members of the ruling elite express their views concerning leadership in Kangan. The author stands as an omniscient narrator reasserting his role as a moral guide and coordinator of a multiplicity of stories and narrative voices (Irele 47). In his essay "The Trouble with Narrators," Jennifer Wenzel argues that the intrusion of the omniscient narrator does not reveal the author's trust in his first-person narrators (319).

In *Anthills*, Achebe uses some folkloric elements from the Wisdom Age such as the Idemili myth. This is in order to revive the place of the oral tradition in the literacy and Information Age. Besides, it also reflects Achebe's insistence on roots in African literature, a feminist Renaissance (Irele 48).

## 4. The Decisive Turn to Orality in *Devil on the Cross*

The oral tradition has proved to be flexible and highly resourceful. It enables the novelist to represent a complex continuation of African storytelling and other traditions in a dialectic tension in the novel (Sackey 390). Ngugi employs the narrative of African oral tradition for structure, theme, and style. In *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi explains that his early education was in the Gikuyu language, and that, before attending an English language school, he read the Bible, folktales, missionary literature, and other texts in Gikuyu (*Decolonising* 71).

Ngugi also emphasizes that his Gikuyu-language novels draw a lot on African orature. He affirms that he "borrows heavily from oral narrative" (*Decolonising* 77) and that the African novel has to be rooted "in the rich oral traditions of the peasantry" (85-86). Ngugi asserts that orature is "the basis of all genres of written literature be it a poem, a play, or a story, was beating with life and energy" (93). He also suggests that African writers should return to the "sources" of their being, "Kenyan writers have no alternative but to return to the roots, return to the sources of their being in the rhythms of life and- speech and languages of the Kenyan masses" (72).

In his answer to a question on his appropriation of Gikuyu orature to the novel form, Ngugi says,

> My novels in Kikuyu have a strange irony. The first one, Caitaani, was written in prison, and the second in England. Many things are different when writing in Kikuyu. I've used the oral tradition a lot. One of the frustrations is the inability to render the satiric dimensions of some phrases ("The Language of Struggle" 152).

Ngugi asserts, "Though tale, dance, song, myth etc. can be performed for individual aesthetic enjoyment, they have other social purposes as well. The oral tradition... comments on society because of its intimate relationship and involvement" (*Homecoming* 68). Ngugi has used oral forms in his earlier novels, but the difference is that in his later novels he expects a different type of audience, namely the workers and the peasants (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 88). Ngugi explains in "The Language of Struggle",

> These are the hazards of being in exile. A writer needs his own home, and the society around him. To be able to function effectively, a writer needs the inspiration of his own community for his imagination to work effectively. […] A writer needs to catch that phrase which is used in a bar, that phrase which is used in a restaurant, in a taxi, in the marketplace, in the shopping center (Ngugi 148-9).

In his book, *Ngugi's Novels and African History*, Ogude confirms that Ngugi employs oral narrative strategies to create social transformation in his characters, to enhance the place of his characters as agents of change, and to voice his ideological message set in his stories (94-5).

Besides, Sackey, in his essay "Oral Tradition and the African Novel", asserts that the oral tradition is employed to challenge the established Western image of Africa and to deform the novelistic structures of the novel. The oral forms emphasize the

African identity and creativity. Ngugi, among other writers like Achebe, Armah and Aidoo, have broken the rules of the Western novel to show that African literature is responsive. Achebe employs the African oral tradition but he is less creative as far as the use of oral literary structures. All of his novels are structured in the form of the great Western tradition (Sackey 390). Therefore, Ngugi employs African orature to create a form that "is best understood as a functional discourse which can legitimate or subvert the existing power structures of society" (Desai 65).

Employing forms of the oral tradition in his narrative discourse, especially his Gikuyu novels, Ngugi subscribes to different traditions, namely the African oral tradition as well as Western fictional forms. His works can be best described as hybrid texts. Ngugi tends to deform the conventional structures of the novel so as to establish more communal conventions of orality (Jackson 9). In "The Language of Struggle", Ngugi announces,

> Obviously, I'm part of several traditions. One, of course, is the peasants, the tradition of storytelling around the fireside and so on … oral tradition, or traditional orature as we call it. Then of course there's a Western literary tradition that is a written tradition: Dickens, Balzac, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Faulkner, and others (153).

Hence, Ngugi is appropriating the Gikuyu oral tradition, and the shift in his novels has to be seen as an amalgamation of both Gikuyu and Western modes of production (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 87). Ngugi attempts to create a hybrid text employing both oral and popular forms and reconciling them with the written form. As such, he redefines orality and subordinates it to the qualities of the written form. He also stretches the meaning of orality to include popular forms like biblical allusions that were widely used in Kenyan culture (90).

Ngugi writes on the use of oral tradition,

> I had resolved to use a language which did not have a
> modern novel, a challenge to myself, and a way of
> affirming my faith in the possibilities of the languages
> of all the different Kenyan nationalities, languages
> whose development as vehicles for the Kenyon
> people's anti-imperialist struggles had been actively
> suppressed. . . . I would not avoid any subject—science,
> technology, philosophy, religion, music, political
> economy—provided it logically arose out of the
> development of theme, character, plot, story and world
> view. Further I would use any and everything I had ever
> learnt about the craft of fiction—allegory, parable,
> satire, narrative, description, reminiscence, flash-back,
> interior monologue, stream of consciousness, dialogue,
> drama—provided it came naturally in the development
> of character, theme and story. But content—not
> language and technique—would determine the eventual
> form of the novel…. (*Detained* 8).

In *Petals*, Ngugi employs Gikuyu phrases and nouns instead of English counterparts. This technique clearly puts the text in Africa. Local detail, passionate tone, and Gikuyu phrases and nouns refashion the Kenyan experience in the face of neocolonialism (Loflin 643). Hence, the English-medium literary text is a hybrid text comprising on the one hand facts, stories, themes and even styles related to the African culture and, on the other hand, the English language with its flavour, stylistic subtleties and even beliefs. The hybrid text of English includes forms of both English and the African language. This is a kind of appropriation of English (Kachru 197).

*Devil* merges indigenous Kenyan oral forms, Mau Mau and other nationalistic songs, English and Kiswahili intercalations on the basis of mixed African and European Socialist and Christian symbols and concepts. Ngugi states that the novel incorporates forms of oral tradition and Western fictional forms (Slaymaker 188). It deals with the corruption of the ruling class, and how workers and peasants struggle against exploitation through communal action. Ngugi asserts that, "Literature

published in African languages will have to be meaningful to the masses and therefore much closer to the realities of their situation" ("On Writing in Gikuyu" 151). In the novel, Ngugi uses Christian symbolism to criticise imperialism (Ojo-Ade 10). He employs Wariinga's story, which is a personal story that is rooted in popular culture of the Gikuyu, and thus through it he evokes his exploration of the postcolonial state (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 93).

In considering Ngugi's *Devil*, Eileen Julien states that oral language for Ngugi "is a quality of Kenyan culture now" and not a form for describing the past (Julien 143). She proceeds:

> Oral language is thus not the object of representation that can be read as quaint and passeiste [of the past]. Orality here means the language and tradition in which this narrative is articulated, the medium in which Ngugi's audience will hear this story (Julien 145).

Ngugi is obsessed with the collective ritual of oral performance. He thinks of the community gatherings and celebrations at the precolonial Gikuyu religious festival. His inspiration to write *Devil* results from his tourist trip to see the Human-shaped rocks of Idakho in western Kenya and folktales of man-eating ogres from Gikuyu orature (*Decolonising* 81). The reception of *Devil* by the workers and peasants in buses, bars, and other public places made Ngugi describe it as the "the appropriation of the novel into the oral tradition" (83).

Forms of African folklore like folktales, proverbs, myths and legends provide modern African literature with motifs, themes, characters, and techniques. Ngugi employs a lot of these forms in *Petals* and *Devil* (Ojaide 50). The form and technique of Ngugi's *Devil* are relevant to the storytelling tradition. Chapter one of the novel is an attempt to establish a rapport between the narrator and the reader. It prepares the

reader for the story. He incorporates song, dance, formal patterns of celebration, and mourning into his narrative discourse. Thus, the novel acts and shows more than tells (Sackey 402). Modern African writers have adopted traditional oral forms in their novels. Ngugi employs a Gicaandi player to narrate the story in *Devil* (Ojaide 51).

In *Devil*, Ngugi uses the narrative point of view that is commonly used in written and oral narratives which is the third person point of view. In order to create an epic atmosphere around his narratives, Ngugi uses the authoritative voice of a collective narrator adopting the narrative style of a master griot or traditional Gikuyu singer. In the novel, he plays the role of a village prophet, a Gicaandi player in the traditional Gikuyu community. However, the name "Prophet of Justice," given to the narrator, also echoes the biblical prophets whose wisdom has been introduced into the local religious traditions of the Gikuyu (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels*, 95).

From the opening of the story, the narrator confirms the power and credibility of his message by naming himself the Prophet of Justice, a Gicaandi player and therefore the voice of the people which is the voice of God. Julien explains that "the narrator's voice is mobilized both in response to the call of other human voices and in response to a deeper spiritual impulse" (Julien 147). The load of prophecy obliges him to faithfully narrate the story of Wariinga and to "reveal all that is hidden" and all that "lies concealed by darkness" (*Devil* 7-8).

One important strategy in Ngugi's narrative is that the story-teller determines historical experience; and therefore, the narrator can comment on real life. Throughout the story of Wariinga, Ngugi provides an analysis of Kenya's social problems and postcolonial plight, as well as a criticism of neocolonialism. Hence, the postcolonial encounter of the workers and the peasants is well contextualised in the

narrative framework (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 96). Besides, The speeches of the thieves in the "Devil's feast" are presented as oral performances, replete with proverbs, repetitions, allegorical allusions, and song pauses that we would expect in a Gicaandi performance (Mwangi 36).

Story-tellers use repetition and redundancy to guarantee that the audience follows and takes part in the story. Ong argues that the repetitions and redundancies are constitutive of the "oral mind-set". He states that "Oral cultures do not add antitheses, proverbs, and other formulas and mnemonic patterning to their thought: their thought consists in such elements from the start. In a completely oral noetic economy, thought which does not consist in memorable patterns is in effect nonthought: you can normally never get it back again" (Ong 191). He adds,

> Oral cultures preserve their articulated knowledge by constantly repeating the fixed sayings and formulas – including epithets, standard parallelisms and oppositions, kennings, set phrases, and all sorts of other mnemonic or recall devices in which their knowledge is couched. Oral noetics enforce the copying of human productions as well as of nature (Ong 264).

Ong also believes that "The re-entry of any text into the oral world is a kind of resurrection," Ong states (271).

Furthermore, Ngugi employs different narrative strategies which include the use of traditional seers or prophets or singer-musicians; the use of the journey or quest motif, rumour and gossip, and fantastic and biblical allusions. He uses these elements to create allegorical symbols of his characters in *Devil*. His use of popular culture enables him to reconcile the conflict between his grotesque characters and the realistic world they live in. Besides, these oral strategies enable him to mediate between the absurdity of the postcolonial situation in Kenya and the moral message in his texts.

Thus, Ngugi's characters in *Devil* fall in the fine line between the real and the surreal (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 95). He uses orality both as an ideal dialogic mode and as a political instrument (K. Williams 59).

In *Devil*, Ngugi uses traditional Gikuyu culture and Christianity as components of Contemporary Kenyan culture, and as stores for the rhetoric of his characters. The Gicaandi player narrates a dream he has had in Biblical and apocalyptic terms,

> And after seven days had passed, the Earth trembled, and lightning scored the sky with its brightness, and I was lifted up, and I was borne up to the rooftop of the house, and I was shown many things, and I heard a voice, like a great clap of thunder, admonishing me: Who has told you that prophecy is yours alone, to keep to yourself? (*Devil* 8).

Hence, Biblical images are used to support Ngugi's argument. The array of diction and symbolic tinge in *Devil* has surpassed the narrowly socialist rhetoric of *Petals* (Loflin 87). In his attempt of the nativization of English, Ngugi employs biblical forms. This leads to linguistic and cultural transfer (Kasanga and Kalume 64-5). Examples of biblical language in *Devil* include,

> ... For the Kingdom of Earthly Wiles can be likened unto a ruler who foresaw that the day would come when he would be thrown out of a certain country by the masses and their guerilla freedom fighters (82).
> Happy is the traveller who is able to see the tree stumps in his way, for he can pull them up or walk around them so that they do not make him stumble (7).
> Happy is the man who is able to discern the pitfalls in his path, for he can avoid them (7).
> 'Knock and it shall be opened,' Mwaiira replied (36).

In addition, in *Devil*, Ngugi employs the Gicaandi player, a traditional storyteller, as a narrator to create a Gikuyu perspective. He includes African proverbs in his narrative: "the forest of the heart is never cleared of all its trees" (7); "aping others

cost the frog its buttocks" (12); "just as a single bee is sometimes left behind by the others, one question in particular remained lodged in Wariinga's mind" (29); "a man who doesn't travel thinks that it's only his mother who cooks wild vegetables" (71).

Proverbs in the African oral tradition are used to interrupt the narrative as a form of persuasion. Characters who are able to use proverbs in their conversations usually prevail. In Ngugi's narrative, this is used by characters to argue over the problems of modern Kenya. For instance, Muturi argues for socialism in Kenya using Gikuyu proverbs,

> That humanity is in turn born of many hands working together, for, as Gikuyu once said, a single finger cannot kill a louse; a single log cannot make a fire last through the night .... The unity of our sweat is what makes us able to change the laws of nature, able to harness them to the needs of our lives, instead of our lives remaining slaves of the laws of nature. That's why Gikuyu also said: Change, for the seeds in the gourd are not all of one kind (52).

A corrupt businessman also refers to proverbs to support his actions, "I have two mistresses, for you know the saying that he who keeps something in reserve never goes hungry, and when an European gets old, he likes to eat veal" (*Devil* 99).

These proverbs direct Ngugi's narrative to a Gikuyu audience. They also show that traditional wisdom alone is not sufficient to drive contemporary African community. It is employed to support African socialism and confront neocolonial corruption. Therefore, proverbs can be very persuasive and readers may interact with them for meaning making (Loflin 87).

Ngugi also integrates a proverb contest as narrated by Wariinga,

> 'The other girls, Kareendi's friends, envy her, and they offer her bits and pieces of advice: "Kareendi, you'd

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> better change your ways: the seeds in the gourd are not all of the same type," they tell her. Kareendi replies: "A restless child leaves home in search of meat just as a goat is about to be slaughtered." But the girls tell her: "Friend, this is a new Kenya. Everyone should set something aside to meet tomorrow's needs. He who saves a little food will never suffer from hunger." She replies: "Too much eating ruins the stomach." They taunt her: "A restricted diet is monotonous." Kareendi rejects this and tells them: "A borrowed necklace may lead to the loss of one's own" (*Devil* 20).

Furthermore, Gatuiria unfolds stories and proverbs passed to him by an old peasant,

> 'He started off with several proverbs. I can't remember them all. But they were all about avarice and conceit. He told me that though it is said that the fart of a rich man has no smell, and that a rich man will cultivate even a forbidden, sacred shrine, still every man ought to know that he who used to dance can now only watch while others do it, and he who used to jump over the stream can now only wade through it. To possess much encourages conceit; to possess little, thought. Too much greed may well prompt one to sell oneself cheaply. "Young man," he said, "go after property. But never show God your nakedness, and never despise the people. The voice of the people is the voice of God" (*Devil* 63).

These passages illustrate Ngugi's use of popular discourse including proverbs and folk sayings. It appeals to his audience and uses the freedom characteristic of the people's language (Berger 20-1).

Hence, in employing these oral strategies, Ngugi is more concerned with the story and his audience's emotional immersion with it rather than with character description (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 97). Gikandi asserts, "In both Caitaani Mutharabaini and Matigari, Ngugi skilfully re-establishes links with African oral literature, a tradition that had been marginalized in his earlier works, but writers such as Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka had done much the same thing in their English-language works" (138).

## 5. Ngugi's Political Blend of Aesthetics and Ideology

Ngugi's mature novels show a departure from the bourgeois conception of the novel as the portrayal of a character struggling in a world that is in Georg Lukacs' terms "abandoned by God" to a Marxist conception where characters are shaped by historical forces as a way to preserve their identity (Lukacs 88). What distinguishes African art from European art is its instrumentality. Indeed, African art "was not, as it is in modern Europe, severed from the physical, social and religious needs of the community" (*Homecoming* 6); it had an "integrative function" (7).

As such, Ngugi's later works reflect Frederic Jameson's idea about the Third World artist in the age of Multinational Capitalism. Jameson believes that Third World cultural productions have to be read as "national allegories" because they do not accept the radical split typical of Western realist and modernist novels, "between the private and the public, between the poetic and the political, between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes, of the economic, and of secular political power" (Jameson 65-88). He affirms that Third World cultural works evoke national and collective experience as well as the people's conception of it.

> A nation's literature which is a sum total of the products of many individuals in that society is then not only a reflection of that people's collective reality, collective experience, but also embodies that community's way of looking at the world and its place in the making of that world (*Writers* 7).

Indeed, Ngugi's later works fall into what Jameson calls the "life-and-death struggle with first-world cultural imperialism," in order to create the forms in which the story of the struggle with the dominant world should be written (Jameson 67).

Hence, Ngugi's later work reflects both aesthetic as well as ideological issues (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 10-1).

Indeed, Ngugi's ideological perceptions are expressed in his conception of the aesthetic. For example, in his answer to a question concerning his view about the effect of the land, he notes that the importance of the land to the Kenyan people is not because of materialistic or economic effects, but rather because of "something almost akin to spiritual" effects (Duerden and Pierterse 123). He asserts that literature is,

> a reflection on the aesthetic and imaginative planes, of a community's wrestling with its total environment to produce the basic means of life, food, clothing, shelter, and in the process creating and recreating itself in history (*Writers* 5-6).

It is clear that Ngugi views literature as a shared experience of a community struggling with its environment. He also holds the belief that the writer should engage with the community's interests. Besides, Ngugi is aware of the fact that art should exhibit certain imaginative subjectivity. Therefore, he employs art and the aesthetic (what he calls the imagination) to address political and social problems that affected him in the early 1960s (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 11).

One of the main accomplishments of Ngugi is his understanding of the complex relation between aesthetics and politics in modern society, which echoes Eagleton's conception of the role of aesthetics. He asserts that aesthetics "provides an unusually powerful challenge and alternative to these dominant ideological forms, and is in this sense an eminently contradictory phenomenon" (*Ideology* 3).

Ngugi's preoccupation with the paradoxical nature of the aesthetic manifests itself as he tries to depict the recent history of colonial and postcolonial Kenya. He is faced with the need to bear on: the rural and the urban, as well as the forms of the middle

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class, namely the novel or drama; the division between the experience of reification in class society and the writer's Utopian aspiration for a "non-alienated mode of cognition"; and the split between the ideological role of art and its subjectivity (Eagleton 2). Hence the novel form is deeply ideological and far from being neutral (Wise 33).

The ensuing outcome of independence is not the emergence of new African identity, but rather an embarrassing U-turn on the most elementary forms of political and cultural formation. Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* can be read as an effort to form these turns and reversals. As such, by the 1970s, Ngugi was thinking about how aesthetics and ideology could be used as an instrument of knowledge and social change (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 32-3).

Hence, the changing form in Ngugi's fiction, from his early romantic works to his later socialist realistic works, can be explained in the crisis of representation he experiences whenever he attempts to portray the African colonial and postcolonial predicament. Previous readings of his works and his development as a writer focused on either his shift in ideology from English liberalism to Marxism, or his change of narrative discourse from romantic poetics to realism (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 13).

Ngugi insisted that the realist novel, though originates in European Middle class, can be appropriated by the African peasantry and working class to enhance political liberation (*Decolonising* 68-69). He discussed the example of gunpowder which, though invented by the Chinese, was used by the Europeans. The Arabs also pioneered in mathematical science, which is a "neutral technology" and was later used by people worldwide. Ngugi views the art of the realist novel, and not the language,

as a "neutral technology" which can be judged only by "the uses to which it is continually being put", (*Decolonising* 15, 69) and not by class origin or any national and historical considerations (Wise 33).

Ngugi has indeed contributed to the innovation of the novel of realism. His adaptation of the form of the novel is similar to the adaptation of the English language by writers like Amos Tutola, Zora Neale Hurston, and other well-known rap poets in the United States. They are very creative in dealing with their objects. Henry Louis Gates believes that Ngugi's deformation of the novel enhanced its reinvention and development into a truly African and Third World literary genre. Ngugi's later Gikuyu-language novels, like *Devil* and *Matigari* have enhanced the traditional connection between the author and the reader (narrator and listener) through the marriage of the European form of the novel of realism and the Gikuyu oral storytelling and poetry traditions (Wise 34).

Ngugi also innovated in the reception and distribution of the novel by its "reading" audience. His Gikuyu novels were received and distributed in group rather than individual settings, like public meetings in bars and buses as well as family and workers gatherings. Ngugi states that these public readings of his Gikuyu novels create dialogue, commentary, and interpretation among the audience. The latter is made up of people who are illiterate in Gikuyu or in any other language (*Decolonising* 83). Hence, Ngugi's reinvention of the novel form is perhaps more important political act than his break with the English language (Wise 34).

Indeed, Ngugi's appropriation of the realistic novel is obscured by the fact that the novel form undoubtedly hides ideology. Later, Ngugi leaves away the European novel and turns towards Gikuyu (African) novel and community drama. This is owing to the

fundamentally ideological aspects of the realistic novel which make it difficult for Ngugi to convey African experience. Hence, Christopher Wise believes that Ngugi's pre-Gikuyu novels, including *The River Between* and *Petals of Blood*, are experimental "failures" which Ngugi leaves as inadequate. However, Wise adds that these are considered to be "magnificent failures" because they have helped Ngugi to develop an authentically African and Third World form of the novel (Wise 46).

*Devil* embodies a break with the conventional novel both in content and form. Ngugi gets inspiration and vision from his cultural roots. The format is that of the Gicandi plays and their oratorical structure. The form of the Gicandi is an East African style similar to the bard and minstrel in European tradition or the West African griot. This is to realise the objective of relevance to the audience, writing in the language of the peasants and workers.

Indeed, language and format make it possible for the African writer to employ traditional metaphors and to speak in the simple, direct voice of peasants and workers. This will lead to create an old, yet new, vision of culture instead of the prevalent culture (Wamalwa 15). Ngugi states, "It was then that I heard the pleading cries of many voices: Gicaandi players, prophets of justice, reveal what now lies concealed by darkness" (*Devil* 7).

Ngugi, more than any other African writer, wanted to distance himself from the bourgeois novel genre (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 143). Indeed, there was a discrepancy between the bourgeois form of the novel, written for the educated middle class, and the targeted world of workers and peasants Ngugi wanted to depict. In order for the novel to achieve social change, it needs to convince the middle class readers to consider national interest rather than their own economic and political interests (144).

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Orality has been one of the most important developments in Ngugi's postcolonial narrative discourse. After his publication of *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi asserted that he was really troubled by the fact that he could not really connect with his audience, which makes the class of workers and peasants. Ngugi asserts, "I knew whom I was writing about', he asserted, 'but whom was I writing for?" (*Decolonising* 72).

He believes that the realist tradition within which most of his earlier novels are rooted is both complex and alienating. Indeed, the realist tradition does not fulfil his objective of portraying the marginalised groups in Kenya with an alternative history. In *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi contends that the African novel has been,

> impoverished by the very means of its possible liberation: exposure of its would-be-practitioners to the secular tradition of the critical and socialist realism of the European novel and the entry on the stage of commercial publishers who were outside the colonial government and missionary control (70).

Therefore, Ngugi decides to write in his mother tongue and to employ oral narrative devices and strategies and authentic oral forms of the Gikuyu.

## 6. *Devil on the Cross* as an Allegory

> In the time of fragmentation, allegory is the best form
> to put history together (Benjamin 159).

Ngugi employs allegory as a strategy to represent the social, political, and economic chaos in the postcolony. It is also a way to recover Kenya's history after being denigrated by the colonial and postcolonial state (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 46). Ngugi's narrative in *Petals* and *Devil* is an overdetermined narrative structure. It develops a causal chain of events in which plot, theme, and character are closely related to the main discourse in the text (68).

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Ngugi's *Devil* is his best example of allegorical narrative in which he employs forms of the oral tradition. At the opening of the novel, the Gikandi player, the traditional narrator of village history, sets the stage. Subsequently, his novel was built in the form of a series of stories. Most of these stories are about fantastic events, of dreams, and legends. Hence, *Devil* may be considered as a fable. For Ngugi, Wariinga's story and predicament is symbolic and allegorical of the plight of the whole nation. It is a narrative about reclaiming the suppressed history of the oppressed in the master narrative (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 77).

*Devil* also echoes the allegory of the cave in Plato's *The Republic*. In Plato's cave, people are chained to a wall and see the shadows of objects taken by unseen people. The overlapping is evident in Wariinga's walking out of the cave,

> The sun shone brightly on the Ilmorog ridges and plains. The land lay quiet. No cold, no wind. "Although I have just been in the full glare of electric lights, I feel as if I have lived in darkness all my life," Wariinga sighed, and then she added in a sing-song voice: "Praise the sun of God! Hail the light of God!" "You should be singing praises to the light of our country," Gatuiria told her (*Devil* 128)

The electric lights in Ngugi's cave are artificial, just like Plato's fire. The natural light of the sun in Plato's cave reveals the darkness of the cave. Gatuiria's claim that the light of truth is the light of the country foreshadows the protests of the peasants, students, and workers against the thieves in the cave (Loflin 88). Ngugi's allusions to Western canonical figures suggest that the neocolonialist businessmen are implementing extreme Western capitalism, and they want to impress their European masters. Thus, these allusions function in a Western context (89).

Allegory in postcolonial discourse has proved to be an effective way of writing back to colonial discourse through what is called the politics of representation

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(Slemon, "Monuments of Empire" 8). Since allegory challenges the monolothic representation of the colonized, it has been employed as "a site upon which post-colonial cultures seek to contest and subvert colonialist appropriation through the production of a literary, and specifically anti-imperialist, figurative opposition or textual counter-discourse" (10).

Postcolonial allegory attains a transformative effect in disrupting the imperial myths and stereotypes found in the collective imagination of colonised people. Slemon asserts that allegory provides the post-colonial writer with a means of foregrounding such inherited notions and exposing them to the transformative powers of imagination; and in doing so, post-colonial allegory helps to produce new ways of seeing history, new ways of "reading" the world ("Post-Colonial Allegory" 164).

In order to succeed in his postcolonial project of writing back or counter-discourse, Ngugi has recourse to allegory in order to fulfil the demands of a historical novel and the demands of rewriting history in the postcolony (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 44-45).

Derived from the Greek word "allos", allegory denotes the other. In the context of literature and writing, allegory is saying something and implying something else. Stephen Slemon explains that allegory is writing that involves, "doubling or reduplicating extra-textual material; and since the allegorical sign refers always to a previous or anterior sign, it will always draw our attention to the passage of time; it will inevitably create an awareness of the past – a consciousness of history and tradition" ("Post-Colonial Allegory" 158).

Hence, allegory has always been linked to history. Slemon argues that allegory is concerned with, "redeeming or recuperating the past, either because the present pales

in comparison with it, or because the past has become in some ways unacceptable to the dominant ideology of contemporary society' ("Post-Colonial Allegory" 158).

In his narration of the colonial past, Ngugi's narrative resonates with the postcolonial experiences of Kenya. Narrative meaning in the colonial context allegorises narrative meaning in the postcolonial state. The setting of the narrative ranges between the two different time frames (then/now; now/then) implying a certain continuity or permanence of the situation. As such, allegory suggests that the colonial structure parallels in a linear way the postcolonial state, and that the postcolonial situation is just a reproduction of the colonial one.

Besides, the best representation of Kenya's colonial past is Abdulla in *Petals*. He is a Mau Mau member, and his injured leg is a proof of his sacrifices in the fight for independence. His memories of the Mau Mau mirror Kenya's colonial past. His story, nonetheless, parallels and mocks the present postcolonial state, which is in turn a continuity of the colonial past.  His struggle represents the spirit of Dedan Kimathi, a Mau Mau leader.

Abdulla connects the reader to Kenya's past celebrating the story of the heroes of Kenya's independence. Even though he made huge sacrifices in the fight for independence, Abdulla gains nothing. He strives to make a living in his store and bar. He and Wanja are depicted as victims of the neocolonialist policies. These neocolonialist forces order the closing of Abdulla's 'dirty premises' to enable the passing of the Trans-Africa road and Kimeria's business houses. He ends up in extreme poverty (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 53).

Through the character of Abdullah, Ngugi employs the enigmatic allegorical time frames in which the past is juxtaposed with the present. He creates a philosophical

irony in which past judges the present. As a result, Ngugi is suggesting that the colonial predicament, degradation, and exploitation is being duplicated in the postcolonial state. The only difference is in colonial times the oppressors were white; in the postcolonial state the oppressors are black serving their masters in Europe (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 54).

One example of the continuity and relationship between colonial and postcolonial situation is Karega's efforts to dismiss the white headmaster at Siriana high school. When the latter is replaced by a black headmaster, Mr Chui, he proves to be no different from the white headmaster. Later, in his postcolonial struggle against the owners of Theng'eta Breweries in Ilmorog, Karega, as a trade union leader encounters Mr Chui in partnership with foreign capital.

Hence, in Ngugi's narrative discourse, the past is apparently parallel with the present at the educational, cultural, economic and even the personal level. Wanja and Wariinga, in *Petals* and *Devil* respectively, are both victims of corrupt educational leadership and a system in which children are exposed to sexual abuse (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 54).

In Ngugi's narrative, characters are used as symbols of social classes. Indeed, in his later novels, characters are presented in conflict with social classes or social forces. The grotesque image of the body and names also depict the values and norms of a social group or class as fixed. As such, characters become an important aspect of the symbolic scheme in the narrative. They are figurative allegorical representations of similar structures within the wider society. For Ngugi, allegory is employed as textual anti-imperialist counter-discourse to subvert and contest colonialist discourse (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 66-7).

The artist-type character represents the class of people who fail to take sides within any group in the Kenyan society. This class is made of the educated elite. Muturi, the worker leader, says, "Those educated people are often not sure whose side they are on. They sway from this side to that like water on a leaf" (*Devil* 211). Gikandi comments on these uncommitted intellectuals of the artist-type character, "These characters exist in a world which always seems beyond their practical abilities, so that understanding is no longer the instrument of dealing with real-life experiences; they prefer to withdraw from a world which they know only too well" (Gikandi, *Reading the African Novel* 74).

Hence, these artist type characters are often in conflict with their families and social background. They are always characterised by rebellion, idealism and flight. Munira in *Petals* and Gatuiria in *Devil* are the best examples of the artist type. Ngugi depicts Munira and Gatuiria as protestors against the will and obsession of their parents. They are characterised by being idealistic, spiritual, and very far from being practical and agents of change. They are also defined by images of entrapment and escape (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 82).

Gatuiria is torn between the values of his African heritage and the values acquired through his elitist education which are rooted in Western values. His inaction is marked in his inability to rescue Wariinga, nor to find the tune for the music of his dreams; he has "not yet found the tune or the theme of the music of my dreams" (*Devil* 53). He desires his musical composition to be his engagement present to Wariinga. His intention and his whole musical project are very allegorical of his nationalism and devotion to the nation (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 83-4).

Ian Glenn asserts that the artist type plays a mediating role in the postcolonial state. His predicament "is structurally related to that of the elite whose alienation is paradoxically their source of power" (63). Glenn further suggests that there is a homologus relationship between Ngugi's intellectual characters and the situation of the intellectual elite in postcolonial Kenya. As such, Gatuiria and Munira can be viewed as allegorical figures of the ambivalent intellectual in Kenya. Perhaps, Ngugi is aware about their plight as they are also similar to his own position as an intellectual (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 86). Unlike Wariinga, who is depicted as active, Gatuiria remains passive and detached from the present. He does not make a choice, nor take sides in the novel. Even though he frequently disapproves his father's actions, he still wants his blessing. Throughout the story, he is presented as a spectator rather than an actor (Wilkinson 586).

In addition to his depiction of artist type characters, Ngugi uses grotesque images to depict oppressors. Ngugi allegorically depicts oppressors in grotesque images, reverses the Manichean class structure, and points to permanence in change. He uses grotesque images such as that of the body to satirise the colonists. In his later novels, he uses the grotesque image of bodily deformity to criticise the blind imitation of Western values by the African bourgeoisie. He also manages to transform his later narratives to national allegories (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 159-60).

Ngugi's Gikiuyu-language novels are good examples of magical realism and allegory with some influence from European and African literary traditions (K. Williams 61). *Devil* is dedicated to "all Kenyans struggling against the neo-colonial stage of imperialism" (*Devil* 5). The novel is entrenched in the indigenous story-

telling tradition that mixes reality with fantasy. It employs the allegory of a fictional great meeting between the Devil and a group of bourgeois thieves (Adeoti 4).

Ngugi employs such allegorical images to elucidate an idea and to link the text to the contemporary world. This act is relevant to his epistemological break with English and his decision to write in his native language, Gikuyu. He asserts, "it is an ever-continuing struggle to seize back creative initiative in history through a real control of all means of communal self-definition in time and space' (*Decolonising* 4).

Ngugi also deploys the form of the fantastic in his narrative. Daniel Kunene explains that this technique involves the representation of anything "ominous" that challenges our sense of the ordinary and "our accepted system of logic" (Kunene 186). Therefore, the fantastic or miraculous event cannot be manipulated or controlled. It is also unpredictable. Kunene adds,

> In the wake of a fantastic or miraculous event, man's role is to decode, to listen and obey. For this is knowledge revealed by that greater power, as against naturally acquired knowledge, with the express intention that it shall move those who experience it to certain types of behaviour (Kunene 186).

An example of the fantastic images Ngugi uses in *Devil* is the trope of 'devil' and 'ogre'. It is employed to describe the members of the political elite in Kenya. They are further described as "local agents of Western imperialism", that is agents of the Devil (Adeoti 4). Ngugi's observations about the man-eat-man nature of the contemporary Kenyan society helped him employ the marimu (ogre) figure and the Faustian theme as the central image to create his story (Wilkinson 585).

In traditional Gikuyu stories, the ordinary world and the spiritual world are interrelated. Thus, ordinary and fantastic events take place side by side. In *Devil*,

Ngugi employs this form for the first time in his works transcending the Western Realist novel. The best illustration of this is the author's use of fantastic elements in the "Devil's Feast". Ngugi's description of the "Devil's Feast" reverberates with Milton's description of the devils meeting in hell in *Paradise Lost*. What is ironic is that the devils in *Paradise Lost* are under the power of God, in Ngugi's *Devil*, the thieves and robbers have an extreme power over Kenya. The only way to curb this power is to start a revolution (Loflin 88).

*Devil* also bears Ngugi's comic vision through a language of the grotesque so as to pass a political critique of the neocolonial Kenya. Ngugi uses characters from all walks of Kenyan society, from peasant to businessman, and a farcical grotesque "Devil's Feast". As such, contemporary Kenya is portrayed as a Kafkaesque nightmare (Berger, "Ngũgĩ's Comic Vision" 16).

Ngugi uses grotesque images in the opening of chapter one,

> The Devil was elad in a silk suit, and he carried a walking stick shaped like a folded umbrella. On his head there were seven horns, seven trumpets for sounding infernal hymns of praise and glory. The Devil has two mouths, one on his forehead and the other at the back of his head. His belly sagged, as if it were about to give birth to all the evils of the world. His skin was red, like that of a pig. … He moaned, beseeching the people not to crucify him, swearing that he and all his followers would never again build Heli for the people on Earth (*Devil* 13).

He also employs grotesque images in chapter seven,

> Nditika wa Nguunji was very fat. His head was huge, like a mountain. His belly hung over his belt, big and arrogant. His eyes were the size two large red electric bulbs, and it looked as if they had been place on his face by a Creator impatient to get on with another job. His hair was parted in the middle, so that the hair on either side of the parting looked like two ridges facing

each other on either side of a tarmac road. He had on a black suit. The jacket had tails cut in the shape of the wings of the big green and blue flies that are normally found in pit latrines or among rotting rubbish. His shirt had frills all down the front. He was wearing a black bow tie. His eyes rolled in time to his words. His hands rested on his stomach and he patted it gently, as if beseeching it not to stick out towards the people with such arrogance (*Devil* 176).

*Devil* can also be read as a savage satire of neocolonial capitalism. Its main allegory is the assembly of different characters representing different class and cultural interests. The "Devil's Feast" unveils the evil face of capitalism (K. Williams 59). The novel is a satirical work that attempts to criticize the idea of wealth in the neo-colony. Ngugi represents the greed and avarice of a new capitalist class in Kenya. The poor country is conquered by the powers of the devil (Gikandi, "On Culture and the State" 155).

In *Devil*, Ngugi satirises the ruling elite and the bourgeoisie at the Devil's feast, making them mere performers on the satirical stage. They are not fully formed characters (Colson 135). Ngugi dramatizes the fate of the African ruling elite through the incorporation images of the fantastic and the unbelievable. He staged them as characters boasting about their intelligence in stealing from the people and serving their foreign masters (Ogude, "Ngugi's Concept of History" 92).

Hence, Ngugi uses grotesque realism as he endeavours to convey the life of the Kenyan peasants in contrast to the life of the bourgeois ruling elite. He also employs grotesque realism for political reasons: to highlight the relationship between the Kenyan masses and their dispossessed land, to suggest models of communal sharing, to make the wealthy class an object of satire, and to emphasise how the rich have isolated themselves from the land. The characters of Munira, Wanja, Abdulla, and

Karega symbolize the grotesque life of all workers and peasants and how they are oppressed (Berger, "Ngũgĩ's Comic Vision" 9).

Furthermore, Ngugi deploys the traditional oral narrative strategy of the journey or the quest to portray the character's social transformation, whose encounters are symbolic of the community's history. The journey motif is by definition used in stories having allegorical representations. Undergoing the journey, characters and especially protagonists would be aware of their moral responsibility. As a result, Ngugi transforms the journey motif into a contemporary strategy in his postcolonial narratives.

The journey motif is traditionally marked by three main phases: the initiatory phase; the transformation phase; and the phase of return. In *Petals*, Karega's initiation happens at Siriana and Ilmorog. His transformation is marked by his journey across Kenya. By his return to Ilmorog, the workers discover his maturity and his potential as a leader.

In *Devil*, Wariinga's story is also perceived in terms of a quest. In the words of Ngugi, she takes two "main journeys over virtually the same ground" (*Decolonising* 77). She travels in a matatutaxi from the capital city of Nairobi to the fictional rural outpost of Ilmorog. She also makes a second journey in a car from Nairobi to Ilmorog and to Nakuru.

By the end of the novel, Wariinga's life has changed after undergoing various formative experiences. The narrator comes to notice that "This Warĩĩnga is not the one we met two years ago" (*Devil* 216). She is now more aware of her situation and more independent. She is described as "Wariinga, our engineering hero!" and "Wariinga, heroine of toil" (217). The narrator observes that her heroism developed

"in the battle of life" (217). She is transformed "into a lucid, decisive woman" (Julien 151).

The journey motif enables Ngugi to move freely within time and space and to work within a simple plot structure. It also enables him to accomplish social transformation in the characters. Gay Clifford asserts that the quest in allegorical narratives is the "metaphor by which a process of learning for both protagonist and readers is expressed" (Clifford 11). It is a structural framework for development of the character and theme (Ogude, *Ngugi's Novels* 99).

Therefore, Ngugi does not only exert a shift in language, from English to Gikuyu. He also innovates in form and style so as to create an Afrocentric narrative (Loflin 90). It is evident that *Petals* and *Devil* are forms of resistant political discourse, and the instructions encoded in Ngugi's texts are signs of the new, non-Eurocentric, decolonized critical perspective (Chinweizu and Madubuike 37).

Ngugi's writings after mid-1960s depict the neocolonial phase in African history and politics. *Devil* can be a good example of how the local elite have mortgaged the country to foreign capital. Ngugi criticizes the exploitation of the majority and the deplorable way the ruling elite talk about their strategies of increasing their wealth (Mwangi 31).

## 7. Narrating Cultural Displacement in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*

*The Mimic Men* depicts the theme of the marginalization of the Third World and its fall into poverty and isolation. It also shows the failure of the nationalist and religious movements in postcolonial nations after independence. These movements were motivated by race and colour. This is what led the postcolonial subject to be a mere mimic man suffering a crisis of identity. In *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul is concerned with the homelessness and rootlessness of colonial subjects (Devi 30). Ralph Singh narrates his experiences during his exile in London through writing about them. He lives in a gloomy hotel room in the suburbs of London. Hence, "home" for him can be no more than the books he writes (Gottfried 443).

Singh's personal failure to find home and origin is an indication of a larger national failure. Failure to locate oneself turns him towards writing. William Walsh states that *The Mimic Men* presents Ralph Singh as "an exiled, or rather a withdrawn politician, fatigued by disillusion rather than failure, writing his memoir in an aseptic, placeless London suburb" (Walsh 54). He writes his memoir as an attempt to create order and to escape his past. He strives to make meaning out of his experiences. Hence, the act of writing itself becomes an act of creation and discovery. It denotes Singh's desire to recover his selfhood and self-consciousness. As such, the personal and the political become an existential allegory of the modern man (Devi 31).

Naipaul told Patrick French, his biographer, that *The Mimic Men* was "an important book for the cultural emptiness in colonial people. But it is very dry". This confession highlights the importance of the novel in dealing with the cultural predicament of colonial people (Pritchard 436). Singh is described as an exiled individual in a London hotel writing his impressions of metropolitan life. The act of

writing his story is an attempt to escape his external disorder. Rao asserts that "[t]he writing of his story, becomes the very means to endure the terror, shipwreck, abandonment and loneliness of his situation" (Rao 126). Singh's analysis of the disorder transcends the personal and extends to the political, the postcolonial condition of the Third World (Devi 31). As such, *The Mimic Men* depicts the social conflict taking place as individuals are brought together. This results in cultural displacement and mimicry (King, *V. S. Naipaul* 69).

> It was my hope to give expression to the restlessness, the deep disorder, which the great explorations, the overthrow in three continents of established social organiations, the unnatural bringing together of peoples.... But this work will not now be written by me; I am too much a victim of that restlessness which was to have been my subject. And it must also be confessed that in that dream of writing I was attracted less by the act and the labour than by the calm and the order which the act would have implied (*The Mimic Men* 30).

Singh describes his marriage to Sandra as an "episode in parenthesis" (*The Mimic Men* 274). They share the feature of being both hopeless and vulnerable. Just like Singh, Sandra has an ambition to "eradicate her past". Singh is drawn by the fact that she speaks English, "She was English. With her, the mere fact of communication was a delight" (*The Mimic Men* 44). Both of Singh and Sandra are presented as isolated.

> "She had no community, no group, and had rejected her family. She saw herself alone in the world and was determined to fight her way up. She hated the common.... To the end she had a cruel eye for the common" (*The Mimic Men* 12).

Singh thinks that this marriage relationship is going to make him find himself and escape the disorder and isolation. He goes back to Isabella with the hope of restoring his life to order. As he gets there, Singh is disappointed by his mother's disapproval of his marriage to a foreign girl (Devi 33). Singh's frustration is due to the fact that he

is rejected by the society. He feels a state of abandonment and shipwreck, "The initial seeming warmth, acceptance and approval gradually disappeared in course of time for Isabella is an unstable, shallow, mixed and chaotic society" (Theroux 73).

As he fails to put together his destroyed self in England with his English wife, Singh leans back on Indian Aryan culture to explain his experience,

> "How right our Aryan ancestors were to create gods.... The larger erotic dream, the god, has eluded us. It is so whenever, moving out of ourselves, we look for extensions of ourselves.... We seek the physical city and find only a conglomeration of private cells. In the city as nowhere else we are reminded that we arc individuals, units. Yet the idea of the city remains: it is the god of the city that we pursue, in vain" (*The Mimic Men* 17).

Besides, the juxtaposition of the centre and the periphery is repeated in the novel, which acts as a combination of such opposites as order and disorder, reality and unreality, authenticity and inauthenticity, power and powerlessness. Singh frequently echoes these opposites between the centre which is presented as a symbol of order using the standard language, and the periphery which employs the edges of language (Devi 36). As such, *The Mimic Men* can be read as "a novel which incorporates an extreme version of the opposition between centre and margin" (Ashcroft et al. *The Empire Writes Back* 88-9).

From his childhood experiences, Singh recalls that his mother's family owns the Bella-Bella Bottling Works, and that they are the Isabella bottlers of Coca Cola. For this reason, Singh is attached to his mother's family, and he is conscious that he is privileged because of his association with the foreign (Devi 36). Because of his disagreement with his in-laws family, Singh's father leaves his family and job and

goes to live in the hills as a preacher to a group of frenzied followers including the slaves, the dockworkers and the "volunteers" (*The Mimic Men* 136).

Subsequently, Singh's father, Gurudeva, begins his movement which is "a type of Hinduism that he expounded; a mixture of acceptance and revolt, despair and action, a mixture of the mad and the logical. He offered something to many people; ... His movement spread like fire" (*The Mimic Men* 214). The Gurudeva movement influences the people and brings respect to the family. It helps Singh start his later political career. The movement puts an end to authority and injustice in the island (Devi 37).

Singh is also haunted by the image of the shipwrecked man, and he wants to find escape of the disorder. He gets the idea that even the beautiful island he lives in is not indigenous. It was conceived by foreign visitors for enjoyment (Devi 40).

> Browne showed me that its tropical appearance was contrived; there was history in the vegetation we considered most natural and characteristic.... But we walked in a garden of hell, among trees, some still without popular names, whose seeds had sometimes been brought to our island in the intestines of slaves (*The Mimic Men* 158).

Singh's image of his displacement and loss is like the islander's image of "shipwreck" (Belitt 35). Singh attempts to escape his shipwreck by sustaining his bonds with the Aryan past. He tries to revive the Aryan tradition of sacrificing a horse in the Roman House.

> "In the feminine atmosphere of the Roman house all was goodwill and dedication. A sacramental quality attached not only to food and drink but to liaisons that had grown up among our courtiers.... Sex a sacrifice to the cause and a promise of the release that was to come" (*The Mimic Men* 212).

*The Mimic Men* is a novel of unconquerable darkness that Singh longs for a sense of home. His mind is haunted by the image of shipwreck. Devi believes that Singh's ability to creatively gather his chaotic experiences is a sign of hope. Besides, his awareness of his weaknesses is the victory over his disorderly and chaotic experiences (Devi 44).

Singh successfully portrays the political life in such hollow society as Isabella. He could see the emptiness of the island's independence. He discovers that freedom implies responsibility. He turns to dream about his role as a "leader and liberator, to find virtue in the poverty of the people, and to reduce them again to the level of slaves – status possibly more dangerous than their original slavery, since they remain unconscious of it" (Boxill 54). The people respond to whatever Singh says with applaud. He declares that "So long as our dependence remained unquestioned our politics were a joke" (*The Mimic Men* 206).

As the situation gets problematic, Singh realizes that politics is a challenge and a trap at the same time. He finds himself unable to solve problems without the help of the centre. The latter is the source of finance. This makes of the Third World nations mere toys in the hands of foreign powers. Singh's criticism of politicians transcends the island. He believes that in most newly independent countries, politicians play the role of increasing the power of the colonizer (Devi 42). Singh says,

> on power and the consolidation of passing power we wasted our energies, until the bigger truth came: that in a society like ours, fragmented, inorganic, no link between man and the landscape, a society not held together by common interest, there was no true internal source of power, and that no power was real which did not come from the outside (*The Mimic Men* 224).

As such, Singh criticizes the Third World's politicians for weakening the power of their nations. He calls them mimic men. Their predicament is due to their ignorance of their defect. Singh distances himself from his colleagues and has one course of action: Flight and exile in London (Devi 43).

As a result, Singh starts a life of writing in London through writing his memoir. In this way, writing has become an escape trying to overcome the past experiences and to start a new life. He attempts to link the modern West Indian sensibility with his Aryan ancestors. He takes different roles in his narratives,

> "the Aryan chieftain of his childhood fantasies, the playboy of London school days, the childless husband who relied too heavily on his wife, the successful businessman, the politician, and finally, the recluse in a London suburban hotel—in which role he is now trying to put the broken pieces of his life into an order through the narrative" (Devi 43).

Through writing, Singh is brave to unveil the different layers of the masks he wears throughout his life (Devi 43).

It is noteworthy that Naipaul's politicians are to be compared to Achebe's in *Man of the People*. Whereas Achebe's politicians are revolutionary, Naipaul's are described as full of doubt (Devi 43). Singh is described as hesitant and fumbling at the opening of the novel. This denotes his strive to put in form his experiences. He is later presented as confident and tolerant of his situation. He states with fulfilment,

> It does not worry me now, as it worried me when I began this book.... I no longer yearn for ideal landscapes and no longer wish to know the god of the city.... I feel, instead, I have lived through attachment and freed myself from one cycle of events. It gives me joy to find that in so doing I have also fulfilled the four-fold division of life prescribed by our Aryan ancestors. I have been student, householder and man of affairs, recluse.... I feel that in this time I have cleared the

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decks, as it were, and prepared myself for fresh action.
It will be the action of a free man (*The Mimic Men* 273-74).

The idea of disorder as a theme in the novel extends to its form. Naipaul's inversion of chronology in the novel suggests the lack of communication and human relationships between individuals in the novel.

## 8. Disorder, Fragmentation, and Environmental Imagery in *The Mimic Men*

V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* depicts the end of the empire in the Caribbean and examines the legacy of enslavement in the region. The novel is set in the fictional city of Isabella, which echoes Naipaul's homeland of Trinidad. The novel, through Ralph Singh's narration, scrutinises the social and political changes ensuing in the Caribbean as nationalists wanted to unite the different racial, ethnic, and class groups in one nation-state. Nonetheless, Naipaul focuses on sketching a state of disorder and disunity, rather than a rendering of what Fanon calls "the moving consciousness of the whole of the people" (Fanon 165). (Whittle 4).

Singh attempts to interpret history and restore order. Robert Morris asserts that order and disorder are important concerns for Naipaul. He ponders on how order can be created and sustained in "half-made" societies which were affected by empire (Charles 23). He attempts to establish order in the world by writing the history of his region (Rao 60),

> ... to give expression to the restlessness, the deep disorder, which the great explorations, the overthrow in three continents of established social orders, the unnatural bringing together of peoples who could achieve fulfillment only within the security of their own societies and the landscape hymned by their ancestors,

> it was my hope to give partial expression to the restlessness which this great upheaval has brought about. But this work will not now be written by me; I am too much a victim of that restlessness which was to have been my subject (*The Mimic Men* 32).

Singh strives to "impose order on [his] own history, to abolish that disturbance which is what a narrative in sequence might have led [him] to" (p. 243). (John King 234). He says that the restlessness and the disorder he feels is due to "the unnatural bringing together of peoples who could achieve fulfilment only within the security of their own societies and the landscapes hymned by their ancestors." It is the disorder created by empire that led Naipaul's ancestor's to move from India to Trinidad as indentured workers. This indeed had created a sense of exile and estrangement from one's roots. The outcome is a prolonged trauma and longing for home and belonging (Gorra 376).

Ralph Singh states that his knowledge of the world does not come from the world of the sugar colony of Isabella, but rather from "the true, pure world" of the English schoolbooks,

> There, in Liège in a traffic jam, on the snow slopes of the Laurentians, was the true, pure world. We, here on our island, handling books printed in this world, and using its goods, had been abandoned and forgotten. We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new (*The Mimic Men* 157).

In the opening of the novel Singh declares, "we lack order. Above all, we lack power and we do not understand that we lack power" (*The Mimic Men* 6). He later adds, "To be born on an island like Isabella, an obscure New World transplantation, second-hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder" (*The Mimic Men* 127). In London, the "city of miraculous light," (*The Mimic Men* 26). Singh seeks order. His

dream of finding order in London fades because London itself falls in a state of disorder, "the great city, centre of the world, in which fleeing disorder, I had hoped to find the beginning of order" (*The Mimic Men* 17).

The newly formed social structures in post-independence Isabella are described by Singh saying that "[w]e were a haphazard, disordered and mixed society" (*The Mimic Men* 57). Because of the negative impact of enslavement and exploitation, the Caribbean is described as "shipwrecked and lost" (*The Mimic Men* 177). Besides, the novel highlights the discrepancy between the colonized Caribbeans who "lack order" (*The Mimic Men* 6) and the highly developed European colonizer who is in a state of social order. (Whittle 4).

Naipaul believes that history is pejoratively linked to Europe, and that culture and civilisation are flourishing there too. Singh expresses that Isabella is "set adrift yet not altogether abandoned" (*The Mimic Men* 209). Indeed, the island is ruled by leaders who mimic the European political theory. These leaders tend to use "heady speeches and token deportations" to mask the "chaos" within (*The Mimic Men* 209). (Whittle 5).

John Brannigan asserts that in *The Mimic Men* "politics are games and dramas which rehearse but never achieve solutions to the problems left in the wake of colonialism" (Brannigan 179). Indo-Caribbean men in Britain are torn between two sides: Europe and the Caribbean, without belonging to neither. They stay on what Bhabha calls the borderline. Naipaul's use of a non-linear structure of the memoir in his novel as well as his use of environmental imagery creates an ambivalent reaction to this colonial dichotomy. Hence, non-linearity and environmental imagery create a

historical trauma where the effects of transatlantic slavery and racial identity interrupt the Caribbean's postcolonial present (Whittle 5).

Instead of adhering to the traditional characteristics of the memoir, Naipaul employs a non-linear structure to depict Singh's crossing and re-crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. Non-linearity in the novel reflects the "absurd disorder, of placelessness" (*The Mimic Men* 166) that characterizes Isabella and its dwellers. Singh expounds that his "first instinct was towards the writing of history" (85). As such, Singh narrates his university years in London and his coming back home with a white English wife. He then tells of his childhood and adolescence to move to his prominence as a politician in adulthood and his divorce. In the last part of the novel, he recounts his eventual exile in post-independence Isabella, sending him back to England in a hotel in the margins of London where he writes his life story in a condition of infinity that reflects postcolonial condition (Whittle 5).

One of the environmental images that Naipaul uses is the stump of the tree that has to be removed to allow for the building of Singh's housing development. Singh relates,

> I remember a trifling incident; it occurred almost at the beginning. The men were landscaping. In the afternoon the foreman told me that they had run into the stump and roots of a giant tree; three charges of dynamite had been necessary to get rid of it. He showed me the crater: a monstrous wound in the red earth. A giant tree, old perhaps when Columbus came: I would like to have seen it, I would have liked to have preserved it. I kept a piece of the wood on my desk, for the interest, as a reminder of violation, a talisman (*The Mimic Men* 63).

As such, Singh's cynical desire to modernize Isabella's landscape is interrupted by the tree. It urges him to reflect upon his action in a colonial dichotomy of order and disorder. He thought of the incident as trivial. He nonetheless wishes that he could

preserve it (Whittle 6). He eventually kept a piece of it as "a reminder of violation" (*The Mimic Men* 63).

The tree is a witness and a reminder of Isabella's deep time. It links the island's postcolonial moment with Columbus' invasion of the Americas subjugating indigenous Carib and Arawak peoples. The tree is a symbol of the old history of the place. It is employed in opposition to Singh's modern housing development, which will serve the middle-class, what Fanon calls the "national bourgeoisie" (*The Wretched* 150) of the newly independent postcolony. The stump also symbolizes the difficulty of erasing the traumatic experiences and history of massacre and slavery in the Caribbean. It is described as leaving a "monstrous wound" (*The Mimic Men* 63) in the landscape. Hence, the novel negotiates the conflicting powers of past and present (Whittle 6).

By the end of the novel, Naipaul describes Singh as failing to establish order as he is torn between two existential and geographical sides, and he is unable to belong to neither. He falls in a state of displacement from both Britain and the Caribbean, and this is very apparent in his memoir (Whittle 5).

# CHAPTER FOUR: IDENTITY ISSUES AND THE BURDEN OF ENGLISHNESS

Colonial experience has deeply affected the identity of the colonial subjects. Cross-cultural encounters caused by colonialism and imperialism have reshaped the identities of African and Caribbean people. Postcolonial literature depicts this crisis of identity and recounts the stories of characters who have conflicting hybrid identities. Achebe and Ngugi focus on colonial encounter and national betrayal in their criticism of the ruling elite as well as in their disenchantment with nationalism. Naipaul, on the other hand, depicts his characters as mere mimic men in this (post)colonial world.

## 1. Colonial Encounter and the Politics of Culture in *Arrow of God*

Achebe's novels can be read as an analysis of African history and its interruption by colonialism. It is further an analysis of the complex nature of the historical process echoed in the tension between tradition and modernity (Irele, 2002, 57). Booker views the novel as an important tool "for postcolonial literature, which, in its engagement with the European literary tradition, represents not the smooth continuation of European conventions, but instead entails a direct challenge to a tradition that often worked in direct complicity with the European colonial domination" (Booker, 1998, 21).

Like *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* is a tragedy of a community. As one character in the novel comments, "the house which the stranger has been seeking to pull down has caught fire of its own will" (*Arrow* 213). In *Arrow of God*, Nwaka voices his statement on the lasting impact of the intervention of the white man in the Igbo affairs, "'Would [the village of Okperi] have laid claim on our farmland in the

days before the white man turned us upside down? '" (*Arrow* 16). Nwaka's trope "turned us upside down" reflects the desire of the British colonizer to shape a new and different identity of the Igbo people (Lynn 113-4). According to Bonnie Barthold, this is articulated in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, as "a portion of Africa becomes symbolic of the destructive oppression worked by the peoples of the West" (Barthold 4-5).

In *Arrow of God*, Achebe employs some British characters who tend to stereotype the Africans. The best examples include the District Officer, Captain Winterbottom and his assistant, Captain Clarke. In one of his statements, Winterbottom describes the conflict between the Igbo tribes with hypocrisy and falsehood,

> We [British] do not only promise to secure old savage tyrants on their thrones—or more likely filthy animal skins—we not only do that, but we now go out of our way to invent chiefs where there were none before. They make me sick. ... This war between Umuaro and Okperi ... started because a man from Umuaro went to visit a friend in Okperi one fine morning and after he'd had one or two gallons of palm wine—it's quite incredible how much of that dreadful stuff they can tuck away—anyhow, this man from Umuaro having drunk his friend's palm wine reached for his ikenga [carved ancestral spirit] and split it in two. ... The outraged host reached for his gun and blew the other fellow's head off. .. . And so a regular war developed between the two villages until I stepped in. I should mention that every witness who testified before me— from both sides without exception—perjured themselves. One thing you must remember in dealing with natives is that like children they are great liars (*Arrow* 36-37).

These claims are basically false because the Igbo do not have kings. Besides, his statement on the Igbo liability to be liars is also false, since he, after this passage, states that Ezeulu testified truthfully in the land conflict (Lynn 116).

Winterbottom's derision of Igbos reinforces the image of the European as an apostle of civilisation. It is also related to Rudyard Kipling's depiction of the duty of the European to bring civilization to the heathen in "The White Man's Burden" (Lynn 116-7). As such, in *Arrow*, the creation of warrant chiefs to rule over the ethnic groups (like the Igbo) interrupted the workings of the Igbo life (Msiska 53). Neil ten Kortenaar explains, "the Christians, led by [the catechist John Jaja] Goodcountry invite the disenchanted and hungry worshipers of Ulu to join the church and to eat the yams that Ezeulu has forbidden. The people of Umuaro agree so that they can harvest their yams and preserve the community. Who is using whom?" (Kortenaar 37).

Achebe states that in writing *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, he attempts to "repair the foundations of the past" (qtd. in Barthold 139). This objective is also relevant to his writing of *Anthills*. In this novel, Achebe portrays the conflict between the traditional reservoir of culture and the deteriorating moral and political state of the modern nation (Lynn 123).

Gareth Cornwell asserts that Achebe's focus on the issue of change is due to its impact on the cohesive patterns of traditional societies.

> "If these novels [*Things* and *Arrow*] depict communities in the process of disintegration, then what had hitherto held them together was a strong social consensus, a shared and largely unquestioning knowledge of and belief in their values, customs, and institutions" (Cornwell 16).

In *Anthills*, the theme of social instability is prevalent and is reflected in the depiction of the lives of the people of Abazon (Lynn 133).

## 2. Identity Crisis in *Arrow of God* and *Anthills of the Savannah*

In her essay, "Ethnicity and Nationhood in Achebe's *Arrow of God*", Pao-I Hwang asserts that Nigeria can be seen as the making of a colonial regime, and not as a nation with people with solid precolonial identities. The novel depicts the hero's identity crisis trying to adapt to a nationalizing colonial system, which disrupts the very making of his community, and threatens his sense of security. Hwang stresses the idea that African people should understand their precolonial roots in order to re-structure their communities accordingly. Nation building and ethnic co-existence are possible only if Africa's precolonial foundations are taken into consideration (Hwang 58).

African writers disagree about the use of colonial languages. Chinua Achebe thinks that English can be an effective too for promoting Nigerian culture and thought. Unlike Achebe, Ngugi, renouncing the English language, believes that social and cultural promotion is possible through the use of the mother tongue. The works of Achebe and Ngugi are highly political. They unveil the problematic nature of nation building as well as identity (de)formation. *Arrow of God*, for instance, epitomizes the political displacement of a community with a precolonial identity to a postcolonial national identity (58).

In his work *Home and Exile*, Achebe ponders over the identity of his people. Should he describe them a "tribe" or a "nation"? He believes that the term nation is not without problems. He clearly experiences a state of unease calling his Igbo people a nation (Achebe, *Home and Exile* 5). Although *Arrow of God* was published in 1984, the beginning of British colonization of Nigeria, the novel deals with the identity crisis and nation building in Nigeria in 1960. In the novel, Achebe highlights the idea

that modern concepts of Nigeria are based on the ultimate destruction of its precolonial identity. Indeed, the novel highlights colonial interruption of precolonial identity and the introduction of the ideals of progress and nationalism (Hwang 59).

Anthony D. Smith believes that the nation is a Western idea; this may explain why Britain found it very difficult to build "Nigeria". Smith distinguishes two models of nation: the ethnic and the Western. The former emphasises "a community of birth and native culture," whereas the latter focuses on "historic territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology" (Smith 11). The damaging effect of colonial administration on the native life is expressed in the following government letter in the novel,

> To many colonial nations native administration means government by white men. In place of the alternative of governing directly through Administrative Officers there is the other method of trying while we endeavor to purge the native system of its abuses to build a higher civilization upon the soundly rooted native stock that had its foundation in the hearts and minds and thoughts of the people and therefore on which we can more easily build, moulding it and establishing it into lines consonant with modern ideas and higher standards, and yet all the time enlisting the real force of the spirit of the people, instead of killing that out and trying to start afresh. We must not destroy the African atmosphere, the African mind, the whole foundation of his race (*Arrow of God* 55-56).

The letter implicitly hints to the establishment of a Western form of identity at the expense of a more ethnic African identity. The quote implies that "higher civilization" is Western civilisation and the "the soundly rooted native stock" is the ethnic identity of the Igbo people. The letter also reveals the contradictions of the British Indirect Rule in Nigeria that sought to employ non-white men, but at the same time to distrust them because they belong to a non-Western uncivilised system.

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The political idea to unite diverse communities under British rule represents a disruption of the native culturally rooted system, creating an unnatural Western system. As a result, the community will undergo disintegration. Pao-I Hwang believes that the disintegration of the villages in *Arrow of God*, as well as the downfall of the protagonist is revelatory about the failure of the project of nationalism (Hwang 60).

Colin Newbury asserts that the British found it easy to maintain control over the colonies through Indirect Rule. He explains that the British succeeded in making a lopsided relationship with the original rules on one condition that Britain is recognized as the political master. Hence, Britain sanctioned corruption and granted privileges to her obedient nominal subjects (Colin 229).

Britain's introduction of Indirect Rule through appointing nominal subjects overrules the native chiefs as it questions their leadership, their resistance, and therefore their utility. In the novel, James Ikedi, and not the native priest Ezeulu, is appointed warrant or paramount chief on the basis of being "an intelligent fellow who had been among the very first people to receive missionary education" (*Arrow* 57). When Winterbottom, the District Officer, comes to ask Ezeulu, it is because the latter sided with him in a court case than because he is the chief of the six villages. Winterbottom nonetheless refers to him as a "fetish priest" rather than the chief priest, a title that would be an acknowledgement of the paramount importance of religion to chieftainship (Hwang 61).

Igboland was made of different states and each state was comprised of different villages sharing a common language and similar customs and ruled by an influential government. In the novel, Umuaro is described as a community in which,

the six villages – Umuachala, Umunneora, Umuagu, Umuezeani, Umuogwugwu and Umuisiuzo – lived as different peoples, and each worshipped its own deity. Then the hired soldiers of Abam used to strike in the dead of night, set fire to the houses and carry men, women and children into slavery. Things were so bad for the six villages that their leaders came together to save themselves. They hired a strong team of medicine-men to install a common deity for them. This deity which the fathers of the six villages made was called Ulu … The six villages took the name of Umuaro, and the priest of Ulu became their Chief-Priest (*Arrow* 14-15).

Achebe's presentation of the six villages and their religious and political system is similar to Raisa Simola's historical account,

A village group is a political structure which consists of a number of villages. At the village-group level, a representative system has been adopted. At the village level of government, the accepted practice has been a direct democracy … Each village is autonomous and sovereign in most matters affecting it. The village is then further segmented into a number of lineages and each lineage into major and minor sublineages. At the lineage level the most important ritualistic figure is the okpara. He holds the lineage ofo (a staff and symbol of power) which is very important in Igbo political processes. The compound then consists of a number of economically independent households, each with a man or a woman as the householder (Simola 64).

Though fiction, Achebe's rendition is close to realism and historical facts. His description of the workings of the Igbo society demonstrates how it is based on religion and traditions. The political union between the villages aims at facing external threats together and is strengthened by having a deity (Hwang 62).

The direct lines existing between the people of Umuaro prompt the smooth transference of power. Power in the community is sometimes achieved through inheritance and sometimes through personal achievement. Okonkwo in *Things Fall*

*Apart* for instance gets his title through personal success. Ezeulu on the other hand inherits his title as Chief Priest from his father.

In his book *The Igbo of South-East Nigeria*, Victor Uchendu asserts that, in the Igbo community, a young man can receive a title and be prosperous, but to retain power over his peers and elders, his post "must not only be achieved, but constantly validated" (20-21). Thus, through its ancestral political dynamics, Umuaro proves to be an ethnic nation rather than a territorial one. Its social cohesion is based on cultural and historical bonds than political and economic ones.

The villages are politically governed by men of title, and these men represent a deity. In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu represents Ulu and Ezidemili represents Idemili. Despite their title, these chiefs are not "kings" with absolute power. It is stated in the novel that Ulu was offered "to the weakest among them to ensure that none in the alliance became too powerful" (*Arrow* 15). The role of Ezeulu is to watch agricultural calendar, name festivals like the New Yam Feast, and to absolve people's sins. Moreover, power in Umuaro is democratic and shared. All members of the community have a say and decisions are made through majority agreement.

What is worth mentioning in any discussion of Achebe's *Arrow of God* is the disruption of the people's ethnic identity by the postcolonial territorial identity introduce by the colonizer. Indeed, British colonialism caused social and political disintegration in its endeavour to build a nation on territorial considerations at the expense of ethnic identity. In the novel, this idea is reflected in three main events: the land dispute, the clash between the symbols of material wealth and the symbols of tradition, and the breakdown of the native socio-political structure (Hwang 63).

Land is conceived differently by the native people and the British colonizer. The presence of the colonizer is hinted to in the land dispute. Land disputes were not common before the arrival of the British colonizer; this suggests that its intervention in the native ethnic life causes the trouble. In order to pacify the situation between Umuaro and Okperi, Ezeulu refers to his father's talk about the land,

> 'my father said this to me that when our village first came here to live the land belonged to Okperi. It was Okperi who gave us a piece of their land to live in. They also gave us their deities – their Udo and their Ogwugwu' (*Arrow* 15).

Nwaka, conversely, supports war, and like Ezeulu, he also refers to the past to make his point,

> If Ezeulu had spoken about the great deity of Umuaro which he carries and which his fathers carried before him I would have paid attention to his voice. But he speaks about events which are older than Umuaro itself … My father … told me that Okperi people were wanderers. He told me three or four different places where they sojourned for a while and moved on again … Would they go today and claim all those sites? Would they have laid claim on our farmland in the days before the white man turned us upside down? (*Arrow* 16)

Both of Ezeulu and Nwaka provide reasons for peace and war with Okperi. What is noticeable is that Ezeulu refers to his father to culturally and traditionally validate Okperi's right to the land, and to support peace with them as neighbours. Nwaka's position emphasises the role of the white man in disrupting peace and harmony of the villages (Hwang 64).

As Nwaka wins the vote, he chooses the hot-tempered Akukalia, whose mother is from Okperi, to negotiate peace. Nwaka and Akukalia's argument is that the white man is destroying relations of kinship existing between Umuaro and Okperi.

> "I remember coming with my father to this very place to cut grass for our thatches," said Akukalia. "It is a thing of surprise to me that my mother's people are claiming it today." "It is all due to the white man who says, like an elder to two fighting children: You will not fight while I am around. And so the younger and weaker of the two begins to swell himself up and to boast." "You have spoken the truth," said Akukalia. "Things like this would never have happened when I was a young man, to say nothing of the days of my father." … "What you should ask them," said the other companion who had spoken very little since they set out, "what they should tell us is why, if the land was indeed theirs, why they let us farm it and cut thatch from it for generation after generation, until the white man came and reminded them" (*Arrow* 20).

In this way, Akukalia and his friends refer to fathers to validate their ideas. They also focus on the responsibility of the white man in creating the problem, and further aggravating it by siding with one party, which leads to disequilibrium and disintegration (Hwang 64-5).

What is worth mentioning is that the British interfered with the people's sense of belonging overlooking the making of their precolonial history and identity. The symbol of this interference with the tradition in the British administration is Winterbottom. His biased account of the land dispute is quite different from that of Nwaka or Akukali,

> The people of Okperi and their neighbors, Umuaro, are great enemies. Or they were before I came into the story. A big savage war had broken out between them over a piece of land. This feud was made worse by the fact that Okperi welcomed missionaries and government while Umuaro, on the other hand, has remained backward … this war started because a man from Umuaro went to visit a friend in Okperi one fine morning and after he'd had one or two gallons of palm wine – it's quite incredible how much of that dreadful stuff they can tuck away – anyhow, this man from Umuaro having drunk his friend's palm wine reached for his ikenga and split it in two (*Arrow* 37).

Nwaka's account of the relationship between Umuaro and Okperi is the opposite of how Winterbottom described it. Indeed, they are not "great enemies" and the conflict ensuing between them is not due to the drunkenness of a visitor from Umuaro which results in the death of the host (Hwang 66).

Winterbottom's intervention to stop the war is merely a display of power, and this is clear in Simola's analysis stating British colonial intervention passes through three main stages, "the first pattern could be called 'letting the guns talk,' the second pattern combined diplomacy and war, and the third combined diplomacy and magic" (Simola 75). As such, British colonialism employs military force, political diplomatic negotiations, and finally religious and educational reshaping. *Arrow of God* dramatizes the disintegration and ultimate downfall of the Igbo community because of the Igbo community (Hwang 67).

James Ikedi is the best example of British colonial interference and its repercussions. Ikedi is offered his position in British administration because of his intelligence, as well as his early Christian conversion. He echoes the character of Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson. What James Ikedi, Mister Johnson, as well as Winterbottom share is their attitude towards the black man as susceptible to corruption and self-aggrandizement. What is ironic is that they themselves are oppressors and fundamentally corrupt.

Winterbottom comments on Ikedi's behaviour as typical of an African who is primarily liable to "cruelty of a kind which Africa alone produced. It was this elemental cruelty in the psychological make-up of the native that the starry-eyed European found so difficult to understand" (*Arrow* 58). Winterbottom does not see that the act of appointing nominal subjects in place of rightful ones as Warrant Chiefs

is politically detrimental to the Igbo system. These Warrant Chiefs represent the second stage of colonial interference: diplomacy and political intervention. In the Igbo system, legitimacy is given to fathers, ancestors, and elders. It is closely related to tradition and age (Hwang 68-9).

Later in the novel, the disintegration of the community leads to internal disruption at the level of the family and the individual. Only Akuebue, Ezeulu's friend, and Obika, his son, could understand his predicament. As troubles are attacking Ezeulu's compound, Matefi, Obika's mother, asks him to convince Ezeulu to challenge his god Ulu, Obika asks, "How can I listen to you when you join outsiders in urging your husband to put his head in a cooking pot?" (*Arrow* 212). Obika loves his father and pursues the tradition. He dies after performing tiresome funeral ritual for a friend while suffering from illness. Ezeulu is deeply moved by the death of his son. He subsequently gives in to madness that saves him from witnessing the downfall his community and the tradition (Hwang 69-7).

After the colonizer threatens to destroy the community, Ezeulu sends his son to church to understand the religion of the white man. This is followed by the white man's total disruption of communal life. The disintegration of the Igbo community has two main implications. First, colonialism has a drastic effect on the colonized and its effect may last for a long time. Second, the past will always reappear in the colonial situation as the people aspire for preservation (Hwang 70).

JanMohamed explains the conflicting situation the colonized faces,

> The limited choice of either petrification or catalepsy is imposed on the African by the colonial situation; his subjugation and lack of political power prevent him from constructively combining the [European and African] cultures and leave him more vulnerable to

further subjugation. If he chooses to be faithful to the indigenous values, he remains, from the colonialist's view point a "savage" and the need to "civilize" him perpetuates colonialism. If, however, he attempts to espouse Western values, then he is seen as a vacant imitator without a culture of his own. Thus colonialist ideology is designed to confine the native in a confused and subservient position (JanMohamed, 1993, 5).

As for the preservation of the past and the tradition, Achebe asserts that the

autonomous Igbo villages and towns, so deeply suspicious of political amalgamation … should ever face an enemy able to wield the resources of a centralized military power, acting directly or through local surrogates. They would need every fortification to maintain their delicate solidarity (Achebe, *Home and Exile* 17).

Ezeulu reverberates in the writer's quote as he continuously urges his people to take colonialism as a real danger. Ezeulu blames his people for getting involved in a war against Okperi

We went to war against Okperi who are our blood brothers over a piece of land that did not belong to us and you blame the white man for stepping in. Have you not heard that when two brothers fight a stranger reaps the harvest? (*Arrow* 131).

*Arrow of God* is about the replacement of traditional values and identities with foreign ones. Achebe calls for communal solidarity and ethnic pride. The novel depicts how Africa is measured by European standards (Hwang 70-1). Thus, Achebe is calling for ethnic reclamation.

Klein asserts that "Criticism may wish, accordingly, to distinguish between the 'African' novels of Achebe and Ngugi, respectively. Like British rule in Nigeria, Achebe leans towards the interaction of cultural identity and administrative coercion. An intrusive settler presence in Kenya, by contrast, turns Ngugi to material conflicts of race and class" (Chapman 154).

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Pidgin is also considered an important marker of identity. Nigerian Pidgin infuses linguistic forms from multiple sources, including African languages and English (Lynn 98). Pidgin is used to facilitate "interethnic communication" (Zabus, *The African Palimpsest* 73; Ashcroft, et al., 1998, 176). Gikandi asserts that Pidgin is "the previously disdained vernacular" that "challenges the norms of the 'Queen's' English" (Gikandi, Ngũgĩ's Conversion" 234).

Achebe's frequent use of pidgin in his novels is one indication that his work challenges the discursive and formal assumptions embedded in European discourse about Africa (Lynn 98). In *Anthills*, Beatrice Okoh and Ikem Osodi use pidgin to speak to less formally educated characters (Lynn 106). Elewa's first speech in *Anthills* delivered to her lover, Ikem Osodi, is very revelatory about her personality.

> "You explain what? I beg you, no make me vex ...
> Imagine! Hmm! But woman done chop sand for dis
> world-o .. . Imagine! But na we de causam; na we own
> fault. If I no kuku bring my stupid nyarsh [arse] come
> dump for your bedroom you for de kick me about like I
> be football? I no blame you. At all!" (31; Achebe's
> ellipses).

This speech by Elewa demonstrates signs of class. She lacks forms of Western-styled education, and she further has acquaintances from different linguistic backgrounds. She tends to use pidgin because she has a very limited fluency in Standard English (Lynn 106).

Elewa's speech transcends not only social and educational disadvantages, but also the disadvantage of being a woman in a male dominant culture. Her speech is an indictment of the exploitation of women. Lynn affirms that "Achebe represents, in short, Elewa's essential qualities through the vitality and content of the Pidgin English she speaks" (106).

Achebe's rendering of speech in *Anthills* helps evoke character, and this is part of his social and political commitment (Lynn 106). In an interview conducted by Jane Wilkinson (1987), Achebe affirms that "the real Nigerian Pidgin [is] a language in itself, not something you can just cook up" (Interview with Jane Wilkinson 49). Thus, pidgin is very revelatory about each character's linguistic identity (106-7). His remarks fit into his portrayal of Elewa,

> "If I'm going to explore a certain kind of character, I must listen to this character. Before I can understand how his or her mind operates I must also know how he or she uses words. ... I must know what they sound like, I must know how they speak language. This character deserves to be listened to seriously, so that when I introduce what he's saying, I'm doing this with integrity and you can recognize him through the way he uses language. Of course if you have the kind of linguistic richness that we have in a place like Nigeria, it's an advantage to the writer. ... This dialogue must come from the source, from the people. This is part of commitment to the people. ... " (Wilkinson 49)

Hence, "how *[a character]* uses words and how they speak language" lead to the reader's understanding of Achebe's characters (Lynn 107). Achebe's shift of registers in *Anthills of the Savannah* is a clear indication of the fragmentation and identity (de)formation in the Nigerian society (Irele, 2002, 56-7).

## 3. The Disenchantment with Nationalism in *Anthills of the Savannah*

In addition to deconstructing the influence of European exploitation of newly independent African nations, African writers also sought to depict the impact of political corruption inherent in African rule on these nations. Indeed, corruption and disorder gave birth to social instability, which in turn led to coups and civil wars. These social and political experiences represent the very material of their art. As such, Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* examines the political direction of the nation

(Ojaide, 2012, 19). The period after independence had given way to a new disillusionment with the discourse of nation because of political corruption. Realism remained the main artistic form of expressing disillusionment in *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) (Nwosu 101).

Gikandi argues that nationalism cannot be considered a solution to the problems of the ex-colonies. He recurrently expressed his disenchantment with nationalism. In his book *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, he asserts that "nationalism cannot seriously be considered to be the alternative to imperialism that it was once thought to be" (Gikandi, 1996, 7). This is due to the historical experience of decolonization as many national tendencies in Africa faced serious problems after independence (McLeod 102).

In his book *West Indian Literature*, Bruce King affirms,

> [w]here the end of the Second World War brought a demand for national political independence to the forefront as a solution to the problems of the colonies, this was soon found to be an unrealistic hope as many new nations became divided by civil war and micro-nationalisms... or failed to develop economically or to offer social justice to those outside the government and its supporters (3).

As such, Bruce King contends that nationalist representations can be the source of division within the national population. Hence, the nation's imagined community affects its internal divisions. The making of a unified imagined community can be both nationalism's point of strength as well as its weakness. Though nationalism can be a good resource for anticolonial resistance, usually, the advocates of nationalism fail to consider the gender, racial, religious and cultural diversity of the people within the nation. Indeed, the internal differences have always posed difficulties to national unity (McLeod 102-3). Etienne Balibar in his essay "Racism and Nationalism",

asserts that nations attempting decolonization have witnessed the agonizing experience of "seeing nationalisms of liberation turned into nationalisms of domination" (Balibar 46).

The idea of the nation is basically Western, and was associated with the ideals of the enlightenment in Europe. In his book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, Partha Chatterjee points out that European forms of nationalism are "part of the same historical process which saw the rise of industrialism and democracy" and "nationalism represents the attempt to actualise in political terms the universal urge for liberty and progress" (2). Hence, this liberal idea of nationalism was used by the imperial powers to morally justify the expansion over the savagery and backwardness of others. This "liberal dilemma" had later become valid in colonial contexts as postcolonial governments wanted to appropriate the liberal aspects of Western nationalism (McLeod 104-5).

According to Fanon's ideas, anticolonial nationalism may result in "the replacement of a Western, colonial ruling class with a Western-educated, "indigenous" ruling class who seem to speak on behalf of the people but function to keep the people disempowered" (108).

In his famous essay "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation", Homi K. Bhabha describes nationalist representations as extremely unstable and fragile constructions which are unable to create unity. Bhabha argues that these nationalist representations become similar to colonial discourses (McLeod 117). Bhabha explains that in order to achieve unity and aim at creating a community out of difference; they attempt to convert the "many" into the "one" following two contradictory modes of representation: the pedagogic and the performative. The

nation as a pedagogic discourse asserts a fixed origin and a continuous history which links the nation's people to their ancestors. Bhabha affirms that pedagogical narratives are moulded by "continuist, accumulative temporality" (Bhabha 145) giving the impression of the steady, linear movement of time from past to present to future just like the narrative of the nation's history (McLeod 117-8).

In addition to the pedagogical mode of nationalist discourse, the latter also proves to be simultaneously performative. That is, the people have to continually rehearse the nationalist icons and popular signs in order to maintain the sense of "deep, horizontal comradeship" (McLeod 118). Therefore, national culture has to be repeatedly performed forging a range of different symbols to achieve unity and national significance. Bhabha asserts, "The scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture" (Bhabha, 1994, 145).

Hence, the people become part of the (re)production of nationalist discourse through the performance and recreation of its signs, rituals, and traditions, as well as the celebration of its great figures. In this way, the performative mode follows a 'repetitious' and 'recursive' temporality (Bhabha, 1994, 145). Due to this "double" narrative discourse, the nation is divided by what Bhabha calls the "conceptual ambivalence" (146). The performative necessity of nationalist representations allows the subaltern subjects, such as women, migrants, the working class, the peasantry, those of a different "race" or ethnicity, to engage in the representative process challenging the dominant discourses within the nation (McLeod 118-19).

African literature had been preoccupied with two main themes, namely the clash of cultures and post-independence disillusionment (Chapman 157). Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* can be described as a novel that opted for a decisive move beyond the

discourses of 'nation'. It is mainly about postcolonial disillusionment (Osei-Nyame 88). *Anthills of the Savannah* epitomises the disenchantment with anticolonial nationalism and revolutionary ideals. The novel is set in the fictional country of Kangan, and depicts the diverse fortunes of the military government and its eventual defeat in a *coup d'état*. Most of the characters are highly educated members of the Kangan society, who get involved with the government in various ways. The male characters in the novel, Sam, Christopher Oriko and Ikem Osodi, are educated in Britain and have known each other since childhood.

However, different voices are juxtaposed in the novel: those of the ruling elite as well as those of the marginalised subaltern classes. Beatrice and the Abazonians can be a good example of these classes. She receives a Western-style education in Abazon and travelled to get a degree in English at a university in London. In her childhood, Chris suffers from her patriarchal father. This leads her to observe gender inequalities (McLeod 132).

> That every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of male chauvinist bullshit I had completely rejected before I knew there was anything like Women's Lib", she remarks. "You often hear our people say: But that's something you picked up in England. Absolute rubbish! There was enough male chauvinism in my father's house to last me seven reincarnations! (*Anthills* 88).

The character of Beatrice highlights male chauvinism in the novel. She suggests that male chauvinism is not an adequate representation of the nation's history. Beatrice tells Chris, "Well, you fellows, all three of you, at incredibly conceited. The story of this country, as far as you are concerned, is the story of the three of you" (*Anthills* 66). The "conceited" story pointed out by Beatrice is similar to Ranajit Guha's concept of "elite historiography" silencing "subaltern" voices. Hence, Achebe

highlights the idea that even though the story focuses on the male elite of the nation, it cannot provide the complete narrative of the nation. Beatrice, just like other characters, is there to disturb the elite male characters' autonomy over the narrative of Kangan's fortunes.

Male elite chauvinism appears in the novel as His Excellency invites Beatrice to a drinks party in order to provide the "woman's angle" (*Anthills* 80) on Kangan for an American journalist. Chris also reflects male elite chauvinism as, before the party, he advises Beatrice to know how to deal with His Excellency (McLeod 132). Beatrice also criticises Ikem's radical political views on the grounds that he can imagine "no clear role for women" (*Anthills* 91).

Gender relations are also affected by the socio-economic background of characters. This is apparent in the characters of Beatrice and her maid, Agatha. Beatrice's social privilege and well-educated background are reflected in her language with Agatha. She uses pidgin English with Agatha. Dennis Walder expounds,

> it is important to distinguish between pidgins, which have small vocabularies, restricted structures, lack expressive potential and are usually not a first language, and creoles, which are distinct varieties of English spoken as their mother tongue by native speakers (Walder 47).

Beatrice employs a different language in order to communicate with her maid. As such, Beatrice is not representative of women like Agatha. It is also very difficult to assume a "deep, horizontal comradeship" within the nationalist discourse with the Kangan women, as their comradeship is disturbed by vertical social differences. Similar to Beatrice, the market woman Elewa, Ikem's lover, also speaks pidgin English.

These Western-educated characters use pidgin to speak with other characters. They, nevertheless, do not use it when they speak with each other. Chris, for example, uses pidgin while travelling to Abazon. Hence, the use of pidgin reveals some ideas related to class and gender. Achebe attempts to draw a picture of how the African elite function within the nation (McLeod 132-3).

First of all, Achebe highlights how the ruling Western-educated elite deal with characters from the other classes. This is related to their world view and their use of different languages. The elite's use of English implies that they do not share nationalist ideals with the masses. Second, Achebe raises questions related to national languages. English is presented as the national language although it is used by the minority of elite characters. Hence, the distance between the elite and the masses, presented through the use of English, reveals how it is difficult to imagine a nationalist community. As such, this hints to the fact that *Anthills of the Savannah* does not present the voice of the nation as a whole. This is similar to His Excellency's failure to get total support as he is rejected by the province of Abazon (McLeod 132-3).

As such, *Anthills of the Savannah* is an attack on the discourse of the nation after independence. It implies that the wealth of the nation is destroyed by the corrupt chauvinistic elite. The latter is depicted as alienated from the people by its Western-style education. Nonetheless, the novel does not totally reject the ideals of nation. Indeed, Achebe weighs the extent to which the ideal of the nation is possibly achieved as all voices are engaged and involved in nation building. To build a nation, all people should participate, not only the English-speaking minority. Relationships are to be built without constructing norms and limits, and without any form of marginalization.

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Besides, the narrative suggests that the discourse of the nation should be free of illiberal tendencies (McLeod 134).

While the opening of the novel focuses on His Excellency's male cabinet, the ending centres on female characters like Beatrice and Elewa. Indeed, the last chapter narrates the Elawa's baby daughter naming party, to which different characters from all bulks of the community are invited. This creates an image of a diverse yet unified community. This image represents an alternative image of the nation in the Kangan community, challenging His Excellency's male chauvinistic elite cabinet (McLeod 134).

According to Bhabha's ideas, the baby naming party represents the interruption of the pedagogical by the performative. The baby naming ceremony has fixed and serious protocols, yet in the ending of the story a different kind of ceremony is performed in Beatrice's flat breaking some of the rules. The rule implies that a male should perform the naming, but in this ceremony Beatrice performs the naming. She is willing to improvise a "ritual" (*Anthills* 222) and name the baby herself.

Being the daughter of the revolutionary writer Ikem and the market girl Elewa, Amaechina is the symbol of new egalitarianism within the nation renouncing all forms of chauvinism of the ruling Western-educated elite. Elewa's uncle says that Kangan's situation is deteriorated since independence "because those who make plans make plans for themselves only and their families" (*Anthills* 228), but Amaechina is "the daughter of all of us" (*Anthills* 228). She represents the nation's diversity (McLeod 134-5).

His Excellency is described in Ikem's writings as a furious sun whose "crimson torches fire the furnaces of heaven and the roaring holocaust of your vengeance fills

the skies" (*Anthills* 30). Likewise, Beatrice is also associated with the sun while being compared the goddess Idemili,

> In the beginning Power rampaged through our world, naked. So the Almighty, looking at his creation through the round undying eye of the Sun, saw and pondered and finally decided to send his daughter, Idemili, to bear witness to the moral nature of authority by wrapping around Power's rude waist a loincloth of peace and modesty (*Anthills* 102).

According the myth, while Idemili is sent to earth in a pillar of water quenching the starving earth, His Excellency exerts retribution of the people of Abazon through reducing water to the province and causing drought and starvation in the region. As Chris and Beatrice make love, Chris calls her a priestess or goddess. By the end of the novel, Beatrice is depicted, through the myth of Idemili, as the symbol of hope as she defies the chauvinism and corruption of His Excellency and his cabinet, the ruling Western-educated elite class. Even though she is an elite character, she challenges its predominance. Indeed, Beatrice outlives His Excellency's days and government and is depicted as bringing hope of a new age through presiding over a naming ceremony. She is likened to the anthills of the savannah in Ikem's Hymn to the Sun, "surviving to tell the new grass of the savannah about last year's brush fires" (*Anthills* 31).

Therefore, *Anthills of the Savannah* portrays the damaging actions of the Western-educated ruling elite, and suggests a new discourse of nation-building including all those left out of conventional nationalist representations. Though the novel resists the problems in nationalist representations, the idea of the nation is not totally rejected (McLeod 135-6).

## 4. *Petals of Blood* as a Transitional Hybrid Text

Ngugi's early works, especially *The River Between*, present the Gikuyu as trying to ambivalently reinvent their history, culture, and economy to be able to fit into affluent colonial structures (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 17-18). Indeed, his first novels, namely *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), address the Kenyan struggle against colonialism and the role of the Mau Mau liberation movement (Gikandi, *Ngugi Reflections* 137). Ngugi's later novels, however, shift from the interiorized fears and anxieties of Njoroge in *Weep Not* or Muthoni in *The River Between* to the affirmative world of Karega in *Petals* and Wariinga in *Devil* (11).

*Petals* and *Devil* present the colonial encounter in Manichean terms, where colonizer and colonized are separated by conflicting identities and interests (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 17). These novels give way to a representation of a lost history and displaced identities. Indeed, the authors' beginnings as a writer, which had been characterised by its autobiographical content rooted in his desire to claim kinship, has now turned towards the discourse of decolonization and displacement (Gikandi, *Ngugi Reflections* 10-11). Thus, Ngugi's narrative moves away from the portrayal of vulnerable characters who are alienated from their communities, into the dramatization of the life of world historical individuals (Lukacs 127).

His avant-garde idea appears clearly as he, in collaboration with his countrymen, sought to start the open theatre project at Kamiriithu dramatizing the histories and everyday experiences of local peasants. This project has worked as an alternative to the narrative of development promoted by the state and the ruling class. Ngugi's

attempt has been ultimately interrupted by his imprisonment and exile (Gikandi, *Ngugi Reflections* 11).

Besides, his later novels that were written after his graduation from Leeds were highly influenced by Marxist thinking and the postcolonial writings of Frantz Fanon (Adams 137). Thereafter, critics could notice a notable shift in his oeuvre, from the Marxist and Fanonian thinking towards a criticism of the neocolonial state and its betrayal of the dreams of the struggle of independence. Gikandi asserts that, "Ngũgĩ was now seeking ways of shifting his aesthetic ideology from morality and sensibility to history and epistemology" (*Ngugi Reflections* 137).

Indeed, Ngugi's subject matter has undergone considerable change after 1977 from anticolonial struggle to neocolonial betrayal. Ngugi's writing style has also been affected considerably. He aimed at adapting the European bourgeois novel form to tell the Kenyan story, and to produce literary expression based on the African oral tradition. Ngugi believed that people's memory can solely be preserved through their own language. This is apparent in his decision to write in Gikuyu and some other African languages, as well as in his attempt to promote translation (Adams 138).

In his early stage of literary creation, Ngugi had not been involved in the politics of art and writing or its impact on his audience. His influence with Marxist ideologies in the 1960s, however, affected his later writing, especially issues related to ideology and audience. By the 1970s, for instance, Ngugi was not just expressing the narrative of colonialism and decolonization; his interest shifted towards the representation of cultural and national consciousness. Ngugi's novels and plays of the 1970s aimed at employing the working class and the peasantry as the agency of the changes Ngugi wanted to exert. He, nonetheless, was faced with the paradoxical fact that these

works, though intended to enhance the peasantry, were written in a language they could neither read nor understand. Thus, the question of language in his writings, as well as in African literature, had now become fundamental to his creative cultural project (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 36).

> To choose a language is to choose a world, once said a West Indian thinker, and although I do not share the assumed primacy of language over the world, the choice of a language already pre-determines the answer to the most important question for producers of imaginative literature: For whom do I write? Who is my audience?... The question of audience has a bearing on the next few problems for a writer: What is the subject and content of my works? From whose stand do I look at that content or not? (*Writers* 53-54).

Gikandi believes that Ngugi's choice to write in Gikuyu, rather than English, starting with *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Many When I Want*) and his novel *Caitaani Mutharabaini* (*Devil on the Cross*), is an indication that Ngugi's cultural project intends the workers and the peasants as his audience (*Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 37). Ngugi saw his shifts in his writings as an endeavour to perfect the mimetic function of the novel. He wanted to create an ideological blend between form and content (Gikandi, "Ngũgĩ's Conversion" 139).

Ngugi's shift in style is also linked to the calamity of Kenya's neocolonial economy. In his article "Ngugi's Concept of History and the Post-Colonial Discourses in Kenya", James Ogude asserts that E. A. Brett's *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa* (1973) and Colin Leys' *Underdevelopment in Kenya* (1974) are two main studies that link underdevelopment to colonialism and dependency. Brett stresses how Kenya is driven into capitalism because of colonialism. Besides, Leys describes Kenya's economy as neocolonial. He believes that neocolonialism was deeply entrenched in the shift from colonialism to

independence through the establishment of obedient governments supported by social classes and serving foreign capital (Ogude, "Ngugi's Concept of History" 95). These two books help a lot in figuring out the shift in Ngugi's analysis. They scrutinize neocolonialism in Kenya. *Devil* can be read as a fable version of Leys' work (Gugler 338).

*Petals* represent Ngugi's gradual development from his earlier novels. In *Petals*, Ngugi undertakes a deeper economic and historical analysis than earlier novels. In this novel, Ngugi names the capitalist countries and companies controlling and exploiting Kenya. He also analyses the transformation in the class system with the compradors becoming a national bourgeoisie. Indeed, he put the Kenyan situation to scathing satire and social criticism. Ngugi stresses the role of the educated elite through the characters of Chui, Munira, Karega, and Joseph. Throughout the story, Ngugi makes a comparison between the characters as individuals and analyses the role of the elite as a group (Glenn 58-59).

Ngugi also faces the challenge of writing through a Western Eurocentric English literary tradition and addressing a Kenyan audience. Thus, *Petals* should be read as a transitional text. It is a text in which Ngugi struggles with his complex situation of being an African writer. Hence, Ngugi's use of comic elements in *Petals* implies a transformation in his conception of genre and in his relationship with the Kenyan people. These comic elements anticipate a more comic novel which is *Devil*. Therefore, in *Petals*, Ngugi wrestles to find a new perspective and form for his audience (Berger 9).

Moreover, Berger asserts that "All the problems facing the African writer – those of audience, genre, and textuality – emerge in *Petals of Blood*" (9). In his essay, "The

Gendered Politics of Untranslated Language and Aporia in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's "Petals of Blood" ", Evan Mwangi affirms that the untranslated terms in *Petals* are related to the narrative's desire for a decolonized English (66). In an answer to a question by Feroza Jussawalla in "The Language of Struggle" on *Petals*, Ngugi says,

> definitely *Petals of Blood* was a transitional novel. However, language experimentation was only a small part of this novel. I was writing about peasants and workers and their struggle against colonialism and other forms of foreign domination ("The Language of Struggle" 147).

He continues,

> But then my change from, or against, English and towards African languages as a means of creative writing came in 1977, '76-'77, when I worked at the Kamiriithu Community Educational Center. Kamiriithu is a small village, very rural, about thirty kilometers from Nairobi. There I was trying to develop a community center to develop resources, skills, and also culture with theater at the center. We confronted the real-life struggles of the people and we found that we no longer could avoid the issue of language.
> *Petals of Blood* and the later work tend to cover the whole spectrum, precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial. *Devil on the Cross* is clearly located within the post-independence era (147, 152).

Therefore, Ngugi's later novels especially *Petals* (1977), and *Devil* (1987) focus on the self's troubled relation to nation, language, and culture. In his book entitled *Ngugi's Novels and African History*, James Ogude explains that there are striking differences between Ngugi's earlier novels and his postcolonial ones. While earlier novels focus on the likelihood of cultural syncretism, postcolonial novels show sheer antagonism towards all what is Western. Moreover, the postcolonial novels display a rising interest in the political, including precisely Marxist ideals. Besides, while earlier novels emphasise moral dilemma and the heroes' attempt to reconcile two

opposing social groups in their society, in Ngugi's postcolonial works, class conflict is fundamental (*Ngugi's Novels* 13).

Furthermore, in the earlier novels, characterization draws our attention towards the complexity of issues raised in the narrative. In the later works, Ngugi employs a more mechanic allegorising style in which human and social issues are expressed through a linear depiction of characters and history. There is also a noticeable shift in Ngugi's later works which is represented in the use of traditionalist enunciation of allegory as simple in the postcolonial texts (13).

The reason for this notable transformation in Ngugi's work is not only because of his disillusionment with the terms of decolonization, or his problems with the Kenyan state, nor because of the shift in his ideological thought from liberalism to Marxism. This transformation is deeply rooted in his fundamental belief that the role of art is not merely to explain the world, but to change it. Ngugi's identity as an influential international modern writer led him to adopt postcolonial issues in the arena of language and culture.

## 5. Culture and National Betrayal in *Petals of Blood*

Ngugi's ideology of culture in the 1970s was in antagonism with that of the ruling class. His project aimed at preserving the idea of culture from both colonialism and nationalism. Indeed, Ngugi wanted to rescue culture from the Arnoldian and Leavisite view that culture embodied the endorsed values of the elite. This view was held by the cultural nationalists who romanticized about African culture and who tried to turn its past into an erotic subject that was now being performed for tourists by governmental organizations. Thus, Ngugi attempted to go beyond the Fanonist nationalist notion of

culture into the Marxist belief that culture is determined by economic forces (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 144).

*Petals* is driven by Ngugi's desire to recover an organic Gikuyu culture in the debris of postcoloniality. This is apparent in how Mwathi's place represents the soul of the community. Mwathi wa Mugo, the mysterious sage, whose name suggests both shepherd and prophet, operates as "the spiritual power over both Ilmorog ridge and Ilmorog plains, somehow, invisibly, regulating their lives" (*Petals* 17). Ngugi's depiction of Ilmorog before being changed by the forces of modernity appears to be related to the Marxist blue book on a primitive mode of production (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 145).

Perhaps the most obvious charge of modernity and modernization is manifested in the agonizing scenes of the destruction of Mwathi's place by the wilful machinery of progress. At this stage of the novel, we understand that something went wrong and that Ilmorog has turned to a wasteland. Hence, the old community is shattered by the more progressive forces of industrial capitalism. Karega is the character who is aware of all the politics of cultural production in the novel. The dangers of the different cultural programs are echoed by him. He is cynical about romanticizing the traditional culture as he is scornful of the liberal ideology of the new ruling class (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 145-7).

Therefore, critics of *Petals* who have read it as a "Marxist novel" need to reconsider the conflicting notions of culture it presents. These conflicting notions of culture can be manifested in the novel's form. In inspiring a sense of disillusionment in his work, Ngugi transforms the literary experience into an efficient criticism of the

culture of postcoloniality. Thus, his work poses a threat to the ruling class in the postcolony (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 190).

In his essay "Towards a National Culture," Ngugi questions the liberal view of culture, and calls for a reconsidering of the importance of traditional African culture in intellectual discourse and its influence on the character of the new nation: "Is culture something which can be preserved, even if this were desirable? Is there such a thing as an original culture?" (Ngugi, *Homecoming* 4).

Fanon argues that culture has become very important in the discourse of liberation since it is placed in the domain of history. The latter shapes the soul of the colonized. Hence, Fanon asserts that the "legitimacy of the claims of a nation" is very much related to the capacity of the colonized subjects to recover and celebrate the importance of their denigrated history (Fanon 209). Ngugi believes that "political and economic liberation are the essential condition for cultural liberation, for the true release of a people's creative spirit and imagination" (*Homecoming* 11).

In his works, Ngugi rarely evokes a precolonial Gikuyu world; he employs Gikuyu mores and norms, not to dramatize the overwhelming effects of colonial modernity, but rather to stage the pressing political and cultural encounters. He rejects the tendency to invoke a precolonial past to render a stable culture and identity. This is very revelatory about how it is so difficult to dramatize a Gikuyu culture outside the colonial relationship (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 14).

The Gikuyu people shared a common language, common origin, and common belief system. Nonetheless, this form of identity was not corporate or centralised. That is to say, the Gikuyu people did not organise themselves in predominant social, cultural, or governmental systems. They were basically operated in sub-clans with

shared memories of common descent. Gikuyu identity was in fact reinvented, shaped, and formed by the dialectic of the colonial encounter, rather than by a Manichean opposition to colonial power and dominance (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 15).

Indeed, the reality of colonial rule influenced the Kikuyus sense of identity. They had to adjust to the fluctuating situation between the last decade of the nineteenth century and the end of the First World War. This is due to the activities of administrators, settlers, traders and missionaries in the region, which created a very demanding, inconceivable, different, and strange way of life that the Kikuyus had to adapt with (Muriuki 165). Colonial authority enforced a bureaucratic system that organised race, class, and clan conflict. Berman and Lonsdale (1976) argued that, "the colonial state occupied centre stage in Kenya, symbolically and materially standing over colonial society" (2).

What is ironic is that the nationalist advocates of the Gikuyu culture were themselves the most colonized. Their identity is influenced by Christian conversion, "Converts to Christianity were called athomi, i.e. literates, and the rest were called Agikuyu, i.e. the people who remained in the Kikuyu culture" (Kibicho 370-88) Hence, nationalism came to distinguish culture from colonialism and Christianity from Eurocentrism (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 22).

Nonetheless, cultural autonomy does not mean a return to a precolonial tradition. As it is understood by nationalists, Gikuyu identity should exist within the colonial project. Gikuyu subjects would be able to select aspects of colonial culture to be integrated into modern identity (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 22). In his conclusion to Facing Mount Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta contended that,

> If Africans were left in peace on their own lands, Europeans would have to offer them the benefits of white civilisation in real earnest before they could obtain the African labour which they want so much. They would have to offer the African a way of life which was really superior to the one his fathers lived before him, and share the prosperity given to them by their command of science. They would have to let the African choose what parts of European culture could be beneficially transplanted, and how they could be adapted (Kenyatta 306).

Though cultural nationalism attempted the liberation of culture from colonialism, it is devised to create a syncretic relationship between Gikuyu beliefs and European systems. Amidst this cultural crisis, Ngugi's works fall into this project of reinventing culture and deploying it as a means of national liberation (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 23-4).

In 1963, Ngugi described Kenyatta and the Mau Mau Movement as the epitome of the spirit of resistance:

> He got support from the peasant masses and urban workers because he was a symbol of their deepest aspirations. To have imprisoned him was futile, because he was himself only a symbol of social forces which could never be finally put down by a gun (*Homecoming* 29).

In 1977, Ngugi was imprisoned by Kenyatta's regime because he was thought of writing a divisive history. It is apparent that his conception of history had been different from that of the state. He later came to criticise Kenyatta, denouncing his betrayal of national consciousness,

> Kenyan reactionary scholarship was about to give the final coup de grace to what Kenyatta started when in 1954 at his trial in Kapenguria; he described Mau Mau as an 'evil thing' which 'I have done my best to denounce ... and if all other people had done as I have done Mau Mau would not be as it is now (*Barrel* 10).

Ngugi's change of attitude towards Kenyatta, whom he had admired in his early works, explains a lot about the change in Ngugi's aesthetic and ideological perceptions in his later works. Thus, nationalism had been betrayed by the same people who had opposed colonialism and Eurocentrism. Ngugi's awakening to national betrayal is the result of two main events: the postcolonial works of Franz Fanon as well as the politics of neocolonialism in Kenya. As a result, colonial culture was essential to the new nation because it maintained the ideals of modernity, individualism, and prosperity. African traditions were vital because they secured the moral integrity of the new national community (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 30-1).

## 6. Envisioning the Future through the Spirit of the Past in *Petals*

> We must . . . find out where we are, in order to decide
> where we will go next. We cannot know where we are,
> without first finding out where we come from (*Njamba
> Nene and the Flying Bus* 19; *Decolonising* 19).

In an interview in 1969, Ngugi asserts that the "ideal" African novel would, "embrace the pre-colonial past [,] … the colonial past, and the post-independence period with a pointer to the future" (Friedberger ii). He believed that the African writer should revisit his history. This is articulated in Munira's statement that he "had to take a drastic step that would restore me to my usurped history, my usurped inheritance, that would reconnect me with my history" (*Petals* 227).

In his famous essay, "The Writer and His Past", Ngugi reflects on the writer's relationship with his past, to conclude that the latter has to engage with his past in order to create an authentic nationalist literature. As the writer reconnects with his history, his people's history, he would celebrate that moment of return. The latter would restore the African character to his history because "[t]he African novelist has

turned his back on the Christian god and resumed the broken dialogue with the gods of his people" (*Homecoming* 43) (Ogude, "Homecoming: The Idea of Return" 164).

Ngugi asserts that the writer's preoccupation with the past does not imply that he would distance himself from contemporary issues and anxieties. Ngugi stresses the dialectical and historical nature of living cultures. In his essay, "Towards a National Culture", he emphasised the importance of cultural heritage that European colonialism had worked to denigrate in Africa, "culture is the sum total of a people's art, the science and all their social institution, including their system of beliefs and rituals", forged in their "creative struggle and progress through history" (*Homecoming* 4). Hence, culture is cherished and celebrated through history (Ogude, "Homecoming" 164-5).

However, Ngugi proceeds to state that "In our present situation, we must in fact try to see how new aspects of life can be clarified or given expression through new art forms or a renewal of the old" (*Homecoming* 4). Hence, Ngugi was not calling for a return to a mythical past, but an interaction with a complex present situation that has been created by a shared colonial experience and native African practices.

His idea of engagement with the past is closely related to Fanon's idea in *The Wretched of the Earth* of the "zone of occult instability where the people dwell" (*Homecoming* 227), the liminal space where Africa's many modernities are shaped by dialogue with itself and other cultures. Hence, Ngugi does not write about a precolonial past because issues of domination and dispossession were significant concerns in the time of colonial encounter.

Ngugi falls in the process of self-knowledge, a questioning of his Christian past and education. This is to be instilled in a political agenda to give African culture its

proper role. As a result, Ngugi drops his Christian name and reclaims his father's name to symbolically mark his break with his Christian past and education (Ogude, "Homecoming" 165).

What is important to note is that the evocation of a precolonial past is not meant to explain the past, but rather to consider its possibility to reveal new prospects, "visions of the future" (Ngugi, *The River* 2). Like Achebe, Ngugi tried to envision a radically new African society through a usable african past. Ngugi's narrative, especially in *Petals*, spins around relationships and acquaintances who spend time socializing, talking about their pasts, discussing political action, and endeavouring to transform a society (Podis 105).

Even though *Petals* is not part of Ngugi's radical revolutionary phase, in which he rejected English as language for literary production, it provides a radical critique of Kenyan society (Podis 105). In *Petals*, he urges for the revival of African culture and traditions. Cook and Okenimkpe (1983) assert, "Ngugi looks to the past to provide a meaningful continuum with the present and the future" (113). Pagnoulle, on the other hand, believes that *Petals* pictures a cultural "regeneration" that will "feed on the people's indigenous past" (273).

In *Petals*, the chapter entitled "The Journey" describes Africa's past before the coming of the white man,

> Ilmorog, the scene of the unfolding of this drama, had not always been a small cluster of mud huts lived in by old men and women and children with occasional visits from wandering herdsmen. It has had its days of glory (*Petals* 120).

At that time, Ilmorog was a peaceful and thriving village. Nyakinuya says that the people's "knowledge of metal became legendary, reaching the ears of the Arab and Portuguese marauders from the coast" (*Petals* 121).

Besides, *Petals* establishes a communal voice. It also tries to depict complex ambivalence towards sociocultural modernization, stating its great attraction but criticizing it for its relationship with corruption, and for the fact of being unfit for traditional values and contemporary cultural needs. The character of Wanja, for example, mixes between the modern and the traditional. She is described as the "barmaid farmer" (*Petals* 61) who wavers between her role as a barmaid/prostitute and her role as agrarian earth-mother (Podis 108).

The coming of the villagers from Ilmorog to Nairobi "brings the beast down to Ilmorog" (Pagnoulle 269), resulting in the establishment of new Ilmorog and taking it from the people, the co-optation of Theng'eta, the negative impact on Wanja, and the downfall of the oppressors, Chui, Mzigo, and Kimeria (Podis 108).

The hardships and the humiliating reception of the villagers in Nairobi create a strong sense of unity. The villagers' bond with the past is created by their close connection with the heritage of Ndemi, founder of Ilmorog. This connection is created by the Nyakinyua, the village's most revered woman and the grandmother of Wanja. The Ndemi story is deployed in *Petals* to inspire the villagers with the spirit of tradition to struggle for their land. The importance of orality in Petals is seen in the character of Abdulla (Podis 110-11). He turns to be very good at telling traditional stories (*Petals* 116-17).

The Theng'eta ceremonies are traditional ceremonies that emphasize communal life in Kenya. Its great effect on some characters implies the enduring impact and

usefulness of the past. Johnson asserts that the role of the Theng'eta ceremony is "to recapture the spirit of the past" and "to renew a sense of unity among the participants" (Johnson 12-13). Ngugi also engages in a myth-making activity which stems from earlier indigenous myth-making. He employs Ndemi story as an attempt to create a new type of founding legend for their troubled communities (Podis 121).

Furthermore, Ngugi stresses the importance of salvaging African history from colonial historiography (Gikandi, "On Culture and the State" 153). His aim is not only reconstructive but also revisionary, uncovering colonialist and neocolonialist ideologies imbedded in history. O. Louis Mink argues that fiction is a representation of history. They both use narrative structure, and they can both be seen as "a primary and irreducible form of human comprehension, an article in the constitution of common sense" (Mink 132). Ngugi points out that colonial writers and Kenya's historians, who were schooled in Western modes of thought have deformed Kenya's history. He steps in to write the history of the subaltern from the remains of colonial exploitation (Ogude, "Ngugi's Concept of History" 86).

> Arab geographers and also hunters for slaves and ivory; soul and gold merchants from Gaul and from Bismarck's Germany; land pirates and human game-hunters from Victorian and Edwardian England: they had all passed here bound for a kingdom of plenty, driven sometimes by holy zeal, sometimes by a genuine thirst for knowledge and the quest for the spot where the first man's umbilical cord was buried, but more often by mercenary commercial greed and love of the wanton destruction of those with a slightly different complexion from theirs (*Petals* 68).

In this passage, Ngugi apparently responds to two main ideological statements from *Heart of Darkness*: the frame narrator's praise of generations of English nights as well as Marlow's denouncement of colonialism (P. Williams 213).

In *Petals*, Karega strives for the revival of Kenyan historiography. This is clear in his effort to find appropriate history texts for his pupils as well as in his request to the lawyer to help him in his search for "a vision rooted in a critical awareness of the past" (*Petals* 198). The Lawyer sends him books and titles published by professors at the university where Ngugi taught. These documents do not answer his questions (Sicherman 353). Karega's analysis of African history may be summarised in his capsule history of Africa:

> Today, children, I am going to tell you about the history of Mr Blackman in three sentences. In the beginning he had the land and the mind and the soul together. On the second day, they took the body away to barter it for silver coins. On the third day, seeing that he was still fighting back they brought priests and educators to bind his mind and soul so that these foreigners could more easily take his land and its produce (*Petals* 236).

The relation between mind and soul is still there, and this is why Kenya needs a new historiography. Karega expresses this in an exchange with Munira,

> Our children must look at the things that deformed us yesterday, that are deforming us today. They must also look at the things which formed us yesterday, that will creatively form us into a new breed of men and women who will not be afraid to link hands with children from other lands on the basis of an unashamed immersion in the struggle against those things that dwarf us (*Petals* 247).

This leads to the school strike in the novel, "We wanted to be taught African literature, African history, for we wanted to know ourselves better" (*Petals* 170). The narrator also reflects upon the history of Ilmorog,

> Ilmorog, the scene of the unfolding of this drama, had not always been a small cluster of mud huts lived in only by old men and women and children with occasional visits from wandering herdsmen. It had had its days of glory: thriving villages with a huge population of sturdy peasants who had tamed nature's

forests and, breaking the soil between their fingers, had brought forth every type of crop to nourish the sons and daughters of men. How they toiled together, clearing the wilderness, cultivating, planting: how they all fervently prayed for rain and deliverance in times of drought and pestilence! And at harvest-time they would gather in groups, according to ages, and dance from village to village, spilling into Ilmorog plains, hymning praises to their founders. In those days, there were no vultures in the sky waiting for the carcasses of dead workers, and no insect-flies feeding on the fat and blood of unsuspecting toilers. Only, so they say in song and dance, only the feeble in age and the younglings were exempt from the common labour: these anyway were carriers of wisdom and innocence. Sitting round the family tree in the front yard the aged would sip honey beer and tell the children, with voices taut with prideful authority and nostalgia, about the founding patriarch (*Petals* 120).

Later Karega rejects such "worshiping" of history,

'It is remarkable how you have changed. You used to argue that the past was important for today, things like that.' 'True … but only as a living lesson to the present. I mean we must not preserve our past as a museum: rather, we must study it critically, without illusions, and see what lessons we can draw from it in today's battlefield of the future and the present. But to worship it – no. Maybe I used to do it: but I don't want to continue worshipping in the temples of a past without tarmac roads, without electric cookers, a world dominated by slavery to nature' (*Petals* 323).

Kakembo questions the utility of an English education given to African children. He puts forward the idea that the African should have a form of "education that will fit [him] in [his] own environment" and not "a lot about English Pirates and English Kings, and practically nothing of his local geography and history" –this will make him "a misfit in his own community?" (Kakembo 7).

Above all, *Petals* looks at the present with a consideration of the past. it contains memories of Mau Mau as well as some allusions to the distant African past and to the black diaspora to consider what Ngugi calls "a huge space of time" to show "three

different phases of social formations: a long period of precapitalist, precolonialist relations, then colonialism, and finally neocolonialism (Ngugi 1986 "RW Interview" 10). *Devil* reflects on the present in the light of the future. Indeed, Ngugi sets a scathing satire on neocolonialism and contemporary Kenya (Sicherman 349-50).

While in *A Grain of Wheat* the past is employed to conserve the collective historical memory, in *Petals*, it is used to understand the present (P. Williams 212). Through their fictional productions, Achebe and Ngugi have apparently started the construction of a usable past. This might have a deep impact on the development of African history, literature, and culture (Podis 121).

Ngugi's essays are concerned with his view of colonialism, nationalism, capitalism, and post-independence neocolonial corruption in Kenya. Thus, his essays focus on the present and the future, rather than on the past as described in his early novels. Besides, he rejects the romanticism of the past posited by the Negritude poets,

> The African writer was in danger of becoming too fascinated by the yesterday of his people and forgetting the present. Involved as he was in correcting his disfigured past, he forgot that his society was no longer peasant, with common ownership of means of production, with communal celebration of joy and victory, communal sharing of sorrow and bereavement; his society was no longer organized on egalitarian principles (*Homecoming* 44).

Ngugi criticizes the African writer's excessive fascination with history. The fetishization of history created by the desire to correct the stained past would detach the writer from the problems of the contemporary period (Gikandi, *Ngugi wa Thiong'o* 256). Ngugi observed the failure of politicians to make a radical shift in the paradigms of colonialism. He felt the responsibility of the artist to restore the African character to history (Gikandi, "On Culture and the State" 153).

## 7. Diaspora and Hybrid Identities in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*

Postcolonialism, according to Thieme, refers to a specific set of practices based on the epistemological and rhetorical effects of the historical truth of colonialism rather than a comprehensive term for all kinds of cultural differences (Knortti and Nyman 2). Postcolonial discourse studies tend to be very critical towards issues about identity and the resulting difficulty of identity formation (Duncan in David Theo Goldberg, and Ato Quayson 320). The central questions that make the basics of concern in identity studies are: Who am I? How did I come to be who I am? To whom am I connected? These questions, however, are not exclusive to the postcolonial condition (Duncan in David Theo Goldberg, and Ato Quayson 328).

Diaspora, the large-scale movement of any nation or group of people away from their native country, is a very formative experience of the current century. Hence, the premodern principle of demographic borders is encroaching upon imperial territorial borders. The new African, Asian, and other "diasporas" relate globally in different ways (Spivak in David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson 47). Without forgetting the psychological pains experienced by the diasporic people and of the historical and cultural contexts wherein these accounts of cultures emerge (Knortti and Nyman 3).

Naipaul's writings suggest that the present is deformed, torn, and disconnected on a global scale. In other words, every nation is hybrid and we belong to the diaspora. The adoption of this condition means both recognizing and representing difference. Naipaul's view in *The Enigma of Arrival* echoes those who established the Anglophone Caribbean identity as something neither national nor international. Carrying his history without an 'idea of history,' and then ignoring how imperialism and immigration have turned cities into great cities of the world, Naipaul

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comprehends how he was too immersed in his Eurocentric Education, of the writer as a citizen of the world (Dennis 199-200).

Instability at home led to a sense of instability of the "colonial theme" and desire to own identity. Naipaul redefines himself implicitly by building identity, through recognizing difference and diversity. This politics of difference as a central aspect of postcolonial theories, with the need to constantly reflect on how to define ourselves under our specific and global circumstances, is a trap to allow the dominant position to appear (Dennis 203).

It has been pointed out that hybridity has a rich, controversial history, arising from cultural communication and mixing. It is, also, a changing site where fixed identities are re-examined. The foremost theorist of hybridity, Homi K. Bhabha, describes this space as a "stairwell" which becomes a symbolic interaction process, a connective tissue that builds the difference between the black and the white, the upper and the lower. The hither and thither movement in the cultural stairwell gives identities stability as opposed to primitive polarization (Knortti and Nyman 3).

This interstitial section between fixed identities opens the possibility of a cultural hybrid accepting the difference without a presumed hierarchy. As such, the postcolonial subject occupies a liminal space, a space that unsettles the authorizing claims of Enlightenment thought and disrupts teleological narrative structures and coherent, homogeneous constructions of the self. Homi K. Bhabha calls this liminal space a "stairwell":

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell,

> the temporal movement and passage that it allows, presents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (*The Location* 4).

Moreover, the contemporary world, as many cultural critics have pointed out, is demarcated by diasporic peoples, cultural allocations, and transnational migrations, all of which contribute to the rise of cultural communication and the interflow of local and global relations (Knortti and Nyman 3).

Nevertheless, it can be said that the use of hybridization in literary and cultural texts denotes resistance to colonial discourse. In this regard, Joppi Neiman, in Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, argues that Mowgli's status as connecting the colonizer and colonized's worlds, of humans and animals, but does not belong to either, where the resistance can be fixed (Knortti and Nyman 5).

Homi K. Bhabha and Paul Gilroy have performed a huge role in theoretical discussions of hybridization. One of Bhabha's essential contributions is the "Third Space of enunciation," which is the crucial space between the cultures of colonizer and the colonized; migrants, and other postcolonial subjects undergo a process that reshapes their experience of identity.

Bhabha adds that whilst identity reconstruction may be both empowering and positive, its transgressive character and location in liminal space of borders and boundaries generates a brand new hybrid character, and new sense of identification which could resemble the old ones but is not always quite equal. The latter is described by using the Freudian term of the uncanny, *das theimliche*, and indicates that what engages in the construction of a hybrid identity is a feeling of the relocation of, Bhabha says, my position and the world (Knortti and Nyman 8).

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Moreover, stories of racial liberation and domination involving abolishing slavery as well as colonialism and imperialism with their forms of resistance are among the narratives of hybridity. Both Fanon's *The Wretched of The Earth* and *Black Skins, White Masks* have popularized postcolonial discourse of these narratives of European identity. It is clear that Fanon represents an introduction to postcolonial studies through his great works as *Black Skin, White Masks*, and *The Wretched of the Earth*, whose impact is moving beyond the prison of racial thinking to the liberating space of universal humanity and the decolonized nation (Cooppan 23).

Therefore, Postcolonialism has evolved pivotal questions including the formation of the subaltern identities, the native resistance, also the national cultures' fate and postcolonial independence (Cooppan 23).

## 8. The Discourse of Mimicry in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*

> "Sometimes we can be strangers to ourselves" (Naipaul, *A Way in the World*, 1995, 11).

The twentieth century Third World writers have been preoccupied with the depiction of the dilemma of the Diasporas. The history of imperialism in the late nineteenth century in the Caribbean region turned the natives into indentured workers in the sugar plantations. This had affected the shaping of their identities due to rootlessness, alienation, exile, and oppression. As such, their identities were characterized by mimicry and ambivalence (Dizayi 920).

In postcolonial discourse, the colonized mimic the colonizer because they have grasped the idea that their cultural values are inferior to those of colonizer, through a process called, as Bourdieu may say, the *doxic experience* of colonial citizens because

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of their imposition by the dominant colonial ideology, making the *doxic field* of the latter natural and irreconcilable (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 61).

Bhabha suggests that the effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For him, mimicry emerges as a result of the representation of a distinction, which is itself a system of disavowal. It involves an appropriation, and simultaneously a difference or recalcitrance. It is then a double strategy that poses a risk to normalized knowledges about power (Bhabha 1984, 126). So, even if it is based on colonial power by simulating that particular power, it can only destabilize that power by recognizing that the mimic man is not "completely white" (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 62).

In other words, Bhabha's theories suggest that simulating a colonist is a threat to his colonial structure, because copying the attitudes, behaviours, morals and values of colonial culture contains mockery as well as a certain threat of similarity, thus *ambivalent*. This Anglicization makes the colonial subject familiar, but differs, for Bhabha, from the English subject who represents a process that mocks the authority of the latter (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 60).

It should be noted that the documentaries and the novels of Naipaul on the Third World countries illustrate the rewriting of colonial ideology. In fact, this gave a sense of "self-definition" which helps to make his works popular in both Europe and America, as it has been recommended by the critic Fawzia Mustafa (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 61).

However, Said argues that Naipaul's writings merely mimic the dominant system of colonial discourse that helped preserve the West's hegemony over the rest of the world. Said adds that through his writings, Naipaul, who is a Caribbean-born writer of

Indian origin, strengthens and reinforces Western discourse of power and superiority instead of contesting it as claimed by Bhabha (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 63). In this respect, Ralph Singh describes the people of the Caribbean islanders in an exceedingly denigrating method that is at the same time one amongst identification ('we'):

> We lack order and we even do not remember the fact that we lack power and strength; we are lost… our transitional or makeshift societies do not cushion us. There are no universities or City houses to refresh us and absorb us after the heat of battle. For those who lose, and nearly everyone in the end loses, there is only one course: fight. Flight to the greater disorder, the final emptiness: London and the home counties (*The Mimic Men* 6).

This quote represents a sequence of "Caribbean lack" that can be traced in the works of Lacan and Freud. As such, through cultural and ideological implications the Caribbean lack is articulated. The latter is expressed as a lack of power, language, order, stability, education, and strengthens the power of colonial knowledge (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 63).

Lucidly, Naipaul's writings show how colonial attitude and values would be internalized as a part of the mimicking subject's psyche. This results in a colonial ideological performative act, which offers a little resistance. This idea goes against Bhabha's notion of resistance (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 64).

A performative mimicry refers to the ability to deal with the complexities that govern the host's linguistic and cultural codes. It is not necessarily that the performance aspect of mimicry means adherence to colonial ideologies. It may refer only to the ability to understand different cultures, and thus assimilation.

Besides, mimicry of Naipaul's literary production is serious because the racist assumptions that have informed Western philosophers are encoded in Western literary and cultural production, and now they are assimilated and repeated in non-white Third World writings. This situation is more dangerous than if it is encoded in white racist writings. In other words, these white readers are reassured that they can feel moral superiority because they perform the liberal gesture to read "Black" literature Moreover, it reinforces the sense of cultural inferiority among Third World readers. Mimicry of humanist values, therefore, is dangerous and detrimental to the disappearance of internal racist assumptions (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 66).

In his works, Naipaul depicts the natives as either despairingly primitive or mimic men. Women are depicted as dependent characters living on the periphery. As such, these characters are from dependent societies parodying Western civilization, and seeing it as a crucial element for survival (AbdelRahman 172).

The ability to simulate the linguistic and cultural performance of a particular culture is simply an attempt to absorb it. In addition, living for a while in a different culture is like Alice's irreversible return; it is impossible to return to the original perceptions of the individual. Cultural hybridization of dynamic type often requires learning host language, since languages symbolize perceived cultural realities. Therefore, the new language fluency depends to a great extent on the perceived cultural value of the language being learned, as it may be noticed that the Englishman in New York will not leave his accent while the New Yorker may learn (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 67).

Thus, the works of Naipaul reveal the continued dominance of the values of their former colonies in unconscious ways. Those who have revealed the feelings of cultural inferiority that make Indian characters imitate English culture have made it possible to value and appreciate their way of life (Dimple Godiwala in Knortti and Nyman 69). Ralph's identity is characterized by the mimicry of western values in the various aspects of his life. In many instances in the novel, he identifies himself with Westerners. In the process of mimicking the western world, he abandons his family and his home, which resulted in his eventual alienation. He becomes very weak, hollow, and psychologically disturbed (Dizayi 920).

Singh's school life memories emphasize the idea of power and (dis)order. The textbooks taught the children about the weight of the king's crown, which imply authority and legitimacy (Devi 38). The textbooks also suggest that "the first requisite for happiness was to be born in a famous city" (*The Mimic Men* 127) and that "To be born on an island like Isabella, an obscure New World transplantation, second-hand and barbarous, was to be born to disorder" (*The Mimic Men* 127). The books they read at school lead the children to be mimics of the world, "We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we 'mimic men' of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new" (*The Mimic Men* 157).

Moreover, Naipaul criticizes the fact that the Isabella people are merely consumers of what Europe produces (Devi 38). Singh expresses this idea as he declares, "We, here on our island, handling books printed in this world Europe, and using its goods, had been abandoned and forgotten" (*The Mimic Men* 157). Singh's struggle as a mimic man is clear in his self-baptism. In order to sound like

Deschampsneufs, who had a six-part name, Singh changes his name to become longer. He adds Ralph to his real name Ranjit Kripalsingh. His new name becomes Ralph Ranjit Kripalsingh. He signs it as R.R.K. Singh (Devi 38-9). Consequently, Ralph Singh's internalization of Western cultural values has alienated him from his heritage. He is depicted as scattered and unable to belong to neither space.

Fanon and Said believe that mimicry originates from the maintenance of colonial dominance. Ralph's acceptance of the colonial language is a sign of his identity (de)formation. In *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul employs words from the Hindi language and contrasts them with English. These Hindi words are clear indication of Singh's social, cultural, and linguistic alienation. In such instances, Singh resists the dominance and authenticity of the English language (Dizayi 920-1).

Fanon and Said had theorised about the outcomes of the colonized's acceptance of an alien colonial culture. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha asserts that identity involves the mixing of distinct modes of living (Bhabha 241). He believes that cultural identity is never pure. Singh undergoes psychic trauma after the recognition that it is so hard to achieve the qualities of the Westerners. It is very difficult for him to reach the whiteness of the colonial imperialist (Dizayi 921).

Singh is presented as a character who is subjected to alienation and loss of identity. Throughout the novel, Naipaul portrays how Singh feels a state of cultural unease and psychological trauma. Indeed, Naipaul is obsessed with origin, purity, and essences. Colonial discourse creates in the colonized the desire to mimic the cultural identity of the colonizer. As such, mimicry establishes colonial authority that would encourage the colonized to be dependent (Dizayi 921). Singh is also aware of his hollowness and mimicry as he shows little interest in life,

> "We pretend to be real, to be learning, to be
> preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New
> world, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders
> of the corruption that came so quickly to the news"
> (*The Mimic Men* 157).

The discourse of mimicry is an ambivalent discourse as it partially transforms the colonized into a colonizer. The mimic men never attain sameness, and they will always be considered as different. Despite the fact that Singh's cultural identity blends with the Western form by having a western education and a British wife, he is never considered same. This eventually creates the image of the unhomely. Therefore, in *The Mimic Men*, Naipaul portrays the political, cultural, and linguistic change in the postcolony. Because of his fragmented past, Singh cannot resist his alienation and culture shock. Even his western education and acute consciousness do not enable him to escape mimicry of the value system of the West (Dizayi 922-3).

> There was no one to link my present with my past, no
> one to note my consistencies or inconsistencies. It was
> up to me to choose my character, and I chose the
> character that was easiest and most attractive. I was the
> dandy, the extravagant colonial, indifferent (*The Mimic
> Men* 19).

Singh's life in the metropolitan city of London created a sense of restlessness that he voices throughout the novel. He undergoes the same feeling of psychic trauma of the other immigrants in the house of his landlord Mr. Shylock (Dizayi 923). He describes the house as "a conglomeration of private cells. In the city as nowhere else we are reminded that we are individuals, units" (*The Mimic Men* 17). Singh's discomfort is reduced through contact with Lieni, the Maltese housekeeper. Singh realises that "We become what we see of ourselves in the eyes of others" (*The Mimic Men* 20).

Singh is described a blind mimic of Mr Shylock's actions. His mimicry is very apparent in the following quote,

> I paid Mr. Shylock three guineas a week for a tall, multi-mirrored, book shape room with a coffin-like wardrobe… I thought Mr. Shylock looked distinguished like a lawyer or business person or politicians. He had the habit of strolling the bot of his ear inclining his head to listen. I thought the gesture was attractive; I copy it (*The Mimic Men* 3).

In this way, Singh copies his landlord, Mr Shylock, in all of his traits as well as actions.

In addition to Singh, Hok also belongs to the world of mimicry. Hok rejects his mother because she is a Negro. This act represents the deep racial wounds left in the West Indian Society (Devi 39). The scene of rejection occurs as a group of school boys was passing the road,

> One boy said, 'Sir, Hok went past his mother just now, and he didn't say anything at all to her.' The teacher, revealing unexpected depths, was appalled. 'Is this true, Hok? Your mother, boy?'
>
> She was indeed a surprise, a Negro woman of the people, short and fat, quite unremarkable. She waddled away, indifferent herself to the son she had just brushed past (*The Mimic Men* 103).

Singh is very much influenced by Lieni's compliment calling him a rich colonial. This is a source of self-consciousness and self-awareness for Singh. The latter becomes very attached to what others say about him. He muses about his success at the British Council meetings. He says, "We become what we see of ourselves in the eyes of others" (*The Mimic Men* 20) (Devi 32).

*The Mimic Men* narrates the experiences of displaced expatriates in the postcolonial world. It explores the feelings of discontent, discomfort, alienation, as

well as the constant quest for identity. Singh is described as living in the in-between space of his native values and traditions, his Caribbean values, and his life in London. This has made of him a displaced character with a hybrid identity. The novel represents the dimensions of Singh's three-time exile and his eventual alienation. It also depicts his personality as concealed in his intellectual dishonesty (Dizayi 924).

Singh's life in Isabella affects the shaping of his identity. It is like a prison to him where he attempts escape into the glorious memories of his ancestors. This is what he has done by changing his name and trying to identify himself with his wealthy lineages (Dizayi 924).

Singh's description of his boarding house is an attempt to make meaning of his condition. He experiences a series of flashbacks to his father. The latter is present as a broken memory in Singh's mind. He is described by the different missionaries who have dwelled on Isabella in an idealised manner. One of the missionary ladies in the novel recounts that Singh's father "had the marks of grace … and urging 'jeering crowds' to 'receive the Gospel of grace'" (*The Mimic Men* 94). Since the memory of his father is lost, Singh has to start forming his identity far from his memories (Dizayi 925).

*The Mimic Men* depicts Singh's alienation under colonial dominance. The novel recounts different phases in Singh's life which are mainly affected by mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity. His change of name from Ranjit Singh to a Ralph Singh reveals his identity crisis and loss. His English education has alienated him from his cultural roots represented in his Indian culture and heritage. As such, Singh falls in a state of despair (Dizayi 925).  In order to escape the feelings of loss and disorder,

Singh dreams about his origin as Rajputs and Aryans. He fancies about the stories of

knights, horsemen, and wanderers (Devi 39).

> I lived a secret life in a world of endless plains, tall bare
> mountains, white with snow at their peaks, among
> nomads on horseback, ... And I would dream that all
> over the Central Asian plains the horsemen looked for
> their leader. Then a wise man came to them and said,
> '...the true leader of you lies far away, shipwrecked on
> an island, the like of which you cannot visualise' (*The
> Mimic Men* 105).

Singh shows nostalgia for the good old days on the great cocoa plantations (Brown

225). Ralph Singh recalls his friend's father's fondness of home,

> You know, you are born in a place and you grow up
> there. You get to know the trees and the plants. You
> will never know any other trees and plants like that.
> You grow up watching a guava tree, say. You know
> that browny-green bark peeling like old paint. You try
> to climb that tree. You know that after you climb it a
> few times the bark gets smooth-smooth and so slippery
> you can't get a grip on it. You get that ticklish feeling
> in your foot. Nobody has to teach you what the guava is
> (*The Mimic Men* 185).

This is due to the sense of loss, defeat, and exile (Waters and Fleming 397-8). In *The

Mimic Men*, Singh voices his disgust of his condition. This is expressed in his

statement about feeling a stomach ache,

> In the hotel that night I was awakened by a sensation of
> sickness. As soon as I was in the bathroom I was sick:
> all the undigested food and drink of the previous day.
> My stomach felt strained; I was in some distress (*The
> Mimic Men* 259).

This sense of disgust and sickness is, nonetheless, due to his exile and estrangement

(Roldan-Santiago 156). Therefore, mimicry in Naipaul's work is a source of despair

because it is reminiscent of the disruptions of imperialism and also an acceptance of

it. It is an approval of one's dependent role as a subject from an inferior culture.

Because of his longing for self, Naipaul considers mimicry as a sign of social and cultural rupture. It creates the feeling of a wounded civilization. The concept of postcolonial quest for identity is reflected in his fragmented narrative style (Gorra 380-81).

# CONCLUSION

This research has discussed the rise of the postcolonial discourse theory as a crucial framework for reading and analysing literary works. Indeed, literature is both a communicative and a political activity since there is no text which is merely a monologue, and no writer who writes without an ideology. Postcolonial discourse theory urges readers and critics to submit art to an analysis that brings the powers of history and politics into the surface.

This research has shown that Postcolonialism is in debt to critical tradition. In postcolonial discourse, Foucauldian ideas of the interplay of knowledge and power in literary discourse about the (ex)colonized have to be carefully considered. Besides, the deconstruction of the metaphysical empire, based on Derrida's classification of our knowledge of the world into binary oppositions (of black/white, East/West, man/woman, European/non-European, rational/emotional), remains the aim of the postcolonial reader or critic. Furthermore, Marxist thought which focuses on how material discourses of society, politics, and economy create our place in the world is also a major influence to postcolonial figures namely, Fanon and Ngugi. All of these tendencies are used to analyse and counter colonial discourse and imperial hegemony.

Undoubtedly, postcolonial discourse theory came to lift the veil on the politics and the discourses of marginalization and oppression, and spoil all hierarchies of power. Indeed, it came with a new vision of the world, a rewriting of history, and new boundaries. As such, writers set out to use art, with language as its main weapon, to narrate the story of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and other oppressed places in the world. Famous critics like Fanon, Said, Memmi, Spivak, and Bhabha, as well as

writers like Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul take the responsibility to analyse both in criticism and in fiction writing the plight of the (ex)colonized subject.

Hence, postcolonial criticism is an anatomy of an unceasing process of dehumanization and subjugation. Thus, it is worth noting that the post in the postcolonial does not mean 'post-independence', or 'after colonialism'. It is an ongoing discourse starting from the very first moment of colonial contact and continues in the form of resistance to colonialism and Eurocentrism. Although nations in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean became independent in the 1950s and 1960s, they are still plagued by their colonial experience, and the syndromes of colonialism are still evident in their language, culture, politics, economy, and literature. Thus, we can discern that postcolonialism resists linearity and embraces the continuous conflicting discourses of self and other, East and West, African and European, black and white.

Since history is generally written by the victor, it is the urgent duty of postcolonial writers and critics to revisit the discourse of power written by the colonizer and to restore dignity to the oppressed. It is an urgent task because it involves reclaiming history and existence which is denied to the marginalized (ex)colonized. People without history are people without legitimate existence. Therefore, history has become an agency that Europe used to draw the palimpsest of the wold emphasising its power and superiority.

As such, history, as conceived and written in a Eurocentric tint, is instilled and infused unconsciously in the collective imagination of the colonizer and the colonized through the medium of literature. Hence, both the objectivity of history and narrative are challenged by postcolonial thinking. It is in effect the role of the postcolonial writer and critic to oppose the Hegelian conception of history and the view that the

African, and in equal footing the Asian, and the Caribbean, are outside history, on the margin. History thus should not solely reflect the universal vision of the *white sepulchre* of European "Civilisation".

As a result, history is related to place and displacement. Place does not merely denote landscape. Place and space in postcolonialism are closely linked to the concept of discourse. Place denotes the complex interaction of language, history, and culture. Displacement of minorities, whole groups, and even whole nations because of colonialism and imperialism remains one main concern of postcolonialism. Language is a main element that constitutes place. As such, the soul of a place and of its people is stored in language. The act of displacement is also going to be inscribed in language.

Consequently, place becomes a fuzzy term in postcolonial discourse as it collides with history, language, and people. As V.S. Naipaul describes the Caribbean stating that "There is slavery in the vegetation" (*The Middle Passage* 79), he is in the act of abstracting the notion of place and transcending its physical making, stressing the intricacies of history and its impact on the creation of place.

Discussion of the idea of place and its implication with history leads us to the notions of centre and margin. Journeying into the world, places are divided between the metropolis and the periphery, of course, with the metropolis being Europe, and Europe being the heart of the world. This dichotomy of centre and periphery became the central concern of *The Empire Writes Back*. This seminal book argues that since our conception of history and place are inscribed by writing, discourse, or language, there no escape from these universal power structures.

Ashcroft *et al.* argued that postcolonial writers contest the metaphysical empire set by the West through a process of rewriting works from the English canon. Thus, they are providing a more radical response rather than mere nationalist sentiments. Writers like Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul articulate the imperative necessity to reject the patronizing discursive categories prevalent in the English canon. Despite the fact that each of these writers voiced the postcolonial project of writing back in his own way, they are all implicated in the process of moving the centre and decentring discourse. The appropriation of the (ex)colonizer's language is an evidence of rewriting literature and history.

Furthermore, the present research has unveiled the processes of alterity, difference, and otherness hidden in Western discourse. It highlighted the attempts of African and Caribbean postcolonial writers to challenge this othering tendency of the (ex)colonized subjects by the (ex)colonizers. The process of Otherness is based on the "Manichean allegory" that is based on the belief of opposition between the races. As such, one of the images of othering the colonized is referring to them as ignorant groups, as a collectivity. The colonizer's self, on the other hand, is referred to by its individuality.

Postcolonial discourse also denounces the assumed patronizing parental relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Indeed, colonial subjects, or others, are viewed as "children" and "primitives" who are in need of protection and civilisation. As such, it is through cultural and racial differences that mental and psychological growth is conceived.

It is apparent that Fanon was a pioneer in his examination of the otherness plight of the colonized. His experience with the wretched Algerians during the period of

French colonization of Algeria had enabled him to have an insight into the psychology of the oppressed. Othering the colonized subjects eliminates their sense of self, their existence, and their humanity. They remain wretched and despicable to the point of objecthood. This leads to the act of the internalization of the colonizer's perceptions.

Consequently, otherness is essential to the production of the "black" subject. The image of the "other" under Western eyes lies outside the European self. It is an undesirable source of disintegration. Conversely, the "black" subject sees whiteness as desirable and self-fulfilling. Therefore, blackness confirms the white self, but whiteness empties the black subject.

The colonizer thus brags about his civilisation that is recorded through writing. As such, the written text plays a crucial role in the Othering process, by emphasising the dominant culture. The indigenous culture lingers behind and gets figuratively silenced. It loses its vibrancy and vitality in the discourses of power; and its values are overlooked and denigrated. It is often described as traditional and exotic.

The waves of modernization in addition promoted the cultural values of the colonizer and the dominant culture at the expense of the colonized's indigenous culture. Postcolonial discourse theory came to confirm an idiosyncratic cultural identity of the "other," and to subvert the colonizer's claims that the colonized is without history. It is through oral tradition and folktales that the colonized revives and celebrates his culture and his past.

This research has also proved the relevance and significance of Fanon's work to postcolonial theory. Even though Edward Said is acknowledged as the founder of postcolonialism, Fanon's work remains influential and is considered postcolonial with

hindsight. His psychological and anticolonial works have, long before Said, denounced colonialism and the oppression of the exploited "other". Indeed, Fanon declared that Europe's rise to power is stirred by the wealth and labour of the colonies.

In his portrayal of the wretchedness of the lives of the oppressed Algerians under colonial rule, Fanon emphasises the discrepancy between the life of the colonized and that of the colonizer. He describes the colonial world as a Manichaean world in which the natives are the wretched of the earth, physically and psychologically dehumanized. Hence, Fanon wrote from the viewpoint of a colonial subject in the discourse of decolonization and the urgent call and struggle for independence.

It is important to note that Fanon's works are influenced by psychology, Marxist thought, as well as the Negritude movement. It is in *The Wretched of the Earth* that he diagnoses the psychological alienation of the colonized subjects. It is worth to mention that Fanon himself experiences cultural rootlessness being Martiniquan French psychiatrist who lived in Algeria during the colonial period. Besides, his analysis of terrible psychological life of the colonized is buttressed by the Marxist notions of how the economic and historical forces intensify this life of poverty and hostility. His support of Negritude movement is very apparent as he celebrates blackness and tends to defend the "black" subjects in his works.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon highlights the alienated colonized subjects' desperate quest for identity. He considers colonialism responsible for the violent repression of the colonized subject's self and identity. In *Black Skin*, Fanon explains his concept of the complex of inferiority which is associated with colonized peoples. Through a process of internalization of the colonizer's values and ideology, the

(ex)colonized subjects see themselves in the mirror of the colonized "other". In this way, the (ex)colonized subject engages in a process of identity (de)formation through identification with the white colonizer. One important tool for identification with the (ex)colonizer is that of language. Therefore, Fanon can be considered a pioneer in anticolonial liberation.

It was Said's publication of *Orientalism* that exposed hegemonic power structures embedded in western discourse about the colonizer. He emphasised the interrelationship between knowledge and power, confirming that knowledge is the ideological tool of colonial power and domination. Said thus affirms that the Orient was never a place but rather an "idea". As such, Said also abstracts the notion of place as it encounters history, language, culture, and politics.

In *Orientalism*, Said is concerned with the misrepresentation of non-Western cultures in colonial discourse. He examined French and English canonical texts to show how they work to construct the inferiority of East or the "Orient" and superiority of the West or the "Occident". Said affirms that the study of the Orient is maintained by other disciplines like philology, art, economic and cultural studies, history, anthropology, philosophy, archaeology, and literature.

Said asserts that colonized subjects are perceived as irrational, barbaric, sensual, lazy, uncivilized, and static. The colonizers, conversely, are viewed as rational, educated, hard-working, developing, and civilized. Moreover, cultural and academic institutions are employed to produce such discourse of power and domination heralded by the West. As such, Said's probe into how culture and knowledge can be used to subvert colonial power initiated colonial discourse studies.

Consequently, the goal of this anticolonial project of resistance is to counter Western discourse of power and domination, and to root out its conceptual apparatus. In effect, the aim is the decolonization of representation; the decolonization of the West's theory of the non-West. As such, postcolonialism calls for an urgent systematic rethinking of the structures of power and ideology to restore "agency" to the subaltern subjects denied to them by Eurocentric discourse. Thus, knowledge and power are never total or fixed; they undergo opposition, duality and resistance.

One of the aims of postcolonial discourse is to recover subaltern speech. Gayatri Spivak wrote about the production and retrieval of subaltern speech. The subaltern is described as vulnerable, submissive, and voiceless. Postcolonial discourse theory intends to restore agency to the subaltern by subverting the silencing effect of domination. Because the subaltern cannot be heard, subaltern voice cannot be recovered.

Due to the already established discourse of power, the subaltern cannot get unified with his history. Moreover, the subaltern subject cannot have agency because our understanding of him/her is shaped by colonial texts. Hence, Spivak believes that all discourse is colonial discourse. As such, the role of postcolonial writers such as Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul is to recover subaltern speech in order to be able to challenge the massive impact of colonial power and colonial discourse.

This research has also examined Bhabha's theories of identity (de)formation. His theories of hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence, and the uncanny emphasise the idea that the (ex)colonized fail to form stable and fixed identities. This idea is closely related to the dichotomy created in the Manichean world of the colonizer and the colonized. Bhabha focuses on the instability and fuzziness of colonial discourse. He puts forward

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his concept of the Third Space or the "in-between" space. The latter space is evident in the confluence of cultures, and characterizes the lives of the (ex)colonized as well as the diaspora.

This research has proved that the hybrid individual, text, or cultural expression is concerned with ideas of exile from one's native culture brought about by alienation from language, landscape. It is also related to ideas of displacement experienced by the (ex)colonized.

In his controversial use of the concept of hybridity, Bhabha refers to Fanon's ideas in *Black Skin, White Masks* to prove that liminality and hybridity are necessary aspects of the colonial encounter. Fanon suggests that the colonized subject experiences psychic trauma as he realizes that can never attain whiteness he desires or to rid himself of the blackness he grows to debase. Bhabha believes that this is what creates a state of agony in the colonizer's identity. Unlike Fanon who sees the image of "black skin/white masks" as "a violated authenticity", Bhabha views it as a sign of hybridity and ambivalence not only of the colonial subject but also the dynamics of colonial power as an internalized discourse constructed historicall, politically and culturally.

Bhabha further suggests that hybridity is a sign of resistance to colonial discourses of domination. He insists that neither the colonizer nor the colonized are independent of each other. In the act of mimicking the colonial Other, the (ex)colonized copies the colonizer but never attains sameness. This is very apparent in the example of the diaspora as (ex)colonized people face problems of cultural adjustment and adaptation. This is an evidence of the instability and agony that the (ex)colonized experience.

Bhabha believes that hybridity counters colonialist and nationalist claims to a fixed identity.

It is evident that writings about the history of the (ex)colonized world made cultural recovery an urgent task. Indeed, the misrepresentation of Africa in Western discourse led Achebe to counter the "monologic" form of the English novel and to write his own form of the "dialogic" novel. He was convinced that the colonizer maintains power over the colonized through words and narrative. Achebe's act of emphasizing the Igbo culture as well as his resistance to Western discourse made his work unique and controversial. Through his infusion of the Igbo language traditions into literary English makes his work, he succeeds to create an African viewpoint, and creates a more inclusive narrative consciousness.

The act of dropping his European name, his rejection of Westernization, as well as his writing of his first novel *Things Fall Apart*, can be considered an act of atonement with his Igbo past. Just like *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* reflects the Manichean worlds of the colonizer and the colonized: Winterbottom/Ezeulu (colonial power/traditional power); Nwaka/Ezeulu (political power/sacred power); John Goodcountry/Moses Unachukwu (desacralization/retaining the sacred); Oduche/Nwafo (conversion/fidelity). Thus, *Arrow* dramatizes the impossibility of compromising the colonizer's rule and religion with the native culture and heritage. However, in *Arrow of God*, Achebe's central focus is on the consequences of colonialism and not its process. British administration disrupts the social and traditional life of Umuaro, and weakens Ezeulu's power as the village priest and a symbol of both sacred and traditional power.

As such, Achebe believes that the essential role of the African writer and his moral obligation is to work on correcting the false impressions of Africa in Western narrative. Achebe highly stressed the vital rationality of precolonial African peoples as a way to challenge racist stereotypes. In *Arrow*, it is through the character of Winterbottom that the idea of the white man's burden to civilize the Africans is expressed. To subvert these denigrating stereotypes, Achebe stresses the role of education as a powerful tool of cultural recovery. This is expressed through Oduche's character as an attempt to reclaim African culture and history.

Moreover, in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe advocates a system of nation-building through a new vision of the past. The past, Achebe, believes can be vital in remoulding his troubled community. As such, through *Anthills*, in the 1970s, Achebe moved from criticizing his society to participating in transforming it through tradition. The latter can be a good solution to the corruption, deterioration, division, and alienation of his society. The past is then employed in new and viable forms in the present.

In *Anthills*, Achebe suggests that for Africans to ensure a bright future, they need to make a decisive return to the tradition. Rural Abazon is presented in opposition to the modern capital city, Kangan. Achebe introduced the character of the old wise man of Abazon, through his brilliant oration, to imply the feasibility of learning from the tradition, and using it in new ways by future generations. This is part and parcel of his project of mental decolonization and national consciousness. In *Anthills*, Elewa's baby is a symbol of hope for the future as well as a demonstration of the disappointments of the past.

Thus, the Igbo culture can be viewed as a vital element in the process of decolonization, and as an effective solution to the problems of modernity. Achebe believes that the cultural value system embodied in the traditions of the Igbo culture is a source of recovery and revival to the nation. This is expressed through the different characters in *Anthills*, who act as types of the various values of the Igbo culture. These characters talk about their past, reflect upon their political situation, and aim at building their community through tradition. Their social background, being from the ruling class and the African elite who had a European education, enable them to ponder upon this usable past.

Tradition versus modernity is also highlighted by Achebe as a major theme in *Anthills*. Throughout the novel, there is this opposition between the traditional value system and modernity. The latter is presented as a source of corruption and disintegration for the Africans especially the elite. The character of Beatrice mirrors both systems of tradition and modernity, being a clever Westernized sophisticate and a village priestess. Besides, images of the delegation, the *kolanut*, as well as Elewa's baby naming party, are representative of the tradition and the desire to create a feeling of a unified community based on native roots.

Because of their alienation from the tradition, Achebe's characters in *Anthills* experience a state of spiritual exile and disenchantment. They strive for change and for creating new order to improve the lives of the people of Abazon. In this respect, Ikem, who reveres tradition, is the embodiment of social progressivism; he is a man of the people. He is an advocate of the tradition and the voice of the ancestors.

Besides, in his *Moving the Centre*, Ngugi explained his aim to reclaim the African's right to "name the world". He perceives his writings as new literature, and

his characters as "the Okonkwos of the new literature". He stands against the supposed universality of European culture and literature. He believes that the (ex)colonized have to rise against the metaphysical empire and to subvert the Eurocentrism is Western discourse of power. As such, Afrocentrism questions the discourse of imperialism and decolonization. This is what led Ngugi to renounce English and start writing in Gikuyu, his mother tongue.

Just like Achebe, he aimed at recovering the African history. Because he saw that Achebe could not put forward concrete solutions to the problems of African nations' political economy, he dissociated himself from his ideas, and started his project of decolonization by questioning Western historiography, and launching a scathing criticism on political corruption and neocolonialism. In *Devil on the Cross*, he sets to criticise corruption in the postcolonial state and to target mainly the national bourgeoisie or the ruling class.

It is *Petals of Blood* that Ngugi expressed his ideological shift. In *Decolonising the Mind*, he distanced himself from Achebe and classified him with those writers who use European languages and claim to be recovering African identity. This is due to his view of the essential role of language in shaping human life and empowering human consciousness.

In 1979, Ngugi rejected the view that national consciousness was embedded in ideology, or in the literary practice, or even in the role of literature in education. In *Decolonising the Mind*, he asserted that African literature can only be written in African languages. As such, Ngugi believes that the choice of language is crucial to people's definition of themselves in relation to the whole world. Besides, for him,

language hegemony is a destructive means of imperialism and a very important vehicle of colonial power.

In addition, Ngugi aimed to restore the Kenyan workers' and peasants' voice. He believes that they are marginalised in the narrative history of the country. He wanted to recover the history and identity of the colonized and exploited peasants and workers. He believes that history is to be written from below by narrating the stories and the struggles of the workers and the peasants. He asserts that decolonization should focus on the colonized's opposition to colonial and neocolonial domination.

One of the aims of Ngugi's decolonization project is to relate literary studies to an African epistemology based on Kenya's and East African traditional verbal arts and culture. Thus, so as to limit the devastating denigration of African literatures in colonial discourse, the literary texts in the curriculum had to be selected carefully. His essays in *Writers in Politics* and *Barrel of a Pen* focused on interrogating the place of the dominant English literary culture in Kenya. *Homecoming* emphasises national culture and discards liberal culture since the latter supports bourgeois individualism over collective consciousness. Just like Achebe, Ngugi perceives culture as very important because of its relation to history.

Because of his ideas about national culture, his peasant theatre, as well as his criticism of Kenyan capitalists in *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi gets arrested, imprisoned, and later forced to exile. He was accused of engaging in politics under the guise of culture. While in prison, he published his first novel in Gikuyu under the title *Caitaani mũtharaba-Inĩ* (*Devil on the Cross*).

Ngugi's rejection of English as a medium of literary expression is an endeavour to revalue the place of national culture in postcolonial Kenya. It is also a challenge to the

Kenyan state in her practice of fetishizing national culture. The latter was employed by the government as ceremonials of power to strengthen their political authority. Ngugi's epistemological break with English and Englishness reflects his quest for form or style to write his counter discourse novels after he gets dismayed by the tradition of the realist novel form.

Ngugi argues that Africans are alienated from their language and culture due to colonialism. Nationalist literature, in its endeavour of decolonization and voicing African identity, employed European languages which carry the aspects of European culture and ideology. As such, Ngugi's objective is to enter into the soul of the nation and its realities in its local languages.

In *Devil on the Cross*, Gatuiria ponders over the historical progress of his people from pre-colonial through colonial into a dim future. He echoes Ngugi's strive to decolonize African literature from the linguistic hegemony of European languages. Ngugi wrote *Devil* on toilet paper so as to challenge the planned custody of his mind. Consequently, Ngugi's choice of language and audience had allowed him to present the workers and the peasants as actors in their own history. Ngugi's conceptualization of the place of language in literature cannot be detached from his politics.

It is worth to mention that Ngugi's depiction of the peasants and the workers in his fiction is because of influence by Marxist thought. In his second-phase novels, he attempts to depict the social and cultural forces of his (post)colonial experience. He focuses on criticizing the exploitation of the peasant masses and urban workers by the ruling class. This is due to his formative years at Leeds which fashioned his ideological framework by reading the Marxist and postcolonial works of Fanon. That is why there is a marked resonance between Ngugi's works and Fanon's. Ngugi's

preoccupation with the entering into the soul of the people and the nation led him to question the place of English in his narrative. His criticism of the national bourgeoisie and its corrupt neocolonial practices, as well as his view of the native poet as the keeper of national culture also have roots in Fanon's work.

One major influence for Ngugi is Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Reading *The Wretched*, Ngugi got an insight into the politics of socialism and developed a language for representing colonialism and decolonization. Indeed, Fanon's work represents a farsighted study of the shift from colonialism to neocolonialism in Africa. Ngugi focused on the supremacy of national culture as well as the disenchantment with independence and the national elite. Fanon's ideas in the "Pitfalls of National Consciousness" enabled Ngugi to discover the feasibility of Fanon's idea of postcolonial betrayal to various African nations. This is what helped him analyse the failure of decolonization in Africa and launch an attack on the ruling elite and the middle class. The latter became worse than the colonizers in the exploitation of the local people.

Ngugi's criticism of the African petty-bourgeoisie is articulated in his novel *Devil on the Cross*. In *Devil*, black bourgeoisie are characterised by their blind imitation of Western values. The character of Kihaahu symbolizes the alienated black who pursues whiteness in every way possible. He changes his name as an act of imitating Western values. He also started his nursery school project that is satirically depicted as the epitome of the desire for whiteness.

For Ngugi, in order to raise awareness and national consciousness in anticolonial struggles, education can be a crucial weapon. The latter played a major role in anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggle. As such, in Ngugi's novels, we witness the

rise of the educated as an activist. In *Petals*, Karega, nevertheless, is suspicious about the usefulness of formal education in the nation's struggle for liberation. He chooses to be a trade union activist rather than a teacher.

In *Devil*, Gatuiria ponders about the serious effects of Western education on the colonized. Muturi is both a student and a worker. Ngugi's activism is manifest in his use of popular forms in his narrative such as the meeting of thieves and robbers. His activism is also apparent in his rejection of English and embracing of Gikuyu in writing his play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I Want*) in 1977, and *Caitaani Mutharabaini* (*Devil on the Cross*) in 1982.

In *Petals*, Munira falls in a state of disillusionment with independence. His character represents an indictment of decolonization. He is depicted as a captive of his colonial past as well as postcolonial betrayal. Thus, Munira symbolizes the crisis of national consciousness, and to portray the failure of the postcolonial state. Just like Munira, both Karega and Wanja witness the failure of the postcolony. Unlike Munira, they attempt to overcome this failure. Therefore, in creating subjects incapable of fulfilment, Ngugi implies the failure and the collapse of the process of decolonization.

Moreover, as far as language and style, the Trinidadian writer V.S. Naipaul has affinities with the Joseph Conrad. Their use of a first-person unreliable narrator creates a relativistic atmosphere about the "the world's half-made societies". Naipaul considers Conrad his literary forerunner and a source of inspiration. He is very familiar with the subjects in Conrad's narrative; this is what led him to be critical about the modern world's social and psychological disorder. Naipaul admires Conrad's examination of moral questions such as the concepts of action, success, and

decision making. As such, they both write about the (ex)colonized subjects in an elusive modernist narrative style.

Both Conrad and Naipaul use a foreign language to comment on the material and moral meaning of the world. Naipaul's novel *A Bend in the River* echoes Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* portraying Salim as a merchant in post-colonial mid-20th century Africa. *In A Free State* is also a clear intertext to Conrad's book. In "The Return of Eva Peron", Naipaul presents the effects of colonialism in Argentina, Trinidad, and the Congo. Nonetheless, *The Mimic Men* remains Naipaul's work where Conrad's influence is very apparent. *The Mimic Men* resonates with Conrad's Nostromo in its use of the fictional island, Isabella. Besides, the use of fragmentation and unchronological narrative are also evident in the narratives of both writers.

Because Naipaul bears a strong likeness to Conrad, critics seem to disagree upon the view that Naipaul is an alternative ego for Conrad. In *The Mimic Men*, Singh shares his point of view of the world's "half-made" societies that Naipaul writes about in his fiction. Besides, the use of allusions, a fragmentary and unchronological narrative structure, as well as the unreliable narrator, render the narrative allusive and oblique in dramatizing the socio-historical, socio-political, as well as psychological effects of displacement.

Naipaul is also aware about the relevance of history and the past to the postcolonial experience. In *The Mimic Men*, he presents Singh as conscious about his Indian origin and simultaneously as a victim of the collapse of his native culture. He does not feel to belong to the Caribbean. He also sees himself as an intruder in the politics of his country, Isabella. He feels excluded and a castaway. This is clear in the shipwreck metaphor which Naipaul employs throughout the narrative which

represents the abandonment he experiences as well as the emptiness in his life. The shipwreck metaphor also symbolizes Singh's wretchedness and loss. His destiny is located far from his Indian roots between the Caribbean and Europe.

Singh's fascination with America and Columbus indicates his view about the cruelty and the violence ensuing from the European colonization. His fascination with trees symbolizes his quest for wholeness and identity. The tree imagery is associated with the shipwreck metaphor as Singh relates himself to the trunks of great trees as he stands on a deserted beach. Singh wonders about the origin of the tree, which reflects his insecurity owing to his lack of racial purity and identity (de)formation. This leads him to fantasize about his Aryan past. This is very revelatory about Singh's displacement.

In *The Mimic Men*, Singh also feels a state of disillusionment with life in London. He is presented with India as his home and his lost history. Just like Naipaul, Singh experiences a state of constant homelessness and exile. It is through writing that Singh quests order for his life. He also ponders upon the distressing experiences of the colonial and postcolonial world. As such, order is a main theme in the novel. It is described as absent in colonial societies due to the lack of cultural, racial, and historical homogeneity. This is what leads to a state of abandonment and alienation.

Constant allusions to T.S. Eliot reflect Singh's personal and cultural alienation. These allusions also represent Naipaul's literary mimicry. He is educated in England and he also writes in English. He is massively influenced by the European tradition. He is cynical about the independence of postcolonial nations. He stresses the idea that (ex)colonized people are incapable of ruling themselves, and are in fact educated by

the colonizer. This idea is closely related to the idea of neocolonialism in which the local ruling elite become the major source of postcolonial disenchantment.

Postcolonial readings of Naipaul's work revolve around the divide between centre (England, imperialist, Western civilization) and margins (colonies, Third World, black). His works deal with the exploitation of subaltern subjects, the denigration of their history, and the (de)formation of their identity. This vision also governs the fiction of Achebe and Ngugi.

In *The Mimic Men*, Mimicry is read in different ways by different critics. Bhabha, for instance, views mimicry as an act of challenging, destabilizing, and undermining the colonizer. This is because the mimic man remains different despite the likeness; he is never same. The mimicking subject haunts the colonizer and emphasises difference. As such, the novel is a great study of the other. On the other hand, Dennis Porter argues that Naipaul's writings are in affinity with the discourse of power. Glyne Griffith asserts that Naipaul's writings side the colonizer, and that the West Indian selfhood and presence in the West Indian novel are limited. The (ex)colonized are mere subjects to others' histories.

Moreover, the writers of *The Empire Writes Back* seem to be suspicious about Naipaul's tendency to side with oppressed in their quest for reclaiming national cultures after political decolonization. Ashcroft *et al.* believe that Naipaul is drawn into the centre despite the fact that he seems to be creating the periphery. They even criticise Naipaul for betraying the West Indies and starting a career of writing in England.

Furthermore, Said criticised Naipaul for not being on the side of nationalist movements and national decolonization. He believes that Naipaul is good at telling

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the story of the (ex)colonized, but he fails to explain why the exploited subjects are doomed to live in oppression. He subsequently concludes that Naipaul writes according to the horizon of expectations of Western readers. Hence, just like Conrad, Naipaul is read and interpreted in many ways.

This research has analysed the use of aesthetics as a means to counter Eurocentric discourse. All of Achebe, Ngugi, and Naipaul, employ aesthetic devices to voice their projects of resisting Eurocentric discourse. They use language as a weapon to counter the discourse of empire.

Achebe started his project of appropriating the English language to write his works. He viewed highly the hybridity of African writers who used English to tell the story of Africa. He argues that contesting colonial discourse has nothing to do with the choice of language. He believes that writers using native tongues are not necessarily anticolonial or revolutionary. They too can be "contaminated" by Western forms and ideas.

This research has also discussed Achebe's differentiation between "national" and "ethnic" literature. He believed that a national literature concerns the whole nation and is written in the national language. Conversely, ethnic literature is accessible to one ethnic group within the nation. Considering the case of Nigeria, national literature is written in English and ethnic literature is written in Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, etc. Ngugi, however, looks at the nation in tribal terms. For him, Kenya is not a nation, but rather a country of different nations. As such, Kenya's literature can be termed national unless it is written in native tongues without English mediation. He believes that literature is the soul of the nation; and thus it should be written in African languages.

Due to the diversity of experience, language, culture, religion, and style, it is preferable to use the term "African literatures" to refer to variety of literary expression in Africa, a cultural "bazaar". To reflect the African experience, Achebe starts his aesthetic project with the aim of creating a new language suitable to the African setting. This gives cultural substance to its narrative content and supports the writers' endeavour of cultural reclamation.

As a result, Achebe aimed at Africanizing the English language through the use of orature to expresses the Igbo verbal style. Therefore, the appropriation of the English language aims at expressing communal views and unveiling the colonial impact on Igbo identity. This is what led Bernth Lindfors to describe Achebe's wor(l)d as "a grammar of values" (Lindfors, 1968, 77).

Hence, one important element in the postcolonial project of Achebe and Ngugi is that of the novel form. Achebe fused the forms of the oral tradition with the European forms of the novel. Similar to Ngugi, Achebe introduced a new epistemology despite the fact that it is moulded in a Western discursive mode, the novel. As such, both Achebe and Ngugi focused on indigenizing the form and the language of the African novel. They aimed at Africanising the realist novel through African oral tradition to counter Western colonial discourses about Africa and the Caribbean in Eurocentric discourse. Achebe employs realism to imagine African cultures. This new shaping of the realist novel might be called "the new realism" in the African novel. It is through reference to Igbo settings and history that Achebe increases the level of realism in his novels, and succeeds to create his theme and world view.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, the fusion between realism and the oral tradition is mythically and symbolically presented in the image of drought as the clash between

the earth and the sky. The commuter bus, by which the characters go on a journey, represents the grouping together of the characters, and the portrayal of their ordinary life as different from the ruling elite. Ngugi, on the other hand, uses the matatutaxi to depict collective life in Kenya.

Achebe transcends the form of the European realist novel which is characterised by social texture, three-dimensional and well-rounded characters, and social relationships with psychological depth. He transforms it into a more communal form employing elements of epic, romance, and tragedy. Achebe's depiction of rituals like the masking ceremonies, the Yam planting, the kola nut breaking, and the seasons' naming and harvesting create both a cultural and communal effect in the novel. Therefore, through his fusion between orality and literacy, as well as his focus on the communal rather than the individual, Achebe transforms the realist novel into a culturally hybrid form to restore Africa to the discourse of history. In Achebe's novels, the form and content artistically capture the key moments of African history in pre-colonial times, colonialism, to postcoloniality.

The search for authenticity in Achebe's works is apparent in his use of proverbs, "the palm oil with which words are eaten". Indeed, proverbs are of a paramount importance to African discourse as they represent a compacted experience and a minimalism of thought. To indigenize the African novel, Achebe made use of proverbs. *Arrow of God* contains more than one hundred proverbs. In *Arrow of God*, Achebe sought to portray colonization and decolonization from the inside. He aimed at representing the Igbo identity as complex as any other identity of a changing society.

Authenticity in African literature is determined by the use of the oral tradition, and sometimes by its use of native languages. Achebe warned against dictating norms and criteria for African literature in the name of authenticity. Ngugi argued for the use of native languages as well as orature. Achebe also employs Igbo words in context to enable the non-Igbo reader to find meaning through making inferences.

This research has also demonstrated that the oral tradition is a practice of the past and the present as manifested in Achebe's and Ngugi's works respectively. Achebe employs orality in his first novels to represent the complexity of the Igbo culture before colonialism. Conversely, Ngugi approached orality in *Devil on the Cross* as an element of Kenyan culture in the present.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe employs stories of the past as memory and historical testimony for the future. The Old Man of Abazon is the epitome of the use of orality in the novel. He is very skilled at storytelling and the use of proverbs. He considers storytelling as the store of the community's history.

In *Arrow of God*, the fusion between literacy and orality is manifested Ezeulu's act of sending Oduche to learn the literacy of the white man. The act of sending Oduche to a mission school reflects Ezeulu's desire to cope with the changing circumstances in his community. This is expressed through the metaphor of the dancing mask to imply the bewildering and conflicting times that the Igbo society undergoes between tradition and colonial modernity. As such, Ezeulu desires communal balance between the local and the foreign, the old and the new, the traditional and the modern because "a man must dance the dance prevalent in his time" (*Arrow* 189). As such, the colonized have to adapt to change.

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In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe depicts characters from all walks of the Kangan community. The Kangan women, the underprivileged, and the ancestors, all have a voice in the novel. Achebe also employed the narrative technique of multiple narrators to give voice to the voiceless subaltern individuals.

Just like Achebe, Ngugi asserted that his Gikuyu-language novels rely a lot on African orature in their structure, theme, and style. He uses folktales, proverbs, myths and legends, dance, song, to comment on society. Ngugi used oral tradition to create communal transformation, to enhance change, and to voice an ideology. In his later novels, Ngugi used orature with an intention to address a different type of audience, namely the workers and the peasants.

The oral forms in Ngugi's narrative destabilize the discourse of power and Eurocentrism, and emphasize African identity and creativity. Because of his reliance on orature as well as some Western fictional forms like biblical allusions, Ngugi's works can be best described as hybrid texts. Indeed, he associated oral and popular forms with the written word.

It is in *Petals* that Ngugi started experimenting on the novel form, employing Gikuyu phrases and nouns instead of English counterparts. This technique is also used by Achebe. It sets the text in Africa and shapes the Kenyan experience with neocolonialism. In *Devil*, Ngugi employed Kenyan oral forms, Mau Mau and other nationalistic songs, as evident forms of the African orature. He also used biblical songs and Christian symbols and concepts. The use of these symbols aims at criticizing imperialism and neocolonialism.

This research has also shown that Ngugi paid a specific attention to depicting communal life in his novels. He employs scenes of community gatherings and

celebrations. *Devil on the Cross* was read by workers and peasants in buses, bars, and other public places.

In *Devil*, Ngugi also used the device of the Gicaandi player, a traditional storyteller, as a narrator to reflect a Gikuyu worldview. The Gicaandi player has a wide knowledge of proverbs. These proverbs aim at addressing a Gikuyu audience. Hence, orature is used by Ngugi as a political instrument to advocate African socialism and confront neocolonial corruption.

Therefore, the main distinguishing feature between African art from European art is its instrumentality. African art aspires to the social and religious needs of the community. It is read as national allegories, and act as instruments of knowledge and social change. Aesthetics in Ngugi's writings act as ideological perceptions. For example, his use of the image of the land in his novels reflects social, cultural, historical, political, and ideological view.

Consequently, Ngugi believed that the realist novel can be appropriated by the African peasantry and the working class to boost political liberation. In *Devil*, Ngugi enacted his break with the European conventional novel both in content and form. More than any other African writer, Ngugi sought to distance himself from the bourgeois novel genre. He employed orature and the art of the Gicandi player to achieve relevance to the audience of the peasants and workers.

Furthermore, Ngugi relies a lot on allegory. It is by definition closely related to history. It aims at constructing a narrative that uses the past and history to create a commentary on the present. Echoing Plato's allegory of the cave in his book *The Republic*, Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* can also be read as an allegory because of its symbolic representation of the social, political, and economic disorder in the

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postcolony. Indeed, the novel is symbolic and allegorical of the plight of the whole nation and its art.

In moulding of allegorical narrative, Ngugi depicted characters as symbols of social classes. They are in conflict with social classes or social forces. The use of the grotesque image of the body and names denote the values of a social group or class. As such, Ngugi's allegory is employed as anti-imperialist counter-discourse to contest colonialist discourse.

Ngugi also used grotesque images to satirize the colonists. The grotesque image of bodily deformity is employed to criticize the mimicry of Western values by the African bourgeoisie. Moreover, Ngugi makes use of fantastic narrative in *Devil on the Cross*. The trope of "devil" and "ogre" is deployed to ridicule the political elite in Kenya. They are depicted as agents of the devil. The trope of the Devil can also be read as a satire of neo-colonial capitalism.

In addition to the use of characters as symbols of class, bodily deformity, and grotesque images, Ngugi employed the traditional oral narrative strategy of the journey or the quest. The device of the journey represents social transformation of the characters. It also highlights the changes in the community's history. The device of the journey also represents the characters' moral responsibility. In this way, it is through his transformation of form and style that Ngugi could create a narrative with an Afrocentric view.

Naipaul's narrative discourse in *The Mimic Men* also centres on the discourse of power. The novel narrates Singh's life in Isabella and his experiences in exile in London. Living in a depressing hotel room in the outskirts of London, he engages in writing his impressions of his life as an (ex)colonized subject. Naipaul juxtaposes

frequent images of the centre and the periphery throughout the novel. Images of order and disorder, reality and unreality, authenticity and inauthenticity, power and powerlessness recur in Singh's narrative. Naipaul thus depicts Singh and the Third World as dependent on the centre.

Singh's disenchantment with independence and the Third World is reflected in the image of the shipwrecked man that is repeated throughout the novel. He believes that there is no escape from the disorder caused by colonial displacement. Due to his feeling of loss, Singh starts to dream about his Aryan past. Still, he is unable to escape the darkness and the postcolonial wreck. Nonetheless, writing his memoir, Singh finds in writing an escape from the physical and psychological disorder he experiences. What characterizes Naipaul's characters is the state of doubt they experience. Whereas Achebe's and Ngugi's characters are revolutionary, Naipaul's characters, such as Singh in *The Mimic Men*, tend to be hesitant and sceptical. They do not exhibit nationalist fervent.

The state of restlessness and disorder caused by empire in *The Mimic Men* is presented in different ways. Naipaul thus employed a non-linear structure of writing the memoir and environmental imagery to create a sense of ambivalence towards postcolonial condition. Non-linearity and environmental imagery negotiate "the history in the vegetation" (*The Mimic Men* 146) and generate a historical trauma where the impact of transatlantic slavery and racial identity disturb the Caribbean's postcolonial present. As such, non-linearity and environmental imagery mirrors the "absurd disorder, of placelessness" (*The Mimic Men* 166) that typifies Isabella and its inhabitants.

One main environmental image that Naipaul uses is the image of the stump of the tree that has to be cut to start the building of Singh's housing project. This cynical project of modernizing Isabella is disrupted by the tree. He later came to remove the tree and keep a piece of it as "a reminder of violation" (*The Mimic Men* 63). The stump of the tree is a reminder of Isabella's history and origin. As such, the tree stands in resistance to Singh's project of modernization. This idea is relevant to Fanon's criticism of the national bourgeoisie in the newly independent colonies. Besides, the tree represents the difficult task of overcoming the traumatic experiences and history of massacre and slavery in the Caribbean. The "monstrous wound" (*The Mimic Men* 63) of colonialism cannot be cured.

This research has also demonstrated the impact of culture and Englishness on (ex)colonized subjects identity. Like *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* dramatizes the tragedy of a community. This tragedy is caused by the disruption of Igbo culture by the coming of the white man. The intervention of the colonizer in the Igbo affairs leads to the disintegration of the Igbo community. The will of the British colonizer to mould a different identity of the Igbo people is echoed in Nwaka's trope about the coming of the white men who "turned us upside down" (*Arrow* 16).

The destruction of the cohesive patterns of traditional Igbo society and the remoulding of the Igbo identity are epitomised through the characters of the District Officer, Captain Winterbottom, and Captain Clarke. These British characters tend to misleadingly and hypocritically stereotype the Africans. Their aim is to emphasize the false image that the European as an apostle of civilisation and that Africa is a place of darkness. As such, Achebe's novels are a direct response to these stereotypes and an attempt to repair the foundations of the past.

Besides, it is to be stressed that Achebe's discourse of nation and nationalism is based on the idea of finding security in precolonial roots. Nation building should never be separated from a careful consideration of ethnic identity. The debate on the language of African literature aroused by Achebe and Ngugi revealed the problematic nature of nation building. This is clear in the political displacement of the Igbo community in *Arrow of God* from a precolonial identity to a postcolonial national identity.

This research has demonstrated that Achebe tends to be cautious about the Western model of the nation. He emphasized the ethnic model of the nation which is based on native culture and communal life (tradition and religion), rather than the Western model, which emphasises the territorial, political, and ideological considerations.

The political attempt to unite diverse communities under British rule represents a disruption of the native ethnic system of the Igbo society and aim at replacing it with a Western one. The outcome of this political displacement is identity (de)formation and community disintegration. The collapse of the villages in *Arrow of God* represents the failure of the project of nationalism. Hence, through Achebe's novels, we see how religion and tradition are indispensable to the unity of the villages. For the unity of the tribes, Achebe calls for an ethnic reclamation.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Pidgin is employed as a significant marker of identity. Nigerian Pidgin is linguistically formed from different sources like African languages and English. The aim of using pidgin is to enable interethnic communication. Achebe's recurrent use of pidgin also shows that his narrative represents a challenge to the discursive and formal assumptions rooted in European discourse about Africa.

Characters with no Western-styled education use pidgin for they are not fluent in Standard English. In this case, pidgin is a marker of class identity. Pidgin is also used to designate gender identity. Therefore, pidgin is very revelatory about the character's linguistic identity. Achebe's shift of registers in *Anthills* reveals the fragmentation of identity in the Nigerian society.

*Anthills* also represents disenchantment with nationalism due to the ensuing state of political and economic corruption after independence. This research has shown that nationalism cannot be an alternative to imperialism because of the gender, racial, religious and cultural diversity of the people within the nation. These internal differences cause challenges to national unity. Thus, the discourse of nation and nationalism is fundamentally a Western idea.

Fanon has asserted that anticolonial nationalism may lead to the replacement of a Western colonial ruling class with a Western-educated native ruling class whose aim is to disempower the people. *Anthills* dramatizes the disenchantment with anticolonial nationalism and revolutionary ideals. As such, the preoccupation of African writers is the clash of cultures and post-independence disillusionment.

Just like Ngugi, Achebe's portrayal of the ruling Western-educated elite implies that the latter do not share nationalist ideals with the masses. This distance between the elite and the masses is presented through the use of English as national language, despite the fact that it is spoken by the minority. They tend to use pidgin to determine aspects of gender and class. As such, *Anthills* does not cater for a representation of the voice of the nation as a whole, which symbolizes the failure of nationalism. As a result, the novel is an indirect criticism to the Western-educated ruling elite, and

suggests a new way of nation-building. All the people should be involved in nation-building.

Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* also manifests disillusionment with independence and nationalism. It is considered to be a transitional text in Ngugi's oeuvre using the language of struggle. It is in *Petals* that Ngugi started distancing himself from the portrayal of vulnerable characters who are separated from their communities such as characters in *The River Between*. In *Petals*, Ngugi dramatizes the life of world historical individuals, like peasants and workers, fighting for the nation against foreign domination. Ngugi also shifted his theme from anticolonial struggle into neocolonial betrayal. This transformation is the result of his essential view that the role of artist is not merely to explain the world, but to change it.

In *Petals*, Ngugi describes how Ilmorog is changed by the forces of modernity. The destruction of Mwathi's place represents the damage of the old community by industrial capitalism. As such, *Petals* is an effective criticism of the culture of postcoloniality. It criticizes how the national elite fetishizes culture and use it as a means of exerting power and authority on the masses. Their ultimate goal is get wealth and to stay in power.

Ngugi is an advocate of the integration of traditional African culture in the discourse of nation. He believes that political and economic liberation should be accompanied by cultural liberation. Hence, in his later phase, Ngugi employs the element of culture to dramatize the pressing political and economic condition of the nation.

Indeed, Ngugi did not tend to depict a stable Gikuyu identity as it is impossible to render African identity outside the colonial encounter. It is through the dialectic of the

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colonial encounter that Gikuyu identity was reinvented. Colonial rule had affected Gikuyu identity considerably. It is ironical that nationalist supporters of the Gikuyu culture were themselves the most colonized because of Western education and Christian conversion. Ngugi's imprisonment and later exile was due to his writings about national consciousness and postcolonial betrayal.

Besides, Ngugi believed that the African writer should not present his art as a mere dramatization of a mythical past. He suggested that writing about the past should entail a negotiation of the present. Ngugi revisits the past with the aim of self-knowledge and identity. Hence, he deals with the past in a new vision, a vision of the future. Just like Achebe, Ngugi tried to visualize a radically new African society through a usable African past. *Petals* depicts characters who spend so much time socializing and discussing their past in relation to their present.

*Petals* urges for a cultural regeneration that stems from the people's usable past. In the novel, Ngugi establishes a communal voice with a scepticism and ambivalence towards modernity. Ngugi presents the attractions of modernization and scorns its connection with corruption. The traditional story of Ndemi in *Petals* unites the people and inspires their struggle for their land. The Theng'eta ceremonies are also employed to highlight communal life in Kenya and to show the lasting impact and usefulness of the past. As a result, unlike *A Grain of Wheat*, where the past is used to conserve Kenyan history, *Petals* presents the past as a means to understand the present.

In addition, through his writings, Naipaul depicts the deformity of the present due to the enduring impact of colonialism and imperialism. His fiction stresses the idea that this world is characterized by hybridity and diaspora. Thus, difference and hybridity are the major characteristics of the postcolonial world. The theory of

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hybridity came to re-examine the idea of fixed identities. The "Third Space of enunciation" is described by Bhabha as a "stairwell" that symbolizes the process of interaction between the native and the foreign, the black and the white. The movement in the cultural stairwell creates a balance at the level of identity as opposed to the traditional divide. It is worth mentioning that Fanon's *The Wretched of The Earth* and *Black Skins, White Masks* have prompted the study identity (de)formation.

Hence, the mimicry evident in the behaviour of the (ex)colonized subjects stems from the internalization of the idea that their cultural values are inferior to those of (ex)colonizer. Bhabha explained that mimicry has a deep effect on dominant discourses. As shown before, Bhabha believes that mimicry arises from noticing a difference, which is itself a system of resistance to colonial discourse. *The Mimic Men* recounts the feelings of discontent, discomfort, and alienation of displaced expatriates in the postcolonial world. Singh lives in the in-between space of his native heritage, his Caribbean values, and his life in the Metropolitan city of London. This research has demonstrated that Singh's identity is affected by his three-time exile.

Said, on the other hand, believed that Naipaul's fiction merely mimic the dominant colonial discourse that facilitated the preservation of Western hegemony over (ex)colonized others. In Mimic Men, Naipaul's narrator, Singh describes the Caribbean inhabitants in a denigrating way. The emphasis on the state of disorder as evident of Caribbean island reflects the idea of the "Caribbean lack" that the (ex)colonizer seeks to internalize in the mind of the (ex)colonized as part of their psyche. This lack is usually expressed as a lack of power, language, order, stability, education, etc.

Indeed, Naipaul's portrayal of the native subjects is humiliating as he describes them as miserably primitive or mimic men. Women are marginalized and dependent. These wretched subjects are rendered as mimicking Western civilisation viewing it as sanctuary. Singh views highly Western civilisation, and thinks that the Isabella people are merely consumers of what Europe produces. He believes that the textbooks taught the children to be mimics of the world. Singh also stretches his name as an act of imitating Deschampsneufs who has a six-part name. His acceptance of the colonial language is an indication of his identity (de)formation. Because of the impossibility to achieve whiteness, Singh experiences psychic trauma. He gets the feeling of alienation and loss in his room in London. The feeling of unease is due to his quest for origin, purity, and essences.

To conclude, initiating a discourse of resistance, these writers have examined the problem of culture and the politics of language in African and Caribbean literature through their works. The research has analysed the ensuing identity crisis because of colonialism and imperialism. It thus focused on the ideas of mimicry, displacement, and disintegration in the selected novels. Despite their different views about the complex notions of culture, language, history, and identity, these writers have set out to dismantle the Manichean structures of power between the colonizer and the colonized and to offer ways of contesting colonial discourse and constructions of otherness and stereotyping.

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# ملخص

تَهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في قضايا الهُوية، و في كتابات رجع الصدى لذلك الخطاب الذي بات تحكمه المَرْكزيّةُ الأوروبيّة، على هديٍ من مُدوّنة تنتقي خمسة أعمال روائيّة، لكُتاب من أفريقيا والكاريبي؛ "سهم الربّ (1964)" و"تلال النمل في السافانا" (1987) لِ تشينوا أتشيبي، وَ" بتلات الدم (1977)" و"شيطان على الصليب (1980)" لِ نجوجي واثيونجو" و"المقلدون (1967)" " لِ فيديادر سوراجبراساد نيبول. ذلك أنّه في الحين الذي يضفي الخطاب الكولونياليّ صفة التفوق والامتياز لقيم المُسْتَعْمِرِ ومعتقداته وعاداته على حساب قيم المُسْتَعْمَرِ ومعتقداته وعاداته، فإنّ كُتّابا مثل أتشيبي ونجوجي يشدّدون على أهميّة التأسيس لـ"تأريخٍ مختلفٍ بما يقدّم أنموذجا تنافسيّا يجابه التمثيلات النمطيّة لـ أفريقيا والأفارقة على حدّ سواء، في حين يتناول نيبول الشكّ والتشظّي الناجم عن تحطم مؤسسة الكولونياليّة بصورة تجسد التناقض الصارخ لأفراد ما بعد الكولونياليّة في سعيهم الحثيث لبناء الهُوية. ومن هنا يرمي هذا البحثُ إلى إماطةِ اللثامِ عن الطرق والتي يمكن من خلالها للأعمال الروائيّة قيد الدراسة أن تسهم في إعادة كتابة تأريخ أفريقو- كاريبي يتيح تحصيل فهم واع للهُوية ما بعد الكولونيالية. وبغية تحقيق هذه الغاية، تعتمد الدراسة منهجَ ما بعد الكولونياليّة الذي يثير عددًا من الأسئلة المتعلقة بالمواجهات التثاقفية، وعلاقات القوى المتضاربة في خضم وما وراء التجربة الاستعماريّة. ومن جملة تلكم الأفكار، يستند التحليل إلى أطُرٍ مستوحاة من فكر "فانون" و"إدوارد سعيد" و"بحابحا" و"سبيفاك". هذا، وتخلص الأطروحة إلى أنّ هؤلاء الكتاب، وعلى الرغم من اختلاف مشاربهم وآرائهم اتجاه المفاهيم المركبة للثقافة واللغة والتاريخ والهويّة، قد نجحوا إلى حد ما في تفكيك الهياكل المانوية للقوى بين المُسْتَعْمِرِ والمُسْتَعْمَرِ بما يولد إمكانات تتحدى خطاب الكولونيالية وما تولّد عنه من نمطيّة وغيريّة .

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** أتشيبي؛ التحرير؛ المركزيّة الأوروبيّة؛ الخطاب ما بعد الكولونيالي؛ نايبول؛ نجوجي

# Résumé

Cette thèse de doctorat traite essentiellement de la problématique de l'identité et de l'écriture en échos au discours eurocentrique dans un corpus varié se composant d'œuvres écrites par des écrivains africains et caribéens, intitulées respectivement *Flèche du Seigneur* (1964) et *Fourmilières de la savane* (1987) de Chinua Achebe, *Pétales de sang* (1977) *Diable sur la croix* (1980) de Ngugi wa Thiong'o et *Les hommes mimiques* (1967) de Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul. Compte-tenu du constat attestant que le discours colonial privilégie les valeurs, les croyances et les coutumes du colonisateur au détriment de celles du colonisé, certains écrivains à l'instar d'Achebe et Ngugi ont insisté, au travers de leurs écrits, sur la nécessité de créer une historiographie différente et ce en contestant les représentations faites de l'Afrique et des Africains. De plus, V.S. Naipaul raconte le scepticisme et la fragmentation qui résultent de l'effondrement de l'institution coloniale en dépeignant l'ambivalence des sujets postcoloniaux qui se sont livrés dans une quête incessante pour construire leur identité. Cette recherche s'est basée sur l'approche postcoloniale qui aide à répondre à une multitude de questions concernant les rencontres interculturelles et les relations de pouvoir conflictuelles pendant et après l'expérience coloniale. Ce faisant, les œuvres sélectionnées sont analysées à la lumière des idées et des théories de Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha et Gayatri Spivak. Les résultats obtenus suite à cette recherche montrent, qu'en dépit de leurs points de vue différents concernant les notions complexes de la culture, de la langue, de l'histoire et de l'identité, ces écrivains ont procédé à un démantèlement des structures manichéennes de pouvoir entre le colonisateur et le colonisé et d'offrir ainsi des moyens permettant tour à tour la contestation du discours colonial et la construction de l'altérité et des stéréotypes.

**Mots clés:** Achebe; décolonisation; Eurocentrisme; identité (dé)formation; discours postcolonial; Naipaul; Ngugi