

Post-Postcolonialism’: Theorising On the Shifting Postcolonial Paradigms in African Fiction

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Abstract: This paper is based on the assumption that there has been a paradigm shift in the postcolonial discourse in African literature to warrant a re-assessment of the postcolonial theoretical constructs. This is so because existing literature, with all the issues therein, appears to suggest a movement towards a new Era which could be termed ‘post-postcolonialism’ or ‘after postcolonialism’. Basing its analysis on select novels in African literature, such as Ngugi wa Thiong’O’s *Devil on the Cross* and *Wizard of the Crow* and Chimamanda Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*, among other works, this paper reviews developments in the postcolonial theoretical framework, from colonialism through neo-colonialism to postcolonialism. The paper, whose critique is sustained by Cultural Studies and New Historicism, maintains that emerging issues in recently published African fiction indicate that what hitherto constituted the postcolonial has shifted, thereby rendering the term more or less a misnomer. Africans, the paper recommends, should look beyond the ‘postcolonial’ in the search for meaning, growth and development.

Keywords: African literature, paradigm shift, post-postcolonialism, postcolonialism, theory

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I. INTRODUCTION

‘Ekpu ufok asikood ekpu ikot ndia . . .’
(It’s the house rat that invites the bush rat over for a feast. . .’

- An Ibibio Proverb

Perhaps it is best to begin this critique with a number of related questions: has the postcolonial suddenly come to an end? Is it time to look beyond the postcolonial? Are we in the era of ‘after postcolonialism’? Can we begin a discourse on ‘post-postcolonialism’? If we do, what will it mean? In other words, what constitutes post-postcolonialism? These are among the challenging questions this paper aims to respond to in the course of its progress. The realities in contemporary African critique-scape predisposes one to contemplate the idea that, perhaps, the postcolonial hermeneutics has met its aporia, that is, its dead end, and thus raises the need for a re-assessment, refocusing and repositioning. Even when viewed from the perspective of time, it could be said that having dominated critical discourse in African literature from the 1950s, the term ‘postcolonialism’ has become, more or less, metaphorically automatized, which necessitates a movement towards fashioning a newer, fresher and a more foregrounded (estranged) terminology to account for the changing complexion and habits of Africa’s postcolonial criticisms, as a way of responding to emerging realities.

The fact is that right from its inception, the postcolonial critique has been plagued by its over-excitement at confronting the Centre. Noting this, Olakunle George writes that ‘from its beginnings, African literature has always been seen as a function of the history of colonialism’ (452). And this preoccupation with colonial history is not without its own merits. This is mostly so because colonialism left an enduring scar on the body politic of the continent; and as it is with all scars, no amount of healing can erase it, except, maybe, plastic surgery, which in itself could be dangerous and injurious to the identity of the subject. The ensuing aggressive campaign to de-colonise Africa, which recorded huge successes, especially in the political and cultural scenes, paid an exaggerated attention to the enemy without, leaving the enemy within to feed fat, grow robust and prosper freely. Myriads of texts have been written and, probably, continue to be written, which do not hide who the real enemy is. Chief among such texts is Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, published in 1972. The book’s title illuminates its contents, but a brief quotation will leave nothing in doubt: ‘For the only great men among the unfree and the oppressed are those who struggle to destroy the oppressor’ (Online, 1). Here, there is no question who the oppressed and the oppressors are.

In the sphere of literature, the Troika’s publication, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, in 1980, wages a fairly successful war to recapture African literature and cultural critique from the captivity of the

Eurocentric soldiers. Again, the focus is the oppressive outsider; and rightly so. If not for anything, the ambitious objective spelt out in the introductory part of the work gives some level of insight into its treatise: 'The cultural task in hand is to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrustation of colonial and slave mentality, to clear the bushes and stake out new foundations for a liberated African modernity' (1). The foregoing are very lofty ideals whose success can only be judged by the foundation on which the current research rests. Ngugi wa Thiong'O, one of Africa's gallant literati, took the battle to the foes of Africa's liberation from the linguistic and mental flanks. One of his landmark publications is *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, published in 1986. So faithful was Ngugi's belief that the war to rid Africa of colonial marks could best be won through the instrumentality of language that he stopped writing in English as is evident in 'A Statement' he issues in the book: 'In 1977 I published *Petals of Blood* and said farewell to the English language as a vehicle of my writing of plays, novels and short stories. All my subsequent creative writing has been written directly in Gĩkũyũ language' (xiv). Thirty-nine years and a change of name later, it is not likely that many writers have followed Ngugi's dance step in the language symphony in African literary discourse, even as it cannot be ascertained how faithful Ngugi himself has been in keeping to his vow. Indeed, most critics have tagged this particular position of Ngugi extreme and unrealistic, albeit a laudable ideal. It is actually Chinua Achebe's linguistic assumptions that most African writers and critics have come to rely upon in the unifying but onerous task of defending African literature and criticism against the external Oppressor. According to Achebe, The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his [or her] message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He [or she] should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his [or her] peculiar experience (100).

Not only has Achebe made significant contributions to the language question in African literary criticism, he has also made invaluable statements that have helped in no small measure in concretising Africa's position in the postcolonial literary discourses. It is one of such statements that has given impetus to the current research. In it Achebe states that 'an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of the contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his house burning to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames' (78). For Achebe, therefore, while it is expedient for writers and critics of African literature to chase away the colonialist ghost that keeps haunting the grounds of Africa's literary castles and towers, it is equally important to not lose sight of the home-grown ghosts that habitually scare away Africa's development.

However, and as it has already been said, a greater part of the oeuvre of most African writers have been preoccupied with the diabolic effects of the African colonial experience. The argumentative posturing of this paper in the next set of paragraphs is that there has been no point in the history of Africa's colonial subjugation that Africans did not play symbolic roles.

Colonialism, Neocolonialism and Postcolonialism in Post-postcolonialist Perspectives

The continent of Africa has been one sorry site of foreign domination, economic rape and political abuses dating back to the earliest known history of the modern world. Colonialism itself occurred in three phases – the classical colonialism, slavery and the legitimate trade. It would not in any way amount to paranoia to assert that even in the 21st century, Africa still grapples with the debilitating aftermaths of colonial rule. Then came along what has generally been referred to as 'flag independence', which from all standpoints, enthroned puppetry at the leadership of the African continent. And it is the position of this paper that this kind of leadership has endured in Africa and continues to constitute a most formidable barrier to Africa's development. However, the major policy of this paper at this point is to emphasise the collaborative role of Africans in the ruinous state of the continent from slavery to postcolonialism.

Olaudah Equiano's account is relied upon on the issue of African's complicity in the criminality tagged slavery. In the first place, Equiano does not deny that slavery existed in pre-colonial Africa, but rather he rationalises on its humane nature compared to the one devised and executed by the brutish European nations. Indeed, though it could be said that the Europeans made trade in human commodity attractive by offering irresistible incentives, the middle men in this inhuman commerce were mostly Africans. They even went as far as starting wars at the slightest provocations so as to find convenient avenues of taking prisoners and turning them into slaves. Equiano reports that 'these battles . . . were incited by those traders who brought the European goods [slaves]' (18), adding that 'such mode of obtaining slaves in Africa was common, including kidnapping ,which was the mode in which Equiano himself and his sister were taken as slaves.

During colonialism, some Africans were willing tools in the hands of the colonial masters while others outrightly betrayed the cause for the emancipation of Africans from the shackles of colonialism. Unfortunately, these stooges and betrayers went on to become leaders and elite as warrant chiefs, interpreters and court officials; and when finally the Europeans decided to withdraw physically from the scene, they replaced

themselves with these 'houseboys', whose leadership has endured up until this moment in Africa. Indeed, from all indications, Africa is being ruled mostly by subservient stooges and betrayers of their countries. The case of Mugo in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* is very typical and adequately exemplifies the thesis of the paragraph. Ngugi writes in the novel that, 'Life was only a constant repetition of what happened yesterday and the day before' (237); but the lesson that interests this researcher is Mugo's courage to take responsibility for his actions – an action which not only leads to his spiritual freedom, but also ensures a new beginning for the new country (235). Mugo's commendable act of confession is a laudable ideal that has eluded the realities of most African situations because these sellouts have gone on to be leaders even to contemporary times. Abena, one of the characters in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, observes:

Our chiefs, our leaders, they have bellies and they have tongues. Minds they do not have. That is the white destroyers' happiness; that is why the white destroyers will exhaust their long knowledge of murder to keep our rotten chiefs, our bloated leaders on top of us. No one sold us but our chiefs and their hangers-on (146).

With the type of leaders limned above, the neo-colonial doom of most African states was sealed no sooner than these leaders assumed positions in the post-flag-independence Africa. Literatures abound that account for all the complexions and habits of these neo-colonial African leaders and how society has fared during their reign. Plagued by ineptitude and, in most cases, sheer illiteracy, neocolonial leaders merely stepped into the shoes of their erstwhile masters; doing their biddings and oppressing their fellow Africans. The argument is often that these leaders were placed there to act as the agents of the departed Europeans. While this might be true, and indeed it is true in most cases, the fact that these people are Africans necessitates a re-examination of our critical canon because the theory on the will of man does not allow one to excuse these sellouts in any way. Emeka Ojukwu's assertion is instructive: 'There is no doubt that a great deal of errors can be blamed on the post independence leaders. . . (4).

A thin line seems to separate the neo-colonial discourse from the postcolonial one. In fact, the two are most times discussed side by side, though for some writers the term 'post-colonial' designates those discourses that straddle colonialism up to the current issues in the critique of African literature. For instance, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back: Theories and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* state: 'We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present' (2). The term 'postcolonial' seems to embrace a time-lapse but problematises its own definition and scope in line with 'post-colonial' so that while it can denote those discourses that emerged at the expiration of colonialism, it can also connote the continuous effects of colonialism on Africa even when it is supposed that colonialism had long ended. Most novels that could be termed 'postcolonial' are preoccupied with this illustration – that Africa is going through her present hell because of the structures laid and left by the colonial masters and sustained by the neo-colonial African leaders. This is, indeed, the core aspect of the 'writing back' tenets. When will we begin to write to ourselves?

Though this particular discourse has dominated literary works and criticisms, it is not without an opposing view. In his 2010 publication titled *How Africa Underdeveloped Africa*, Stanley Igwe writes that 'the only accepted explanation for African poverty is to say that it is caused by the lingering effects of colonialism' and that 'this is the only explanation a public figure can speak of without having his career and reputation intentionally destroyed', but that 'that does not make it true' (13). It is interesting that Igwe attributes the pitiable state of Africa today to corruption, which is made possible by the weak-willed and compromising leaderships on the continent. It is obvious that, for Igwe and a good number of critics, Africans have themselves to blame for the current problems besetting the continent. This view is succinctly captured by Mour Ndiaye in Aminata Sow Fall's *The Beggars' Strike* when he says: 'We are now the ones responsible for the destiny of our country. We must oppose anything which harms our economic and tourist development' (18). It is this researcher's position that this blame game has gone on for too long, and that it is time Africa moved on, in theory and praxis. But first there is need to review the existing postcolonial theories and the new historicist framework in order to appreciate why there has been a paradigm shift, which should necessitate theorising the post-postcolonial. Indeed, postcolonial deserves another 'post' at this point in African history and politics.

Cultural Studies and Cultural Poetics or New Historicism operate on common grounds of politics and history. Karin Barber declares that 'postcolonial criticism has a political bite; it turns the searchlight back to the center and exposes the agenda underlying its claims to a universal literary humanism' (671). Barber's statement justifies the earlier assertion of this paper that postcolonial criticism is traditionally Centre-centered. Beginning from Edward Said in his *Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism* published in 1978 and 1994, respectively, through other notable critics such as Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Elleke Boehmer and Gayatri Spivak, among others, the objective has always been to expose the hegemonic nature of the Centre in relation to the periphery or the Other. Boehmer states that 'The concept of the Other, which is built on the thought of, *intra alia*, Hegel and Sartre, signifies that which is unfamiliar and extraneous to a dominant subjectivity, the opposite or negative against which authority is defined' (21). On the other hand, Charles Bressler writes that in the creed of New

Historicism, 'all history is subjective, written by people whose personal biases affect their interpretation of the past', which explains why New Historicism 'highlights the interrelatedness of all human activities, admits its own prejudices, and gives a more complete understanding of a text' (181). History, as declared by Steven Lynn, is textual, thus making literature to become 'as much a context for history as history is for literature' (127, 8).

What is observable in all this is that the realities of African history of contemporary times are not adequately reflected in the existing postcolonial theories and literature, or, to put it more clearly, existing theories betray existing literature. Some critics have, in recent times, noticed this lacuna and have called on other writers and critics to consider charting new directions for African literature and criticism. Ann McClintock maintains that 'the way out of colonialism is forward' (628) and goes on to observe that 'many contemporary African, Latin American, Caribbean and Asian cultures, while profoundly effected by colonialism, are not necessarily preoccupied with their erstwhile contact with Europe' (631). Indeed, the postcolonial binaries of self-other, metropolis-colony and centre-periphery, among others, can no longer account for the existing realities in the postcolonial discourse of African literature. The incident of globalisation and its attendant consequence of multiculturalism has ensured the blurring of certain ideological lines and divides, closing and rendering insignificant hitherto acknowledged cultural lacunas. Perhaps, this is what Kwame Appiah has in mind in writing the following words:

If there is a lesson in the broad shape of the circulation of cultures, it is that we are all already contaminated by each other, that there is no longer a fully autochthonous echt – African culture awaiting salvage by our artist (just as there is, of course, no American culture without African roots). And there is a clear sense in some postcolonial writing that the postulation of a unitary Africa over against a monolithic West – the binarism of Self and Other – is the last in our shibboleths of the modernizers that we must learn to live without (663).

It is apparent that the African postcolonial situation in the 21st century has become too complex, complicated and subjective to be analysed using the existing framework. Thus, this paper heeds the call of Eldred Jones that 'The specialist students of literature have the additional task of applying their minds in a special way to the critical examination of African literature in order to reveal the qualities of individual works and to help establish general critical standards' (412) by attempting to fashion what it terms 'a post-postcolonial discourse' in African literature, which it hopes will account for the current realities on the continent.

Charles Nnolim, while decrying 'the defensive nature of our literatures and our preoccupation with re-establishing the African personality, glancing backwards to a glorious past' ("African Literature in the 21st Century", 4), urges African writers to 'look forward and project a forward-looking utopia for Africa, not the backward-looking utopia of the 20th century that merely healed our psychic wounds' (5). It is interesting to note that Nnolim's statement is among the 'New voices' that are 'emerging from all parts of the African continent not only to reinforce the voices of the generations before them, but also to reveal new realities, visions and concerns of Africa and its people' (Emenyonu, xii). Elsewhere, Nnolim is disillusioned by the fact that 'African literature in the twentieth century seemed to have reached a point of mild exhaustion' ("In Search of New Challenges", 27) and goes on to mandate 'Our writers' to 'create a new Africa, a new spirit of optimism, an Africa full of promises, able to feed its teeming populations, an Africa with a healthy and vibrant people not dependent on Europe and America' (29).

While this paper sympathises with Nnolim's position on the seeming lack-lustre state of African literary criticism in recent times, as well as granting that there is need for new theories to be fashioned, the paper must point out that there are hidden dangers in the rush for the utopianisation of African literature and criticism. Such an idyllic act runs the risk of creating false comfort in a continent where poverty and illiteracy are rife. Who will read and understand the science fiction when most of the schools in Africa are ill-equipped? Where is the physiological enablement to induce a utopian-science-consuming culture in a continent still ravaged by extreme poverty? Nnolim should understand that when most European science fictions were written, most of those nations were already colonising other nations of the world. If new theories must be enacted for African literature, as urged by well meaning critics like Chinyere Nwahunanya, Nnolim, Emenyonu and Dan Izevbaye, such theories must take into account the need to quickly address the lingering leadership lacuna in African politics and institutions. It should be a comprehensive theory which aims to 'establish procedures for the evaluation and control of critical opinion' (Izevbaye, 422), and at the same time make sense of the African condition as well as account for the realities of African history and literature. In an era driven by global framework of interdependence, Africa cannot afford to remain in her perpetual posture of dependence, for as Stephen Covey rightly states, 'interdependence is a choice only independent people make' (50).

Theorising Post-postcolonialism for African Literature

(During colonialism, they came here and forcefully took us to America and Europe as slaves; after independence, we willingly take ourselves to Europe and America as 'slaves')

At this point in human history, Africa requires a strong ideological base from which she could launch herself back into the world. Such an ideology should be self-conscious without necessarily being narcissistic. At a time

when globalisation, multiculturalism and postnationalism have been shaken by such exotic cultural forces as Brexitism and Trumpism, such an African ideology ought to be Pan-Africanist and Negritudist taken beyond its purely cultural and intellectual concerns to tackling economic waste and stagnation, leadership vacuum and political insensibility, instability and insensitivity. This is in keeping with Izevbaye's assertion that 'the formation of the contemporary African critical attitude rests largely on the relation of art to reality' (28). To put it lightly, such a theory should be practical and practicable, bearing in mind the yielding of the right results in its praxis. Such a theory should emphasise the importance of sincere and accountable servant-leadership on the continent as a veritable means of African liberation from its own chains, first of all, and then from the residual, yet powerful, fetters of imperialism, for as Tejumola Olaniyan notes, 'The atrocities committed in the last 30 years by many African leaders in the name of the sacredness of the nation are still part of our contemporary history' (640). Therefore, such a theory should reflect and 'entrench a critical self-consciousness that is the enemy of all passions that present themselves as unimpeachable' (Olaniyan, 640), especially the seeming unimpeachable nature of evil leadership in Africa. These refer to 'compromised leaders whose interests prove to be fundamentally different from the aspirations of their subjects' (Sophie Ogwude, 103).

Apart from the foregoing, such a theory should attempt to achieve poetic synchronisation between ideological assumptions and textual realities because current observations have indicated that there are gaping disparities between existing literatures and existing theories. In other words, in a bid to portray the marginalised nature of the 'Others', the texts have ended up as devices for the subversion of the Domineering nature of the supposed margins. Post-postcolonial study of literature aims to uncover such subtle subversions inherent in the text. A situation where a supposedly postcolonial novel dramatises the demonic acts of an African dictator, and then the theory wants everyone to believe that the cause is the Centre can no longer be accepted. As it has already been implied, such an interpretation is too defensive and escapist to be realistic. The reality is that most African oppressors no longer represent foreign interests but only their own. Now what is 'Post-postcolonialism'?

Post-postcolonialism: An Attempt at a Definition

Any serious framework is expected to begin its definition by, first of all, defining its field; in this case, literature. And in this, this paper relies on Ann Dobie in her writing that 'The broadest view of postcolonial literature is that it is the literature written in English by people in formerly colonized countries, some of it authored by the colonizers and their descendants, but more of it by those they colonized' (208). However, it should be noted that a post-postcolonial definition of literature cannot, and must not, ignore literature written in indigenous African languages, even though, as Emmanuel Ngara notes, the literature written in vernacular 'is accessible only to a small portion of Africa' (6). Post-postcolonial literary work also includes all artistic contents with African sensibilities in the new media, including films and performances. The post-postcolonial literature is a socially-committed literature, a history-conscious literature and a society-transforming literature. It is a literature that places art at the service of society. Post-postcolonialist literature is at once Africa-conscious and world-focused. It is concerned about the deplorable state of Africa at present and is aimed at galvanising the needed actions that will transform Africa and place her among her peers in the world. This is based on the ideals of the framework itself, which will be unveiled in the definition of post-postcolonialism. So what is post-postcolonialism?

Post-postcolonialism is a forward-looking, inward-looking and soul-searching framework, which is mostly concerned with re-defining, re-assessing, re-examining, re-evaluating and re-positioning Africa's postcolonial discourses. It is a framework that places Africa and Africans first, especially her political and economic interests and dignities. Post-postcolonialism is a periphery-searching and margin-centering theory. And in centering the margin, the theory hopes to expose the oppressors among the oppressed. It is a theory that creates a centre out of the Otherness of Africa. Such a re-Othering and re-Centering is based on the deconstructable self-posturing of the previous binary structures which, from all indications, can no longer sustain our postcolonial realities. In this, one refers to Appiah's assertion that '... the first and the last mistake is to judge the Other on one's own terms' (656). The constant flux in the binary relations of Centre/Other is what the mechanics of post-postcolonialism emphasises.

Post-postcolonialism is technically deployed to infer 'pastcolonialism'. Pastcolonialism does not mean that the influences or effects of colonialism cannot still be felt in Africa (indeed, it would be foolhardiness to reason so), but rather, it is used to infer that colonialism did pass, and that, at least, political independence was achieved. The position of the paper is also that political independence was/is a veritable tool to deploy in achieving or having the other independences – especially economic and cultural independences. But why the delay? Why the palpable sense of stagnation? Why the seeming helplessness and frustration in the African progress? The answer lies in the faulty nature of the political independence itself and the inability of succeeding African leadership to turn itself around. In post-postcolonialism, the terms 'suspension of belief' and 'belief of doubt' are deployed to assume, even for a moment, that the Western colonial influence has ceased, however

seemingly escapist, delusionary and illusionary such a belief might appear. Such a suspension of dominant belief would give way for a new semantic horizon on the possibility of Africa being held largely responsible for her many postcolonial woes.

Post-postcolonialism urges criticism to look beyond the race and the bourgeoisie-proletariat relationship between Africans and the Western nations to the ethnicity, corruption, inept leadership and the various oppressive class structures within the African continent, which are more immediate and directly impacting. It is only after these societal foes have been defeated that Africa can then unite to face their external aggressors; for we cannot fight them from a disadvantaged vantage, that is, if we even have to fight them at all. Thus, what post-postcolonialism says in a nutshell is that Africa needs to put her house in order before presenting her case at the international scene. Post-postcolonial literature and criticism are deeply political, because they see a direct relationship between Africa as a failed state and the failed leadership on the continent. Post-postcolonialism decries dictatorship, as it is detrimental to the health of African politics and economy. It also condemns mutative democracy, whose roots lie deep in the well-manure soil of military dictatorship. It is sad to aver that most parts of Africa practise militarised democracy – a mere shedding of camouflage for mufti. Africa cannot grow this way. This explains why Africa needs a self-responsible and self-responsive framework, to which post-postcolonialism aspires.

A Statement on Assumptions and Methodology

In post-postcolonialism, the term 'de-colonisation' assumes a new and significant paradigmatic visage. It connotes the idea that Africa should look beyond the pains, shadows, ghosts and scars of colonialism, because it is only by doing so that she can begin to heal. Holding on to a mentality oppressed by colonialism can only aggravate Africa's problems. Rather, it is time Africa picked herself up and began to take responsibilities for her contemporary troubles. De-colonisation also implies disencumbering Africa of its internal colonialist elements, which have, over the years, structured themselves along points of power on the continent. The researcher can boldly say that most of the problems that Africa is grappling with at the moment are not caused by Europe. The few ones which imperialism can be held responsible are made possible by African collaborators who, unfortunately, are in leadership positions.

Post-postcolonialism is organised around time and power binaries whose Dominant Self is a previous Other. Here, the Other is the 'dialecticality' that has been problematised. Dobie, having stressed the need of examining the Other in any discourse, maintains that 'dominance creates opposition that makes social change inevitable' (183). In post-postcolonialism, however, one sees the marginal as the dominant. This means that in the Self/Other, Centre/Periphery binary, the Self and the Centre are jettisoned so that the focus can be on the Other and the Periphery which, of course, are synonymous with Africa. When the Other is given a 'Poetic Gaze', it splits into itself and another Other. If the new Other is accorded a Poetic Gaze, it too will split into itself and another Other. Indeed, there are many Selves and Others among the Other and there is no fathoming the end to these poetic splits.

Thus, in the first split, Africa as the Other divides into Leadership and Followership, where Leadership is the Self and Followership is the Other. In keeping with the tenets of New Historicism, the attention of the paper is constantly on the Other, in this case Followership, since the Self (Leadership) is dominant enough to warrant more attention. When accorded the Poetic Gaze, the Followership splits into many binary structures such as: rich/poor, educated (informed)/uneducated (uninformed), men/women, adult/children; where women are the Earth (Ecology) and children are the Future (Africa Tomorrow). Followership can, therefore, be seen as the Super Other because it is from it that the other 'selves' and 'others' emerge. All the binary elements are deeply problematised and should be examined closely if Africa must make progress.

So much has been said in this paper already about the state of leadership in Africa which does not need belabouring, even as it is ideal not to stress that which is already dominant. Thus, attention should be focused on followership. African followership is an important factor in the transformation of Africa, and until the followership decides that it is time for change, nothing will change on the continent. But then the followership needs to be interrogated in order to see how it has been manipulated and disempowered by the leadership with the aim of maintaining the status quo. These devices used in weakening the followership must be exposed and dismantled so that followership can be alive to its duty of enthroning people-conscious leadership in Africa. To achieve this requires that each of the binary structures drawn from followership should be critically examined. For instance, Africa should deal decisively with the extreme poverty that is ravaging the continent at the moment. The ever widening gap between the rich and the poor should be closed because, for one, it creates severe class disparity that precludes collective action and, secondly, poverty weakens the people's position of power. Already, the African middle class, it has been argued, has become endangered. Perhaps, there are only two classes in Africa today: the upper and the lower classes.

To tackle poverty and the people's power deficiency, it becomes necessary to eradicate illiteracy (and lack of information and proper socialisation) in Africa. This is where the educated –uneducated binary is

critiqued. The current leadership in Africa is profiting from the mass illiteracy that has been recorded on the continent. Apart from this, the education system in Africa is in such a lamentable state. Most students graduate with dependable mentality because they were not given an education that stresses mental independence and individuality. Thus, there is a new class of illiterates in Africa – educated illiterates. A sound education system will enthrone leaders with the needed competence, temperament and integrity, all which are needed if Africa must attain her destiny. A post-postcolonial African education system is one in which Africa educates her own children, not sending them abroad to pick up strange cultural values in exchange for a good education, which in the end serves no positive purpose since the individual is damaged psychologically and morally before coming back home, that is if the individual even desires to return. The current situation where politics is being played with education in Africa can no longer be accepted.

The men-women binary indicates the relationship between post-postcolonialism and gender. The liberation of the woman is central to the liberation of Africa as far as the post-postcolonial theory is concerned. We must not repeat the mistake of the past – the mistake of the men marching forward and leaving the women trailing behind. It is a journey that is doomed from the beginning. In the post-postcolonial era in African literary criticism, the role of the woman in aiding the liberation of Africa cannot be trifled with. Men and women must move in unison, hand-in-hand, failure of which failure will continue dogging our path. It is interesting to note that, even in the choice of primary texts for the study, the researcher uses works of two African writers: one male and the other female. The researcher also uses two novels from each writer. This is aimed at reflecting gender balance, which is really needed in Africa today. What is even more interesting is that the writers themselves are aware, as reflected in their works, of the necessity of complementarity between the sexes if the war against unprogressive forces in society must be won. Concerted efforts must be made to remove all barriers and strictures which tend to disempower African women.

African Motherhood represents the Earth. This is where the ecological issues in African literary criticism come in. The relationship between human beings and the environment must not be ignored by any framework in the 21st century. The situation in Africa is peculiar, especially for a continent whose landscape, both physical and social, has been subjected to all manner of abuses in the course of over four hundred years. Africa is the mother of the Earth which has to be sustained and nurtured if all must survive. So much depends on it. Post-postcolonial ecology urges that Africans should aspire to have control over how their environment and the resources in it, human and material, are utilised. The activities of multi-national oil corporations in the Niger Delta of Nigeria are glaring examples of the gross insensitivity exhibited by the postcolonial forces towards African landscape. It is an ecological rape that must be checked.

The adults-children binary structure is the most interesting in the post-postcolonial discourse of African literature. For one, children have hardly featured in postcolonial discourses, having already been assigned their department in the College of Literature – Children's Literature. Thus, with the growing attention paid to children in newly published works, there seems to be no existing theories to account for the issues affecting children. This is a clarion call to all writers and critics. Instead of over-flogging issues with repeated critical cadences, they should begin to formalise theories that give attention to the postcolonial African child and how he or she has fared in a postcolonial setting. It should be noted, however, that in his 2008 publication titled *The Infantist Manifesto*, this researcher proposed a child-conscious theory called *Infantism* in which he states that 'Infantism is to the child what feminism is to the woman' (21). Africa should begin to lay a solid foundation for her children because they are the Future of the continent, just as the women are the Earth.

It is only after all the aforementioned issues had been addressed that Africa can rejoin the global discourse, but this time not as an inferior Other but rather as a benign dominant Self. It is at this point that African writers can begin to utopianise their reality as Nnolim earnestly desires. Anyone who is wont to doubting the testability of this discourse should recall that the United States was once a colony. India was once a colony. And Malaysia was also once a colony. All it takes for Africa to redeem herself is to overhaul African leadership and its institutions through the instrumentality of followership.

When a thoroughgoing post-postcolonialist critic picks up a work of art, he or she will look to avoid the 'Blame Elements' that have instituted themselves behind semantic signposts in the text. These blame elements point to an old Centre that is no more. They constitute devices that subvert the real meaning of the text. By ignoring these illusionary elements, for that is what they are, the critic will be able to focus on the Other. When the critic gives the Other a Poetic Gaze, the Other will split, as already illustrated, into it-Self and a new Other. The new Self is Leadership (it is always leadership in all its forms – from the family to the national capital) while the new Other is Followership. It is the Followership, a super Other, that will be interrogated in any discourse, against the dominance of the Leadership. Writers and critics must realise and must be aware of the various techniques in which the Followership verbalise their views against the Leadership, including sighs, groans, murmuring and even silence. The critic should aim to expose how the Followership has learnt to survive the dominance of the Leadership as well as the many devices which the Leadership has used to keep the Followership permanently in check. The post-postcolonialist critic should also check the relationship among the

other binary elements, which are, but not limited to, rich-poor, educated (informed)-uneducated (uninformed), men-women (the Earth) and adults-children (the Future), though it is doubtful if the critic can exhaust all these structures in a given discourse. It is, therefore advisable that a part of it can be taken at a time.

Post-postcolonialism and the Language of African Literature

As shown at the initial stage of this paper, the language question has always plagued the discourse of African literature. However, if postcolonialism is to be understood as the ideological incident in which the eternal consequences of colonialism are understood, then English (not English) language in all its appropriated, syncretised and hybridised forms must be accepted as the language of our literature, while efforts should continue to be intensified in the direction of growing our growing body of literature written in indigenous languages. It is obvious that we have already accepted the cold sad reality that African literature will be expressed using the Englishes for a very long time – perhaps, forever. But the difference between postcolonial and post-postcolonial literature within the purview of language seems to be that while the former appropriated the authoritative language of the Centre, the latter is concerned with the appropriation of the language of Leadership, which is a new centre of an old Other.

Post-postcolonialism and Publishing in African Literature

It is an unfortunate fact that the Headquarters of African literature are currently located in Europe and America. Granted that this shameful anomaly has been brought about by the tragic state of affairs in Africa today, it must be stated that writers and critics of African literature must accept the blame for this form of cultural imperialism. It bespeaks of colonial mentality for writers and critics to rush to Europe and America to have their works published. And in Africa, works published in Europe and America are worshipped like gods. Most of the important publications in African literature are published and marketed in Europe so that those who were primarily meant to study those works have to look for them in Europe. Some of these writers and critics are kind and considerate enough to, after publishing the 'Quality Edition' in Europe and America, decide to publish the African or Nigerian Edition in Africa. Today, the sad reality is that if you have to read any of the well established African authors, then you have to go to Europe and America to conduct an epic search for their works, especially if it cannot be found in any of the European and American-controlled online sales outlets and platforms. This paper does not intend to refer to the exorbitant cost of these works, which are even made more aggravating by the lamentable exchange value of most African currencies.

For post-postcolonialism, African works are encouraged to be published in Africa before being exported or published abroad. With all the grammatical and typographical errors occasioned by poor editing or lack of editing, with all the faint and, in some cases, blank pages, made possible by archaic publishing tools and piracy, let African works be published in Africa. This way, and with time, African publishing industry will develop and could even compete with those of Europe and America. It amounts to a case of colonialist mentality that we rush to Europe to put a stamp of approval on our works.

A Post-postcolonialist Critique of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Devil on the Cross and Wizard of the Crow

Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* is an exemplar of a neoclassical text, but in this discourse it will be read as a post-postcolonial novel, for as the old man tells Gatuīria, 'There is no difference between old and modern stories. Stories are stories. All stories are old. All stories are new. All stories belong to tomorrow. And stories are not about ogres or about animals or about men. All stories are about human beings' (61, 2). This is how one quickly comes to the understanding that the Devil referred to in the novel must be a human being. The Devil also constitutes the leadership. It should be noted that the leadership referred to here is not the one crucified at the initial stage of the novel, but rather it is the one which takes him down and pray to take over from him. Ngugi writes: 'After three days, there came others dressed in suits and ties, who, keeping close to the wall of darkness, lifted the Devil down from the Cross. And they knelt before him, and prayed to him in loud voices, beseeching him to give them a portion of his robes of cunning' (13, 14). While the crucified Devil represents the colonial masters, those who pray to take his place are the neocolonial leaders of Nairobi, Kenya, a microcosm of Africa which Ngugi describes as '... large, soulless and corrupt' (Devil, 15). Note how the words of Rodney still apply to these new African leaders as their actions tend towards the 'creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment' (291).

This leadership constitutes the new Centre of the old Other. But as already theorised, the attention is always on the Other of the new Centre – Followership. This is mostly because followership can be used to infer the leadership. The state of the followership says so much about the leadership. One then recalls the saying of when the righteous is on the throne. The rich-poor binary can be seen in the relationship between Wariinga and her landlord as well as in her relationship with her employer. The same also reflects the male-female binary, including the relationship between Wariinga and Gatuīria and John Kimwana. The fact that each binary structure encapsulates traditional opposition does not necessarily mean that it has to always be conflicting. The

idea is to examine the relationship between the two in order to make sense of the extent of progress or retardation in the relationship. Not all rich people oppress poor people, and not all men subjugate women. The adults-children dialectics can be exemplified in the relationship between Wariinga and the Rich Old Man from Ngorika and her relationship with Wangari.

Because the women in the novel find themselves in disadvantaged and oppressed structures, the physical and social ecologies of the novel are problematic. And since the dreams of children are shattered by the actions of the adults in the novel, the future of society remains bleak until an action is taken towards altering the course of things. Indeed, post-postcolonialism has an action component of the Marxist bent. Evil should not only be discoursed, something should be done about eradicating it. The followership must come together at a point to dismantle existing structures and create new ones that will be favourable to all. Again, it should be noted that the Devil's Feast is made possible because of the collaboration between the indigenous and foreign thieves. Of course, ekpu ufok asikood ekpu ikot ndia. . .

In Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow*, the Ruler, who is demonised as Ngugi is wont to do, is the new Centre of the former Other as Leadership, including his Cabinet members in a relative sense. The Other of the new Centre constitutes the Followership whose binary structures are: rich-poor, educated (informed)-uneducated (uninformed), men-women (ecology) and adults-children (future). In the novel, the rich-poor dialectics is seen in the relationship between Tajirika and Kamiti, Tajirika and Nyawira, among others. The extreme poverty and excessive wealth in Aburiria is noted by the narrator thus: 'The contrast between the motorcade of sleek Mercedes-Benzes and the line of donkey-pulled carts loaded with goods of various kinds was stunning' (Wizard, 27). Kamiti also 'found it ironic that, as in Eldares, '... shacks stood side by side with mansions of tile, stone, glass, and concrete' (39). Kamiti, a brilliant graduate, is plagued by poverty and hunger occasioned by widespread unemployment in Aburiria. He is so desperate to find work that he is willing to wash toilets to earn a living, not minding his BA in Economics. Note how Tajirika treats Kamiti when he goes to his office in search of a job (52-59). It is after this encounter that Kamiti decides to go into begging in order to survive. A society that reduces its graduates to beggars is a doomed society.

In the educated-uneducated binary structure, one finds Nyawira and Vinjina, not because Vinjina did not go to school, but because she is uninformed about the oppressive structures she has found herself. It takes the tutoring role of Nyawira to bring Vinjina out of the woods of her ignorance. Most of the patients who go to the Wizard of the Crow for a cure are shown to be uninformed or ignorant of themselves in relation to society. It takes the ingenuity of the Kamiti to empower these people with the right kind of information to help them live meaningful lives. This shows the extent to which the peoples of Africa need to be informed about their situation so as to help them make informed decisions. Evil thrives where ignorance is rife, which explains the dark cloud of palpable helplessness that envelopes the world of the novel.

Kamiti and Nyawira, Ruler and Rachael, Tajirika and Vinjina, Kaniuriu and Nyawira, among others, exemplify the men-women binary structures in the work. Patriarchy is deeply entrenched in this novel, and this has gone a long way to limiting the women, which in turn significantly affects societal development. At the slightest provocation, the Ruler locks up his wife, and refuses to release her until her death. This is very symbolic as it connotes the social and ideological imprisonment of the African woman with the ultimate aim of sustaining her voicelessness. Despite the excellent performance of Vinjina in running her husband's business, and despite her sterling qualities, attributes, aptitude and attitude, Tajirika in the end tells her: 'Okay, you can now resume your place in the kitchen' (423). A society that denies women the opportunity of making their own contribution cannot develop. However, the relationship between Kamiti and Nyawira is exemplary and should be emulated. Together they work to sensitise the people of the evil leadership in Aburiria, as well as helping to galvanise the people to move against the Ruler and his obnoxious regime. The adults-children binary scheme is reflected in the relationship between Nyawira and Vinjina's children – Gacigua and Gaciru. Ngugi is of the view that in order to rid society of unprogressive forces, men, women and children should be involved, as shown in how the Ogre is defeated in Nyawira's story told to Vinjina's children. A careful look at the physical, social and psychological landscape of the novel reveals an uncertain future because of the unfavourable positions of women and children.

Post-postcolonialism in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*

Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* depicts the historicity of the Nigerian civil war waged between 1967 and 1970. Read as a post-postcolonial work, the new centre is the leadership of General Gowon and General Ojukwu while the followership follows the set down binary relations. It is because the Igbo are treated as the Other, oppressed and marginalised that creates a general sense of dissatisfaction which later resulted in the war. Emefienna Ezeani writes that 'it is this feeling of discontent within the state of Nigeria that underlined . . . the Biafrans' desire to go back' (Author's emphasis) (59). The remote cause of the terrible war was the inept and narrow-minded leadership of General Gowon, coupled with the fundamentalist sentiment or outlook of the Northern elements in the then young African nation. Indeed, it can be argued that the seeming interference of

the British in African affairs, as reflected in Ezeani's report on the war (59), may not be unconnected with the nature of leadership on the continent. If African leaders could show the needed maturity in the handling of issues and situations, there would be little need for the former colonial masters to show such excessive interest in the erstwhile colonies. Or how does one explain the callousness in Gowon's repudiation of the Aburi Accord? Leadership is a serious problem in Africa that must be addressed if the continent must develop.

In the novel, the rich-poor binary is represented by Ugwu, Aunty Ifeka, Uncle Mbaezi, among others on the one hand, and Olanna, Kainene, Chief Ozobia and wife and Chief Okonji, on the other hand. The educated-uneducated binary scheme can be discussed using Odenigbo and Ugwu. But it is interesting how Ugwu, through the help and encouragement of Odenigbo and the nurturing of Olanna, grows up to be so educated and so knowledgeable that he could even teach other children as part of his war effort (298). The men-women binary scheme involves Odenigbo and Olanna, Richard and Kainene, among others, while the adults-children binary structure places Odenigbo and Ugwu, Olanna and Baby, and so on. Adichie dramatises the imperative of valuing all human beings irrespective of age, race, class and gender, if society must survive.

In her *Americanah*, which is a much more complex work in terms of its centre-other subjectivity and multicultural texture, the major characters, Obinze, Ifemelu and Aunty Uju find themselves slaving abroad because of the incompetence of the political leadership back home. This justifies why African leadership needs to be re-envisioned if Africa must survive, for slavery cannot end for Africans if there is no leadership back home. As usual, the quality of leadership is inferred by the welfare of the followership. The poor-rich binary structure is, at one point or the other, occupied by Obinze, Ifemelu, Aunty Uju, Ifemelu's parents, and so on, and Curt, the General and Chief. The process that leads to the change in the circumstances of the characters is tear-inducing. Any achievement that reduces an individual's humanity is not worth the name at all.

Most of the characters are also seen moving from their position of ignorance to the position of knowledge and strength' but this is through the hard way – their experiences. Knowledge is an armoury, so now we know that the Diaspora is more alienating and humiliating than previously conceived. One has to lose one's self, one's identity and one's dignity in order to survive. If home was better, if education back home was even average, if the poverty back home was not so unbearable, what would they have left their country to suffer in another man's land for? No wonder Ifemelu returns to Nigeria once she has achieved her dreams in America because home is the place to be. But others cannot return because they know what awaits them if they dare to. This is because back home, the leaders wreck the economy and, in the words of Ojukwu, prefer to purchase rather than produce (Because I am Involved, 89). And these problems are caused by Africans themselves through the cultivation of greed in the corridors of power, through the enthronement of inept and cruel leadership, which is why post-postcolonialism is born – to tackle evil leadership in Africa. As the character Laura notes, it is 'Horrible, what's going on in African countries' (*Americanah*, 173). While appreciating the reason most Africans are eager to flee their countries to the apparent safety of foreign lands, post-postcolonialism decries the excessive 'escapist' mentality of most Africans. The fact that at the slightest discomfort, most Africans run away to Europe and America has ensured that the evil leadership in Africa continues unchallenged, whether in a military dictatorship or democratic regime. As Adichie's *Americanah* reveals, Africans should realise that Europe and America may not be the heaven they envisaged after all. When Africans come to the knowledge that they do not have another home/continent other than Africa, they will try to stay at home and resist evil leadership until Africa becomes a place to proudly call home.

The men-women dialectics reflects in the relationship between Obinze and Ifemelu, Obinze and Kosi, among others, while the adults-children binary scheme reflects in the relationship between Aunty Uju and Dike, Ifemelu and Dike, Obinze and Buchi, among others. It is quite unfortunate that while Aunty Uju and Ifemelu work so hard to restore the cerebral wholeness of Dike through the showering of unconditional love, care and attention, Obinze is eager to end his marriage of many years without considering the effect this will have on Buchi. In post-postcolonialism, however, actions must be taken after due consideration of their impacts on the 'Other' members of the race no matter how small they may be.

II. CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to formalise an approach to the reading of texts in African postcolonial discourse. The approach is referred to as post-postcolonialism. It begins by elevating the former Other to the level of a Centre and then creating a new Other. This at once exposes the structures that preclude Africa's effort at development and justifies the belief that more attention should be paid to the enemies within than to the one without. And this enemy is Leadership. The paper maintains that Africa has a serious leadership lacuna and urges on the Followership to rise to its responsibility of enthroning the right leadership on the continent. The analysis of the selected literary texts show the realities of these anti-development structures, which in turn gives credence to the call on all writers and critics to adopt the post-postcolonial posturing in their creed and hermeneutics.

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