

ENG882 - COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN FICTION

Course Developer/Writer

Dr. Adebola Adetunmbi
Department of English,
Lagos State University
Ojo, Lagos State
adebola63@yahoo.com

Course Editor

Professor Saleh Abdu
Department of Languages
Federal University, Kashere
Gombe State
salehabdukwami@gmail.com

Course Coordinator

Dr. Bridget A. Yakubu
Department of Languages
National Open University of
Nigeria
Jabi, Abuja
ayakubu@noun.edu.ng



National Open University of Nigeria

University Village

91, Cadastral Zone,

Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway,

Abuja, FCT.

Lagos Annex

14/16, Ahmadu Bello Way,

Victoria Island,

Lagos

e-mail: centralinfo@nou.edu.ng

URL: www.nou.edu.ng

ENG 882: COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN FICTION

(Conflict, Tradition, Encounters, Exile & Migration, Gender)



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

ENG882: Comparative Studies in Fiction is a course compact on comparative fiction, as distinct from general literature. General Literature, according to Tieghem, refers to all researches underlying the common properties of a number of literatures, be it reciprocal relation or congruency. General Literature studies those movements and fashions which transcend national lines (Cao, 2013: 20). National Literature is the literature produced by citizens of a particular nation. It is one way of grouping literature (e.g. American literature, British literature, French literature) as an expression of the national spirit and an essential element in the formation of national character. It is not merely the record of a country's mental progress: it is the expression of its intellectual life, the bond of national unity, and the guide of national energy'' (jstor.com/org>stable.). World Literature is the sum total of the world's national literatures and their circulation into the wider world beyond their country of origin. Though it initially refers to the masterpieces of Western European Literature, it is seen today in global context, thanks to the emergence of the ideas of Poststructuralist theories, namely Deconstruction and Post-colonialism, etc. which have ruptured the Eurocentric notion of the canon and paved the way for literature from non-western nations of African, Asia, Latin America, etc. to be included in the western-dominated canon.

Basically, ENG882 works from different languages; it may also be applied to works written in the same language if they originate from different nations/cultures in which that language is found. Due to its characteristically intercultural and transnational nature, the course concerns itself with the relation between literatures,

broadly defined, and other spheres of human activity like history, politics, philosophy, art and science.

ENG882 demands that students have knowledge of one, or two, or more national literatures within the context of cross cultural and interdisciplinary approaches. This course investigates literary movements, literary periods, genres and themes in world literature. A fair knowledge of basic concepts of literature and of the works in the canon of western and non-western literatures will greatly enhance students' understanding of the course. The course compact is divided into five parts: Traditions, Conflict, Encounters, Gender and Exile & Alienation. The topics are explored with select texts from different regions to underscore key engagements of socio-political and cultural dynamics which will create an understanding of the realities of the African continent as compared with and in relation to the rest of the World. African-American and Caribbean prose fiction are also given priority because of the historical link with Africa. Texts are selected on basis of thematic and stylistic similarities; comparison takes off from the analysis of these similarities before proceeding to the peculiarities engendered by the uniqueness of perspective as shaped by geographical region.

What You Will Learn in this Course

Learning objectives will be met through a combination of lectures, class works, discussions and assignments and seminar presentations. In the course of the interactive lectures, students will be encouraged to demonstrate their ability not only to distinguish between national/general and world literatures but also identify universal features of all literatures and relate these to specific literary works.

Working through this Course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and other related materials you can lay your hands on. Each unit contains self-assessment exercises, which you are expected to use in assessing your understanding of the course. At the end of this course is a final examination.

Course Materials

Major components of this course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignment File
5. Presentation Schedule

Study Units

There are twenty units in this course as follows:

MODULE 1: CONFLICT

Unit 1: Conceptual Clarifications: Conflict As A Device Of Plot Development, Types Of Conflict, Determinism

Unit 2: Precursors to Empire Re-Narration: Humanity as a Prerequisite to Discourse on Conflict in Literature

Unit 3: Aesthetics of Conflict and the Beginnings of Modern African Prose Fiction: the Empire Writes Back

Unit 4: Cultural Conflict: Assimilation versus Association and Modern African Prose Fiction

Unit 5: Conjectures and Prescriptions on Neocolonial Ruptures: Comparing el Nathan's *Born on a Tuesday* and Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*

MODULE 2: ENCOUNTERS

Unit 1 Literature of Discovery: Encounter as Motif in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*

Unit 2 Post-colonialism: Theorising Encounters and Its Aftermath in Literature of Encounter

Unit 3 Modern African Prose Fiction and Tell-Tale Signs of Encounters

Unit 4 Prose Fiction and The Black Diaspora: Cultural Survivals and Double Consciousness

Unit 5 Migrant Prose Fiction and Encounters

MODULE 3: EXILE AND ALIENATION

Unit 1 Societal Context: Migration as Catalyst of Alienation & Crisis of Identity

Unit 2 Narrative Point of View as Tool: Themes of Race, Immigration & Alienation in *Americanah* & *The Lonely Londoners*

Unit 3 Psychological Alienation: Comparison of Characterization & Plot in *The Lonely Londoners* & *Americanah*

Unit 4 Creolization and Engli-Igbo: Language as Identity in Exile, a Comparison of *Americanah* & *The Lonely Londoners*

Unit 5 Critical Evaluation and Comparison of Cross-Cultural and Inter-racial Relationships

MODULE 4: GENDER

Unit 1 Synopsis & Thematic Comparison: *Nervous Conditions* & *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Unit 2 Compounding Gender Repression: Assimilation & Abolitionism as Catalysts

Unit 3 Psychosis as Consequence of Gender Repression in *Wide Sargasso Sea* & *Nervous Conditions*: Comparative Analysis

Unit 4 Survival or Submergence? Overcoming 'Otherness' Across Generations: Comparative Analysis of *Nervous Conditions* & *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Unit 5: Centurial Perpetuity in Stereotypes of Male Domination

Textbooks and References

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Assignment File

This file contains the details of all the assignments you must do and submit to your tutor for marking. The mark you obtain from these assignments will form part of the final mark you will obtain in this course.

Presentation Schedule

The presentation schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of your tutor-marked assignments and when you will attend tutorials. Remember that you are required to submit your assignments according to the schedule.

Assessment

There are two aspects of assignment in this course. The first aspect includes all the tutor-marked assignments, while the second is the written examination.

In tackling the assignments, you are expected to apply the information and knowledge you acquired during the course.

The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment file. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment account for 30% of the total mark accruing to the course.

At the end of the course, you will sit for a final three-hour examination that will carry 70% of the total course mark.

Tutor-Marked Assignment

Each unit has a tutor-marked assignment. You are expected to submit all the assignments. You should be able to do the assignments from the knowledge you derived from the course, and information you acquired from the textbooks.

When you have completed the assignment for each unit, send it along with your TMA (tutor-marked assignment) form to your tutor. Make sure that the completed assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline in the assignment file. If you cannot complete your assignment on time due to a cogent reason, consult your tutor for possible extension of time.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination for ENG882 will be for the duration of three hours. The examination will carry 70%. It will consist of questions that will reflect the type of self-testing practice exercises and tutor-marked assignments you have come across. All areas of the course will be examined.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for examination. You will find the revision of your tutor-marked assignments equally useful.

Course Marking Scheme

The table below shows how actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignment 1 - 3	Three assignments will be given which will count as 30% of course mark
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the study units replace the university lecture. This is one of the advantages of distance learning: you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set for you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read

your set books or other materials. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate time.

Each of the study units are written according to common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives guide you on what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have completed the units, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. This habit will improve your chance of passing the course.

READING SECTION

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. So, when you need help of any sort, call on him or her. Do not fail to do so.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly
2. Organise a study schedule or time table. Refer to the course overview for more detail. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit, and how the assignments relate to the units.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason students fail is that they lag behind in their course work. If you get into any difficulty with your schedule, do let your tutor know it before it is too late for help.
4. Turn to unit one and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.

5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the overview at the beginning of each unit. You will always almost need both the study unit you are working on and one of your books on your table at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor- marked assignment form and also on what is written on the assignment. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Ensure that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

11. Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

There are eight hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, time and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, email, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you will find help necessary.

Contact Your Tutor If:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings
- You have difficulty with these If-tests or exercises
- You have a question or problem with an assignment, your tutor's comments on an assignment, or with the grading of an assignment

You should try your best to attend tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

All the best!

MODULE I – CONFLICT

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The course is an exploration of conflict with emphasis on the African continent in relation to the West. Thus, the course is organised chronologically to reflect the African experience from the transatlantic slave trade through imperialism to neo-colonialism. Western texts and African texts dealing with the issues surrounding these phases are sampled in order to fulfil the comparative intent of the course. Since African literature is not monolithic and acquires varying textures and flavours based on regions, some modules involve the comparison of texts that fall along different sides of the colonial divide in the African continent. Essentially, the main matters for reflection are issues relating to the African socio-political realities as engendered by the contact with the West and the varying literary dialogues such contact has occasioned.

This is a course in comparative fiction. Conflict is examined as a device of plot development, as well as, as theme and aesthetics in fiction. Each module, built around a comparative analysis of two prose fiction, works towards understanding the varying faces of conflict in prose fiction.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, the students should be able to:

1. Explain the concept of conflict in literature.

2. Relate the understanding of conflict in literature to modern African prose fiction through its evolution from pre-colonial to post-colonial times.

MODULE 1 OUTLINE

Unit 1 - Conceptual Clarifications: Conflict As A Device Of Plot Development, Types Of Conflict, Determinism.

Unit 2 - Precursors to Empire Re-Narration: Humanity as a Prerequisite to Discourse on Conflict in Literature

Unit 3 - Aesthetics Of Conflict And The Beginnings Of Modern African Prose Fiction: The Empire Writes Back

Unit 4 - Cultural Conflict: Assimilation Versus Association And Modern African Prose Fiction

Unit 5 - Conjectures And Prescriptions On Neocolonial Ruptures: Comparing El Nathan's *Born On A Tuesday* And Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*

READING LIST

PRIMARY TEXTS

1. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
2. Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*
3. Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*
4. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
5. Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*

6. Thomas Mofolo, *Chaka*
7. El Nathan, *Born on a Friday*
8. Chigozie Obioma, *The Fishermen*
9. Ferdinand Oyono, *Houseboy*
10. Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

SECONDARY TEXTS

Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*

Ashcroft B. et al. *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*

Aime Césaire. *Discourse on Colonialism*

Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Mask*

_____. *The Wretched of The Earth*

M.H Abrams. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*

UNIT 1:- CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS: CONFLICT AS A DEVICE OF PLOT DEVELOPMENT, TYPES OF CONFLICT, DETERMINISM

Description

This module will undertake conceptual clarifications of the terms “conflict” and “determinism” in prose fiction. Two texts (Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*) will be juxtaposed in order to illustrate the two concepts.

OBJECTIVES

The students at the end of the module should be able to:

1. Define the concept of Conflict in relation to fiction.
2. Explain the various types of conflict in relation to the select literary works.
3. Relate the concept of determinism to conflict in literature.

INTRODUCTION

The term “conflict” in relation to literature may refer to conflict as a literary device or as a theme and aesthetic in a literary work. As a literary device, conflict in literature is plot tension, opposition between or among characters or forces in a literary work that shapes or motivates the action of the plot (*Encarta* 2015). When explored thematically or aesthetically in imaginative fiction, conflict is the preoccupation of the author with issues that mirror discord, dissonance and its

resolution in the society. Imaginative literature thrives on the existence, portrayal and resolution of conflict both as device and as theme.

TYPES OF CONFLICT

Five types of conflict have been identified in literature:

1. **Intrapersonal conflict:** Intrapersonal conflict in a literary work is when a character has to triumph over personality flaws or natural disposition in order to achieve a goal. A good example is Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* (2015). Ikenna has to struggle against the seed planted in him by the prophecy of the mad man, Abulu. As Ben narrates: "The fear, after destroying Ikenna's well-being, health and faith, destroyed his relationships, the closest of which was with us, his brothers. *It seemed that he had fought the internal battle for too long, and now wanted to get it over with*" (122). The conflict which drives the narrative in this regard is an intrapersonal conflict. Ikenna loses the battle against his natural disposition and this becomes his ultimate undoing. His very nature leaves him vulnerable to the seed sown in his mind by Abulu's prophecy. It is against his own impressionable nature that he must wage a battle.

2. **Interpersonal conflict:** In this regard, characters are pitted against each other. The protagonist has to surmount obstacles towards achieving an end which is embodied by the antagonist. An example of interpersonal conflict is depicted in Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* (1976). Oshevire and Toje are sworn enemies. At times, the conflict between two characters is a means of evaluating ideological intricacies. A woman's conflict with a man, for instance, could provide the occasion for espousing the feminist ideology, as may be exemplified by Buchi Emecheta's

Second Class Citizen. The conflict between an oppressive rich man and a poor man is an interpersonal conflict that is a linchpin for interacting with the dynamics of the Marxist ideology.

3. **Man against Society:** In a work of prose fiction whose plot is driven by tension between man and society, we have the story of an individual who locks horns with his society. An example of this is Achebe's *Arrow of God*. Ezeulu, the priest of Ulu, stands apart like a sore thumb from the rest of his society just like the lawyer, Atticus Finch, in the racist society in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In such narratives, even when the protagonist is defeated by the forces of the society, he is still an impressive character from the grandness of his ambition in challenging his society, particularly when the society is in the wrong.

4. **Man against Nature:** Such prose narratives depict the experience of the individual who must pit his will against the hostile forces of nature. He must demonstrate his strength by succeeding in spite of the roadblocks which nature throws across his path. The old man, Santiago, in Ernest Hemmingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* is a good example of a character who engages in a brawl against nature. He takes on the sea in the battle to cancel his bad luck. To a large extent, this clash may be analysed as a metaphorical depiction of overwhelming conflict with undefeatable forces.

5. **Man against Technology:** The conflict between man and technology is depicted in science fiction. The protagonist has to succumb to ills brought about by technological or scientific advancements. A good example is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

It is essential to note that conflict in society usually mirrors societal realities. It is therefore no great wonder that moments of great tumult in human history have birthed towering works of literature. Out of the destruction of the slave trade came classics such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, racist America birthed Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The encounter between Africa and the West which led to the subjugation and colonisation of Africa produced great literary works such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* amongst others. The postcolonial era in Africa and the following disillusionment and neo-colonialism has produced a canon of works of great literary merits.

DETERMINISM: A COMPARATIVE READING OF RALPH ELLISON'S *INVISIBLE MAN* AND CHINUA ACHEBE'S *NO LONGER AT EASE*

Determinism is a philosophical concept which holds "...that everything, including every human act, is caused by something and that there is no freewill" (*Encarta* 2015). In literature, the concepts of determinism and conflict are closely linked. While to identify conflict in a literary work is to identify a clash, to examine the conflict against the backdrop of determinism is to leave room for the analytic posturing that the outcome of such conflict has been determined. An example that may illustrate the notion of determinism is Atticus Finch's statement in Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960):

I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know that you are licked before you begin

but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do” (*To Kill...*116)

Narratives that subscribe to the notion of determinism hold that the hero is defeated even before he commences the fight. Thus, he becomes a hero for being willing to pick a fight with the society in compliance with his notion of good and bad, right and wrong, despite knowing that he is defeated to begin with. In this module, Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1947) and Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (1960) are examined side by side in order to get a good understanding of the concept of conflict and determinism in African-American and African prose writing especially as it relates to the reality of the black man in a world in the creation of which he had no say.

Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1947) is the story of a nameless protagonist, a young African-American man who does not believe in the racist system and seeks to assert himself by finding favour with the authorities. Herein lay the conflict in the narrative. Invisible Man pits himself against a racist society. He is not deterred by his wrongful humiliation in the South. He however finds himself in situations that keep foiling his attempts towards self-assertion. These situations push him to the North bearing the letter of Bledsoe which is guaranteed to keep him running in the “...direction of that promise which, like the horizon, recedes ever brightly and distantly beyond the hopeful traveller” (156). He is later to discover that as long as his actions are impelled or motivated by whites, he is on an unending race. His dead grandpa, way back from the slave era knows this truth that only years could reveal. In his dream, he sees his grandpa and the exchange between them reveals the wild

goose chase the system represents to a young man who looks to the white race for self-validation. This happens on the night he gets the scholarship after a dehumanising day at the end of which he had strutted in front of his grandfather's portrait with the suitcase. In the dream, his grandfather, apparently unimpressed by the scholarship Invisible Man just won, instructs him to open his brief case:

...and read what was inside and I did, finding an official envelope stamped with the state seal; and inside the envelope I found another and another, endlessly, and I thought I would fall of weariness. "Them's years," he said. "Now open that one." And I did and in it I found an engraved document containing a short message in letters of gold. "Read it," my grandfather said. "Out loud." "To Whom It May Concern," I intoned. "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running." (28)

Invisible Man discovers that as long as the rules of the race are made by the racist system, as long as that flawed system decides the winners and losers, there is not much hope for the coloured person. Hence, Jonathan Baumbach (1971: 64-65) notes the "invisibility and phantasmagoria of the Negro's life" when he asserts that: "The Negro's life in our white land and time is, as Ellison knows it, a relentless unreality, unreal in that the Negro as a group is loved, hated, persecuted, feared and envied, while as an individual, he is unfelt, unheard, unseen – to all intents and purposes invisible." Invisible Man attempts to defy the societally imposed invisibility on the coloured man but loses the battle. His fate to be invisible is so set in stone that he is not mentioned by name for once in the text.

Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* is the story of Obi Okonkwo, two generations away from the Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart*. Obi seeks to distinguish himself in the civil service in postcolonial Nigeria. However, he finds that despite having acquired an enviable western education, he cannot be the sophisticated man he seeks to be. The ghost of his traditional background haunts him until he stoops to indulge in bribery

and corruption. To all observers, as Achebe points out, it seems unusual: “Everybody wondered why (152). However, the reader who witnesses the chain of events cannot but agree the disaster which befalls Obi Okonkwo is almost inevitable. Corruption is everywhere around him. In fact, at his job interview, he is asked: “Why do you want to take a job in the Civil Service? So that you can take bribes?” (36). That appears to be the expectation of everyone around him. His townspeople do not see his undoing as corruption but inexperienced dabbling into corruption: “ ‘It is all lack of experience. He should not have accepted the money by himself. What others do is tell you to go and hand it to their houseboy. Obi tried to do what everyone does without finding out how it is done’ (5).

In the two narratives that have been examined, the intent of the writer who subscribes to determinism is made clear. The stance is that sometimes, it is not the individual who needs to be fixed, it is the society. Belief in the need for structural change fuels various ideologies such as feminism, Marxism, post-colonialism, etc. Failure to change the social order merely condemns the protagonist even before he is capable of action. The social structure cancels out his ingenuity and ambition.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TEXTS

1. They belong to the canon of work collectively referred to as black literature.
2. The ideology underlying the texts is fatalistic. The authors tout that the society is the source of conflict confronting the characters and the society. The character who seeks to strike out and stand apart is doomed.

3. The two characters, Invisible Man of Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Obi Okonkwo are members of society created by the white man. Thus, the underlying message appears to be that the black man is doomed in the construct laid down by The West.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO TEXTS

1. While Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* belongs to the African-American literary tradition which had attained maturity at the time of its publication, Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* is relatively
2. In the American society mirrored by Ellison, racism prevails. Invisible Man's undoing is strongly tied to racial discrimination. Obi Okonkwo, on the other hand, is the scapegoat whose doom is spelt by the mere fact that he exists at the meeting point of two cultures, western which refuse to be blended.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What is the relationship between determinism and conflict in literature?
2. What bearing does the concept of determinism have on Modern African prose fiction?

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UNIT 2: PRECURSORS TO EMPIRE RE-NARRATION: HUMANITY AS A PREREQUISITE TO DISCOURSE ON CONFLICT IN LITERATURE

RECAP OF PREVIOUS UNIT: *In the previous lesson, the concept of conflict as both theme and device was explored. Furthermore, four types of conflicts were identified in prose fiction. The previous lesson also emphasised the place of determinism in the discourse on conflict. A comparative analysis of Richard Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* in order to situate the discourse on conflict within the reality of the black race as depicted in black literature. The two texts illustrate strong deterministic intents as they depict the reality of the black race in a world which is dominated by the West. Therefore, the previous module served as a background for examining socio-political and historical conflicts that have characterised the black man's existence as a result of colonialism and post-colonialism, which will be examined in subsequent modules.*

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the student should be able to:

1. Elaborate further on the concept of conflict and its relation to humanity and the post-colonial discourse in literature,
2. Compare and contrast Eurocentric and Afrocentric representations of the African identity,
3. Articulate the background issues preceding the body of writings referred to as empire re-narration.

INTRODUCTION

It is noteworthy that conflict is most importantly, a clash of will between two opposing vital forces. Therefore, scholarship on literary interpretation hardly leaves room for conflict between man and things. In the colonial context, the black man is more or less an object. Aime Cesaire (1955) famously said colonisation 'thingifies'

black people. Modern African Prose Fiction asserts the humanity of the black man. It is therefore only natural that the portrayal of conflict in relation to the identity of Africans in narratives is influenced by the side the author stands on in the coloniser and colonised divide.

While Modern African Prose Fiction is especially preoccupied with the representation of self which has been maligned by colonialist writings, it will even be more fallacious to maintain that early modern African literature existed only as a conscious counter-narrative to European literature. Modern African Prose Fiction to a large extent is a reaction to the western incursion into Africa and the resulting socio-political realities of transatlantic slavery, colonialism, post-colonialism, and neocolonialism. But, there are works, such as Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* which exist on their own and not in relation to the provocation the misrepresentation of the African history engenders.

Of course, the canon of European literature has many books which create false historical representation of black Africans. This may be attributed to the constant infantilization of the black man in the colonial era and the era preceding it. As Frantz Fanon observes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) regarding the relations between white French men and negroes during the colonial encounter: "A white man addressing a Negro behaves exactly like an adult with a child and starts smirking, whispering, patronising...it is not one white man I have watched, but hundreds, and I have not limited my investigation to any one class... (89)."

Fortunately, where narratives exist to denigrate African history, there are African narratives that fulfil the end of cultural vindication. These are writings that celebrate

the African past. Bodies of works pre-date the body of writings which have come to be known in scholarship on postcolonial literature as Empire Re-narration which were purposefully fashioned to be rebuttals to racist texts which furthered colonialist aims. The African prose fiction narrative selected for analysis, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (1931) pre-dates these texts. It exists as a testament to a vibrant African history without situating the discourse against the colonial experience. In this module, a comparative analysis of Mofolo's *Chaka* and Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* (1855) will be undertaken for two reasons. Not only are they both depictions of Africans, they both present Africans facing forms of conflict and negotiating their ways around it. They therefore are a form of interracial dialogue on the historical identity of Africa and the portrait of the pre-colonial African, pre-dating the literary mission of re-narrating the empire and the exchange it occasioned. They also serve as texts illustrating richly the concept of conflict in literature. Essentially, the comparison of the two texts is to underscore how the complexity and manipulation of conflict in the literary work on a people is pre-requisite towards the perception of their humanity.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HERMAN MELVILLE'S *BENITO CERENO* AND THOMAS MOFOLO'S *CHAKA*

Published in the year 1855 on the heels of abolitionist and pro-slave trade arguments and counterarguments, *Benito Cereno* is geared towards the destruction of the illusion of the West in relation to the presumed complacency and childlikeness of the black slave. It is the fictional account of a slave uprising aboard a Spanish slave ship; it is told through the eyes of Delano, a North American. Delano spots a Spanish

slavery ship. Essentially, *Benito Cereno* is a forecast of the series of black resistance movements that would rock the boat of the complacent westerner who deludes himself into believing black Africans are unthinking objects incapable of an uprising. *Benito Cereno* is the story of Africans newly caught in slavery told by the white man. It is of great significance that while Delano chooses to see black people as unthinking beings incapable of a revolt, they sharpen their hatchets right under his nose. He opts to see it as a task they have been set upon by the white captain: "All six... had the raw aspect of unsophisticated Africans" (6). *Benito Cereno* is an attempt by Melville to draw the attention of the white slavers to what Melville appears to perceive as the budding sophistication of the African which could end up being the undoing of the white race. Although Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*, takes a different route from the literary works of his era, for example, Caroline Hentz' *The Planter's Northern Bride* (1854), the wonder of Delano and the white court at the successful uprising of the black slaves is ultimately condescending and even becomes more shocking when the narrative is read side by side with Mofolo's *Chaka* (1931). The Westerner fails to see slavery as a form of inter-personal conflict which sets black people against white people. This is as a result of the objectification of the black race. It is for this very reason that the uprising comes as a shock. In the construct of colonialism, the colonised is robbed of his humanity, there is therefore no room for the acknowledgement of inter-personal conflict where the white slaver and the black slaved is concerned. This, to a large extent, is the impetus behind the narrative, *Benito Cereno*.

Mofolo's *Chaka* exists as a foil to *Benito Cereno* because it depicts black people dealing with complexities and negotiating conflicts among themselves. Sezangakhona, for instance, confronted by societal disapproval disowns Chaka. Chaka himself is opposed by the society who despise him for his status as an illegitimate son. Isanusi makes Chaka undergo an intrapersonal conflict where he has to choose between the paths of good and evil.

The build up to Chaka's tragedy is the collision of various forces. Chaka's tragedy is not any less grand than Marlowe's *Faustus* or Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. *Chaka* is the historical fiction detailing the birth, rise, fall of Chaka and the creation of the Zulu tribe. Chaka's political strategy and unparalleled military tactics is described thus by Mofolo: "Soon after the killing of the cowards Chaka sent an expedition southward. He finished off the remnants of the Maqwabe, and then fought with Mafuze, Bathembu, and the Machunu. Those were the first nations to be scattered by Chaka with his combined forces, made up of local and drafted foreign armies" (135). Conflict is inevitable in human society. War as detailed in *Chaka* is upfront. The Africans fight like true warriors, unlike the Africans in *Benito Cereno* whose uprising is characterised by sneakiness. It is almost impossible to imagine that Africa is made up of strong people of valour on reading *Benito Cereno*. When read side by side, Mofolo's *Chaka* is a rebuttal to Melville's *Benito Cereno* and its tone of incredulity at the ingenuity of Africans and the possibility of Africans being actors in a conflict. The tone in *Benito Cereno* in recounting the uprising has the surprise that ought to belong to witnesses to a monkey's performance of the graceful salsa dance. It expresses great surprise at witnessing an ounce of humanity and courage in

black Africans. *Chaka* on the other hand presents Africans navigating multi-layered forms of inter- and intra-personal conflicts and provides a multi-dimensional portrait of Africa before the Empire narratives.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO NARRATIVES

1. *Benito Cereno* and *Chaka* are both narratives that portray Africans in the face of conflict.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO NARRATIVES

1. While *Benito Cereno* is a Eurocentric text which under-represents the identity of the African, *Chaka* celebrates the African identity.
2. Conflict in *Chaka* is presented in a matter-of-fact way which does not give room for the questioning of the status of Africans as full-fledged human beings; Delano, on the other hand, expresses surprise that Africans are capable of asserting themselves as humans in the face of conflict with the European. This reveals the perception of Africans as subhuman by the narrator.
3. *Benito Cereno* shows Africans in captivity, while *Chaka* depicts Africans and their decisions under conditions vastly different from the realities of captivity and slavery.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Is there a relationship between the portrayal of conflict in a text and the disposition of the author/narrator towards the people being portrayed?

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UNIT 3: AESTHETICS OF CONFLICT AND THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN AFRICAN PROSE FICTION: THE EMPIRE WRITES BACK

RECAP: *The previous unit explores the relationship between conflict and humanity, especially as it relates to issues of African humanity in the context of colonisation. Mofolo's Chaka and Melville's Benito Cereno exist at opposite ends with Chaka portraying African characters navigating an intricate web of conflict while Melville's Delano cannot even spot the inter-personal conflict going on under his nose simply because he doubts the humanity of the black slaves.*

OBJECTIVES

The students at the end of the module should be able to:

1. Discuss the impetus behind texts regarded as Empire writings,
2. Compare and contrast Eurocentric and Afrocentric texts on African identity against the backdrop of a solid comprehension of the mission of Empire re-narrations.

INTRODUCTION

The West maintained that Africans were subhuman with no tangible civilisation pre-dating western incursion into Africa. This assumption holds that Africa had no history, no culture, no literature. Isidore Okpewho (1985) summarises this disposition:

There used to be a widely-held view among European anthropologists who studied African societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—that there was

nothing of true poetic merit in African oral literature. Poetry, these scholars argued, is a mark of an advanced culture or civilisation and the business of men of specialized skill and training who devote their time to observing and commenting on life with beauty and seriousness (4).

The belief that Africans were sub-humans birthed several literary works which denigrated Africans. Therefore, the prose fiction which emerged in Africa in the 1950's into the early '60's are preoccupied with self and the reconstruction of the African identity. They are purposeful rebuttals to colonialist writings. They were written with the intention of righting colonialist misrepresentation of the African identity. In this context, we have art deliberately being fashioned as a weapon of decolonization. These texts are captioned "Empire Writes Back" (Empire Re-Narration) with reference to Salman Rushdie's 1982 essay entitled "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance". The prose fiction regarded as Empire Re-Narrations interrogate the colonial legacy in literature. As Achebe (1975) explains concerning the impetus behind writing the quintessential *Things Fall Apart*, there was the need to rehabilitate the African past, to prove that the African past was not a long story of barbarity. In this module, *Heart of Darkness* and *Season of Migration to the North* will be compared.

A COMPARATIVE READING OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS* AND TAYEB SALIH'S *SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH*

Chief among texts that perpetuated the myth of the black race is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which is only one of a body of western works which depict Africans as brutes and barbarians lacking in sophistication and culture. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) is a novella which is regarded as a classic of

European literature. Achebe (1975) famously denounced the European classic as “an offensive and deplorable book... [which] blinkered with xenophobia.” Furthermore, he condemns the portrayal of *Heart of Darkness* as a classic, insisting that a book which... “depersonalises a portion of the human race” should not be considered a classic. Naturally, it is a text which has been the trigger to many empire re-narrations, including Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1969).

Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* is regarded as a classic African novel which re-writes the colonial story. Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* is not merely an attempt at decolonisation, it is an inversion of the colonial experience.

When Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* are juxtaposed, they represent an exchange between coloniser and colonised. The former represents the colonialist mentality while the latter represents a sophisticated rebuttal asserting the humanity of the colonised subject while questioning the culture of the West. To buttress this assertion, excerpts from the two texts will suffice. Captain Marlow in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, on his arrival in Africa, condescendingly remarks:

Imagine him here – the very end of the world, a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke, a kind of ship about as rigid as a concertina – and going up this river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sand-banks, marshes, forests, savages, – precious little to eat fit for a civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink (4)

When five men are on a boat, four of whom are black Africans, the protagonist describes the scene thus: “As to me, I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time. It was a distinct glimpse: the dugout, four paddling savages, and the lone white man” (9).

Here are only two of the numerous racist descriptions of Africans in a narrative in which Africans are generally portrayed as lazy, childish and barbaric.

In *Season of Migration to the North*, it is an African, Mustafa Sa'eed who travels to Europe. Mustafa Sa'eed is beloved of the West. He is very well educated. He is a man of learning and culture, a making of the British. He is the representation of the perfectly civilised African. However, he only becomes a seed of destruction to the foreign women who come across him. He sexually subdues them. These women may be taken as symbols of foreign countries. *Season of Migration to the North* inverts the narration of colonisation as told by Conrad. Wail S. Hassan in his introduction to the text identifies *Season of Migration to the North* as one of the “counter-narratives” to the colonial texts. *Season of Migration to the North* is a decolonising text that reverses the patriarchy of colonialism. Mustafa Sa'eed, an Arab-African, “colonises” the West through his sexual escapades with European women. He also leads Sheila Greenwood to her death. The climax of the tragedy of the meeting of North and South is dramatised at the death of Jean Morris. The meeting of the two leads to tragedy. Essentially, Salih is forcing the West to confront the ghost of their sins to Africa.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TEXTS

1. They both deal with the topic of encounters.
2. Furthermore, they are narratives of cultural clashes.
3. To an extent, Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* is a mirror image of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TEXTS

1. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* portrays Africa as the heart of darkness while Salih presents his Egypt in exotic terms in order to seduce the women he meets.
2. *Heart of Darkness* is a Eurocentric text while *Season of Migration to the North* is an Afrocentric text.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What are the key features of texts referred to as "Empire Writes Back"?
2. How is *Season of Migration to the north* an inversion of *Heart of Darkness*?
3. It has been disputed by certain scholars that *Heart of Darkness* is not a racist novel, that rather, it is to be considered a text which exemplifies realism. What are some of the points offered as counterarguments to Achebe's denunciation of *Heart of Darkness* as a racist text? To what extent do you agree with such scholars' assertions?

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UNIT 4: CULTURAL CONFLICT: ASSIMILATION VERSUS ASSOCIATION AND MODERN AFRICAN PROSE FICTION

RECAP: *The previous unit examines the conflict which impelled the beginnings of modern African prose fiction which are preoccupied with the purposeful rebuttals to colonial writings on Africa. These writings which are referred to as empire re-narrations undo the misrepresentation by engaging issues which centre on existence in a colonial set up. It is essentially an engagement of the conflict that characterises Western and African encounters by comparing narrations from different sides of the divide.*

OBJECTIVES

The students at the end of the module should be able to:

1. Compare the British policy of association and the French policy of assimilation in West Africa.
2. Articulate the tragedy which was borne of cultural conflict in Africa.

Description

This unit undertakes a different form of comparative analysis of the conflict occasioned by the Western incursion in Africa. However, it is the comparison of two West African works which fall on different sides of the linguistic divide (English and French) and hence, experienced colonialism under different masters. Cultural conflict is explored as experienced by West Africans under the colonial policies of assimilation and association.

INTRODUCTION

Fourteen countries were gathered at the Berlin Conference of 1884-5 to decide the future of Africa and their holdings in the continent. The fourteen countries represented at the conference are Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden-Norway, Turkey and the United States of America. At the end of the conference, Africa had been divided into fifty countries. Great Britain left with a slice of Africa that comprised Egypt, Sudan (Anglo-Egyptian Sudan), Uganda, Kenya (British East Africa), South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Botswana; Nigeria and Ghana (Gold Coast). France got control of most of West Africa from Mauritania to Chad and Gabon and the Republic of Congo. To Belgium went the Democratic Republic of Congo. Portugal had Mozambique and Angola. Italy took Somalia and a portion of Ethiopia; Germany took Namibia and Tanzania. Spain's holding was Equatorial Guinea. Britain and France were the major colonial powers in Africa. Colonisation, like every other institution which brings two peoples together, was the meeting point of two cultures. However, as has been proven by texts such as Melville's *Benito Cereno* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the West saw the African culture as fundamentally inferior to theirs. Therefore, it was expedient to the colonial framework that strategies such as assimilation and association were implemented. In comparing Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the effect of cultural conflict in Francophone and Anglophone Africa are underscored and compared against the backdrop of colonisation.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL CONFLICT AND ITS IMPLICATION IN FERDINAND OYONO'S *HOUSEBOY* CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* is a quintessential narrative when it comes to exploring the cultural clash occasioned by the French policy of assimilation in Francophone Africa. The narrator is Toundi, a young boy who seeks to become a Frenchman under France's policy of assimilation but eventually comes to the realization that the African is a mere disposable plaything to the westerners and that assimilation, to a large extent, is a myth. That Africans are mere playthings to the colonialists is really borne out in the scenario where Father Gilbert throws lumps of sugar to the natives, as though he were throwing corns to chickens (10). The ensuing scramble not only leaves a trail of swollen eyes, bleeding noses and painful cuts, but also brawls between parents. This act raises a question about the role played by the European in the internecine conflicts in Africa. Sugar, in its triviality on this occasion is a revelation of the value Oyono places on the Western culture. It is significant that Toundi falls out with his father over Father Gilbert's bit of sugar. Gullet, another French character in the narrative attempts to turn Toundi against his tribeswoman, Sophie. Toundi is also invited to betray a fellow African by Gullet when he seeks information which will aid him capture the absconded Sophie, Gullet tells Toundi, "If you want to have plenty of money, inform against Sophie...you might even get a medal" (*Houseboy* 112). Likewise, M. Janopoulos derives fun from setting his huge Alsatian on natives, thereby causing "a great stampede and amusing the ladies" (*Houseboy* 27). The Europeans in the text show blithe disregard for the

African culture by sowing discord among Africans in exchange for mere trifling such as sugar and medals.

While the French colonizers claim to aim to make the black men their equals, the reality is a different story altogether. The remark made by the Commandant's wife to Toundi reveals this: "Everyone has their position in life. You are a houseboy, my husband is Commandant...nothing can be done about it. You are a Christian, aren't you?" (*Houseboy*, 56). Oyono questions the claim to cultural superiority by exposing the hypocrisy of the French.

Toundi gradually comes to his senses as he comes to discover the whites are not better than the blacks. He reaches this understanding by observing the various vices of the white men he works and lives with. When Toundi comes to the realization that the whites are not superior to the blacks, as they claim; that they have moral faults too (especially that Madame sleeps with M. Moreau), his life is jeopardised. This goes to show how threatened the whites feel whenever the natives gravitate towards awareness of either themselves or of the true status of the whites. It is of little wonder, then, that Kalisia advises Toundi to escape because whereas his ignorance spells the loss of his essence and disconnection from his roots, his knowledge or awareness to the realities of his environment spells disaster and doom, making him "the eye of the witch that sees and knows" and in reference to the Commandant and his wife, Kalisia concludes that "A thief or anyone with a guilty conscience can never feel at ease in the presence of that eye..." (100). Toundi is consequently caught at crossfire and loses his life as a result of the cultural conflict occasioned by the presence of the European. Toundi, on his deathbed, comes to self-discovery,

when he questions those by his side, “what are we blackmen who are called French?” (4). He is the scapegoat on the altar of two cultures meeting against the backdrop of colonialism. On his deathbed, Toundi laments: “I’d have made old bones if I’d been good and stayed at home in the village” (4).

In *Houseboy*, conflict of colonial purpose underscores Oyono’s authorial intent. The policy of Assimilation claims the physical and psychological integration of the Africans, however what they achieve in reality is a culturally alienated generation. The colonized Francophone mind is suspended in limbo with a lost, denigrated African culture yet regarded as sub-human and savage by his acquired ‘civilizers’. His inability to transform into a European underscores their perception of him as a ‘savage’. The fallacy of French cultural superiority is however unmasked through Oyono’s satirical style which engenders mockery of the underlying immorality, hypocrisy and barbarism of the colonialists themselves. This is portrayed through the illicit sexual escapades and injustices of the colonial masters and their exploitative relationships. The writer presents a darkly humorous derision of the colonialists’ licentiousness and hypocrisy as depicted by Madam and M. Moreau; this is in stark contrast with the idealized ‘altruism’ of their policy of assimilation. The satirical style of Oyono enables the illustration of the conflict in the purported idealism of Assimilation and the reality of tragic debasement of the African as exemplified by Toundi.

In comparison with *Things Fall Apart* though both narratives explore conflict as an offshoot of culture contact, Achebe deploys Irony as stylistic platform in his depiction of colonialism.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959) chronicles the splendor of the African culture before the intrusion of Britain. It is an eloquent account of the cultural clash occasioned by the presence of the white man on the African soil. Although colonisation in Francophone and Anglophone Africa wore different faces of assimilation and association respectively, the two regions experienced a form of cultural conflict in similar ways.

Umuofia is a land with rich culture with its laws and orders, values and distinction. Umuofia has men and women of honour. However, when the colonisers arrive, things fall apart. As Okonkwo, the protagonist would later lament: "Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (*Things Fall Apart*, 141). Not only does the colonialist become the instigator of disharmony in Africa, as depicted in the narrative, his presence causes disregard for sacrosanct aspects of Umuofia culture. The climax in the cultural conflict occasioned by the white man's presence is reached when Enoch, an over-zealous convert unmasks an egwugwu. It is the ultimate disrespect to the Umuofia people:

That night the Mother of the Spirits walked the length and breadth of the clan, weeping for her murdered son. It was a terrible night. Not even the oldest man in Umuofia had ever heard such a strange and fearful sound, and it was never to be heard again. It seemed as if the very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was coming – its own death (60).

Despite this provocation, the Africans in the narrative demonstrate tolerance. The band of egwugwu approach Mr. Smith to make known their take on the cultural conflict occasioned by his presence in their land: "You can stay with us if you like

our ways. You can worship your own god. It is good that a man should worship the gods and the spirits of his fathers. Go back to your house so that you may not be hurt. Our anger is great but we have held it down so that we can talk to you" (65). His church is demolished in this confrontation during which he refuses to shift grounds.

Okonkwo, like Toundi, clearly sees the mission of the white men. He realizes that there cannot be peaceful co-existence between the two cultures especially since the western culture does not look on the African culture as its equal. For refusing to bow to the system, Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, like Toundi, is sacrificed in the clash of the two cultures. Okonkwo, a man of different times cannot come to terms with the notion that his culture has to bow to the Western culture in order for him to survive. The tragedy of Okonkwo is not merely his but of the entire Umuofia clan. Although, Britain claimed to implement a policy of association culturally, Achebe narrates on the occasion of Okonkwo's suicide: "The District Commissioner changed instantaneously. The resolute administrator in him gave way to the student of primitive customs" (69). The District Commissioner regards Umuofia's customs as "primitive".

It is very telling that the two characters in these narratives who seek to assert themselves in the face of two conflicting cultures are driven to death. It is an exposure of the corrosive effect imperialism had on African cultures.

Similarities between the Two Narratives

1. The two narratives focus on the colonial encounter.

2. They both explore characters that are strong-willed and seek to assert themselves in the face of colonial aggression and cultural conflict.
3. The two characters are driven to death by the colonial framework.

Differences Between the Two Texts

1. While *Houseboy* is the experience of an African in a French colony, *Things Fall Apart* is the experience of an African in a British colony.
2. Although the consequences of colonial incursion in the two texts are similar, the two narratives reveal different forms of colonial policies: assimilation and association.
3. The predominant stylistic device in *Houseboy* is Satire, while Achebe deploys Irony as platform of theme.
4. Whereas Achebe devotes time to establishing the nature and wealth of the African culture which the West arrived to truncate, Oyono does not go into details of the cultural background of Toundi besides praising it as a culture in which Toundi would have lived to old age.
5. Whereas Okonkwo is a man of valour and honour who clearly resents the colonial intrusion from the beginning, Toundi does not show great respect for his culture in the beginning, running off to Father Gilbert because of lumps of sugar.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How did the British policy of association differ from the French policy of assimilation?

2. How does Okonkwo's death transcend the realm of personal tragedy to be the tragedy of a people?

3. Why was the Berlin Conference of 1998-5 put together?

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UNIT 5: CONJECTURES AND PRESCRIPTIONS ON NEOCOLONIAL RUPTURES: COMPARING EL NATHAN'S *BORN ON A TUESDAY* AND CHIGOZIE OBIOMA'S *THE FISHERMEN*

RECAP: The previous unit explored cultural conflict in West African literature, drawing parallels between the experiences of Anglophone and Francophone literature. Summarily, the cultural conflict occasioned by the colonial encounter spells doom for the cultures examined. This conflict is amply reflected in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Oyono's *Houseboy* as it ultimately becomes the tragedy of a race.

OBJECTIVES

The exploration of conflict in this module is undertaken using postcolonial Nigerian texts with the aim of showing the conflicts engendered by neo-colonial socio-political maladies and the disposition of contemporary Nigerian writers to them. At the end of this module, the student should be able to:

1. Analyse the chain reaction triggered off by the colonial intrusion into Africa,
2. Explain neo-colonial conflicts

INTRODUCTION

As Okonkwo laments in *Things Fall Apart*, "Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (141). The Post-Colonial era has been marked by different types of conflict. Neo-colonialism, as Kwesi Kwaa Prah (1998: 1) observes, comes

with an array of “material and socio-psychological humiliations”. The ruptures left behind by colonial intrusion have only been widened by the maladministration and corruption which characterizes the neocolonial era. Hence, it is not unusual to find postcolonial prose fiction exploring disharmony and conflict which characterize the neocolonial era and may be traceable to colonial legacies. Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria, while being part of the same country have slightly different colonial experiences. The consequence of this is a different reality. When the colonisation of Africa is discussed, accusing fingers point to Europe. While the corrosiveness of Europe’s aggressive colonialism cannot be exaggerated, the first blow was struck by the Islamic civilisation. In an excerpt from Yusufu Turaki’s article which is entitled ‘Tainted Legacy, Islamic, Colonisation and Slavery in Northern Nigeria’(2010):

Although the legacy of Western colonialism and of the slave trade in Africa is well documented, little is known about Islamic-based colonialism and slavery in Africa and the roles that Arabs played in it. The Europeans plundered the West Coast for the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Arabs, who were busy with the trans-Saharan and East African slave trade, plundered the hinterland (the Sudan) for Africans for markets in North Africa, Arabia and the Middle East. Similarly, although the infamous trans-Atlantic slave trade is well understood, little is known about the equally infamous trans-Saharan slave trade and the East African slave trade with Arabia, the Middle East and India. As a result, the West is held responsible for the damage it has done in Africa, while Islam and the Islamic empires escape similar scrutiny, and the nature of the African experience under Islamic forms of colonialism and slavery remains hidden.

This assertion may be buttressed with a comparison of Chigozie Obioma’s *The Fishermen* (2015) and El Nathan’s *Born on a Friday* (2016). The two texts are of comparative interest because while both being Nigerian texts, they represent the depiction of post-colonial conflict by a southern and northern author respectively.

AN EXPLORATION OF INTRA-RELIGION CONFLICT IN EL NATHAN'S *BORN ON A TUESDAY*

Obioma in *The Fishermen* (2015) through the allegory of the brothers depicted in the text engages the history of violence and dissonance in postcolonial Nigeria. While living in a more tolerant society, the seed of conflict was planted among the brothers by Abulu who prophesies that Ikenna will be killed by one of his brother, By making the outsider, a mad man, Obioma seems to attribute the failings of postcolonial Nigeria to the makings of the coloniser (the mad man, Abulu) who is out of his mind. The narrative traces different approaches towards fixing the ruptures brought about by Abulu's colonial intrusion into the Agus' idyllic existence. Ikenna's impressionability is a denunciation of the fragility of the African continent which gave room for colonial intrusion, Boja's hotheadedness is the dismissal of the rush of some postcolonial subjects to consider violence as an option in fixing the ruptures in the African socio-political existence, Obembe's shallow one-directional intellectualism is an indictment of the intellectual class. Obioma urges a peaceful acceptance of responsibility for our failings as a continent before the process of healing can begin.

Born on a Tuesday (2016) explores the religious conflict which plagues northern Nigeria. The setting of the story is Sokoto. This is a highly topical issue especially in view of the menace posed by Boko Haram to the region. The protagonist, Dantala, has to navigate the realities of existing in a region caught in the throes of fanaticism. Two Islamic sects, Jama'atul Ilyau Islamil Haqiquy and the Shiites are engaged in rivalry. While Sheikh Jamal, head of the Haqiquy preaches tolerance and non-

violence, the Shiites take the opposite route in the narrative. Nathan shows the result of such conflict and the price individuals pay for it. Deaths and imprisonments follow the clash of these sects. The tragedy is that the intra-religion conflict depicted in the text is only the face of the conflict left on ground by colonial and neo-colonial ruptures in the African socio-political existence. Dantala ends up in an underground prison. He survives as a result of his willpower. Nathan therefore seems to prescribe that the solution to navigating the intricacies of neo-colonial conflict is the strength of the individual.

As may be inferred, the two texts grapple with issues of conflict in post-colonial Nigeria, albeit, from different angles due to the differences in the colonial experiences of the South and North. However, the two narratives reflect a strong belief in the power of the individual to triumph over the atmosphere of violence and dissonance characteristic of the neo-colonial environment.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TEXTS

1. The two texts are contemporary Nigerian texts,
2. They grapple with violence and disharmony which aptly captures the ambience of neo-colonial Nigeria.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TEXTS

1. While *The Fishermen* is situated in the South-Western town of Akure, *Born on a Tuesday* is situated in Sokoto.
2. Consequently, the view of the authors and theme reveal regional peculiarities, even as they grapple with issues of violence and disharmony.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How do regional peculiarities affect the portrayal of violence in the narratives?

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Primary Texts

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Prah, K.K. "Beyond the Color Line: Pan-African Disputations". In: *Selected Sketches, Paper and Reviews*. Trenton, Africa World Press, 1998.

Yusuf , T. World reformed Fellowship. <<http://wrfnet.org/resources/2010/09/tainted-legacy-islam-colonialism-and-slavery-northern-nigeria-wrf-member-dr-yusufu>>

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. **Title:** *Invisible Man*

Synopsis: The narrative is regarded as a classic of African-American prose fiction. It focuses on the forces in racist America which drive a young and ambitious Negro young man to finally embrace invisibility in an underground cave. It bears out conflict between man and the society.

Author Ralph Ellison

Publishers: New York: Random House (1955)

2. **Title:** *No Longer at Ease*

Synopsis: Achebe's third novel interrogates the fate of a bright young man, two generations after the account rendered in *Things Fall Apart*. Obi Okonkwo, London-schooled is rapidly corrupted in the Civil Service as he returns to his country. He ends up in jail.

Author Chinua Achebe

Publishers: London: Heinemann (1960)

3. **Title:** *Benito Cereno*

Synopsis: Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* is a classic European prose fiction. Delano, an American sailor, witnesses unusual signals from a Spanish slave trade. Subsequent events will lead him to the realisation that a slave uprising which has led to some of the crew has occurred.

Author Herman Melville

Publishers: London: Nonesuch Publishers (1926- 6th edition)

4. Title: *Chaka*

Synopsis: *Chaka* is an epic novel which revisits the history of the Zulu people of South Africa. It is the fictionalised portrayal of the birth, rise and fall of Chaka, the founder of the Zulu kingdom.

Author Thomas Mofolo

Publishers: New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books (1931)

5. Title: *The Heart of Darkness*

Synopsis: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a novella of western encounter of the African culture along the Congo basin. Postcolonial scholarship has made this novella, which was for a long time, indisputably regarded as a classic, controversial. Achebe (1977) famously challenged it as an obnoxiously racist work.

Author Joseph Conrad

Publishers: United Kingdom: Blackwood Magazine (1899)

6. Title: *Season of Migration to the North*

Synopsis: The Egyptian classic belongs to a body of works which are regarded in post-colonial terms as Empire Re-Narrations. They exist as the counter versions to imperialist texts such as *Heart of Darkness*. It is the life story of Mustafa Sa'eed, a

young Egyptian who becomes a man of great learning and proceeds to pay the colonial countries back in their own coin.

Author: Tayeb Salih

Publishers: England: Pearson Education Limited (1969)

7. Title: *Things Fall Apart*

Synopsis: Achebe's first novel dismantles the myth espoused by the West of uncultured Africa. It is the celebration of the African past with emphasis on its different ways of worship and social interaction. It is the tragedy of a great man and a great clan, casualties of colonial intrusion.

Author Chinua Achebe

Publishers: England: Heinemann (1958)

8. Title: *Houseboy*

Synopsis: Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy*, is a tragic satire told by a young African boy and set in a Francophone colonial territory. The story espouses the physical and psychological trauma the colonized 'natives' are subjected to at the hands of their colonial masters through their policy of Assimilation. The novel gives a poignant insight into the aspiration of the young man to fully integrate himself into the French culture until he encounters the hypocrisy and brutality of the system and its savage effect on the African consciousness. It is the classic novel depicting the falsity of the French policy of assimilation in Africa.

Author Ferdinand Oyono

Publishers: Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers (1966)

9. Title: *The Fishermen*

Synopsis: Four brothers live in harmony until a madman sows the seed of discord among them by prophesying the murder of one of the brothers by another brother. The resulting disharmony and violence is regarded as an allegory for the Nigerian story through the first encounter with the West to contemporary times.

Author Chigozie Obioma

Publishers: Abuja: Cassava Republic (2015)

10. Title: *Born on a Tuesday*

Synopsis: This is a novel from Northern Nigeria. It is the portrayal of the nitty-gritty of intra-religious crisis and intolerance in the North. It is an apt commentary on the state of affairs of the heavily Islamised, doubly-colonised Northern Nigeria.

Author: El Nathan

Publishers: Abuja: Cassava Republic (2016)

MODULE 2 – ENCOUNTERS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This is a course in prose fiction on the phenomenon of Encounters. Since the discourse is situated within the ambits of comparative fiction, it examines prose fiction texts from Africa, Europe, America and the Caribbean. The term “Encounters” refers to the meeting of two cultures and the complications which ensue. In reading select texts, issues arising from encounters such as narration and re-narration, cultural erosion and cultural survivals, political and experiential implications of encounters and its portrayal will be examined. As behoves an exercise in comparative fiction, texts will be paired from different perspectives to facilitate a dialectical exchange on the dynamics of cultural encounters. The course is broken into five modules.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the symbiotic cultural relationship between literature and encounters,
2. Discuss the influences on western encounter on modern African prose fiction,

3. Discuss the distinction among African-American, African and Caribbean prose fiction, underscoring how each achieves its distinctiveness as a result of its unique encounter with imperialism.

MODULE 2 OUTLINE

Unit 1 - Literature of Discovery: Encounter as Motif in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*

Unit 2 - Post-colonialism: Theorising Encounters and Its Aftermath in Literature of Encounters

Unit 3 - Modern African Literature: Tell-tale signs of Encounters

Unit 4 - Prose Fiction and The Black Diaspora: Cultural Survivals and Double Consciousness

Unit 5 - Migrant Prose Fiction And Encounters

READING LIST

Primary Texts

- Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*
- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
- Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*
- E.M Forster, *A Passage to India*
- Ferdinand Oyono, *The Old Man and the Medal*
- Sefi Atta, *A Bit of Difference*

- Jamaica Kincaid, *Annie John*
- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
- VS Naipaul, *Miguel Street*

Secondary Texts

Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms* seventh edition. Boston: Heinle&Heinle.

Achebe, C. (1975). *Morning yet on Creation Day*. London: Heinemann

Barry, P. (1995). *Beginning Theory; An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: UP.

Du Bois, W.E.B. (1903). *The souls of black folk*. New York: Dover Publications

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Gates Jr., H.L. (2004) *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Norton &Company: New York.

UNIT 1:- LITERATURE OF DISCOVERY: ENCOUNTER AS MOTIF IN DANIEL DEFOE'S *ROBINSON CRUSOE* AND JOSEPH CONRAD'S *LORD JIM*

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the place of European travelogue in the discourse between the coloniser and colonised,
2. Elaborate on the racism inherent in the portrait of the benign white ruler in European travelogue.

INTRODUCTION

The colonialist's venture into Africa and other third world climes was motivated by the hero complex of Europeans. Like Achebe (1975) rues in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, the white man felt he had the noble venture of bringing civilisation to other peoples and cultures. European literature spun the myth of subhuman Africans and cloaked the greed of colonialism in the magnanimity of feeling a sense of responsibility to rescue Africa from savagery. This module examines two texts which deal with European encounters with non-Europeans comparatively as precursors to the whole body of works that comprises narratives and counter-narratives of encounters between coloniser and colonised. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* are prototypical racist narrations of the encounter between the Western and non-western cultures as will be subsequently examined.

A COMPARATIVE READING OF DANIEL DEFOE'S *ROBINSON CRUSOE* AND JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is often regarded as the first English novel. It is a travelogue that chronicles the woes of Crusoe who is stricken with wanderlust. *Robinson Crusoe* has been criticised on several occasions by postcolonial scholars. It is the classic story of colonisation told from the point of view of the coloniser. Robinson Crusoe, who is unlucky on his ventures out on the sea, is eventually stranded on a deserted island near Trinidad for 28 years. On various occasions, he meets with cannibals and mutineers. Postcolonial studies have identified Defoe's protagonist as a prototypical coloniser. He happens upon the island and eventually becomes governor (344). He variously tries to impose European ideals on the desert. He finally gets a chance to fully manifest his colonialist tendencies in his acquisition of Man Friday. He rescues Man Friday from other native cannibals who plan to eat him. At this point, Man Friday becomes Crusoe's slave- the point being that Crusoe has rescued him from the savagery of his people:

I beckoned to him again to come to me, and gave him all the signs of encouragement that I could think of; and he came nearer and nearer, kneeling down every ten or twelve steps, in token of acknowledgment for saving his life. I smiled at him, and looked pleasantly, and beckoned to him to come still nearer; at length he came close to me; and then he kneeled down again, kissed the ground, and laid his head upon the ground, and taking me by the foot, set my foot upon his head; this, it seems, was in token of swearing to be my slave forever. I took him up and made much of him, and encouraged him all I could (261).

Crusoe then proceeds to shape Man Friday into an imitation of his own self. He converts Man Friday to Christianity, a religion the latter will never fully come to comprehend. Ironically, Crusoe himself does not possess very deep understanding of the religion he preaches:

‘Well,’ says Friday, ‘but you say God is so strong, so great; is He not much strong, much might as the devil?’ ‘Yes, yes,’ says I, ‘Friday; God is stronger than the devil - God is above the devil, and therefore we pray to God to tread him down under our feet, and enable us to resist his temptations and quench his fiery darts.’ ‘But,’ says he again, ‘if God much stronger, much might as the wicked devil, why God no kill the devil, so make him no more do wicked?’ I was strangely surprised at this question; and, after all, though I was now an old man, yet I was but a young doctor, and ill qualified for a casuist or a solver of difficulties; and at first I could not tell what to say; so I pretended not to hear him, and asked him what he said (280).

Although this brings discomfort to Man Friday, Crusoe imposes his type of clothes on him:

...then I made him a jerkin of goat’s skin, as well as my skill would allow (for I was now grown a tolerably good tailor); and I gave him a cap which I made of hare’s skin, very convenient, and fashionable enough; and thus he was clothed, for the present, tolerably well, and was mighty well pleased to see himself almost as well clothed as his master. It is true he went awkwardly in these clothes at first: wearing the drawers was very awkward to him, and the sleeves of the waistcoat galled his shoulders and the inside of his arms; but a little easing them where he complained they hurt him, and using himself to them, he took to them at length very well (*Robinson Crusoe*, 267).

Robinson Crusoe feeds the colonialist myth that colonies needed to be rescued from barbarism; the idea is that it is a peaceful submission which happens to be in the best interest of the natives. The same line of thought is expressed in Conrad’s *Lord Jim*.

Lord Jim (1900) belongs to a trilogy featuring the character Captain Marlow. The works are: *Youth*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. Conrad is a controversial literary figure. While traditional European literary scholars view his works as literary gems,

his works are regarded as thoroughly racist in postcolonial discourse. Achebe (1988: 264) describes him as a “thoroughgoing racist”. *Lord Jim*, like *Heart of Darkness*, before it is a narrative which centralises the encounter motif between a white man and a race of savages who are incapable of self-rule. Jim arrives among them and quickly installs himself as lord. In *Lord Jim*, Jim arrives into the settlement of native Malay and Bugis People. He quickly turns on his saviour complex. The settlement is portrayed as neck deep in corruption and strife. He saves them from their corrupt chief, Rajah Tunku Allang and the bandit, Sherif Ali. On the death of Jim, the people of Malay are left as incapable of governing themselves as they were in the beginning. Thus, the European intrusion is justified by Conrad on the basis that natives need to be saved from themselves.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO NARRATIVES

1. The two narratives are European travelogues chronicling the venturing of Europeans into regions faraway from their native land;
2. The two narratives espouse the myth of benign coloniser and savage colonised who had to be rescued from himself;
3. Therefore, colonialism is portrayed as a humane act which occurs in the interest of natives.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO TEXTS

1. While *Lord Jim* is portrayed as the rescuer of a whole race of people, Robinson Crusoe’s colonialist venture is limited to a single character.

2. Situated within the framework of the colonial theoretical frameworks of assimilation and association, Crusoe's approach in his colonisation of Man Friday is Assimilationist while Lord Jim's mirrors Britain's policy of association.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Does Man Friday have a choice in his acquisition by Robinson Crusoe?
2. What role do European travelogues play in nurturing the myth of Western superiority which fuelled the colonialist venture?

REFERENCES

Primary Texts

Conrad, J. (1900) *Lord Jim*. New York: Black Wood Magazine

Defoe, D.(1719) *Robinson Crusoe*. London: Simon and Schuster

Secondary Text(s)

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UNIT 2: POST-COLONIALISM: THEORISING ENCOUNTERS AND ITS AFTERMATH IN LITERATURE OF ENCOUNTER

RECAP OF THE PREVIOUS UNIT: *The previous unit examines the symbiotic relationship between racism and European travelogue. It also examines European travelogue as early depictions of encounters with overtly racist undertones. It portrays the image of grateful colonised in relation to the magnanimous coloniser. Module 2 will examine the relationship between the colonised and coloniser which has been so depicted. However, module 2 will broaden the discourse by sampling the response of the colonised to such position as may be viewed from their literature.*

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this study, the student should be able to:

1. Discuss the origin, tenets of the postcolonial literary theory,
2. Undertake the application of the postcolonial literary theory to narratives representing colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies.

INTRODUCTION

Discourse on encounters in literature tends to lead to the subject of colonialism and consequently, the postcolonial discourse. As MH Abrams (1999) explains, the postcolonial theory is:

...the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers. These studies have focused especially on the Third World countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean islands, and South America (236).

Post-colonial literary theory interrogates the dialectical exchange between literatures of colonisers and colonised; essentially, it underscores meanings and inferences in colonialist writings and anti-colonialist re-narration. It is the most suitable theory for examining texts on the cultural and political ruptures in Africa as traceable to

Western Imperialism and its legacy. It is particularly useful in the attempt to get a grasp on the realities of erstwhile colonies.

As a theory, postcolonial theory has its precursor in works such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Peter Barry enumerates the tenets upheld by postcolonial scholars in textual analysis:

1. They reject the claims to universalism made on behalf of canonical Western literature and seek to show its limitations of outlook, especially its general inability to empathise across boundaries of cultural and ethnic difference.
2. They examine the representation of other cultures in literature as a way of achieving this end.
3. They show how such literature is often evasively and crucially silent on matters concerned with colonisation and imperialism.
4. They foreground questions of cultural difference and diversity and examine their treatment in relevant literary works.
5. They celebrate hybridity and 'cultural poly valency', that is, the situation whereby individuals and groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture (for instance, that of the coloniser, through a colonial school system, and that of the colonised, through local and oral traditions).

6. They develop a perspective, not just applicable to postcolonial literatures, whereby states of marginality, plurality and perceived 'Otherness' are seen as sources of energy and potential change.

Application of the Post-colonial Theory To Literature of Encounters: A Comparative Reading of E.M Forster's *A Passage to India* and Ferdinand Oyono's *Old Man and the Medal* through postcolonial lens

E.M Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) is a central text in the discourse of Encounters and colonialism in post-colonial literary studies. It depicts individual Indians and Britons in India within the context of the British Raj. It examines the relationship between Britons and Indians. *A Passage to India* poses a very key question to the discourse of encounters in prose fiction: can the coloniser and colonised be friends? This question underscores the relationship between Dr. Aziz, the Indian and his British friend, Dr. Fielding. Aziz's cordiality with the Britons almost jeopardises his life and career as he is accused of sexually assaulting Adela Quested when he serves as her tour guide to Marabar caves. It is discovered later during the trial which ensues that Adela was not assaulted but had actually been destabilised by the echoes and suffered a shock. This seems to show an inherent distrust of the 'natives' on the part of the Britons. Aziz eventually comes to discover that he cannot be friends with Fielding, regardless of how well-meaning Fielding is. The colonial construct itself makes it a delusion to consider the possibility of friendship between Aziz and Fielding. The closing chapter is particularly eloquent on this point:

Aziz in an awful rage danced this way and that, not knowing what to do and cried: “Down with the English anyhow. That’s certain... we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then, and then... you and I shall be friends.

“Why can’t we be friends now?” said the other, holding him affectionately. “It’s what I want. It’s what you want.”

But the horses didn’t want it... the earth didn’t want it,,, the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn’t want it, they said in their hundred voices, “No, not yet,” and the sky said, “No, not there” (150).

Forster’s point in the excerpt above is that two people who meet on the different sides of the divide of coloniser and colonised are fundamentally divided by the unnatural construct which imperialism is and cannot be friends even if they wish to be.

Ferdinand Oyono in *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967) also tackles the concept of friendship between Africans and Westerners in a colonial construct. However, Oyono, a Cameroonian, writes from the point of view of the colonised. Meka, on learning he would be receiving a medal from the Chief of the French is exhilarated: “Isn’t the friend of a chief something of a chief himself?” (39). The Commandant encourages Meka in his delusion by telling him he is now “somebody among men” (19). However, after the ceremony, “the whites get into their cars. Father Vandermayer invites Meka to get into the back of his van though there was no one with him in the cabin” (98). An intoxicated Meka questions the truth of the white man’s friendship with the blacks. His suspicions are confirmed when the white Chief declines Meka’s invitation to dine with him (107). After this encounter, the natives confirm their doubt about the friendship of the whites: the whites do not eat from the same plate with the blacks and during the banquet, there is no African on the

platform with the whites. When he is arrested and taken to Gullet for loitering around the European quarter, Gullet spits on Meka's face and calls him a lunatic (133). After suffering inhuman treatments in the hands of the whites, it becomes clear that the St. Christopher medal given to Meka is a mere pretense and official ritual to compensate him for his lost land and children, in furtherance of the French cause in the colony. Meka is of interest merely because he has been a very useful tool in the hands of the colonial machinery

The two narratives, *A Passage to India* and *The Old Man and the Medal*, shrink down the grand narrative of the interaction between two cultures to the interaction between two individuals representing each culture in order to pass across an overwhelming commentary on the colonial context.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO NARRATIVES

1. They both tell stories of unusual friendships developed and broken within the colonial construct.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO NARRATIVES

1. While *A Passage to Indian* was written by Forster, a Briton- a citizen of the colonising country, *The Old Man and the Medal* is a book written by Oyono, an African writer and prioritises the view point of the colonised.
2. Consequently, Fielding is portrayed more sympathetically by the author as against the matter of fact way Oyono portrays the Commandant. While Fielding seems to be genuinely friendly with Aziz, The Commandant only patronises Meka.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Compare and contrast the pair of Aziz – Fielding and Meka - Commandant.

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UNIT 3: MODERN AFRICAN PROSE FICTION AND TELL-TALE SIGNS OF ENCOUNTERS

RECAP OF THE PREVIOUS UNIT: *The previous unit is an exploration of the origin, tenets and application of the post-colonial critical theory. The postcolonial theory is a theory that is very suited to capturing the socio-cultural and political ruptures that came about as a result of Western incursion into Africa. Also, it is a veritable theory for interrogating Western literature on third world literature for traces of imperialist inclinations.*

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the student should be able to:

1. Identify traces of the imprints of the encounter with the West in the plot and style of Modern African Prose fiction,
2. Discuss the characteristics of Modern African prose fiction, with consciousness of its double heritage, and
3. Discuss Modern African literature in the nexus of orientalism and empire re-narration.

INTRODUCTION

Most Modern African prose fiction in English and French are of double heritage: at once the child of the western literary culture which was the result of the encounter with the West, as well as the child of pre-literate indigenous forms. Before the encounter with the West, the literature which existed in Africa was predominantly oral in nature. Several scholars including Ruth Finnegan (2012), Senanu and Vincent

(1976) have attested to the presence of literary forms before the encounter with the West. However, as will be subsequently explored, the encounter with the West shaped Modern African Literature in several ways.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS* AND CHINUA ACHEBE'S *ARROW OF GOD*

Some Modern African Prose Fiction gained the impetus to exist from the encounter with the West. This is the first way in which Modern African Prose Fiction is shaped by the encounter with Europe. The bulk of writings from the West on Africa depicts Africans as subhuman savages. Achebe (1977) explains the drive behind representation of Africans in such derogatory ways as he contemplates racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: "Quite simply it is the desire – one might indeed say the need – in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (1). Thus, Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* variously uses racist epithets to cast Africa as a foil to civilised Europe. It is not uncommon to stumble upon portions where he describes Africans as savages, such as: "More than once, she had to wade a bit, with twenty cannibals splashing around and pushing... Fine fellows – cannibals – in their place" (56). Early Modern African Prose Fiction aimed to undo such damage to the representation of Africans. Achebe's *Arrow of God* depicts multidimensional, graceful Africans. If they are flawed in any way, it is because they are humans. Achebe's description of Ezeulu stands out. Even Winterbottom has to admit that "...he was a most impressive figure of a man" (48). Whereas the natives in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* wallow in the

abyss of barbarity, Achebe depicts the Igbo society with culture, civilisation; the District Officer, Winterbottom is a lesser figure for his lack of comprehension of the depth of the culture which surrounds him.

Another aspect in which the imprints of the encounter with the West may be found in Modern African Prose Fiction is in the subject matter and themes. The subject matter and themes deal with issues relating to colonialism and its legacy of neo-colonialism. *Arrow of God*, for instance, reacts to the racism in *Heart of Darkness*. It reflects the reality of a people caught at the crossroads where two cultures meet, the one trying to cower the other into submission. Achebe creates tragedy out of the loss of devotion to local deities, due to intra-tribal conflicts made worse by the presence of the colonialists.

Furthermore, the language of Modern African Literature bears tell-tale signs of the encounter with the West. While it is written mainly in European languages, it defies the conventions of European languages in order to channel the ideology of decolonisation. As Achebe avers in his essay 'Colonialist Criticism' reproduced in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*: '...let no one be fooled by the fact that we write in English for we intend to do unheard of things with it' (7). *Arrow of God* testifies that Achebe was true to his word. He infuses his narration in English with oral aesthetics borrowed from the indigenous African culture. One of the characters, Ugoye, declares: "oho, Moon, may your face meeting mine bring good fortune. But how is it sitting?" (3). In another instance, Ojiugo's mother said: "A woman does not carry her father's *obi* to her husband" (13). In the language usage of Modern African Prose Fiction, as has been exemplified with Achebe's *Arrow of God*, there are elements of

defiance to the colonial imposition of European languages. Out of this defiance has been borne the unique language of African literature which is a blending of the European world view with African cultural outlook.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. In what ways has Africa's encounter with the West in the context of colonialism shaped its literature?
2. How has Achebe manipulated the English language to reflect the unique realities of Africa?

References

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UNIT 4: PROSE FICTION AND THE BLACK DIASPORA: CULTURAL SURVIVALS AND DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

RECAP OF THE PREVIOUS UNIT: *The previous unit identifies and traces the imprints of the encounter with the West in the plot and style of Modern African Prose fiction. It discusses the characteristics of Modern African prose fiction, with the consciousness of its double heritage, within the nexus of orientalism and empire re-narration. The module considers how Africa's encounter with the West has been a major determinant of the content and style of its prose fiction.*

OBJECTIVES

1. Discuss the impact of cultural encounters on African-American and Caribbean Prose fiction,
2. Compare the impact of the encounter with the West on the psyche of the African-American and Caribbean subject as revealed in the prose fiction emanating from each culture,
3. Articulate the significance of cultural survivals in analysing African-American and Caribbean prose fiction.

INTRODUCTION

African-American and Caribbean prose fiction was given impetus by the need to re-write self. Written by the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and their descendants, its essence was to "...demonstrate that persons of African descent possessed the requisite degrees of reason and wit to create literature, that they were,

indeed, full and equal members of the community of rational, sentient beings, that they could indeed write ” (Gates, 2004: 95). Its peculiarity stemmed from the creative expression reflecting a culture subsumed within another and underscoring the hybrid reality of the black person in Diaspora.

Imprints of Encounters in African-American and Caribbean Prose-Fiction: Cultural Survivals and Double Consciousness

The tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade is the tear it introduced into the cultural fabric of Africans and the resultant ‘cultural trauma’ which Eyerman refers to as a “dramatic loss of identity... a tear in the social fabric affecting a group of people that has achieved a degree of cohesion” (1996:2). The impact of being forcefully removed from one’s culture is a tear in the psyche of the individual. A race of subjugated and oppressed people was created by the transatlantic slave trade. With that loss of culture was the tragedy of a people that had to struggle to find their identity. Because it is underscored by the tragedy of a people that had to contemplate dual identity in order to belong while not losing their past, the prose fiction which emerged in this context is uniquely flavoured by elements of cultural survivals and “double consciousness”.

Du Bois (1903) states that double consciousness is characterised by “a sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, an internal struggle in which a black person ever feels his sense of twoness – an American, a Negro; the two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (694). Neal (1969: 656)

views double consciousness as “the tension that is in the soul of the black folk” which must be destroyed.

Cultural survivals are closely linked to double consciousness in prose fiction emanating from the black Diaspora. While a large part of their culture was snatched away, they are left holding fragments of the African culture. Some elements of the culture of the black Diaspora have attained a life of its own. Thus, the black person in the Diaspora has a hybridized personality whose identity is rooted in cultural syncretism: a blend of African culture and the American culture. Mamudu (2005: 89-90) in his essay entitled “Issues and Tropes in the Fiction of Four Writers of the Black Diaspora” avers: “Against all odds, the slaves ensured that the African culture survived in the new environment, following their sense of communality...”

The African-American is burdened with the necessity of finding strength from the harmony of the two warring parts of him: the American and the African. Structurally, Ralph Ellison succeeds in harnessing the strength of this harmony in writing *Invisible Man* (1952). His writings are the manifestation of “...the creative tension between the folk and classical traditions which has remained the richest source of his art” (Bonx, 1971: 46). Ellison once remarked that he was “...taken very early with a passion to link together all [he] loved within the Negro community and all those things [he] felt in the world which lay beyond” (Bonx 1971: 63). “The world which lay beyond” in this context may be taken to indicate the world within Du Bois concept of the Veil. The chaos that precedes the harmony may be exemplified most cogently with the pivotal scene in the life of *Invisible Man* in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* when he drives Mr. Norton to, first, Jim Trueblood’s

domain and then, the Golden Day pub. Mr. Norton may thus be taken as the American side of Invisible Man that lives in denial about his being a Negro. Like the other college blacks, he has succeeded at banishing the black culture to the background. It is highly symbolic when Mr. Norton and Jim Trueblood confront each other to his dismay (40). The confrontation between the two leads to his journey away from the college in search of his identity. His discomfort at the confrontation between the two may be analysed psychoanalytically. Jim Trueblood represents his repressed id which he must constantly repress to be acceptable at the college and the white race. This repressed self is then dug out and has dire consequences for him. His sense of identity is shaken to the core. His denial shield suffers a dent and he embarks on the quest to find himself.

Invisible Man is not allowed to sing by the Brotherhood that teaches him to be ashamed of singing. He is caught between the short man who requests him to sing and Brother Jack who maintains that he does not sing. Those of the Brotherhood look on singing, as a facet black culture, to barbaric. They renounce singing. This is a pointer to the rigidity that characterises their movement, a movement which does not identify with the black soul, the innate strength of the black race that bursts into song under its burden:

"The Brother does not sing!" Brother Jack roared staccato. "Nonsense, all colored people sing." "This is an outrageous example of unconscious racial chauvinism!" "Nonsense, I like their singing," the broad man said doggedly. "The Brother does not sing!" Brother Jack cried, his face turning a deep purple. The broad man regarded him stubbornly. "Why don't you let him say whether he can sing or not . . . ? Come on, Brother, git hot! Go Down, Moses," he bellowed in a ragged baritone, putting down his cigar and snapping his fingers. "Way down in Egypt's land. Tell dat ole Pharaoh to let ma colored folks sing! I'm for the rights of the colored brother to sing!" he shouted belligerently. Brother Jack looked as if he would choke; he raised his hand, signaling. I saw two men shoot from across the room and lead the short

man roughly away. Brother Jack followed them as they disappeared beyond the door, leaving an enormous silence.

The turmoil which drives *Invisible Man* underground is his failure to orchestrate harmony between the African and American in him, an encounter occasioned by the transatlantic slave trade. His lack of awareness of the phenomenon of double consciousness is his undoing.

VS Naipaul's *Miguel Street* is a Caribbean prose fictional narrative. It focuses on the issue of identity. While the Caribbean and African-American peoples both experienced the transatlantic slave trade, the Caribbean experience is particularly unique. The people of the Caribbean island were taken to farmlands. They had to plant themselves on a new land which was predominantly a farm. Their encounter is with the land and not with new people or new culture. The challenge of the Caribbean is to get roots and plant himself into the land as against the mandate of the African-American to plant himself in a culture. Naipaul's *Miguel Street* is the tragic story of various people who try to gain roots in their encounter with the land to no avail. The characters are caught floating midair and trying to find their place. While Popo persists at making *The Thing Without a Name*, B Wordsworth does not write beyond a word of poetry in five years. It is the story of people who, having encountered the land, fail to get roots. At the end of the day, the young protagonist, as is typical of Caribbean narratives, has to leave the country in his quest for self-identity.

Essentially, therefore, it may be averred that while Caribbean and African-American narratives are stories of encounters occasioned by the slave trade, it is a different form of encounter each group experienced. Tell-tale signs of these differing encounters abound in narratives emerging from each region. While Invisible Man is driven underground, the young protagonist of *Miguel Street* is driven to flee.

Similarities between the Texts

1. The two narratives emanate from the black Diaspora
2. Both protagonists are on a quest for self- identity
3. At the resolution of the narrative Invisible Man is driven underground, while the Narrator in *Miguel Street* is also driven to flee his reality.
4. Both narratives exemplify issues of failed masculinity.
5. Both narratives are told from the perspective and through the eyes of the Narrator, who is also the protagonist.

Differences

1. The unique encounters with imperialism as experienced by African-Americans and the Caribbean give the texts different textures in the exploration of identity: Invisible Man seeks identity within the context of a white dominated society as opposed to the creole environment in *Miguel Street*.
2. The stylistic narrative in *Invisible Man* is based on flashbacks and memories while *Miguel Street* is based on the real life experiences of characters living on Miguel Street and the inner city.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. In what ways are Invisible Man's disappearance underground as the boy-narrator's flight in *Miguel Street* reflective of the colonial experience.
2. Attempt a comparative analysis of the each narrator's search for identity and highlight how their narrative styles enable theme.

References

Primary Texts

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UNIT 5: MIGRANT PROSE FICTION AND ENCOUNTERS

RECAP OF PREVIOUS UNIT: *The previous unit examined the imprints of encounters on prose fiction of the black Diaspora. VS Naipaul's Miguel Street and Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man were read side by side in order to highlight the similarities and differences in African-American and Caribbean prose fiction against the back drop of encounters between the West and Africa.*

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the student should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the sensibilities underlying Migrant Prose fiction in African and in Diaspora.
2. Appreciate perspectives of women writings from African and the Caribbean, their similarities and differences.

INTRODUCTION

In the post-colonial era, a new form of encountering has been birthed. Countries which were erstwhile colonies find themselves dealing with the aftermath of colonisation. Neo-colonialism comes with its array of social maladies. People are impelled to leave their countries in search of greener pastures. Thus, contemporary literature underscores new forms of encounters as citizens of erstwhile colonies travel to the land of the colonisers of their country to confront them and take a chance at life. In this module, a comparative analysis will be done of Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie Frank*, a Caribbean novel and Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference*, - a

Nigerian novel - in order to underscore the similarities between the departures and the impulse behind them in the two regions.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MIGRATION AS ENCOUNTER IN JAMAICA KINCAID'S *ANNIE JOHN* AND SEFI ATTA'S *A BIT OF DIFFERENCE*

Caribbean novels often end on the note of departure. It is almost as if the protagonists cannot get away quickly enough. The boy-narrator in *Miguel Street* wants nothing more than leaving his homeland and tells Ganesh Pundit: "I don't want to study anything really. I just want to go away, that's all" (127). The protagonist is not any different in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*. Thus, Caribbean literature and African literature have been among the most significant contributors to migrant literature as a result of the harsh conditions in the two regions which propels many to depart.

The heroine of Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* is a young girl that must discover her identity apart from her mother. In the self-narrative of Annie, we see the history of the Black Diaspora dramatised. There is the stage of bliss when Annie John is one with her mother. They wear the same garments. She does not know herself to be a distinct being from her mother. Then her relationship becomes strained. Annie John gets intimations of the forthcoming separation when she finds that she is no longer going to wear similar clothes with her mother as she had done before the moment of psychological separation:

I immediately said how much I loved this cloth and how it would look on us both, but my mother replied, "Oh, no. You are getting too old for that. It's time you had your own clothes. You just cannot go around the rest of your life looking like a little me." To say that I felt the earth swept away from under me would not be going too far. It wasn't just what she said, it was the way she said it... in the end, I got my dress...but I was never able to wear my dress or see my mother in hers without feeling bitterness and hatred, directed not so much towards my mother as toward, I suppose, life in general (26)

Annie John's relationship with her mother suffers a lapse and no moment is it more poignant than when she demands for a trunk of her own. The trunk is to be a sign of self-assertion and the solidification of her identity. Years before, her mother had left Dominica for Antigua. She had "packed all her things in an enormous wooden trunk...left her father's house...boarded a boat and sailed for Antigua" (19). Her mother's journey from Dominica to Antigua had not been without mishaps. It had been fraught with storm and turbulence. Annie describes it thus:

It was a small boat, and the trip would have taken a day and a half ordinarily, but a hurricane blew up and the boat was lost at sea for almost five days. By the time it got to Antigua, the boat was practically in splinters, and though two or three of the passengers were lost overboard, along with some of the cargo, my mother and her trunk were safe (19-20).

Annie John had always shared her mother's trunk until the increasing sense of alienation that steadily descended between them. When her father gives her a *carte blanche* to request for anything she wants him to make for her, she demands for nothing but a trunk of her own:

It came into my mind without thinking. "A trunk," I said. "But you have a trunk already. You have your mother's trunk," he said to me.

"Yes, but I want my own trunk...", I said back.

"Very well. A trunk is your request, a trunk you will have," he said (107)

Even in this moment of self-assertion, when Annie John moves away from her mother to validate herself, she is struck by a sense of dread. Her mother's love had stood for stability and security. Now, as she parts from her mother's shadow to assert her own identity, it looms over her, threatening and foreboding. As she demands for her own trunk, she can see her mother "out of the corner of one eye...her shadow on the wall, cast there by the lamp-light. It was a big and solid shadow, and it looked so much like my mother that [she] became frightened" (107). Consequently, she cannot be sure, despite having fashioned out her own individual identity, "when it was really [her] mother or when it was really her shadow standing between me and the rest of the world" (107).

The reality of the West Indies as a created colony of uprooted and transplanted people is rendered metaphorically in the moment of introspection by Annie John when she ruminates on her identity that has been inscribed in the workmanship of her parents. Her life, as she finds it, is manmade and the older she gets, the more uncomfortable she feels as a transplanted individual who has no hand in her journey to "becoming". The house, may be taken metaphorically to stand for the Caribbean Islands as a whole, for the people inhabit a purposefully created environment and were meant to be on the land, not as people, but as tools:

The house we live in, my father built with his own hands. The bed I am lying in my father built with his own hands. When my mother uses a large wooden spoon to stir the porridge... it will also be a spoon that my father has made with his own hands. The nightie I am wearing, with scalloped neck and hem and sleeves, my mother made with her own hands. When I look at things in a certain way, I suppose I should say that the two of them made me with their own hands. For most of my life, when the three of us went anywhere together I stood between the two of them or sat between the two of them. But when I got too big, and there I was, shoulder to

shoulder with them...it became not very comfortable to walk down the street together. And so now there they are together and here I am apart (133).

The older she gets, the more conscious she is of a quest for separation that is only assuaged when departure becomes a reality. To assert her identity, therefore, she chooses to leave the stifling environment home had come to be. She has no plan other than to leave her parents and go off in the world. As she leaves, she knows she wants nothing else in the world other than to be independent and that she would have at any cost. She is resolved not to return to Antigua: “ I did not want to go to England, I did not want to be a nurse, but I would have chosen going off to live in a cavern and keeping house for seven unruly men rather than go on with my life as it stood” (130). The prospect of making a break with history gives Annie great joy: “my heart could have burst open with joy at the thought of never having to see any of it again” (132).

Sefi Atta’s *A Bit of Difference*, on the other hand, approaches the idea of migration from another angle. Whereas Annie John is an only daughter who rapidly grows alienated from her parents, Adeola Bello is one of four children who has fond memories of childhood. She comes from a privileged background. Adeola Bello constantly thinks of returning to Nigeria and eventually does, while Annie John leaves with the full awareness she is not returning to Antigua.

Adeola Bello in London does not feel forced to impress anybody. She speaks her mind, defiantly maintains her identity. While she is a migrant in London, her sense of pride and self is firmly bolstered by her background. Therefore, in her encounter with the West, she is mentally powerful. She does not lose her identity even though

she wants their country for its seamless and efficient governance. She therefore meets the West from the position of power. Interestingly, while *Annie John* ends on the note of a departure, *A Bit of Difference* begins on a note of departure and ends with a return home.

Annie John feels the need to totally sever ties with Antigua because it was never really a genuine home to her in the first place. Adeola Bello on the other hand, despite having different reasons to feel disgruntled with Africa has her umbilical cord attached to the continent as her home. The differences in the attitude towards departure in the two narratives underscore the difference between the realities of postcolonial Africa and post-slavery Caribbean.

Similarities

1. They both belong to the canon of third world prose fiction.
2. The two texts examine the issue of migration using female characters.

Differences

1. The two narratives acquire their distinctiveness from the uniqueness of the nature of the encounter with imperial powers.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How is the colonial experience distinct from the slavery experience?

References

Atta, S. (2012) *A Bit of Difference*. Lagos: Interlink

Kincaid, J. (1989) *Annie John*. New York: Plume

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Title: *Invisible Man*

Synopsis: The narrative is regarded as a classic of African-American prose fiction. It focuses on the forces in racist America which drive a young and ambitious Negro young man to finally embrace invisibility in an underground cave. It bears out conflict between man and the society.

Author Ralph Ellison

Publishers: New York: Random House(1955)

2. Title: *The Heart of Darkness*

Synopsis: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is a novella of western encounter of the African culture along the Congo basin. Postcolonial scholarship has made this novella, which was for a long time, Indisputably regarded as a classic, controversial. Achebe (1977) famously challenged it as an obnoxiously racist work.

Author Joseph Conrad

Publishers: United Kingdom: Blackwood Magazine (1899)

3. Title: *Miguel Street*

Synopsis: It is a collection of stories on different people who are connected because they all live on Miguel Street and are known to the boy-narrator who tells their

stories. The characters are mainly underachieving artisans against whom the narrator is contrasted. He escapes their destiny by moving away from Miguel Street.

Author: VS Naipaul

Publisher: New York: Penguin Books (1969)

4. **Title:** *A Passage to India*

Synopsis: It is a narrative set against the backdrop of British colonial presence in India. It dismisses the idea that the coloniser and the colonised can be friends and shows that the very nature of colonialism made friendship a great impossibility.

Author: E.M Forster

Publisher: Uk: Edward Arnold (1924)

5. **Title:** *Arrow of God*

Synopsis: It is the story of the generation of Nigerians who are caught on the crossroads of cultural conflict and intra-tribal conflict. The Chief Priest, Ezeulu testifies against his people in a land conflict before the white man. The weakness caused by the internal discourse ends up granting the colonial religion absolute freedom as the disillusioned people turn to Christianity.

Author: Chinua Achebe

Publisher: London: Heinemann (1964)

6. **Title:** *Robinson Crusoe*

Synopsis: It is a classic English travelogue novel. The pseudonymous protagonist is stranded for 28 years on a desert island. He proceeds to colonise the space and a young man he chances upon. It has been criticised by post-colonial scholars for blatantly pushing a racist and imperialist agenda.

Author: Daniel Defoe

Publisher: (1719)

7. **Title:** *Lord Jim*

Synopsis: Conrad's *Lord Jim* is one of a trilogy: *Youth*, *Heart of Darkness* and itself.

It is the narrative of a floundering young white man. He eventually finds his salvation by becoming the head of a less civilised race. Like Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, it has been criticised for being blatantly pro-colonial in outlook.

Author: Joseph Conrad

Publisher: New York: Blackwood Magazine (1900)

8. **Title:** *The Old Man and the Medal*

Synopsis: In assimilationist Cameroon, the old man – Meka – learns the hard way that within the colonial construct, the coloniser and colonised cannot be friends.

Author; Ferdinand Oyono

Publisher: London: Heinemann Educational Publishers Ltd. (1967)

9. **Title:** *A Bit of Difference*

Synopsis: A Nigerian woman who is fast approaching middle age balances the pressure of family, migration and work. She has to return to Nigeria in the end to regain her bearing as she welcomes her first baby.

Publishers: InterLink (2012)

10. **Title:** *Annie John*

Synopsis: Annie John grows away from her mother as she grows older and realises that she is largely indifferent to her mother after being hurt countless number of times. She relocates from Antigua to London for good at the end of the narrative.

Publishers: New York: Plume (1985)

MODULE 3 - EXILE AND ALIENATION

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Colonialism, under-development and globalization have resulted in the massive movement and self-imposed exile of diasporic people from their homeland to foreign countries over the last two centuries. The homelands of people in Diaspora are usually what have been labeled as the Third World, developing or under-developed nations, while the abode of exile is usually a developed nation of the West. The consequent crisis of identity, psychological and physical dislocation has generated a genre of writing that focuses on cultural alienation, racism, exile and communal survival in the host nation. This course attempts a comparative analysis of representative texts that reflect socio-political ethos of this period; our focus will therefore be on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*

Outline

Unit 1 : Societal Context: Migration as Catalyst of Alienation & Crisis of Identity

Unit 2: Narrative Point of View as Tool: Themes of Race, Immigration & Alienation in
Americanah & *The Lonely Londoners*

Unit 3: Psychological Alienation: Comparison of Characterization & Plot in *The Lonely*

Londoners & Americanah

Unit 4: Creolization and Engli-Igbo: Language as Identity in Exile, a Comparison of

Americanah & The Lonely Londoners

Unit 5: Critical Evaluation and Comparison of Cross-Cultural and Inter-racial
Relationships

UNIT I : SOCIETAL CONTEXT: MIGRATION AS CATALYST OF ALIENATION & CRISIS OF IDENTITY

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module the student will be able to

1. Understand how the themes of alienation and exile re-enact the socio-cultural experience of Migrant Literature and Literature of the Diaspora in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Americanah*..
2. Understand the themes of Crises of Identity in migrant literature of Africa and Caribbean Literature.
3. Understand the psychological and socio-political under-pinning that informs migration and exile; how the reality of sojourn in the diaspora translates to disillusionment, the search for cultural identity and how this is depicted in the narratives.

INTRODUCTION - THE EMERGENCE & CONSOLIDATION OF ‘DIASPORIC’ GENRE OF LITERATURE

The novels were published over a time differential of about 50 years; *The Lonely Londoners* appeared in 1956, while *Americanah* hit the bookstands first in 2014. Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* is set principally in the immediate post-colonial period of the British Empire, while *Americanah* is set in contemporary Nigeria, the UK and the United States of America. The post-colonial period of the West Indies was characterized by extreme poverty, unemployment and under-development juxtaposed with an exposure and craving for the ‘civilization’ and ‘better quality of life’ offered by their erstwhile colonial masters. After World War II between 1948 and 1970, nearly half a million people left their homes in the West Indies and immigrated to Britain in search of “better opportunities for themselves and their children. Some came to work for a while, save money and return home...others had

fought for Britain during the Second World War.”¹ London was perceived by the average West Indian as the proverbial El Dorado with ‘streets paved with gold’. The novel therefore focuses on the mass migration of West Indians from Trinidad, Port of Spain, Barbados into Britain in search of employment and greener pastures. The crisis of identity and alienation which occur as a result of their sojourn in foreign lands forms the bedrock of theme in both narratives. According to Lars Eckstein² Samuel Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners* also “marks a milestone in the decolonization of British novelistic tradition” which some critics³ have described as “colonization in reverse”. For the very first time the language of the Anglophone novel is infused with a creolisation of narrative while the literary format is stylized by Caribbean art forms emanating from the Calypso genre of oral traditions. According to Rebecca Dyer⁴, “Selvon’s writing resembles an oral storyteller’s continuing tale...depicting an immigrant London in the immediate postwar years.” Both works capture the massive brain-drain and migration of Nigerians and West Indians to the USA and Britain in search of self-actualization and a brighter future.

In *Americanah*, immigration occurred against the backdrop of an emasculated economy and the imminent collapse of the educational sector in Nigeria, on the other hand *The Lonely Londoners* depicts migration as a result of myriad of economic factors in the postwar West Indies. However there is a vast departure in each writer’s depiction of the psychological evolution of the main characters and the ethos of their experience. Ifemelu and Obinnze in *Americanah* viewed going abroad with rose-tinted glasses and a romanticized imagination. The author captures the essence of the deep seated craving of the average Nigerian youth for

¹ ‘Bound for Britain: Experiences of Immigration to the UK’ The National Archives
nationalarchives.gov.uk

² Eckstein, Lars. *Sam Selvon, The Lonely Londoners*. Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Potsdam. Preprint published at the Institutional Repository of the Potsdam University

³ Ramchand, Kenneth. “Introduction.” *The Lonely Londoners*. New York: Longman, 2001. 3-21

⁴ Dyer, Rebecca. “Immigration, Postwar London, and the Politics of Everyday Life in Sam Selvon’s *Fiction*” www.academia.edu

the American way of life in the conversations Ifemelu, Obinnze and their classmates have during their secondary school life in Lagos:

“Ginika where in America are you going?” Emenike asked. He was awed by people who went abroad. After Kayode came back from a trip to Switzerland with his parents Emenike had bent down to caress Kayode’s shoes, saying “I want to touch them because they have touched snow. P.79

For Ifemelu “...she began to dream. She saw herself in a house from *The Bill Cosby Show*, in a school with students holding notebooks miraculously free of wear and creases. She took the SATs at a Lagos centre, packed with thousands of people, all bristling with their own American ambitions...America was America...she dreamed of America. When Aunt Uju called to say there were acceptance letters she stopped dreaming. She was too afraid to hope, now that it seemed possible” p.122

Both Ifemelu and Obinnze had however acquired some capacity to discern and engage in intellectual probity and discourse and had acquired a fully developed sense of cultural identity before their immigration. This probably accounts for the depth of psychological soul-searching Ifemelu experiences and ultimate reversal of her migrant status.

Ifemelu’s encounter with racial and gender prejudice, her desperate search for love and self-actualisation against the backdrop of alienation and socio-cultural exile become focal points of her sojourn. Her romantic fantasy of life in the US soon gives way to the harsh reality of racial inequality and the quest of the African woman for self-identity and validation. According to Chimamanda Adichie, *Americanah* is a story of “love, race and hair”⁵....hair symbolizing the essence of African womanhood⁶. Chimamanda boldly breaks barriers and conventions to destroy social inhibitions and deal forthrightly with race issues hitherto unvoiced. The writer goes a step further than mere social commentary on issues of race but prescribes patterns for change in inter-racial relationships. The writer not only deals with

⁵ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: ‘My new novel is about love, race and...and hair’;
amp.theguardian.com

⁶ The Symbol of Hair in Americanah from, LitCharts | The creators of SparkNotes

white-black inter-racial issues but tackles the complexity of intra-race relationships between African Americans and indigenous Africans in the diaspora. Attention is also given to social relationships between non-white immigrants such as the Latino community and the peculiar psyche of tones of blackness as symbolized in people of mixed race.

On the other hand Samuel Selvon's characters, with the exception of Moses, are symbolic of the West Indian proletariat workforce that immigrated to the United Kingdom in the early 1950s. This period commenced from June 1948 with the arrival in the United Kingdom of the SS Empire Windrush; the ship made an 8,000 mile journey from the Caribbean Islands carrying 492 passengers comprising mainly ex-service men seeking work in Britain. The immigrants were 'semi-skilled' and found work in the furnaces and forges of the British manufacturing industries. They also found work as porters, cleaners, drivers and nurses- 'jobs paying so badly that few whites wanted them.' (2008, pp 2). The characters in *The Lonely Londoners* are representative of this historical social class seemingly void of formal education and with very little capacity for introspection. According to Donnell & Welsh, in the novel "we can finally locate a working-class uneducated voice representing its own perception of cultural and social issues."⁷

Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* also unfolds significant biographical material as we see parallels in the events of Samuel Selvon's real life experiences and Moses. The writer immigrated to London from Trinidad on the same boat as Barbadian writer George Lamming in 1950 in what has been described as "The Windrush Generation"⁸. Kate Kelsall describes the novel as "seeking to re-inhabit and rewrite this particular London by showing it as an unreal place of promise that brings to many a reality of lonely struggle."⁹ The main character from whose point of view most of the story is told is aptly named Moses, akin to a

⁷ Donnell, A and Welsh, S. L. (eds.) (1996) *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, London, Routledge

⁸ BBC CARIBBEAN.com 'The Windrush Generation' www.bbc.co.uk; 20 June, 2008.

⁹ Kelsall, Kate. 'Inside Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*'; www.theculturetrip.com

Messiah, leading his people in exodus from West Indies, the 'land of bondage', to the United Kingdom the 'Promised Land'. Ironically at the onset of the novel, the narrative tone is coated by weary disillusionment and a feeling of hopelessness as Moses battles the unrelentingly harsh British weather to usher in more of his unwelcome kinsmen from Jamaica at the Waterloo station. The narrator laments:

“Now the position have Moses uneasy, because to tell the truth most of the fellars who coming now are real hustlers, desperate; it's not like long time when forty of fifty straggling in, they invading the country by the hundreds, And when them fellars who been here a long time see people running from the West Indies, it only logical for them to say it be damn foolishness to go back. So what Moses could do when these fellars land up hopeless on the doorstep with one set of luggage, no place to sleep, no place to go? P.8

He joins Tolroy a fellow immigrant who is also at the station to meet one of his family members from the West Indies. The simplistic worldview of prospects of a comfortable livelihood in the United Kingdom is typified in the unexpected bandwagon arrival of the whole of Tolroy's family from Trinidad, despite his invitation of only one member. Henry Oliver, otherwise known as Sir Galahad, another freshly arrived immigrant is also met at the station by Moses. The character of Galahad portrays naivety and lack of preparedness to face the harsh conditions of an immigrant's life in London as depicted by his tropical suit worn without an overcoat to combat the bitter coldness of a London Winter. The insensitivity of the newly arrived immigrants to the unwelcoming stance of their host country is underscored as Tanty, a member of Tolroy's family, brazenly rummages out her ceremonial hat from inside a cardboard box to pose for a photograph. The journalist however, is taking her picture for a story about the undesirable influx of West Indians into the United Kingdom at Waterloo Station. This is sardonically captioned in his article in the next morning's newspaper 'Now, Jamaican *Families* Come to Britain'.

Thus while both novels explore the themes of sojourn, exile and self-validation, there is a vast difference in the psychological profile and state of mental development in the major characters. While Ifemelu and Obinnze in *Americanah* display elevated intellect and capacity for psycho-analytical dialectics and self-introspection, the immigrants in *The Lonely Londoners* largely display a somewhat simplistic capacity for psycho-evaluation of their status. This could be informed largely by the opposing underlying aspiration of the protagonists' in the two texts: while the motive of migration in *Americanah* is largely a quest for educational emancipation, the characters in *The Lonely Londoners* are in pursuit of economic wellbeing and emancipation.

Similarities

1. Both narratives explore and depict the complexities and themes of Sojourn, Alienation and Exile.
2. Both protagonists experience a prolonged sojourn of over a decade in the Diaspora.
3. Both narratives depict an emasculated economy, based on historical/factual data, which spur their protagonists to seek greener pastures in the Diaspora.

Differences

1. In *The Lonely Londoners* the protagonist's quest for migration is educational emancipation and international exposure, while the key character in *The Lonely Londoners* is on a quest for economic emancipation through menial jobs and unskilled labour. .
2. While the spatial reality of *Americanah* bestrides both the land of exile as well as the homeland, *The Lonely Londoners* restricts spatial reality largely to Britain with sparse reference and brief flashbacks to the homeland in order to illuminate or corroborate activities and actions of the characters in exile.
3. *The Lonely Londoners* is set in Post-Colonial London while *Americanah* is set in

contemporary America with a time differential of 50 years.

4. There is a vast departure in the depiction of the psychological and mental evolution of the characters: Ifemelu's character undergoes an evolution to self-realization and validation while the characters in *The Lonely Londoners* continue to experience stagnation and self-delusion.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the psychological evolution of both protagonists in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Americanah* from a euphoric migration in quest for economic and educational emancipation to alienation and disillusionment in exile.
2. Discuss how Migration is depicted as the major catalyst of alienation in Literature of the Diaspora.

Reading List:

Primary Texts

1. Chimamanda Adichie- *Americanah*
2. Samuel Selvon's *Lonely Londoners*

UNIT 2: NARRATIVE POINT OF VIEW AS TOOL: THEMES OF RACE, IMMIGRATION & ALIENATION IN *AMERICANAH* & *THE LONELY LONDONERS*

Re-cap: *The previous unit attempts to explore the divergent historical and societal contexts from which each novel emerges. The study examines the concept of Alienation and the quest for self-validation as a psychological off-shoot of Migration, Exile and the diasporic flux from the Caribbean Islands to Britain in The Lonely Londoners, and from Nigeria to United States in Americanah. We have examined the loss of cultural identity and the quest for self-validation that accompanies Literature of the Diaspora. The focal point of the module is to determine the thematic preoccupation of both writers as presented in the protagonists.*

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand how the writers deploy the Narrative Point of View to depict the concepts of the quest for self-identity and validation within the societal context of alienation, disillusionment and gender inequality in the two racially segregated societies of contemporary America in *Americanah* and post-World War Britain in *The Lonely Londoners*.
2. To identify the differences and similarities in thematic intent and narrative approach.

INTRODUCTION

A major similarity in the style of both writers is their deployment of a Narrative Point of View that *moderates* the evolution or unfolding of events in both their novels. Narrative perspective is used as a tool of authorial intent to communicate and influence perception. Both writers therefore deploy the narrative perspective as a vehicle of expression, interpretation and commentary on the major themes dealt with in the novels.

Narrative Point of View as Tool: Themes of Race, Immigration & Alienation in *Americanah* & *The Lonely Londoners*

In *Americanah* the writer deploys the heterodiegetic, omniscient narrative voice in the 3rd Person¹⁰ that enables perspective from any of the characters. Thus we see the point of view oscillate between the characters of both Obinnze and Ifemelu thereby enabling insights into their individual psychological and emotional response to racism, alienation and exile. For instance at the onset of *Americanah* we see the fully evolved character of Ifemelu, whose experience of sojourn to the US has come full circle and she is on her way back to Nigeria. She is at the precipice of her epiphany of self-actualization and the emergence of a strong identity of Black African womanhood, having experienced and overcome culture contact, culture conflict, inferiority complex, racism, a crisis of identity and finally attains self-validation. The narrative point of view explicitly states Ifemelu's voluntary choice to return to Nigeria. She is armed with an enlightened and educated mind that has evolved the power to decipher, distill and unravel the unspoken complexity, subtleties, hidden depths and layers of racial prejudice. This is presented through excerpts of commentary on her cyber blog. Having succeeded in giving voice to the voiceless and cover for the fearful in her blog, Ifemelu seeks for herself the re-awakening of her first and only love having rejected 'white love' as well as African American love.

The sequence of *Americanah* alternates between the past and her odyssey to self-validation and the present continuous where she seeks to re-discover her soul-mate as well as her vocational self-fulfillment and professional validation in Nigeria. Principally Chimamanda Adichie deals with migration from a variety of points of view: as an act of necessity in view of the imminent collapse of the educational system in Nigeria as was the case with Ifemelu; as an act of desperation as was the case in Obinnze's escape to the UK; as an act of

¹⁰ *Americanah* from *Bookrags*. ©2017 BookRags, Inc.

inferiority complex as was the case of Emenike. The return of a disillusioned and disgraced Obinnze back to Nigeria and his subsequent transformation into a billionaire and Ifemelu's return despite her accomplished status in the US negate all their childhood fantasies of going abroad to seek the 'golden fleece'. The writer utilizes the traumatic experience of Obinnze and the desperate longing of Ifemelu to return as an eclipse of that delusion.

The writer deploys the omniscient narrative point of view to depict Ifemelu's experiences in the US and the expressions in her blog to illustrate as well as prescribe responses to the raging vortex of racial inter-relations. Adichie goes a step further than to just catalog the *experience* of racism but offers *psychological re-construction, mental exchange of race and re-living other people's racial experience* as behavioral options. The writer uses encounters and the psychological evolution of each the main characters Obinnze, Ifemelu, Auntie Uju to depict conflict on a variety of themes from neo-colonial mentality, racism to materialism and self-debasement thereby offering authorial advocacy on possible resolution of these issues. This is enabled largely by the omniscience of the narrative point of view.

In the case of *The Lonely Londoners* the Narrative point of view is that of a homodiegetic narrator who while "not figuring as an explicit character, shares their language and their worldview."¹¹ This narrative voice also *moderates* the events as they unfold in the novel. Samuel Selvon deploys the 3rd person narrative and uses Patois or the West Indian Creolized dialect of English for both narration and dialogue. This unique interplay of language blurs the distinction between the voice of Moses and the Narrator giving the impression of a unified experience. This technique has been described by Steve Pradley¹² as "focalization", where Moses becomes the 'focaliser', the character through whose eyes and perceptions the narrative is mediated. This enables the presentation of events from a perspective *within* the

¹¹ Birat, Katie. (2001) *Michael Fabre and the Fiction of the Caribbean*. Homage to Michael, Transatlantica

¹² Pradley, Steve. (2016) *Language and Form in The Lonely Londoners; Characterization, Illusion and Identity*. OpenLearn. The Open University

community. The 3rd Person Narrative also avails the reader insight into the psychological musings and mindset of some of the characters which engenders the collectivity of experience of the characters in the novel. The use of Creole gives the novel a West Indian identity and enables the re-creation of the ethos of a Black West Indian community within a White British country.

However while the main characters in *Americanah* evolve a new consciousness as the novel unfolds, the characters in *The Lonely Londoners* do not experience any form of evolution, psychological growth or mental emancipation. At the onset of the novel Moses' perspective of deep-seated anxiety about the number of West Indians invading the coasts of Britain is ironically negated by him as he welcomes a new batch of immigrants to further swell the overflowing mass. We see his pathetic attempt to spread the newcomers: "...like a welfare officer Moses scattering the boys around London, for he don't want no concentrated area in the Water- as it is, things bad enough already." We perceive his sense of disillusionment and alienation when he arrives at Waterloo station: "When he get to Waterloo he hop off and went in the station...he had a feeling of homesickness....that's why he was feeling sort of lonely and miserable."p.9-10. Despite this force of unwilling consciousness of alienation Moses is still at the station to play the role of 'leading' his people to their delusions of London and its 'streets of gold'. Towards the tail end of the novel the reader listens to one of the most significant passages in the novel as Moses bares his soul to Sir Galahad: " And I can't go back to sleep. I just lay here on the bed thinking about my life, how after all these years I ain't get no place at all. I still the same way, neither forward nor backward." p. 113.

This passage underscores the fundamental theme of the novel. Despite Moses' realization of the futility of his sojourn in the United Kingdom he refuses to return home. This is portrayed by the collective perspective of Galahad, "Daniel, Five Past Twelve and them other fellars" as "they would never leave Brit'n", despite their depraved alienated existence in the land of

their sojourn. This marks a complete departure from the thematic essence of the protagonist's psychological evolution in Chimanda's *Americanah*.

Similarities

1. Both writers deploy Narrative Point of View to modulate transmit authorial intent.
The authors' voices are distinct from the voice of the characters in both work.
2. The two narratives deploy the third person perspective to a large extent.
3. The two narratives emphasize the hidden lives of the characters.

Differences

1. *Americanah* deploys the heterodiegetic omniscient narrative, while *The Lonely Londoners* deploys heterodiegetic 3rd person narrative and deploys Patois for both narrative and dialogue.
2. Adichie's characters have a richer inner life, underscoring the difference in class between the characters of *Americanah* and those of *Lonely Londoners*.
They have the words to theoretise and postulate on their conditions as migrants. This is not the case for the characters of *Lonely Londoners*.
Ifemelu's blog is a key stylistic device functioning as her soapbox where she seemingly expresses herself, free from authorial intrusion. Selvon's characters are poignantly mentally unsophisticated. Herein lies the force of his work.
3. Ifemelu evolves. Her evolution is articulated at various stops of the story and culminates in a self-awareness which prompts a return to her home-country.
The characters of *Lonely Londoners*, on the other hand, end up where they started from.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the types of Narrative point of view applied in the two texts and illustrate the divergence and similarities in their application and how this enables authorial intent.
2. How does the narrative point of view in *The Lonely Londoners* illustrate creolization?

UNIT 3:- PSYCHOLOGICAL ALIENATION: COMPARISON OF CHARACTERIZATION & PLOT IN *THE LONELY LONDONERS* AND *AMERICANAH*

Re-cap: *The preceding unit attempts to understand, analyse and compare each writer's authorial intent through the Narrative Point of View. We examine how the writers influence perception through specific perspectives tailored to communicate theme. We see the deployment of the homodiegetic narrator to achieve a sense of the collective experience in immigrant community and Caribbean ethos on the one hand in The Lonely Londoners. On the other hand we see Adichie deploy the omniscient, heterodiegetic narrator to communicate a variety of themes reflecting the cosmic reality of racism, socio-cultural exile and the search for self-actualization in Americanah.*

OBJECTIVES

1. To effect an in-depth analysis of how character evolves and is deployed in each text to reflect the complexities of alienation and disillusionment as a psychological offshoot of Migrant Literature.
2. To study and understand the role of plot and structure in unveiling thematic preoccupation in each narrative
3. To carry out a comparative analysis of the similarities and points of divergence in the deployment of characterization and plot by the two writers.

INTRODUCTION

Characterisation and plot are literary tools that are focal to the communication of authorial intent. Both writers have deployed these devices as essential components, with varying forms of perspective and type. The relevance of one over the other continues to be a bone of

contention; from Aristotle¹³ who believes the concept of character and thought are secondary to plot, contrary to E.M. Forster,¹⁴ who describes character as the “soul of a work of art”, and ultimately Henry James¹⁵ who avers that character and ‘incident’ (Plot) are totally interdependent as he states “What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?”. It can therefore be surmised that both plot and character are equally fundamental to the depiction of theme and authorial intent; each writers’ individual stylistic approach in the deployment of character and plot will form the nexus of our in-depth analysis.

Psychological Alienation: Comparison of Characterization & Plot in *The Lonely Londoners* & *Americanah*

Characterization

We see very clearly at the onset of both novels and in both the main characters of Moses and Ifemelu, an air of disillusionment, bleakness and homesickness characterizing their psychological alienation from their environment. However Ifemelu responds with a redirection in her quest of self-identity through her preparation to return to her homeland. On the other hand Moses continues to usher in more West Indians into delusions of a glorious future, and maintains his status quo of disillusioned weariness. Very significantly both characters have spent over a decade abroad, however Ifemelu has undergone a metamorphosis in her psyche as a result of the dynamics of her racial experience.

In *The Lonely Londoners* we see a form of stock characterization and uniformity of psychological profiles in most of the characters, with the exception of Moses and Tanty.

¹³ Aristotle. “Poetics”. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. H. Abrams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971

¹⁴ Forster, E. M. *Aspects of The Novel*. Middlesex: Penguin Books Limited, 1927

¹⁵ James, Henry. “The Art of Fiction”. *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. H. Abrams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971

From Sir Galahad to Captain, Lewis and Five Past Twelve the characters do not achieve any evolution or transformation of their attitude to life even after so many years. Only Moses feels a sense of disillusionment yet he is unable to take the bold step of reversal in quest for self-discovery which Ifemelu chooses to take.

Contrary to Savidge Reads' description of *The Lonely Londoners* as not having "so much of a plot"¹⁶, we interpret the plot as episodic and static, rather than conventionally progressive; the narrative is built around the characters to depict an existentialist approach and interpretation of immigrant life. The helpless acceptance of the characters to their fate in the face of pervasive forces opposed to man's progression permeates the entire novel. There is no progression of action or activity; we do not see an unfolding story which escalates to a conflict or climax of events and eventually develops towards a resolution of the conflict. Instead we see the profiling of a variety of characters depicted through specific episodes that are symbolic or representative of the collective experience of the black immigrant in Britain. The emphasis of the plot and perspective of narrative focuses on the only *descriptions* of experience without enabling *impact* of the experience on the psyche of the character thereby fostering change, reaction, psychological response or resistance and rejection. The reader is presented with racism, alienation and hopelessness of the characters underscored by a total acceptance of this state. Once the writer presents a character through narrative commentary or description of an experience, action or activity, Selvon does not develop or evolve the character to react to this experience.

It is only the character of Tanty, ironically a woman, like Ifemelu, in *Americanah*, who resists the capitalist exploitative tendency of the Jewish merchant denying credit for the black immigrant community. Tanty is the only character that undergoes any major evolution. Tanty resists the status quo and challenges oppressive capitalist forces in the community. "It

¹⁶ Reads, Savidge. *The Lonely Londoners* – Sam Selvon 2007; www.wordpress.com

was Tanty who cause the shopkeeper to give people credit.” (p.63.) We see Tanty also break the boundaries of her restricted existence and venture into the city, through the tube and by bus, unaccompanied. At the end of the eye opening journey Tanty “feeling good that she make the trip from Harrow Road at last....Now nobody could tell she that she ain’t travel by bus and tube in London.” p.65

Characterization in *The Lonely Londoners*, however, has some very significant parallels in *Americanah*. Both writers deploy their characters to depict themes of race and alienation and the impact this has on the psyche of the immigrant. We see a very strong parallel in the character of Bartholomew in *The Lonely Londoners* and Ginika, Ifemelu’s childhood friend in *Americanah*. Both the characters are biracial though Bartholomew epitomizes the tragic mulatto complex most effectively. The tragic mulatto is defined as “a mixed race person who is assumed sad or suicidal because he/she fails to completely fit into in the white world or black world. As such is the victim of the society he/she lives, in a society divided by race.”¹⁷ Steven F. Riley goes further to identify a sub-classification of this character of mixed black and white race as “A woman (or man) who appears white, but is believed to be of Spanish or Greek origin... but upon revelation that he/she is mixed race loses social standing.”¹⁸ Further definitions underscore the major feature of the tragic Mulatto as being “outside the realm...destined to live lives caught between the colour line. Neither Black nor White”¹⁹ Bartholomew in *The Lonely Londoners* is a stereotypical Tragic Mulatto with crisis of identity as he refuses to acknowledge his black roots by lying that his skin tone is as a result of his Latino descent. His delusions of superiority to his fellow black immigrants trigger his unsuccessful aspiration to marry his white girlfriend. After his rejection by his girlfriend’s family we see him in a state of constant psychotic search for the girl. This

¹⁷ Wikipedia Definition; https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragic_mulatto

¹⁸ Riley, Steven F. “*Tragic Mulatto/Mulatta*” Mixed Race Studies www.mixedracestudies.org

¹⁹ Prosser, Erica. “Williams Wells Brown and the Tragic Mulatto” in *The Jefferson-Hemings Controversy* Episode 3,

symbolises the state of psychological limbo people of mixed race experience: a rejection by their white skinned kinsmen and a disconnection from their dark-skinned brothers as they perceive the lighter hue of their skin and the presence of white blood in their veins as an indication of superiority. They therefore deal with a compounded alienation from both their white and black counterparts. Bartholomew's fruitless search indicates a lack of resolution and existentialist futility to the tragic reality of unrequited love due to skin color.

In the case of Ginika in *Americanah*, Adichie breaks the boundaries of the stereotypical portrayal of mixed race complexities and treats the theme with more frontally. First Adichie debunks the theory of preference for the lighter skin color by making Obinnze choose Ifemelu's dark skin over Ginika's lighter one. Even Ginika admits her winning of a beauty pageant was undeserved and only because of her fair skin. Secondly we see Ginika unwilling to immigrate to America with her parents, preferring her African origins: this is in sharp contrast with the desperate longing of their other classmates for a foreign education. When Ifemelu finally joins Ginika in America, Ginika admits there is less prejudice against people of mixed race, in comparison to their black counterparts. However, the writer deliberately downplays the mulatto complex as somewhat contrived through Ginika's flippant dismissal of the psychological state. In the eyes of Ginika the mulatto complex which she disdainfully describes as "having issues" were non-existent to her in Nigeria until she came to America. She therefore implies that her recognition of this state is largely artificial and in order to conform with her peers and not necessarily her personal experience.

"...and I'm supposed to be offended when people call me half-caste. I have met a lot of people here with white mothers and they are so full of issues, eh. I didn't know I was even supposed to have issues until I came to America." p. 151.

Here the writer underscores the non-existence of this psychological disconnection in biracial Nigerian children as she exclaims "Honestly, if anybody wants to raise biracial kids, do it in

Nigeria.”p151. Thus while *The Lonely Londoners* presents an existentialist perspective of alienation and the futility of Bartholomew’s continual search for ‘whiteness’, Ginika is more positive in her identification of a psychological comfort zone and place of cultural affinity in Africa.

Both Adichie and Selvon examine two prevalent themes of blacks in diaspora. Each writer focuses on the psychological and cultural degeneration of long time immigrants and exploitative relationships and marriages of convenience which occur as a result of this circumstance. We shall juxtapose the characters of another Bartholomew, Aunty Uju’s suitor and eventual husband, in *Americanah* and Captain, a duplicitous Nigerian ne’er-do-well in *The Lonely Londoners*. They are both very long time immigrants in US and UK respectively. Bartholomew is what the narrator describes as a ‘lost’ son of Igbo extraction who has been in the diaspora for so long his return home is unlikely. Bartholomew belongs to the lower rung of the American labor force and social strata; however his chauvinistic, entitled attitude springs from his much coveted status as a legal American immigrant and potential husband material for Aunty Uju. His availability is the only qualifying factor for which Aunty Uju is prepared to sacrifice love, her self-worth as a woman and most damaging of all, the happiness of her only son Dike. Aunty Uju’s desperation for marriage at any cost qualifies him as very eligible husband material irrespective of his disregard for Dike. Ifemelu’s contempt for him arises as a result of his repressive subjugation of Aunty Uju despite his unworthiness in terms of enlightenment, education and exposure. Underlying Ifemelu’s contempt of Bartholomew is an exploitative undercurrent she discovers from his online commentary on Nigerian women. Under a sobriquet of “Igbo Massachusetts Accountant” Bartholomew responds to the accusation that Nigerian men “went back to Nigeria to looking for nurses and Doctors to marry, only so the new wives could earn money for them back in America” Bartholomew responds “What is wrong with a man wanting financial security from his wife? Don’t women want the same thing?” (p.144.) His exploitative intentions

come to the fore after his marriage to Aunt Uju as he shirks all responsibility for the family. Aunt Uju's expectation of a happy married life come crumbling as Bartholomew turns out to be parasitically dependent. Her disillusionment with the marriage spurs her self-emancipation as she breaks loose and attains professional and personal actualization. Both Aunt Uju and Bartholomew exploit one another as a result of their individual immigrant circumstances. However the writer enables psychological evolution of the characters and ultimate emancipation for Uju.

Bartholomew's exploitative character bears similarity with Captain in *The Lonely Londoners*. Both characters are representative of the deceptive exploitation of vulnerable immigrants. Though Captain eventually marries one of his many conquests, we see his deceitful philandering under the guise of being an affluent student in the UK; his original quest for education is completely abandoned. We see serial infidelity, duplicity, extortion and perpetual exploitation as he takes advantage of everyone in all his amorous, platonic and fraternal relationships. Captain is a stock character whose persona does not undergo any development but is in archetypal of a certain category of exploitative Nigerian immigrants in the diaspora, whose unbridled activities constitute preying on hapless individuals. According to the narrator: "Yet day after day, Cap still alive, living without working, smoking the best cigarettes, never without women" p. 45

In *Americanah* we also are presented with Obinnze's former school mate, Emenike, who has become a citizen in the UK through an exploitative marriage to an older white woman. Despite his exploitative intent Emenike has to undergo a complete transformation into pseudo-British mentality, with the submergence of any hint of his core African cultural essence. He strives for a sense of belonging in the contrived world of his British citizenship. His accent, clothes, friends and entire worldview have become an extension of his British affiliations as he apes their every action in an attempt to fit in and be acceptable to his wife.

Emenike has lost every dimension of his core ethos as a black man, except his skin color, which betrays him as a caricature in self-delusion. It is this degenerated state of self-debasement that Obinnze unknowingly strives so desperately to attain, through his aborted marriage of convenience. Ironically his eventual imprisonment and deportation back to Nigeria is the pathway to his transformation into the bourgeoisie class of the undeserving super-rich. Thus the writer parodies the depths of debasement to which the immigrant subjects himself as opposed to the ease, though often questionable, through which ill-gotten wealth can be acquired in our homeland.

Captain on the other hand, in *The Lonely Londoners*, does not need a residency permit to stay in London. Here we see the marked contrast in immigrant life 50 years ago in *The Lonely Londoner* and the contemporary world of *Americanah*. The immigrants in *The Lonely Londoners* are faced with continuous psychological debasement yet continue to flow in, unabated, en-masse. Samuel Selvon does not present or explore the possibility of self-improvement or education in any of the immigrants in his novel. Despite their unbridled access to education, as exemplified in Captain's original educational quest in UK, they choose to remain alienated and wallow in disillusionment and escapist pastimes. We thereby see Captain's deceitful philandering under the guise of being an affluent student in the UK. We see duplicity, extortion and exploitation as he takes advantage of the vulnerable in all his amorous, platonic and fraternal relationships. Captain is a stock character whose persona does not undergo any development but is in archetypal of a certain category of Nigerian immigrants in the diaspora, whose unbridled activities constitute a prey on hapless individuals. We see the obtuse Big City who is a sea faring wanderer, a migrant of mercurial temper, raised in an orphanage with no roots.

The character of Henry Oliver, who is nicknamed Sir Galahad is very central to the theme of alienation and racism. First we see at his arrival that while all the passengers have

disembarked, Galahad still sleeps on in the coach oblivious to the fact that he has arrived at his destination, until Moses seeks him out and wakes him up. The fact that Sir Galahad, at the onset of the novel, is a new immigrant in Britain gives the reader perspective on the impact racism and alienation has on fresh immigrants. Moses' first encounter with and impression of Sir Galahad at the Waterloo station is built around his appearance and his totally unsuitable mode of apparel. Throughout the narrative Sir Galahad's clothes are symbolic of his psychological profile. His slumber and unsuitable apparel symbolize his complete unpreparedness and psychological state of slumber and lack of consciousness. This underscores the harsh awakening from his unassuming innocence that awaits him in the UK. We see Galahad in a thin tropical suit in the piercing coldness of winter, and in summer we see him shivering with cold despite the intense heat of the season. His tropical apparel worn in the West Indies, reveals his mindset is still firmly anchored in a state of illusion and unreality. The nick name Sir Galahad has its origins in the most chivalric, gallant and perfect Knight of King Arthur's Round Table. The historic Sir Galahad was the only Knight that sought and attained the Holy Grail. His character signifies perfection and the epitome of goodness and gallantry. The significance of the historic Galahad to Samuel Selvon's Galahad is the elusiveness of the search for all that is perfect and idealistic, similar to the proverbial El Dorado or Promised Land. The very next day after his arrival we see his 'boldface' and bravado as he ventures out into the city of London, unaccompanied to job-hunt. The complete disorientation and loss of direction he encounters underscores the harsh reality of his unpreparedness and total alienation from his environment. Once again Moses assumes the role of deliverer as he miraculously appears out of the blues to direct and guide Sir Galahad.

Sir Galahad's obsession with his clothing represents the desperation to cover up his inner disconnection and loss of identity. The obsessive detail Galahad pays to his foppish dress sense when he is out on a date is juxtaposed with dumpy threadbare clothing he adorns when

he is at work. All the elements of Galahads character appear to be in complete opposition and variance to the reality around him. This underscored by his preference for night shift at work, such that his movement is at complete variance with the rest of his community: his day begins when theirs ends, and ends when theirs begin. His outward clothing therefore is an attempt to assimilate him into the British society and absorb him into the spatial environment. We see in his fascination for names of famous places an aspiration for inclusion. He savors the full and proper pronunciation of the venues and sets up meetings and rendezvous at these locations in order to be a part and participant of the exciting life in his environment despite the alienation of his soul and skin colour. The reality of his physical disparity is underscored as a white child comments on his appearance. He ignores the slur reaches out to the child who in turn bursts into tears. This incident captures the escapist mentality of Sir Galahad as he mentally shuts his mind to the reality of his alienation and deludes himself as being a part of the British world. The essence of Sir Galahad's escapism is depicted in his psychological explanation to racism. He offers a deluded explanation to racism:

‘Lord, what it is we people do in this world that we have to suffer so?Colour is you that causing all this, you know. Why the hell you can't be blue, or red or green, if you can't be white? You know is you that cause a lot of misery in the world! Is not me, you know is you! I ain't do anything to infuriate the people and them, is you....Is not we that the people don't like, he tell Moses, 'is the colour Black' p.72-73

Galahad separates himself from the entity of blackness, and convinces himself that the whites discriminate not against him as a person but against the colour black as a distinct article. This escapist explanation creates a false comfort zone from which Galahad escapes the reality of his alienation and exclusion and contentedly perceives himself as an integral part of society.

His dalliance with Daisy after their public rendezvous at the famous Charring Cross and romantic aftermath in his yard gives him a state of false assimilation. He is firmly established in his comfort zone and psychologically equipped for an infinite habitation in Britain despite his true status as an alienated immigrant.

The descriptive characterization in *The Lonely Londoners* culminates in a **crucible** or melting pot in the plot, where all the characters meet at Harris' West Indian fete party. Here we see the amalgamation of the West Indian community in a festive environment. The fete is permeated with the ubiquitous elements symbolic of West Indians in the Diaspora: the music from the indigenous West Indian Steel band, Marijuana and alcohol. The writer includes the presence of all the characters depicted in the narrative and binds them together at a solidarity dance party. This scene symbolizes the inclusion and unification of the immigrants versus their hitherto alienated existence. The underlying significance of the fete is communal existence as a survival strategy for the alienated. A subtle critique of the colonial mentality of Harris is underscored by his insistence on playing the British National Anthem at the fete. This casts a shadow over the cultural identity celebrated in the fete and superimposes the sovereignty of the British and their continued domination.

Plot

In the plot of *The Lonely Londoners* we see the introduction in the arrival of Sir Galahad and Tolroy's family from Trinidad at the Waterloo station, met by Moses and Tolroy. The plot advances through episodic depictions of a number of characters who are representative of the immigrant population in Britain at the time. Thus the plot revolves around the characters and their experiences, rather than the unfolding of events or action that lead to a climax and resolution, as is the case in *Americanah*.

The **introduction**, **characterisation** and **crucible** of the plot in *The Lonely Londoners* present the status quo of the alienated black immigrant in Britain. The writer then develops

the narrative to a point of **crisis** through Galahad's loss of his job and means of sustenance. We see Sir Galahad in a state of near starvation in Britain as he resorts to catching and slaughtering a pigeon from Trafalgar square which he consumes with Moses. The universality of his experience for other immigrants in Britain is underscored by a similar experience Captain has. He also resorts to killing and eating meat for two weeks to avert starvation. Their consumption of these icons of British tourist attraction signifies their symbolic debasement as an observer calls Galahad a "cruel, cruel beast", a "cruel monster" and a "killer".

This crisis situation is however never resolved, like it is in Chimamanda's *Americanah*. Whilst Ifemelu resolves to return home after her debasement and conflictual relationships in US, Galahad does not ever propose to leave Britain. Moses on the other hand continues to fantasize about West Indies as the 'Paradise' he longs for. Ironically Paradise can never be attained except through death. Very significantly despite the fact that Moses immigrated to Britain in search of a better life, after 10 years he still has not managed to save enough money to return to Trinidad, yet he doesn't return. The dogma of their attitude and perpetuity of their immigrant status is personified in Galahad; the futility of their alienated existence is captured conclusively in the following conversation between Galahad and Moses towards the end of the narrative:

'Boy if I was you....I save up my money....hustle back to Trinidad'
'Who me? No boy, I not going back.' Answers Galahad.
'Ah, you just like Daniel and Five Past Twelve and them other fellars.'
'They sat that if they have money they would go all round
the continent....they would never leave Brit'n. Boy you
know what I want to do? I want to go back to Trinidad....I
go and live (in) Paradise....p.114

Moses goes further to capture his whole experience as an immigrant in the following words:

‘Sometimes I look back at all the years I spend in Brit’n...and I surprise that so many years gone by....This is a lonely miserable city....Here is not like home where you have friends all about....you want to go excursion to the sea, you want to go and play football and cricket. Nobody in London does really accept you. They tolerate you, yes, but you can’t go in their house and eat or sit down and talk. It ain’t have no sort of family life for us here. Look at Joseph. He married to a English girl and they have 4 children....living in two rooms.He apply for a flat....but it look like he will never get one.’ p. 114

In Americanah we see the writer explore the themes of race, gender, and self-discovery through a complex plot comprising introduction, rising action, crisis, conflicts, climax and resolution.

The plot or structure of the novel is divided into 7 parts and is crafted to:

- a) Unfold the process of the discovery of love between Ifemelu and Obinnze, and examine the conflict of separation, psychological and racial complexities which arise as a result of the Migrant flux.
- b) Delineate the psychological development, maturity and self-emancipation of both the characters of Ifemelu and Obinnze, and Aunty Uju
- c) Present, explore the complexities of Exile, Racism and Migration and thereby stimulate alternative behavioral patterns as an antidote to these concepts.

Part 1, made up of Chapters 1& 2 is the **Introduction**. The thematic kernel of this segment is to communicate three basic aspects of Ifemelu’s character: her self-Identity as a black African woman with a ‘halo’ of natural curly hair, her professional identity as an accomplished blogger impacting on immigrant race issues and relations and finally her emotional Identity and search for the true ‘love of her life’.

The second part of the **Introduction** in the plot is the presentation of Obinnze the co-protagonist on which the plot of the story is hinged. As in the case of Ifemelu, the writer

presents Obinnze, in the present dimension of time as an adult, successful Obinnze residing in Nigeria. The writer introduces a possible conflict in plot by juxtaposing the younger Obinnze that Ifemelu longs for as her childhood first and only love in Chapter 1 as now being 'happily married' and firmly established as a family man. The writer consciously foreshadows conflict as the narrative voice describes the present day affluent respectable Obinnze whose settled life is invaded by amorous, suggestive, emails from Ifemelu addressing him with a romantic sobriquet exclusive to the two of them during their university days.

Part 2 comprising chapters 3 to 21; constitutes the essence of the 'rising action' and build-up of 'conflict' in the plot. The story is set against the backdrop of global immigrant flux from developing countries to the Western world in the twenty first century. The writer utilizes the flashback technique of plot to traverse back and forth in time and space²⁰ to illustrate, intimate or give perspective underpinning actions or circumstances of the characters. We see a selection of specific, incidents or occurrences which are representative of or explanatory to certain aspects of the emergence of their characters. Through flashbacks the writer is able to introduce the pivotal characters and main influences in Ifemelu's life: her parents, and Auntie Uju who facilitates Ifemelu's immigration to the US. Auntie Uju is also symbolic of the theme of female self-debasement as portrayed in her relationships with both the General in Nigeria and Bartholomew a Nigerian immigrant in the US. Significantly however we see the evolution of Auntie Uju's character from psychological imprisonment and dependence to her ultimate emancipation of self as she perseveres and triumphs in her Medical practice exams in the US. Her eventual separation from Bartholomew's condescending yet exploitative relationship signals the completion of her psychological rebirth and attainment of self-Identity.

²⁰ Nina, N. "Story & Plot: Americanah". (2014) in WeAreOCA: The Open College of the Arts' blog. Powered by WordPress.

The writer consciously and systematically introduces specific incidents of Ifemelu's formative years through flashbacks to illustrate how cultural, intellectual and social values were instilled into them as youth which form the core of their essence as adults. This is very effectively portrayed in flashbacks to Ifemelu's university days and her relationship with Obinnze's mother, a strong intellectual idealist with a liberal, though practical, attitude to womanhood. She instills in Ifemelu the need for a woman to take responsibility of her own destiny and run with her vision.

By Chapter 9 the 'rising action' built through flashbacks successfully communicates the core influences in the characters of the two main protagonists and their families. We see the consolidation of their idyllic love affair and their hope of an idealistic future together abroad. This is of course cut short by fate and Ifemelu's departure to the US leaving Obinnze in Nigeria.

Ifemelu's varied experiences in the US form **crisis** and **conflict** in the plot. First we are presented with the **crisis**: she is unable to find a job and sustain herself in the US causing her to resort to prostitution. This breaks her spirit, debases her soul and severs her bond with Obinnze. This **crisis** is the hiatus that forms a void in Ifemelu's heart; she tries unsuccessfully to fill it with her relationships with Curtis her white boyfriend and her black American lover, Blaine. The writer follows this crisis with **conflict** in the plot. Instead of a single central conflict, the writer generates a series of inter-related conflicts that can be categorized into four broad subjects:- a) her amorous relationships, b) her **inter** and **intra**-racial relationships, c) her cultural and psychological self-identity. The writer uses these conflicts to generate exposition and discourse on all these themes thereby advocating alternative behavioral patterns. The culmination of these conflicts is the epiphany of self-discovery by Ifemelu and her emergence as a confident black woman, comfortable in the

color of her skin and the texture of her hair, with the capacity to challenge and overcome societal boundaries of race and gender.

The writer explores Ifemelu's inter-racial relationship with Curtis, her white boyfriend as exciting, romantic and idyllic. Conflict arises ostensibly because she is unfaithful to him, but the fundamental cause is the racial undertone and the inability of Curtis to recognize and actually *live* through her experience of racism, despite his love for her. He cannot comprehend that racial disparity is real.

At the end of **Part 2**, in the midst of the plot unfolding the love affair between Ifemelu and Curtis, the writer sandwiches a spatial flash which transcends the reader from America where Ifemelu is, to England where Obinnze is forming **Part 3** of the novel. Thus instead of flashbacks that go back in time to shed light on the present, the writer moves across space to intimate the reader, almost simultaneously, on the activities of Obinnze. In **Part 4** her idyllic love life with Curtis in the US is juxtaposed with the harsh dehumanizing experience of Obinnze as an illegal immigrant in UK, and his ultimate imprisonment and deportation. The reference to Obinnze destabilizes Ifemelu and sparks jealousy in Curtis as the truth dawns on him that he will never be the love of her life.

We are also presented with the second love conflict in Ifemelu's sojourn in the US: her amorous relationship with Blaine, a Black American male intellectual. Blaine appears as the epitome of an idealistic lover and the quintessential knight in shining armor. The conflict in Ifemelu's relationship with Blaine encapsulates the very central theme of *intra*-black racial complexities (while her relationship with Curtis represents *inter*-racial relationships). Blaine is the archetypal intellectual black American activist and crusader for the fundamental human rights and advancement of the native black Americans. This is typified by his extensive community service and passionate advocacy for blacks. His regular intellectual soirees arrow-headed by his sister Shan form a nexus for black activists. Ifemelu feels a

subtle alienation from their group and craves to be a part of their sophisticated intellectualism, but seems to fall short of expectation. Though Ifemelu uses her blog to espouse the complexities of racism as well as intra-racial prejudice between non-native blacks from Africa and native black Americans, the very fact that she is not native Black American taints her perception. Her discourse on race issues in her blog are regarded with slight condescension by Blaine and cynicism by Shan, his sister because they believe her exposition on racism does not really reach her soul. The inability of Ifemelu and Blaine to fully connect ideologically and in terms of cultural experience leads to emotional conflict.

In synopsis therefore both Ifemelu's relationships are conflicted due to racial complexities and the inability of parties to live through and in a racial experience culturally different from theirs. The writer also gives a most profound insight into her perspective on how inter-racial and intra-racial relationships can truly survive. This forms a core message of the entire narrative:

The simplest solution to the problem of race in America? Romantic love. Not friendship. Not the kind of safe shallow love where the objective is that both people remain comfortable. But real deep romantic love, the kind that twists and wrings you out and makes you breathe through the nostrils of your beloved. And because that deep romantic love is so rare, and because American society is built to make it rarer between American Black and American White, the problem of race in America will never be solved. (p.366-367)

Adichie very unconventionally proffers a forthright change in behavioral patterns as well as psychological mind shift as the only solution to racism:

Dear American Non-Black, if an American Black person is telling you about an experience about being black, please do not eagerly bring up experiences from your own life. Everyone has suffered but you have not suffered precisely because you are an African American. Don't be quick to find explanations to what has happened. Don't ...say it's not

race....Blacks don't WANT it to be race....Black Americans, too are tired of talking about race. They wish they didn't have to. But shit keeps happening....Don't say 'I'm colour-blind'....Dont say 'Oh, racism is over, slavery was so long ago'....racism is about the power of a group and in America its white folks who have that power.... American Blacks are not telling you that you are to blame. They are just telling you what is. If you don't understand ask questions....Then listen more....Here's to possibilities of connection and understanding. (p.406)

The emotional conflicts in the novel have been presented through flashbacks and spatial flashes. The plot returns to the present dimension of time and we are back in the hairdressing salon at Fenton, as Ifemelu prepares to return to Nigeria. The theme of the psychological impact of race on immigrant black youth is introduced as Ifemelu is informed of Dike's attempted suicide as she leaves the hairdressers. The psychological trauma illustrated in the various conflicts Ifemelu and Auntie Uju face as immigrants, manifests as depression and suicidal tendency in Dike.

Similarities

1. Both protagonists experience a prolonged sojourn of over a decade in the Diaspora.
2. Both writers focus on the psychological and cultural degeneration of long time immigrants in the Diaspora.
3. Both writers explore the concept of Racial discrimination as a major component of theme.
4. Both protagonists seek psychological self-identity.
5. Both writers explicate the Mulatto Complex of characterization as offshoot of inter-racial relationships.

Differences

1. The plot in *The Lonely Londoners* is episodic, static and the narrative is built around various experiences of the characters which reflect their persona. On the other hand, in *Americanah* Adichie conforms to the Aristotelian principles of

plot comprising Introduction, Rising action, Crisis, Conflict, Climax and Resolution.

2. While the protagonist in *Americanah* embarks on a re-turn from exile in her quest for self-identity, the protagonist in *The Lonely Londoners* maintains his status of disillusioned migrant in perpetual exile.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Carry out a comparative analysis of the plot as structural device in *The Lonely Londoners* and *Americanah*.
2. Discuss the psychological and cultural degeneration of long time immigrants as portrayed in exploitative marital and sexual relationships exemplified by Bartholomew and Captain in *The Lonely Londoners*.
3. What is the Tragic Mulatto Complex? Effect a comparative analysis of each writers' exploration of this concept.

UNIT 4: CREOLIZATION AND ENGLI-IGBO: LANGUAGE AS IDENTITY IN EXILE, A COMPARISON OF *AMERICANAH* AND *THE LONELY LONDONERS*

Recap: *The previous unit has attempted an in-depth comparative analysis of the themes of exile, alienation, bi-racial relationships and complexities, emotional exploitation, male domination, gender repression and the quest for self-identity as depicted through characterization and plot in Americanah and The Lonely Londoners. We have examined how the interplay of these themes reflects the ethos of Migrant Literature of the Diaspora and the similarities and divergence of worldview in the two works.*

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand each writer's re-crafting of English in order to depict the peculiarity of the collective experience of the immigrant in his search for cultural identity in exile.
2. To understand how the deployment of this form of language impacts on the themes of disillusionment and the quest for self-identity.

INTRODUCTION

Both Adichie and Selvon fall into the category of postcolonial writers and their use of language underscores the peculiarity of the colonial experience characterized by the interplay of more than one culture, language and indigenous worldview. In the case of *The Lonely Londoners* and very similar to the experience of Adichie, Samuel Selvon is described as being "torn between two languages"²¹. Chimamande Adichie²² describes herself as belonging to "a generation of Nigerians who constantly negotiate two languages...ours is the

²¹ Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" Ed. In Patrick Willimas and Laura Chirsman, *Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. Print.

²² Interview with Chimamanda Adichie in Women's Caucus of the African Literature Association, 2008

Engli-Igbo generation....my English speaking is rooted in a Nigerian experience not in a British one...I have taken ownership of English.” (Ada Uzoamaka Azodo 2008:2) The significance of the deployment of language is very central to each writers’ portrayal of the search for self-identity in both the novels.

Creolization and Engli-Igbo: Language as Identity in Exile, a Comparison of Americanah & The Lonely Londoners
Creolization and Engli-Igbo: Language as Identity in Exile, a Comparison of Americanah & The Lonely Londoners

For the Caribbean writer, texts written in Creole represented a form of resistance to colonial cultural dependence and the imperialism that the English Language represents. In order to reconcile misperceptions of the superiority of language of the colonizer (English) over the colonized (Creole), many Caribbean writers settle for a linguistic compromise deploying Standard English as the narrative voice and Creole as the language of dialogue. Sam Selvon in *The Lonely Londoners* completely debunks the myth of the ‘backwardness’²³ of Creole and uses it as the sole language of his narrative: creole is used for the narrative voice, as well as in dialogue. *The Lonely Londoners* is therefore characterized by the subversion of English language under expressions and adaptations of Creole. The writer incorporates indigenous language forms into Standard English: the rhythmic fluidity of calypso oral narrative Creole forms is brought to bear on sounds and pronunciation of specific words to give a cadence peculiar to Creole. We see the adaptation of local Creole idioms and colloquial expressions as vehicle of expression in the narrative. Creolization thereby assumes the symbol of Caribbean Identity, especially within the diaspora as the postwar period was characterized by mass movement into exile by West Indian citizens. Selvon therefore writes in what the

²³ D’Costa, Jean Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Literatures in English

authors of *The Empire Writes Back*²⁴ describe as the Creole Continuum which has variously been defined as ‘hybridization’²⁵, ‘amalgamation’²⁶ of the language of the colonized and the colonizers depicting a decolonized Caribbean Identity. Paradoxically however, the creolization of language in *The Lonely Londoners* underscores the alienation and ‘otherness’ of the characters rather than their integration into the British society.

Very significantly Adichie achieves what Selvon does in *The Lonely Londoners* through his Creolization of English. *Americanah* interweaves Igbo phrases and sentences with Standard English in order to achieve what she describes as Engli-Igbo. She thereby communicates the cultural ethos of the Igbo language within the ambit of English syntax or lexicon. This narrative strategy enables the reader to recognize when characters are communicating with one another in Igbo and thereby experience the cultural flavor of Igbo worldview and its linguistic traditions. In her narrative strategy and stylistic use of language Adichie deploys what Onukaogu and Ezechi (2010) describe as Discourse Implicature²⁷, otherwise described as reader as ‘co-creator’; this a situation whereby the reader is expected to decode the meaning of Igbo phrases from the flow of the narrative. Thus the writer is able to replicate code-switching (intermittent switching from one language to the other), from Igbo to English which is a very predominant feature of migrant Igbo culture both in the diaspora and in the homeland. Adichie foments cultural identity of the Igbo by interlacing the narrative with Igbo proverbs and wise-sayings, and proceeds to give an English equivalent translation of this phrase; the Igbo rhetoric enriches the narrative flow thereby fostering Igbo traditions and bringing the aesthetics of Igbo rhythmic language forms to bear on English language as

²⁴ _ . *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

²⁵ Young, Robert. *Colonial Desire: Hybridization in Theory Culture and Race: The Empire Writes Back*: London: Routledge, 2001. Print.

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²⁷ Onukaogu, A. A., Ezechi, O., 2010, Chimamanda, Ngozi Adichie: *The aesthetics of commitment and narrative*, Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.

a globalized medium of communication. Adichie succeeds in making the “works truly and authentically Nigerian but still remaining in the migrant context.”²⁸

The deployment of this technique underscores the illustriousness of Igbo heritage and reinforces the irresistible pull for Ifemelu to re-unite with her African roots thereby attaining self-validation.

In *The Lonely Londoners* the author introduces the stream of consciousness as a narrative strategy to depict the peculiarity of an experience occurring only during the summer. This segment is distinguished by the style of language rendition which is reminiscent of composite oral traditional performance which is ‘acousmatic’²⁹ in nature, i.e. appearing to be English, but in actuality informed by Creole structures. This narrative segment depicts life in Britain in the summer; this is in contrast with the rest of the narrative which is permeated with images of a blisteringly cold, unwelcoming weather. For the first time the foreboding cloud of alienation gives way to fluidity in inter-racial relations. We see the creolization of language as literary vehicle that enables this segment. There is a rhapsodic flow of language characteristic of traditional oral forms of calypso in the segment. The conversion from orality into a literary structure is depicted by the endless stream of expression connoting the connectivity of rhythm and sound. The summer heat appears to metaphorically melt away all inhibitions, symbolized by the complete absence of guiding rules of grammar as the narrative style is totally devoid of any punctuation. There is the unfolding of a steady stream of action flowing from one to another seamlessly. Through the stream of consciousness comes a torrent of public display of indiscriminate sexual activities under the heat of the summer sun, irrespective of race or gender or sexual preference. Bill Schwarz interprets this as “testifying to an entire repressed domain of eroticism within the national landscape, conventionally concealed through the practices of English decorum. The heat of the city

²⁸ Koziel, Patrycja. (2015), *Narrative Strategy in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novel, "Americanah": The manifestation of Migrant Identity*. Studies of African Languages and Cultures: University of Warsaw

²⁹ Dolan, Mladen, *A Voice and Nothing More*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2006.

evening finally reveals a perverse national pathology: “sex life gone wild”³⁰ The activities largely evolve around Hyde Park Corner and unveil unbridled, boundless inter-racial, gay and straight copulations. What strikes the reader is the overt blurring of racial boundaries and the public nature of an otherwise private activity. The overtly alienated psychological state of the immigrant seems to disintegrate in the boundless licentious liberty of the summertime cavorting.

The sexual encounters also break boundaries of social stratification as we see sexual activity between the lowest ‘professional’ sex workers and the bourgeoisie ostensibly proper English upper class as a white woman takes a Jamaican home one night from Hyde Park:

...a Jamaican with a woman in Chelsea in a smart flat with all sorts of surrealist paintings on the walls and contemporary furniture...asking questions to improve himself....but the woman not interested in any knowledge she only interested in one thing...and in the heat of emotion call the Jamaican a black bastard...as a compliment. p. 93

Other encounters are described thus:

....a big set of West Indians storming Brit’n it have a lot of dark women in the racket....it have some white fellars who feel it a big thrill to hit a black number and the girls does make them pay big money. p 91

³⁰ Schwarz, Bill. (2014) “Creolization West One. Sam Selvon’s *The Lonely Londoners*,” *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 11:Iss. 2, Article 3.

Similarities

1. Both writers create adaptations of standard English into linguistic art forms that reflect the indigenisation of English by formerly colonised citizens.
2. Cultural elements form strong stylistic platforms in both narratives as we see a strong preoccupation with Igbo traditions in *Americanah*, such as the concept of the African Woman's Hair which forms an extended metaphor throughout the narrative. Similarly strong features of Creole culture such as the Patois language form, Calypso music and the famous steel band carnivals all form stylistic devices in *The Lonely Londoners*.
3. The two texts present female characters, Tanty (*Lonely Londoners*) and Ifemelu (*Americanah*) as the ones who truly comprehend the oppression underlying racial relations. Thus, the narratives present an avenue for exploring the interface of race and gender in discourse on migrant literature.

Differences

1. *Americanah* reflects the prevalent use of Engli-Igbo as stylistic format, while *The Lonely Londoners* deploys Patois for both narrative and dialogue.
2. While the elements of Igbo culture create a nostalgic effect in *Americanah* and spur the protagonist to seek her roots, the creolization of language in *The Lonely Londoners* on the other hand, underscores the alienation and 'otherness' of the characters rather than their integration into the British society. Rather than generate a desire to return to their roots, as is the case in *Americanah*, the characters in *The Lonely Londoners* maintain their status quo and remain stagnant.
3. In *Americanah*, the writer explores the themes of race, gender, and self-discovery through a complex plot comprising introduction, rising action,

crisis, conflicts, climax and resolution The characters are less central than Selvon's characters in *Lonely Londoners* whose plot advances through episodic depictions of a number of characters who are representative of the immigrant population in Britain at the time. Thus the plot revolves around the characters and their experiences, rather than the unfolding of events or action that lead to a climax and resolution, as is the case in *Americanah*

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the similarities in the modulation of English by both writers as a symbol of cultural identity in Migrant Literature.
2. Of what significance is the Stream of Consciousness segment of the narrative in *The Lonely Londoners* in terms of theme and language?

UNIT 5: CRITICAL EVALUATION AND COMPARISON OF CROSS-CULTURAL AND INTER-RACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Re-cap: *The previous unit is a descriptive analysis of the deployment and modulation of the English language by each of the writers in order to communicate the peculiarity of the migrant experience of Sojourn, Exile, Alienation, Disillusionment and the quest for lost cultural identity. The unit attempts a comparative evaluation of the major elements of each writer's style and how this enables thematic preoccupation.*

OBJECTIVES

1. To enable a comprehensive understanding of how each writer reflects the psychological challenges of cross-cultural and inter-racial relationships within the context of racial discrimination and gender repression.
2. To recognize the similarities and differences between each writers' depiction and exploration of the theme of inter-racial relationships and their individual and underlying authorial intent.
3. To deploy feminist theory in the analysis of inter-racial and cross-cultural relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Inter-cultural and inter-racial relationships form a core element of theme in both *The Lonely Londoners* and *Americanah*. However, there is a marked difference in the exposition and interpretation of the theme by each writer. Adichie underscores the challenges and conflictual nature of the theme by exploring depths of love, passion and intense psychological profiling of each character as they are faced divergent racial and cultural experiences. Selvon employs an entirely different perspective to his depiction of cross-cultural relationships.

Critical Evaluation and Comparison of Cross-Cultural and Inter-racial Relationships

In *Americanah*, the writer takes the reader through the often desperate largely unsuccessful, striving of each character to understand their partner's cultural difference. The inability to resolve these conflicts results in a psychological progression by one or both the characters as they seek fulfillment outside the relationship. Leaving an unsuccessful relationship or situation is always underscored, by the writer, as an often necessary option for survival. Ifemelu exits both her relationships with Curtis and Blaine; Auntie Uju exits her relationship with Bartholomew; Obinnze exits his relationship with Kosi. And very importantly Ifemelu exits her sojourn in the US. However very significantly Adichie does not leave her audience with a mere *presentation* of the reality of conflict, but goes a step further to *offer* and *recommend* a re-evaluation and shift in psychological behavioral patterns as solution to conflict in inter-racial and cross-cultural relationships

White folks don't get treated like shit in in upper-class African American communities and white folks don't get denied bank loans or mortgages precisely because they are white and black juries don't give white criminals worst sentences than black criminals for the same crime and black police officers don't stop white folk for driving white and black companies don't choose to hire somebody because their name sounds white and black teachers don't tell white kids that they are not smart enough to be doctors...so after listing all the don'ts, what's the do? *Try listening; maybe hear what is being said. And remember it's not about you. Don't say 'We are tired of talking about race....dont say "Oh racism is over, slavery was so long ago."* p. 406

On the other hand Samuel Selvon deploys an existentialist, stereotypical perspective to inter-racial relationships. We see a permissiveness and contempt in the depiction of the superficial, largely physical encounters of most of his characters. We are presented with a male chauvinistic depiction of largely white women as sexual objects for the Black

immigrants. Despite the alienation and exclusion the black immigrants face from British society, there appears to be no discrimination in their desirability as studs for the white womenfolk. This depiction in itself smacks of reactionary lash-back by the writer against the society. Despite their low pedigree, alienated psyche and racial differences sexual encounters occur with great ease between black immigrants and “white skin”. There appears to be alienation in every aspect of their lives except sex. This is explicitly underscored in the stream of consciousness segment of indiscriminate sexual activities at Hyde Park Corner during summer. The few exceptions to this rule are the unsuccessful marital relations that are given not given hope of survival by the writer. We see Bartholomew who is unacceptable to his girlfriend’s family; we see Joseph who is married to a white girl, with four children and no flat to live; we see Captains sham marriage under false pretenses to the German girl he eventually abandons. The relationships are given neither depth nor perspective. Male characterization is predominant in the novel and their relationships are often abusive and sexually exploitative; for instance Lewis constantly abuses his wife physically and we see the Jamaican man on a one night stand with a white lady from Chelsea, physically assault her. This underscores Curdella Forbes feminist critique of the boys’ verbal performance “unproductive litanies, the sign of their rejection of women as the bearers of order and social responsibility.”³¹

Similarities

1. Both writers explore the complexities of inter-racial erotic relationships; thus, sex takes ideological and thematic significance in the two narratives.

³¹ Forbes, Curdella. (2005) *From Nation to Diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming and the Performance of Gender*. University of West Indies Press.

Differences

1. *Lonely Londoners* focuses on the sexual exploration of coloured men with white women. The coloured men are chauvinists who objectify white women towards soothing their battered ego. Sexuality is a little more complex in *Americanah*. Ifemelu's sexual exploration is predicated towards the need to find meaning as a black woman.
2. The writer in *Americanah* engages a depth of psychological and emotional underpinnings in order to explore the complexity of inter-racial and inter-cultural relationships and goes a step further to offer solutions and recommendations for the success or otherwise of these relationships. On the other hand Selvon's depiction of inter-racial relationships is somewhat derogatory, chauvinistic and superficial without enabling any significant interpretation for the resolution of conflict in these relationships.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What is the significant of underscoring conflict as a major characteristic of cross-cultural and inter-racial relationships? Carry out a comparative study of each writers exploration of this theme.
2. How does alienation and racial divergence impact on cross-cultural relationships?

Conclusion

This portion has explored *Lonely Londoners* in comparison with *Americanah* for intimations of exilic consciousness and the sociology of third world migration. The differences and the implication of the differences between the social and

psychological essence of the characters have been underscored in this portion, especially towards emphasising the complexities of the migrant situation. Each module has emphasised the similarities and the peculiarities of the texts while examining different aspects of the migrant discourse.

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MODULE 4 – GENDER

CONTENTS

Module 4 Description:

The course is an exploration of gender dynamics, particularly the situation of women as the negated ‘Other’ in a gender-conscious world. The selected texts, *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys provide the basis of comparison for the reality of the oppression of women within the family and larger social framework across space and time. The analysis depicts the socio-psychological implications of gender and racial repression on the evolution of women in their quest for self-actualization and how the socio-political environment of each text impacts on theme and authorial intent.

Module 4 Outline:

Unit 1: Synopsis & Thematic Comparison: *Nervous Conditions* & *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Unit 2: Compounding Gender Repression: Assimilation & Abolitionism as Catalysts

Unit 3: Psychosis as Consequence of Gender Repression in *Wide Sargasso Sea* & *Nervous Conditions*: Comparative Analysis

Unit 4: Survival or Submergence? Overcoming “Otherness” over Generations: Comparative Analysis of *Nervous Conditions* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Unit 5: Centurial Perpetuity in Stereotypes of Male Domination

UNIT 1: SYNOPSIS & THEMATIC COMPARISON: *NERVOUS CONDITIONS & WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

OBJECTIVES

1. To give a brief synopsis and overview of thematic preoccupation in *Nervous Conditions & Wide Sargasso Sea*.
2. To understand the socio-historic context of both narratives and the impact this has on authorial intent.
3. To appreciate the similarities in both writers' depiction of gender inequality and repression as well as examine the areas of divergence that each narrative illustrates.

INTRODUCTION

Tsitsi Dagarembga's *Nervous Condition* is a contemporary African novel set in Rhodesia in the late 1960 and early 1970s. The novel, first published in 1988 is built around the real-life circumstances of the author's childhood³² and is set in Robert Mugabe's patriarchal male dominated Zimbabwe of that period. The title of the novel is in reference to Jean Paul Sarte's Introduction to Franz Fanon's classic *The Wretched of the Earth*³³, where Fanon describes the traumatized oppressed state of the colonized mind as a "nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among the colonized people with their consent." The theme of the novel centers on gender prejudice in a colonised state and the quest for self- emancipation of the

³² Joyce, Meghan. Boghani, Ami ed. "Nervous Condition Study Guide". 3- September 2013 We. 1 April 2017

³³ Fanon, Franz. *The Wretched of The Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963. Print.

African woman. The novel also examines psychotic imbalance as a consequence of female repression and subjugation.

The narrative unfolds from the perspective of Tambu, a young Rhodesian girl born in abject poverty to peasant agrarian parents during the post-colonial period. Her father is an uneducated, poorly motivated man whose livelihood depends largely on the benevolence of his very enlightened, prosperous brother Babamukuru, who heads the district Mission school. Tambu's mother is a psychologically broken-spirited woman who is burdened by a lifetime of intense depravation and the stigma of repeatedly bearing female children in the repressive male dominated traditional culture of Rhodesia. She struggles physically to eke out an existence through subsistence farming without much aid from her husband, her singular source of joy seeming to be her only male child Nhamo. The family lives under the African social practice that dictates the oldest male child deemed to be the future head of the family³⁴. All the meager resources of the family are therefore poured into the education of Nhamo to the detriment and negligence of all his sisters, in particular Tambu. The theme of the narrative elucidates the arduous mental, physical and psychological struggles Tambu must face as the stereotypical disadvantaged girl child in a culture that propagates male supremacy and gender prejudice. The novel attempts to debunk the patriarchal limitations of African society by giving voice and inspiration for the validation of the girl child. The story explores the themes of the emancipation of Tambu as she faces the generational forces of sexual discrimination, male chauvinistic aggression, colonial limitations and restrictions in access to

³⁴ Sparknotes Editors. "SparkNote on Nervous Conditions." SparNotes.com. SparkNotes LLC. 2006. Web. 14 May 2017

education for Africans. Tambu also faces the absence of a maternal support system as a result of generations of subjugation and the disillusioned acceptance by the majority of African womenfolk of their repressed status. Tambu's relationship however with her British trained cousin Nyasha, whom she lives with at the Mission house, is very central to the theme of self-discovery and the search for self-actualization³⁵. We see the psychotic effect on the girl child who is dually repressed by gender inequality and the devastating effect of a clash of the African traditions and Western education, against the dominating oppressive colonial milieu of Rhodesia.

On the other hand *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys is a 1966 post-colonial novel set in the Caribbean Island just after the 1833 Act of Emancipation and the end of slavery. The novel, like *Nervous Conditions*, is fraught with autobiographical elements reflecting the experiences of the author first as a child growing up on the Caribbean Island of Dominica and subsequently as a young woman in the United Kingdom. According to Rachel Creely "Jean Rhys' characterization of Antoinette suggests a connection to personal events and feelings of oppression in the author's life."³⁶ The story is inspired by a bid to expand and explore the character of the mentally unbalanced character of Bertha, Mr Mason's Creole first wife, in Emily Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

Wide Sargasso Sea elucidates the psychological journey of Antoinette a young Creole girl who experiences a life rife with societal complexities and the volatility of

³⁵ Uwakweh, Pauline Ada. Interview with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in *Research In African Literatures* Vol 26, No. 1. (Spring 1995), pp 75-84

³⁶ Creely, Rachel. *Wide Sargasso Sea: An autobiography of Jean Rhys* on Prezi Viewer Inc. Dec 7. 2011

a slave-owning heritage in the Caribbean Islands. The Emancipation Act of 1833 and the abolishment of slavery disintegrate the vast fortunes of her family and their lives of opulent dependence on slave labor, and gives way to abject poverty. They experience ostracization from the white community and are surrounded by a thinly veiled but menacing racial hatred and deep-rooted contempt by the former slave. This leads to her father's death after years of alcoholism and depression. The remarriage of Antoinette's mother to Mr. Mason an English gentleman of considerable wealth marginally restores their dignity. Their material comfort is however cut short by a slave uprising that results in the destruction of their home and the death of her mentally challenged brother, Pierre, the sole recipient of her Mother's maternal love. The rapid psychological decline of her mother and the eventual death of her step-father leave her fortunes in the hands of her duplicitous step-brother Richard, who arranges a marriage of convenience and trades her off to an unnamed English suitor for her inheritance of 30,000 pounds.

For Antoinette the deeply sensitive protagonist of the novel, the psychological trauma of her childhood and young adulthood engenders a fearful and introverted nature. Like Tambu the protagonist in *Nervous Conditions*, they both experience multiple layers of repression in terms of gender subjugation and racial prejudice. However, whilst *Nervous Conditions* unfolds Tambu's unrelenting pursuit for self-validation despite the pervasive forces of repression, Antoinette desperately and unsuccessfully seeks validation in unrequited love and voodoo practices. The combination of her husband's rejection, her step brother's betrayal, the hateful psychological warfare of the former slaves, the loss of the tenuous support of her

faithful mentor Christophine, the severance of all cultural ties, her transportation to the bleak and unfamiliar captivity in Britain causes the eventual mental degeneration of Antoinette.

Similarities

1. Both novels have girl child protagonists, at the threshold of their womanhood, and deal with the concept of gender exclusion and 'Otherness'.
2. Both novels are set in formerly colonized states and explore the complexities of dual layers of racial and gender repression.
3. Both novels contain a preponderance of autobiographical material.

Differences

1. The novels are set in divergent historical and spatial realities: *Wide Sargasso Sea* is set in Post-Abolitionist Era of West Indies, while *Nervous Conditions* is set in Post-Colonial Rhodesia.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Give a brief synopsis of the two texts highlighting the autobiographical content and historical milieu from which they emerge and how this impacts theme.
2. Attempt a comparative analysis of each writer's depiction of the pursuit of self-identity in the two protagonists against the backdrop of gender inequality and male domination.

UNIT 2: COMPOUNDING GENDER REPRESSION: ASSIMILATION & ABOLITIONISM AS CATALYSTS

Re-cap: *The previous unit gives a brief synopsis of Nervous Conditions and Wide Sargasso Sea and attempts to distil the thematic preoccupations of each novel vis a vis the socio-cultural and historical backdrop of the emergence of the novels. The unit explores the ethos of the patriarchal postcolonial society of Zimbabwe which forms the societal backdrop of Tsitsi Dagaremba's novel. The module also examines the post Emancipation era in the Caribbean Islands and the depiction of the socio-cultural complexities that characterize this era and form the social fabric of Wide Sargasso Sea. There is also a comparative overview of the autobiographical elements in both novels and the points of divergence in each writer's depiction of the search for self-identity in the face of gender and racial inequality by the female protagonists of each novel.*

OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the policies of Assimilation as depicted in the colonial educational system and the impact this has on the pursuit of self-actualization by the protagonist of *Nervous Conditions*.
2. Understand the depiction of the societal milieu of post Abolitionist era Caribbean Island and the impact this has on the psychological evolution and search for self-identity by the protagonist in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
3. Appreciate the similarities and departures of gender repression as illustrated by both writers.

INTRODUCTION

The post-Colonial Era of the mid 1960s and the period of the Emancipation Act of 1833 form the historical milieu of *Nervous Conditions* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* respectively. The socio-political and historical landscapes are fundamental to the themes of gender repression and anti-colonialism in the novels. The state of the colonized mind as expounded by Jean Paul Sartre (Fanon, 3.) is described as “the violence of the settlers contaminates the colonized, producing fury; failing to find an outlet it turns in a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creatures themselves.” It is the impact of this mental state of devastation on the African woman which Tsitsi Dagarembgha examines in *Nervous Conditions*. This debilitating state of mind is aggravated further by the **retrogressive** limitations of gender inequality in the patriarchal state of Rhodesia. The African woman therefore has a deeper more acute experience of subjugation than her western counterpart: she faces compounded discrimination from both the males as well as the colonial masters. Sally McWilliams surmises this as women of color³⁷, like Tambu, having to grapple with a compounded state of tyranny. In our analysis of the texts we will juxtapose the experience of the Black woman with the experience of the White Creole woman which in itself is distinct from the average White woman. The peculiarity of the White Creole woman’s experience emerges from the hybridity of her origins as symbolized in the character of Antoinette. The Creole White woman is usually of European descent, but born and raised on the Caribbean Islands; her cultural identity is traced to centuries of slave ownership and an amalgamation of Caribbean

³⁷ McWilliams, Sally. “Tsitsi Dagarembgha’s *Nervous Conditions*: At the Crossroad of Feminism & Post Colonialism” p. 103. Published online: 18 July 2008.

aboriginal traditions. The post-Abolition Era of the period was also characterized by a breed of volatile embittered former slaves whose malevolence is targeted at their former slave owners.³⁸ The White Creole Woman is therefore vulnerable to the dual oppression of a male-dominated patriarchal society compounded by reverse racism and psychological oppression and abuse by the former slaves. The comparative analysis of these two experiences as depicted in the texts will form our focal emphasis.

Analysis

The manifestation of Tambu's direct contact with colonization is presented in her educational experience at the Mission. We see the complex process of trying to unraveling the subterranean agenda of the white man's presence in Rhodesia in the mind of Tambu. She attempts to distill the profiles of the different persona of the colonial masters based on her naïve perception of their influences in her world. She innocently interprets the motives of the missionaries as altruistic and "holy" because "They had come here not to take but to give. They were about God's business here in darkest Africa." P.104. Tambu earnestly believed that:

"It was a big sacrifice that the missionaries made....a sacrifice that made them superior not only to us but to other whites as well who were here for adventure and to help themselves to our emeralds. The missionaries' self-denial and brotherly love did not go unrewarded. We treated them like minor deities" p.104

³⁸ Phelps, Valerie. "The Mother Daughter Bond and History in *Wide Sargasso Sea*" (2011). Student Literary Analyses. Paper 1. http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/eng_stu_lit_anal/

A very important stylistic device by the author is the utilization of more than one narrative point of view in the single character of the narrator. According to David Cohen, “The narrator, Tambudzai herself, not only displays different viewpoints and feelings but also reflects on the very different views which she herself draws...”³⁹ We see the perspective of the innocent young Tambu growing up and narrating her naïve perceptions of her world. On the other hand we also see the adult wiser Tambu who is the narrator giving interpretative perspective to the real exploitative intent of the Europeans. We hear this voice underlying Tambu’s naïve descriptions of the missionaries qualifying the European response to African idolization as the “self-satisfied dignity that came naturally to white people in those days, they accepted this improving disguise” p.104. The reader is thereby notified of the falsity of the “disguise” of the missionaries. Their real motive was to deaden the sensibilities of the naïve Africans and distract them from the real colonialist intent of paving way for the expatriate exploitation of the county’s natural resources.

Tambu attempts to distinguish between the missionaries and expatriates but naively concludes that:

They were deified in the same way as the missionaries were because they were white so their coming was still an honor. I am told whether you were an expatriate or a missionary depends on how and by whom you were recruited. Although the distinction does not stick in my mind....I often ask why they come, giving up the

³⁹ Cohen, David William. *‘With Their Consent’: Tsitsi Dagarembgha’s Nervous Conditions: A Novel*. Evanston, IL: Programme of African Studies, Northwestern University no. 4, pp.12, 1992

security and advancement of their own homes. Which brings us back to the matter of brotherly love, contribution and lightening of diverse types of darkness.” P.105

The overriding intent of the author is to depict the concealed unity of exploitative intent of both the missionaries and expatriates. This is underscored by their co-habitation in the mission. The success of their “disguise” and hidden agenda is depicted in the innocent acceptance and ignorance of the colonized mind, as exemplified by Tambu and Babamukuru. They are unable to distil the hidden missionary agenda of actually paving way for the entrance of economic domination. According to Maureen Grundy, in her critical evaluation of the role of the colonizers, “Both the missionary and the colonizer disrupt the African lifestyle and impose western ideologies. Both signify exploitation of a people”⁴⁰. The Mission which Tambu goes to acquire education is therefore symbolic of the white man’s access to the heart and soul of the colonized black mind and ultimately his natural economic resources. The mission schools, of which Babamukuru is the Head Master is available for the generality of the young populace and came under the benevolent hegemony of the missionaries. This is the environment under which young African minds received western education.

A major thematic concern of the writer is the detrimental policy of assimilation on the psyche of the colonized mind. The delusions of being fully integrated into the western culture through exposure to western education and value system is

⁴⁰ Grundy, Maureen. “*Missionary and Colonization in Dagarengba’s Nervous Conditions*”. Class of 2000; Brown University 1999

exemplified in the inter-racial schools which are predominantly white but give access to a select corps of loyal blacks. This served to salvage the white man's conscience on the need for 'good works' and acted as a reward for subservience and unquestioned subjugation to the colonial masters. For instance, "The Authorities thought Babamukuru was a good African." According to them, Chido, his son was "a good boy...and it would be a pity to waste him" so they promised to "See what we can do." p 108. Babamukuru is therefore rewarded with a scholarship for his son Chido in one of the elitist schools. The underlying factor of the concession being the assurance of Babamukuru's continued subservience, blind loyalty and unquestioned acceptance of white dominion. According to the narrator, Chido's scholarship was "Not surprising, since whites were indulgent towards promising black boys in those days, provided that promise was a grateful promise to accept whatever was handed out to them and not to expect more." P.108

Thus the white colonizers educated the next generation of blacks in order to consolidate and secure their continued domination of Africa. The creation of these elitist schools was a divisive strategy to stratify the educated crop of colonized black in order to subjugate, divide and rule. The ultimate agenda being the transference of political and economic power to the favored elitist class who have been assimilated into the mindset of white supremacy and the superiority of western values to traditional African culture.

A very strong voice of rebellion against this status quo is the young idealistic voice of Nyasha, Babamukuru's daughter who describes the discriminatory admission of black students into the elitist schools as "nepotistic ways of getting advantages"

p.109 Nyasha whose foreign education abroad has sufficiently exposed her to the evils of assimilation subjects Tambu's naïve perspective to deeper probity and a clearer understanding of the harsh realities of the colonial system of education. According to Tambu, her Uncle Babamukuru was the only African living in a white house like the missionaries, a fact they were all "proud" of "except Nyasha, who had an egalitarian nature and had taken seriously the lessons about oppression and discrimination she had learnt first-hand in England." (64) The unlikelihood of Nyasha and Tambu ever being admitted into the elitist schools, first because they were black and secondly because they were girls, is described by Nyasha as a "blessing in disguise" and warns Tambu of dire "consequences" of such an education which they would have to "fight" (107).

It is noteworthy that both the characters of Tambu and Antoinette go through a learning process at Convent schools. In the case of Antoinette however the convent was largely an escape mechanism for her. According to the writer:

"This convent was my place of refuge, a place of sunshine and death....everything was brightness or dark...the nuns' habits were bright...the Crucifix hanging from their waists, the shadow of the trees was black. That was how it was, light and dark, sun and shadow, Heaven and Hell, for the nuns knew all about Hell...and one knew all about Heaven and the attributes of the blessed....I could hardly wait for this ecstasy and I prayed for a long time to be dead.'(25)

After the mental degeneration of her Mother and the absence of familial support, Antoinette lives in constant fear of the pervading malice, overwhelming contempt and hatred from the Negro community which she is surrounded by. She therefore finds solace in the protective but insulated world of the convent.

The profile of learning activities at the convent depicts a narrow moralistic perspective to life and does not effectively prepare Antoinette for the realities of life. The substance and focus of education was the emulation of female Roman Catholic saints and their ascetic way of life underscoring spiritualism and denial of fleshly desires. Reference to the patron saints of the convent as being of origins external to the cultural and ethnic fabric of the West Indies is very significant. This underscores the superimposition of an alien ethos over the educational system and social traditions of the West Indies. The spirituality of the environment encourages an introverted escape for Antoinette into the inner recesses of her mind. She focuses more and more on an ephemeral light as depicted by the saints and finds solace in the escape from the 'darkness' of the outside world, with which she is no longer familiar. The convent encourages religion as an opiate for Antoinette's psychological and societal fears and insecurities; it dampens her capacity for affirmative action and ill prepares her for the continued subjugation of her spirit by the dominant males in her life.

The convent for Tambu on the other hand depicts an entirely different experience. Young Ladies College of The Sacred Heart convent represents Tambu's ultimate access to self-actualization and emancipation through education. It was a multi-racial school which granted access to the highest quality of education in the land. Nyasha once again expresses deep objection to Tambu's acceptance at the school and underscore the dangers of the policy of assimilation. In her words the school would make Tambu "forget who you are, what you are and why you were that...so they would make a little space into which you are assimilated, an honorary space in

which you would join them and they would make sure you behaved yourself...really one ought not to occupy that space.”(182) Tambu however is determined to go at any cost and is very significantly supported by Maiguru, Nyasha’s highly educated Mother. Once again we see the writer underscore women solidarity as a necessary platform for the emancipation of the African woman.

At the convent Tambu experiences acutely repressive forces of racial segregation and discriminatory treatment. However, very importantly, we see her triumph over this psychological debasement by a focus on her goal of optimal acquisition of all means of educational empowerment. From her innocent acceptance of the discriminatory secondhand uniforms and inferior dormitory arrangements we see a disregard for the distraction of racial slurs by Tambu. Instead we see her focus on the availability of a vast source of knowledge from the Library: “The nuns needed to be observed and classified according to whether they were human or not....The white students needed careful study to decide whether they were different or similar to me....most importantly most wonderfully there was the Library....The sheer number of books made me ashamed of my ignorance. I resolved to read every single one of those informative glossy volumes from the first page to the last.” (199)

For Tambu the Convent was an avenue to a higher dimension in her pursuit of the acquisition of knowledge and self-actualization. While for Antoinette it was a means of escape precipitating her inability to survive outside its walls.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* disruptions in the socio-political milieu of the period also contribute very significantly to the mental degeneration of the protagonist, Antoinette. After centuries of slavery on the Caribbean Islands, the Abolition Act

of 1833 generates a major upheaval in the socio-economic and political fabric of the West Indies. The economic mainstay of the colonies which was the growth of sugarcane from the slave-empowered plantations was completely eroded by the abolition of slavery. The vast wealth of the plantation owners experienced major decline with the unavailability of slave labor and this created a class of disenfranchised white planters whose heritage of opulence was no longer sustainable. The population of the West Indies comprised a mixed milieu of cultural diversity and economic stratification. The white community comprised the Creoles, born and bred on the Islands who were descendants of white settlers from all over the European continent but had inhabited the Caribbean Islands for over decades. There were also the British planters who sought economic fortune from the sugarcane plantations and had their roots firmly in Britain. They had however created a strong exclusive English community in the West Indies. Finally there was the black community comprising the newly emancipated slaves. Ostensibly in order to ease their transition from slavery the blacks were compelled to undergo ‘a forced apprenticeship’ of four years under their former owners, a status which was considered just as harsh and debilitating as slavery. The punishment for attempting to escape the apprenticeship was as dehumanizing as slavery itself. It was therefore not surprising the former slaves continued to harbor deep seated resentment and bitterness towards their former owners. Thus the society embedded a myriad of cultures strained by slavery, oppression and exploitation. Ann Hardwick describes the setting of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a “divided community”⁴¹ with segregation on the basis of language, race, culture and economic stratification, according to her:

⁴¹ Hardwick, Anne. ‘*Wide Sargasso Sea: A Divided Community*’ Crossref-it.info 2017, Text Guide

Creoles were not English. They were born and bred on the Island...White people spoke English, Black people spoke Patois, a dialect with connections to French. The effects of this divided society on cultural identity and a sense of belonging was immense” (12)

The racial and cultural amalgamation of all these groups was strained by racism, economic disruptions and financial calamity. With the abolition of slavery the “White slave-owners were promised compensation for freeing their slaves, but many slave owners never received payment and were(financially) ruined.”⁴²

The impact of this interplay of societal variables had a significant impact on the depiction of the character of Antoinette. We are presented with a sensitive alienated young woman with a disrupted sense of her own identity. She is Creole by heritage as her family were former slave plantation owners who had inhabited the Islands for many decades. She is white but not accepted by the White community due to societal disapproval of her Father’s second marriage to her Mother, a woman considered too young, of questionable ancestry, and of low moral and social class. This is severely aggravated by the loss of their fortunes as a result of the Abolition Act. The death of her Father due to depression and alcoholism leaves herself, her Mother and her mentally challenged brother, financially destitute and completely ostracised by the White community. In her own words at the very onset of the novel she describes their situation as “They say when trouble come close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother.” (*Wide Sargasso Sea*. Pp.2)

⁴² *Wide Sargasso Sea: Where it goes Down*” Shmoop Premium

Antoinette experiences compounded alienation from the white community as well as from her Mother. We see complete emotional detachment as her Mother focuses all her love on her sick son Pierre, to the complete isolation of Antoinette. This causes Antoinette to seek solace in a deep rooted connection to their faithful slave Christophine. The writer explores the emotional complexity of Antoinette's relationship with the Black slave community. The writer thereby seeks to unravel the scarcely explored concept of psychological and emotional oppression which the White Creole community (of which Rhys was a part) suffered at the hands of their former slaves. According to McLuaghlin in her study of authorial intent "few readers noticed that one of Rhys' chief concerns most unfashionably is a providing a voice for the former slave-owners."⁴³

Very significantly, the character of Antoinette suffered multiple layers of repression and depravity. In terms of cultural identity she had the appearance of being white but was neither accepted by them nor shared their British identity. In her desperate search for self-identity "she wanted to be black" and treated her former slaves with a mixture of love and fear, as exemplified in her relationship with Christophine and later Tia her childhood friend. Antoinette's love and emotional dependence on her slaves is juxtaposed with the thinly veiled malice, contempt and bitterness the slaves harbored towards her, with the exception of Christophine. Her emotional need gives the slaves psychological dominion over her and the capacity for oppression as exemplified in the actions of Tia, Amelie, her mother's car-givers and ultimately Daniel Cosway her illegitimate brother.

⁴³ McLuaghlin, Kily. "Wide Sargasso Sea." *LitsChart*. LitCharts LLC, 30 April. Web. 27 Feb 2017

The slave uprising which eventually leads to the destruction of her home, the death of her brother and the mental degeneration of her mother is symbolic of the psychological warfare and reverse racial oppression the creoles suffered from the slaves. For Antoinette the social fabric of the Abolitionist era compounded her repressed status as a woman in the male dominated society. The rejection and alienation she suffers causes her to once again channel her search for validation toward her unwilling husband. For Antoinette “Womanhood is synonymous with a childlike dependence on the nearest man. Indeed it is this dependence that precipitates the demise of both Antoinette and Annette.”⁴⁴ Both women marry white men in the hopes of assuaging their fears as vulnerable outsiders, but the men betray and abandon them.

Thus, as the policy of Assimilation is to Tambu, forming the socio-political background of her subjugation as a woman, so also is the oppressive Abolitionist era to Antoinette. However Tambu distils the availability of education and knowledge from the repression of Assimilation and propels herself towards attaining her goal of self-emancipation. Antoinette on the other hand seeks validation externally from the male in her life while Tambu reverts internally to personal willpower and exploits cultural values instilled by tradition. Tambu survives, while Antoinette is submerged under the psychological torment of her husband’s rejection.

“The novel is written precisely at the time when Black Power and Afro-Caribbean⁴⁵ writers and theorists attempted to reconceive and re-write the history and cultural

⁴⁴ Coartney, Stephanie. *Identity Crisis for the Creole Woman: A search for Self in Wide Sargasso Sea*. Mckendree.edu

⁴⁵ victorianweb.org/neovictoria/rhys/setting

ethos of West Indies. Writing of this period is therefore predominantly characterized by works reflecting the Black experience of slavery and racial oppression. Thus writers like Jean Rhys aspired to present the peculiarity of the white creole woman's perspective and her unique experience of the male domination and reverse racism. According to Megan Mericle:⁴⁶

White women in the Caribbean held a uniquely repressed position in the society as they were both **inside and outside** the political spectrum. Although they were considered elite and upper class because they were white women, but still had **no voice, made no laws, could not inherit their husband's estate.'**

In other words white Creole women had no hope for independence, as they were placed under "coverture" meaning they were under their husband's protection and authority....and considered the "**silent sex**".

Similarities

1. Both writers examine the psychological impact of the combination of racial and gender repression on their characters leading to varying degrees of psychosis and mental degeneration.
2. Both writers examine the role of education in the evolution of both protagonists and underscore the negative subterranean agenda of colonial Christian education.
3. Both novelists examine familial and racial alienation and its impact on the character of both protagonists.

⁴⁶ Mericle, Megan. "The Madwomen in Our Attics: *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s Treatment of Feminism."

4. Both novelists examine the impact of colonial socio-political policies of Assimilation and Abolitionism in Rhodesia and West Indies, respectively.

Differences

1. While Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* deploys education as a means of validation and emancipation from oppression, Antoinette seeks validation from the male figures in her life who ultimately reject her.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Attempt a descriptive analysis of the policy of Assimilation in the Zimbabwean educational system as depicted in *Nervous Conditions* and compare this with the Convent education as portrayed in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and the psychological impact this has on both protagonists.
2. Describe the socio-political disruptions of the post-Abolitionist Era and illustrate how this affected the mental degeneration of Antoinette. Discuss this in contrast with the mental psychosis Nyasha experiences and the factors that led to this.
3. Discuss gender discrimination and the reverse racial psychological warfare perpetuated by the former slaves on their masters and the impact this has on Antoinette and her mother; compare this with postcolonial racial and gender discrimination as experienced by Tambu.

UNIT 3: PSYCHOSIS AS CONSEQUENCE OF GENDER REPRESSION IN WIDE SARGASSO SEA & NERVOUS CONDITIONS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Re-cap: *The previous unit examines the societal milieu of post-colonial Zimbabwe of the 1960s and the socio-political history of the post Emancipation era of 1833 in the Caribbean Islands, which form the contextual landscape from which Nervous Conditions and Wide Sargasso Sea were created. The module analyzes how themes of post-colonization and gender repression are depicted in the two narratives. The unit also attempts to profile how the policies of Assimilation assault the educational system and modulate the psychological development of the colonized mind and juxtapose this with how the complexities of the Abolitionist era engender psychological trauma in both the former slave owners and the newly liberated slaves. The unit goes further to examine the impact of these societal influences on the pursuit of self-validation and identity by the female characters. The themes of gender repression, discrimination and inequality are profiled as catalysts to mental degeneration in the female characters of both novels.*

OBJECTIVES

1. To trace the psychological impact of gender inequality, racial and psychological oppression resulting in mental degeneration
2. To appreciate the similarities and divergence in the depiction of these themes by the two writers.

INTRODUCTION

Both writers explore the concept of psychological degeneration in their characters. In the case of *Nervous Conditions* the character of Nyasha illustrates the impact of racial and gender discrimination, compounded by the erosion of traditional values on the alienated persona of an Anglicized African woman. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* the character of Antoinette portrays psychological breakdown as a result of male domination and repression against the backdrop of the dislocation of a society built on slave domination. Whilst Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions* disintegrates against the backdrop of colonialism and gender discrimination, Antoinette loses mental balance under the weight of male subjugation and rejection and the psychological warfare of the freed slave. The reactionary mental torture the emancipated slaves subject their former oppressors to destabilizes societal norms and renders Antoinette lost and mentally vulnerable. Her desperate search for love, safety and validation from her husband is rebuffed and she takes solace in voodoo and alcoholism. Her subsequent displacement from the familiar terrain of the Caribbean and bondage by her husband in the United Kingdom culminates in mental degeneration. Our focus in this module will be a comparative analysis of how the depiction of the concept of psychosis in the two texts.

Psychosis as Consequence of Gender Repression in *Wide Sargasso Sea* & *Nervous Conditions*: Comparative Analysis

The character of Nyasha typifies the vortex of conflicting sensibilities and complex ramifications in the mind of a racially subjugated woman in a patriarchal society: According to Deepika Bahri (1994):

“Nyasha’s diseased self suggests the textualized female body...on whose person are writ(ten)...imperial inscriptions of colonization, intimate branding of patriarchy, and the battle between native culture, western narrative, and her complex relationship with both. Nyasha’s response to this violence in the body...manifests as illness which will consume her body”⁴⁷

Nyasha’s character symbolises the clash of western and traditional culture in the midst of subjugated womanhood. Her desperate search for self-validation is seen in her voracity for western knowledge on the one hand and in her attempt to understand and regain the lost language and culture of her African ancestry on the other hand. This is compounded by her unsavory encounter with both colonial segregation and gender inequity. Her father’s domineering subjugation of herself and her mother stirs up resistance of their repressed status. This engenders a violent reaction in her psyche which she is mentally unprepared to deal with. The paradox of her Anglicized upbringing only succeeds in revealing and not interpreting the vortex of racial and gender irregularities. Her Anglicized feminist orientation does not prepare her for the submissive discounting of self, which her father expects and which we see in her mother. This conflicting psychological interplay in the mind of Nyasha manifests itself in the rare predominantly western disease of *bulimia nervosa*, degenerating into psychotic paranoia. Nyasha’s Anglicized upbringing accelerates her process of mental degeneration as her mind is culturally alienated having no psychological defense against the unsolved complexities. The eventual psychological breakdown of Nyasha portrays one of the major consequences of the

⁴⁷ Bahri Deepika, *Disembodying The Corpus: Post-Colonial Pathology Dagarembga’s Nervous Conditions*. Postmodern Culture Vol. 5, Number 1 September 1994. 10.1353/pmc. 1994.004

policy of assimilation and colonialism on the African. Her recognition of the debilitating consequence of colonialism and her knowledge that the policy of assimilation gives a false sense of integration and devalues African culture traumatizes her endlessly. This is compounded by her helplessness against the domestic repression she encounters from her Father and her sense of alienation from her African traditions. Despite her Anglicized outlook and western education she suffers racial and gender discrimination in all facets of her life.

Though Tambu is exposed largely to the same socio-cultural milieu her grounding in traditional values provides a communal inclusiveness and validation among her people which Nyasha lacks. The solidarity of the traditional womenfolk informed by their lives of oppressed survival, despite their personal differences, is symbolized when all the women sleep on the floor in the kitchen during the family re-union at the homestead. Tambu also often refers to the tutelage she received from her grandmother as they worked laboriously on the farm, as was the tradition of most Rhodesian women. This empowering solidarity and traditional value system forms the fabric of Tambu's mental stability.

Though the three major female characters in both novels (Tambu, Nyasha, Antoinette) are subjected to repression by the dominant male characters in their lives, only Tambu survives and triumphs over her circumstances. This could be attributed to the mentorship, psychological and physical empowerment from her grandmother based on traditional and cultural values. Nyasha's Anglicization and loss of language and culture rob her of this power; her western orientation of feminist resistance to oppression only generates alienation and mental imbalance.

Even the character of Maiguru, Babamukuru's wife, is able to eventually strike a balance between blind subservience to her husband and self-actualization, without losing her cultural essence.

Both authors hint at the option of separation from male dominated relationship as an option for emancipation. We see Maiguru's temporary exit from her matrimonial home in order to 'sort herself out'. We also see Christophine suggest marital separation from her husband as an option for Antoinette:

"At last I said, 'Christophine, he does not love me, I think he hates me. He always sleeps in his dressing room now and the servants know....What will I do?"

'Answer me I," I said

'You ask me a hard thing, I tell you a hard thing, **pack up and go.**'

'Go, go where? To some strange place where I shall never see him again? Not I will not, then everyone, not only the servants, will laugh at me.'

She looked gloomy. 'When man don't love you, more you try, more he hate you, man like that. If you love them they treat you bad....'

'But I cannot go. He is my husband after all.'

She spat over her shoulder. 'All women, all colours, nothing but fools. Three children I havebut no husband. I thank my God. I keep my money. I don't give it to no worthless man.'

When must I go, where must I go'

'...**a man don't treat you good, pick up your skirt and walk out.** Do it and he come after you.'

'He will not come after me. And you must understand I am not rich now, I have no money of my own at all, everything I had belongs to him'

'What you tell me there?' she said sharply.

‘That is English law.’ (58)

Antoinette however refuses Christophine’s practical advice and instead resorts to the escapism of voodoo. The temporary enchantment of her husband with the aid of Christophine’s voodoo portion backfires and their relationship deteriorates leading to alcoholism and a mental breakdown by Antoinette.

Similarities

1. Both writers examine stereotypical male domination and exploitation in a patriarchal society.
2. Both novelists examine economic dependence and psychological connectivity with the land and vegetation by the protagonists.

Differences

1. The protagonist in *Nervous Conditions* attains some level of self-actualization while Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* degenerates into mental imbalance and probable suicide.
2. Nyasha’s mental decline is born of her mental sophistication. On the other hand, Antoinette’s decline, progressing from her entanglement in voodoo and alcoholism

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Carry out a comparative analysis of gender repression as a major factor in the psychological degeneration of Antoinette in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions*
2. How would you describe the psychological evolution and quest for educational emancipation in the character of Tambu, taking into consideration gender

inequality and male repression? What distinguishes her character from Antoinette? What elements in her character enable her mental survival in comparison to the degeneration of Antoinette and Nyasha?

3. Attempt a comparative analysis of the role of education in the quest for self-actualisation and psychological development of Tambu, Nyasha and Antoinette.

UNIT 4: SURVIVAL OR SUBMERGENCE? OVERCOMING ‘OTHERNESS’ ACROSS GENERATIONS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *NERVOUS CONDITIONS* & *WIDE SARGASSO SEA*

Re-Cap: *The previous unit examines the concept of psychological degeneration in Nervous Conditions through an in-depth analysis of the characters of Nyasha and Tambu, whose experience reflect oppressive encounters with racial and gender discrimination. The unit explores the protagonist, Tambu’s survival against the doubly intensive assault of both gender and racial inequity due to her grounding in the tradition African values and norms. This is in contrast to the degeneration of Nyasha whose African essence is eroded and replaced with an Anglicized worldview leading to her ultimate cultural alienation and psychotic breakdown. The examination of these characters is juxtaposed with the experience of Antoinette in Wide Sargasso Sea whose psychotic breakdown is also triggered by a male dominated repressive society compounded by the complexities of psychological oppression by the newly liberated slaves on their former owners.*

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the concept of “Otherness” as depicted by each writer in reference to gender inequality and racial prejudice in largely patriarchal societies signifying the female as the subjugated repressed “Other”.
2. To understand each writer’s presentation of the search for self-identity and validation by the protagonists and evaluate their survival and attainment or submersion and degeneration of this vision and the factors that engender this.

3. To be able to compare and analyze the divergent responses of each protagonist to their subjugated status as the repressed “Other” in society.

INTRODUCTION

Though the protagonists of both novels existed centuries apart from one another, were of divergent racial stock and lived on different continents of the globe, they both experienced the repression and subjugation of “otherness”⁴⁸ peculiar to the female gender. The concept of “Otherness” as defined by Simone de Beauvoir describes humanity as ‘male’ and man defines woman not in herself but as “relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being...she is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute – she is the Other.”⁴⁹ Both the protagonists in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Nervous Conditions* symbolize the inessential ‘Other’; their quest for self-actualization and their psychological response to their repressive socio-cultural circumstances form the kernel of our analysis. For Tambu she suffers both gender and racial bias of being female in a white dominated post-colonial society. For Antoinette apart from suffering the abuse of male subjugation from her step brother and husband, she experiences psychological torture and reverse racial prejudice from her former slaves.

Survival or Submergence? Overcoming Otherness Across Generations: Comparative Analysis of *Nervous Conditions* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*

⁴⁸ Carriere, Boyd Melody: Displacement & The Text: Exploring Otherness in Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Maryse Conde’s *La Migration Des Coeurs*. Dissertation submitted to The Grande Faculty of the Louisiana State University, August 2007.

⁴⁹ Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex* New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

The thematic perspective of each writer is however very divergent. Tsitsi Dagaremba explores an assertiveness and determined struggle in the character of Tambu to resist and overcome opposing oppressive forces. We see willpower and clarity of vision in her character; there is the early realization that her destiny is not in the hands of any force outside of herself and she strives to overcome her circumstances. This is portrayed when her family chooses her brother's education over hers purely due to his sex. Tambu resorts to generating her school fees by cultivating and selling her own crop, the spirit of industriousness having been instilled in her at a very tender age by her grandmother.

When we juxtapose the character of Tambu with Antoinette we see an air of constant fear, helplessness and emotional dependence on others in Antoinette. There is the constant psychological retreat into her innermost consciousness whenever Antoinette is challenged by opposing forces. We see Antoinette retreat into the garden and take solace in its solitary density when we first see her heckled by a group of black children who mockingly call her "white nigger" and "white cockroach". When she has nightmares and craves the attention of her mother, which is denied for her brother, she escapes into the forests and sheltered greenery of the land. Both writers deploy the imagery or symbolism of the land as a significant defense mechanism for both characters. However while Antoinette escapes into the idyllic beauty of her garden, Tambu exploits the richness of her plot of farmland to generate a livelihood for herself. Thus while Antionette's appreciation of the land is purely aesthetic and largely escapist, Tambu's appreciation of the land is fruitful and productive.

In their search for self-identity and psychological evolution into womanhood both characters face a series of exponential occurrences which are determinate of who and what they become. The reaction of each character to their different encounters is the central theme of the narrative. On the one hand Tambu achieves educational and personal emancipation, while Antoinette degenerates into mental and physical bondage of the mind and soul. We shall carry out a comparative analysis of the circumstances of each protagonist juxtaposing their reaction and the impact of this on their end. First we shall examine the societal and familial context from which each character emerges.

Both Antoinette and Tambu live in a patriarchal male dominated society and grow up experiencing abject poverty. While Tambu exists in a colonized, racially segregated society rife racial and gender limitations, Antoinette lives in the post-slavery era of the nineteenth century and experiences a peculiar situation of reverse racism from her former slaves. The slave Emancipation Act of 1833 that renders her family poor also engenders their vulnerability to the onslaught of race-induced hatred from the former slaves. The dismantling of the protective insulation of legitimized slavery and wealth leaves the white former slave-owners vulnerable and unprotected. They are faced with the harsh reality of deep-seated loathing from their former slaves as depicted by the slave uprising that leads to the death of Pierre, Antoinette's brother. We see the emotionally debilitating attack on Antoinette by her best friend Tia a former slave, the sexual abuse her Mother undergoes in the hands of her caretaker former slaves after her mental breakdown.

Both the characters lack maternal love and support and suffer rejection over their brothers for their Mother's affections. Both the characters revert to other female figures in their lives for mentorship and counseling. We see Christophine's relationship with Antoinette and Tambu's relationships with Nyasha, Lucia and her grandmother. Very significantly however, we see major differences in the distilling of counsel from these female figures by Tambu and Antoinette. Antoinette discards the wise counsel of Christophine to either leave the emotionally abusive relationship with her husband or attempt to reason with him. Rather than heed advice Antoinette pressurizes Christophine to prepare an 'obeah' supernatural love portion for him, which backfires as Christophine had warned her it would do. Tambu on the other hand seeks and acquires all the western knowledge she can acquire from Nyasha, but holds firm to her cultural and traditional values. We see Tambu absorb the virtues of productivity, hard work and resilience despite all odds from her grandmother. The extreme poverty of Tambu's upbringing and the observation of her Mother's broken spirit and aversion for enlightenment and progress for the girl child is no deterrent to Tambu's ambition; rather it serves as a catalyst in her determination not to end up like her mother. This conforms to R. Moyana's evaluation of gender depiction in the novel in reference to the characters of Tambu and Lucia; according to her: "These are the women who refuse to be compartmentalized into their chiseled up roles. They question, struggle and become liberated in different ways."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Moyana, R. "Men and Women: Gender Issues in Tsitsi Dagamrembga's *Nervous Conditions* & *She No Longer Weeps*" in *New Trends and Generations in African Literature, ALT 20*. Edited by Jones, M & Jones, E.D. London: James Currey. Pp 26

Similarities

1. Both novels deal with extreme poverty and economic dependence on male figures by the protagonists.
2. Both novels deal with the concept of Maternal Alienation or deprivation of maternal love due to male child preference within traditional patriarchal societies.
3. Both protagonists explore the impact of dogmatic preoccupation on superstitious traditional belief systems.

Differences

1. The character of Tambu encapsulates the assertiveness and determinate struggle of 'Womanism', while Antoinette reflects the subjugated, emotional dependence on male figures of the repressed 'Other'.
2. While Antoinette's mental degeneration is total, Tambu survives as a result of her cultural values and outlook; this is reinforced by the network of traditional African womenfolk sorority in which she is raised.
3. Tambu is oppressed as a female black in a racist and patriarchal society. Antoinette is discriminated against as a "white nigger" by blacks and former slaves.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Define the concept of "Otherness" and carry out a critical comparison of its portrayal in the two narratives.

2. Discuss the divergence of Tambu's response to gender subjugation and post-colonial repression, with Antoinette's response to reverse racial oppression by the former slaves and male domination.

UNIT 5 : CENTURIAL PERPETUITY IN STEREOTYPES OF MALE DOMINATION

Recap: *The previous unit examines the concept of “Otherness” through the characters of Antoinette and Tambu as they both experience some form of racial prejudice, gender repression and domination within a patriarchal society. The unit engages in a comparative analysis of the search for validation and self-identity by each of the protagonists and their divergent response to their subjugated state. Tambu’s deployment of self-motivation having inculcated the African women’s values of industriousness is closely examined; her singular pursuit of educational emancipation as a survival tactic is also espoused. This is juxtaposed with the contrasting escapism of Antoinette and her ultimate submersion into psychotic degeneration.*

OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the concept of stereotypical male domination and the parallels of depiction in the two novels
2. To be able to profile the concept of male domination irrespective of spatial and temporal dimensions using the temporal divergence of two novels as benchmark
3. To understand the role of each dominant male character in the hindrance and repression of self-validation and emancipation in each female protagonist
4. To understand the correlation between a patriarchal male dominated society and the enablement of the male conspiracy syndrome

5. To be able to compare and recognize similarities and differences in the depiction of dominant male figures in each of the narratives

INTRODUCTION

Though written centuries apart, male domination and supremacy are major determinants in the destiny of both characters of both Antoinette and Tambu. However, the mental and physical response of each character signifies their ability for self-emancipation or their ultimate personal debasement. An examination of male domination irrespective of time and space comprises the focal point of this module.

Centurial Perpetuity in Stereotypes of Male Domination

From birth both Antoinette and Tambu are beset with maternal-male preference syndrome: a situation where male siblings are regarded as more worthy of societal attention as well as maternal love. In the case of Antoinette, her Mother favored Pierre her younger brother far above her; Pierre's mental incapacity completely consume her Mother's mind that there is no emotional space left for Antoinette. The writer thereby underscores the depths of psychological prejudice when even the mentally challenged child with no capacity to receive or return love is considered more worthy than a female child who desperately craves and seeks that very love. Antoinette's constant but unattainable desire for her mother's love is in stark contrast to the attitude of Tambu. In Tambu's relationship with her mother we see neither contention nor desperation for her love; rather we see stoic resistance to her mother's discouragement of her dream of education. We also see formidable rejection of her brother's attempt to sabotage her education when she beats up him up for giving away her hard earned crop.

Very significantly both brothers of the protagonists die untimely deaths in their youth. For Tambu this signifies the beginning of the realization of her dreams as this affords her the opportunity to attain education. For Tambu education symbolizes her emancipation from the shackles of poverty and her access to self-discovery and actualization. At Nhamo's death on the advice of Babamukuru, Tambu replaces Nhamo at the Mission school. On the other hand, paradoxically Pierre's death signifies the final termination of Antoinette's link with any blood relative, as her mother slides into depression and oblivion. After the death of both her mother and her step father Antoinette is sold off into a marriage of convenience by the conniving manipulations of Richard her step-brother, for a sum of #30,000.00. This underscores the skewered, discriminatory laws of inheritance whereby the fortunes of women are determined solely by their male relatives. Thus though the fate of both protagonists is determined by males, Tambu's affirmative actions towards sponsoring herself to school make her the inevitable substitute for her dead brother. However Antoinette's passive and gullible acceptance of her husband's empty promises and her half-brother's manipulations expedite her sham marriage and ultimate subjugation.

Tambu's experience at the mission house is a major destiny determinant in the novel. Similarly Antoinette's experience on her honeymoon forms the major destiny determinant in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. They are both live with an oppressive, dominant male stereotype in the characters of Babamukuru, Nhamo's uncle, and Antoinette's husband. Interestingly the figure of Babamukuru, depicted from the perspective of Tambu, is a god-like, idolized and very much revered father figure, who takes the

place of her biological father in terms of respect and obeisance. To Tambu he is the epitome of educational elevation which she strives for. As the sole benefactor of Tambu's clan we see complete monopoly of decision making and total concession of leadership in all ramifications to him. To both in his nuclear and extended family Babamukuru's word is infallible law, regardless of his conservative, often archaic and traditional perspective to life. Despite the perceived supremacy of Babamukuru by his extended family, the writer introduces perspectives of his character which reveal weakness and exploitation. This is exemplified in the discovery that Babamukuru is not the sole financier of his ostensive benevolence to his extended family. We discover that Maiguru, his wife, is actually a major but unacknowledged contributor to the family finances as she hands over her entire salary to him every month. Yet Babamukuru is idolized and extolled for his magnanimity while Maiguru toils under the burden of her job, as well as the endless domestic and financial demands of Babamukuru's family. We also see a lack of objectivity and narrow-mindedness in Babamukuru as he attempts to curtail his daughter's insatiable search for western knowledge and enlightenment. He accuses Nyasha of "whoredom" when she does nothing but talk to a young man: his obstinate insistence on her guilt causes him to physical abuse her despite her complete innocence. Babamuku typifies the conservative parochialism of the African male as they seek to keep their womenfolk in ignorant subjugation by imposing African values of domesticity and submission to their male counterparts.

His oppressive domination of his household is accepted by his equally well educated but subjugated wife, Maiguru, and challenged by Nyasha his British

trained, intellectually vibrant,⁵¹ daughter who has strong leanings to feminism. She questions his domineering control of his household and rebels against the traditional constraints he places on women. Nyahsa's exposure to British education and Western civilization occurred at the height of the new feminist wave in Europe during her school days in the UK. Tambu's close relationship to Nyasha thereby exposes her to the issues of gender equality and the right of every woman to have access to equal opportunities and self-determination. Both Tambu and Nyasha embody the conflict of Western and Traditional values as regarding women but each character deals with the conflict differently. Though the reader is intimated with the inner ruminations of Tambu we see her attempt to balance and reconcile the divergent values. Tambu's firm grounding in the culture and tradition of her people, as exemplified in her up-bringing and cultural perspective to life, coupled with her financial dependence on Babamukuru prevent her from defying Babamukuru as Nyasha does. Tambu maintains her cultural values of modesty, domesticity, hard work, industriousness, homage and respect for elders and tradition. However neither the relegation nor subjugation by the males in her life derails her from her ultimate agenda of education and self-actualization.

In *Wide Sargasso Sea* we are presented with the figure of Antoinette's husband, the major dominant male influence in her life. His namelessness initially underscores the unknown quality of his character as he is a complete stranger to Antoinette, only having met him a few weeks prior to their wedding. He also depicts the stereotypical nature which could be seen as a universal representation of the oppressive male. Her husband's domination of Antoinette is emotional, financial and

sexual; this enabled by the unspoken code of conspiracy among men for the repression of women.

First, we see repressive male conspiracy between her husband and her step-brother Richard to marry her off at such a tender age; this is similar to the code of conspiracy between the African male to keep the women subjugated by denying them access to education. We see Babamukuru and Tambu's father in conspiracy as they decide Nhamo must be educated instead of Tambu. We also see male conspiracy as Nhamo steals Tambu's corn mealies, meant to be sold to pay for her fees, distributes for free to her classmates. Tambu vigorously resists the conspiracy by physically and mentally fighting her oppressors, in contrast to Antoinette's pliant acquiescent. The unspoken code of male conspiracy is also hinted at in the connection between Antoinette's husband and her colored illegitimate brother, who goes by the name Daniel Cosway. Cosway's questionable paternity is not an issue for Antoinette's husband as the latter chooses to allow a letter and wild allegations to taint his perception of his own wife. The claims of an illegitimate colored male hold more credibility for Antoinette's husband than her explanations.

Secondly, the financial exploitation is seen in her stepbrother's negotiation of #30,000 which accrues to her husband on marrying Antoinette. The discriminatory laws of inheritance are also hinted at here as Antoinette is neither consulted nor included in the marriage arrangements between herself and the English gentleman. An extension of her husband's financial exploitation is also illustrated by her need for deception in order to surreptitiously extract her money from him. She claims this in her conversation with Christophine, as she believes he would never give her her

money otherwise. Once again we see similarities in the exploitative tendencies of the dominant male between Antoinette's husband and Babamukuru's financial exploitation of his wife.

For the second time in Antoinette's life we see her once again desperate for unrequited love; she transfers her acute desire for love from her mother to her husband. She therefore becomes emotionally and sexually dependent on her husband. On the other hand her husband has never loved her and only married her in order to exploit her financially and alleviate his otherwise indigent status due to unfavorable English laws of inheritance. We see emotional oppression as her husband denies Antoinette sexual pleasure after his meeting with Daniel Cosby, and wantonly exploits the colored slave girl, Amelie, with total disregard for the proximity of Antoinette on their honeymoon. The inequity of sexual behavior between the sexes is underscored by the vilification of Antoinette's innocent relationship with Sandi and the permissive cruelty of her husband's relationship with Amelie. The dogma and inequity of sexual behavior is also illustrated in Babamukuru's judgmental attitude to Nyasha's innocent dalliance with her male childhood friend.

The combination of her husband's oppressive domination and psychological torture does not however generate in Antoinette the desire for emancipation as Christophine advises. In its place we see an escapist cowardly reversion to voodoo, witchcraft and alcoholism by Antoinette, which ultimately backfires.

Similarities

1. Both protagonists live with oppressive dominant male figures who they depend on emotionally and financially; Babamukuru in the case of *Nervous Conditions* and her husband in the case of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
2. Both narratives explore marriage as a repressive institution and explore the option of leaving the institution when it threatens a woman's individuality.
3. Both protagonists experience the death of their brother, who were both preferred by their Mothers over them.
4. We see Familial Conspiracy of the male figures within the family setting against both protagonists. Both Tambu and Antoinette experience the collusion of traditional male family members to repress and deprive them of equal opportunity.

Differences

1. While the death of Tambu's brother signifies the catalyst for her educational emancipation, the death of Antoinette's brother signifies the termination of Antoinette's access to maternal love as her Mother becomes mentally deranged as a result of the experience.
2. Tambu receives financial help in the form of her scholarship which plants her on the path of self-actualisation and fulfillment. Antoinette comes to a dead-end because of patriarchal property laws which end up making her helpless.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. “Universality and Perpetuity: Male Domination as Conspiracy”. Discuss this as a critical comparison of male figures in *Nervous Conditions* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
2. Attempt a comparative discussion of the impact of male domination in the mental state of Antoinette, Tambu, Nyasha and Maiguru

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