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**Postcolonial African Literature and the Identity  
Question- A Special Reference to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's  
Ideological Pronouncements**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgement is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

## Dedications

I thank Allah Almighty for the strength and patience he has given me to accomplish this work.

To my caring, generous parents Louardi and Messaouda.

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**Abstract:**

The quest for identity is a very prominent theme in postcolonial studies and literature. The exploration of such postcolonial writers as Ngugi in terms of the depiction of their cultural identities and of their people's reveals the hybrid culture of the postcolonial societies and writers. These writers tackle the influence of decolonization, hybridity, language, and displacement movement on postcolonial Diaspora. Their attempt is an attempt to reconstruct identity or to reinvent a new one. In the discussion of the works of Ngugi together with his personal views on identity question we will see how he views this subject matter as a postcolonial writer and from a personal perspective both through his articles and interviews; and also through the way he explored this topic through his novels. We will try to go first through the topic of postcolonialism and its relation with identity, and then we will try to discuss the very question of identity as related to postcolonial literature. We will try also to discuss how Ngugi views and deals with the identity question on a personal level and the way he dealt with the main components that influence identity; such as language, hybridity, place and displacement, and otherness, in his works.

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## General Introduction:

*"Of all relations the most universal is that of identity, being common to every being whose existence has any duration." -- David Hume, 1739*

It is said that any culture is in reality multicultural and shapes its features through its relation to other cultures and through its interaction with the world. This contact between cultures is what forms this diversity in identities which overlap and result in a new society holding different potentials. However, all human beings, besides bearing their individual identities, hold also an identity connected to their societies and countries.

In this work we will try to discuss this vast notion of identity and how it is shaped and constructed through the works of postcolonial writers. For, it has been very common that postcolonial literature deals with this notion of identity at length since most of the postcolonial writers witnessed the process of colonization and have been affected by it, and also suffered from exile and alienation both at home and abroad.

In order to study this subject matter, one has to know that colonies undergo several changes before, during and after their colonization. When considering pre-colonialism, we notice that the original culture, the beliefs and customs of the postcolonial subjects were functioning in an ordinary way without feeling the need to identify with a place or to prove they are not inferior to anyone.

Colonialism transforms and displaces everything. Through this process, traditions, beliefs and cultural standards of the imperial canon are forced upon all of their subjects who find no choice but to accept these new ways of life. This is where the displacement of their traditional culture begins. And as a beginning and to create a channel of communication between the colonizer and the colonized, the colonized subjects learn how to speak the settlers' language, and bit by bit, they find themselves mixing their native language with that of the colonizer because of the brutal encounter with the colonizer who introduces his language either through education or through subverting the colonized and forcing him to learn his language in order to communicate with him.

After a very long time of experiencing suffering and a brutal contact with the colonizer, the colonized find themselves unconsciously incorporating aspects of the



colonial ways in their original identity. Furthermore, one of the ways which the colonizers use to control their colonies, and change their national identities is education; they control the thoughts and ideas held by the younger generation through implanting colonial ideologies in their minds. As a matter of fact, the original culture and identity for the coming generation are lost in the new world order.

During the process of decolonization, postcolonial subjects attempt not only to free their lands but also to free their cultures. Once, independence regained the process of post colonialism begins; what is left of the original cultural identity of the native people then starts to be explored and the newly acquired identity starts to be analyzed. This subject of the quest for identity and the attempt to figure out the value of the new identity is deeply explored in postcolonial literature.

Postcolonial literature comes from the broadest term postcolonialism which deals basically with the period of colonialism and its aftermath. The editors of *The Empire Writes Back* state that postcolonial literature, and postcolonialism in general, also deal with the resultant of colonialism which is cross-cultural discourse and its effect on the literature produced in the postcolonial world.(2) That's why Postcolonialism appeared as a literary theory to study literatures of the formerly colonized nations, mainly those colonized by European powers such as Britain. It takes also into consideration the literature of colonial writers who make of the portrayal of colonized citizens their subject matter.

In addition, postcolonialism depicts the identity of the colonized society; it deals with the huge challenge of building a national identity following a harmful experience and how writers talk about and celebrate that identity, often reclaiming it from, and maintaining strong connections with the colonizer. They do it through producing a literature that debates cultural identity and criticizes the change that occurred during colonization and in the present state of the postcolonial societies. Postcolonial literature deals with the cultural change that occurred in the postcolonial societies and led to a cross-cultural state in literature and society.

However, this focus on the quest for identity has been widely criticized. Some scholars claim that this has become an obsession for postcolonial writers with this issue while others argue that identity is an important aspect of understanding the self and in identifying with society and the rest of the world. It is obvious that characters and

mainly protagonists in postcolonial novels are often pictured as struggling to figure out who they are, and attempting to find their place in between the old native world and the imperial world. These literary works written by postcolonial novelists like the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o or the Algerian writer Rashid Boudjedra, depict the crucial question for postcolonial writers and their people about the nature of the newly emerging identity. They arise a broader and more complicated question about where do they fit in this new world order.

This quest for identity in the postcolonial literature has been revolving around the key features that forge and build an identity. These key features overlap; that is, when tackling one of them we find ourselves unconsciously talking about the other. Some of these key features consist of the notions of language, home, hybridity, multiculturalism and otherness.

The African novel is in fact a very striking example of postcolonial literature since it explores the struggle for the quest of identity. And it is for sure quite obvious that Ngugi wa Thiong'o is one of these writers who explore this notion at length. Through his writings he explores the features that forge the postcolonial African identity such as hybridity, Otherness, displacement and language. This latter has been of a great importance for Ngugi who asserts that writing African literature in English or French or any other European language is a kind of submission to the dominant culture and that the use of a foreign language to express the experience of Africa makes it difficult to understand that experience if not blurs things for readers who want to know about the real authentic traditions of Africa. Actually, this language issue turned to be a main interest to many African writers after independence. These writers, such as Ngugi as mentioned above, have chosen, after many years writing in English, to reject the colonial language and write in the native African languages as a sign of belonging to their communities, and of an independent self.

Ngugi and his fellows were opposed by many other African writers such as Chinua Achebe, and Wole Soyinka. While the language debate continues, many authors, mainly Ngugi, strived to produce writings that speak to African people and help them determine their status in their society and in the world. However, this debate about language as related to identity is not the only aspect depicted in postcolonial literature as mentioned above; but this notion especially has taken a great ground of debate in this

field. It is an undeniable fact that the cultural exchanges and the mixing of cultures have different impacts, but the multicultural feature of these societies and the hybrid nature of their citizen come out of these exchanges. When we attempt to perceive postcolonial literature from the angle of postcolonial condition, we come to the conclusion that each person holds his own traditions and beliefs, and fights to find his personal and national identities.

Some scholars also postulate that each author speaks his own voice and must be conceived from that perspective, but these writers do not write only to express their own feeling of loss and displacement. They also express that of their own societies through a depiction of their realities. That's why a discussion of the works of a postcolonial writer would be of a great importance in understanding postcolonialism in general, and the quest of identity depicted by postcolonial literature in particular.

In this case, the writer in question is the famous Kenyan writer coming from a postcolonial background: Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. This writer depicted his cultural identity and his people's through his writings. Discussing his works allows us to understand the multitudinous portrayals of cultural identity and the effect of colonialism upon that identity. In this respect, discussing the effect of the choice of language, the presentation of 'home' and its effect on the cultural identity of the writer and his people, the hybrid nature of postcolonial subjects, and the view of the writer and his people towards the world which are important elements depicted in the works of Ngugi.

It is obvious that the field of postcolonialism is a very wide and controversial notion that concerns mainly postcolonial nations who had suffered from the process of colonization and who felt displaced because of it and are striving to define their status in society. And since we come from a similar background it is important for us to know the workouts of these literatures produced in the postcolonial atmosphere. For this, what brings about the motivation to deal with this topic is:

- Postcolonial literature is the best way to find out how postcolonial nations and their subjects try to redefine or rebuild their new identities through their pre-colonial past and their colonial experiences.

- The question of identity in itself is very crucial to the writers who come from a similar background related to colonialism and its aftermath since they express their feeling of loss and try to find out any links that make them feel the sense of

belonging somewhere and find out who they are regarding their own societies or the west.

- The choice of Ngugi is due to many factors among which is the fact that he used the colonizer's language in the beginning of his career but later on rejected it, he preferred to write in his native language then translate into the colonizer's language as a sign that he wants to regain his identity. He wants to send a message through his writings that he is the center of his own world and that everyone else is an Other to him; he wants to create a place to identify with. The development and construction of his characters illustrate his quest for a once lost identity, and he makes this fact obvious even through his non-fiction writings.

So, this issue of identity is of a great importance in postcolonial literature and it is explored at a wide range by postcolonial writers in their works. It is also a fertile ground of debate concerning the attempt of postcolonial writers to reconstruct or restore their original identity and that of their peoples through literature. Elements that either construct the identity of a society or affect and reshape it like language, displacement, otherness, and so on are always present in the works of postcolonial writers, and this is the fruit of their personal experience as well as the experience of their society, and their attempt either to decolonize their literature and culture to free themselves from the chains of the imperial powers or to hybridize their discourse and stress their peoples' multicultural atmospheres. The Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o defended this postcolonial identity through his works and explored its features such as language, home place, hybridity multiculturalism, and otherness; and we can see that through his essays as well as his novels.

In this work we will focus on this specific subject matter of identity in relation to postcolonial literature and writers. However most of these writers tend to withdraw from the Western canon and create their own personal identities as related to their own experiences. For that, the main questions that we will try to grapple with are:

- After colonization the postcolonial state is no doubt affected and the colonial memory is implanted in the minds and hearts of postcolonial societies. So where do postcolonial peoples fit in this world?

- What is the nature of the newly emerging identity? If it is a hybrid identity, then is it really a new identity resulting from cultural exchanges or is it only an imitation of western ways?

- What is really a postcolonial literature? Is it authentic, and does it really express the voice of Africa? Does it reject western influence or is it just another face of western literature?

- Furthermore, does a postcolonial writer like Ngugi wa Thiong'o adopt the colonial identity both for himself and his writings or does he adapt it to his own culture and beliefs, and thus create a new different identity that is neither original nor Westernized?

- Does he reconstruct his past identity or just reclaim an identity that is hybrid? If so, does he accept this new hybrid identity as the ultimate identity for him and his people?

This work will deal with textual analysis based on the theoretical frame of the postcolonial theory. Therefore, it will hold a four-chapter structure. It will have a general introduction, the body in four chapters, and a general conclusion. It will deal with the postcolonial African writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o's attitude towards postcolonial identity both at a personal level, and in his novels.

The first chapter will be devoted to definitions, theoretical background and key concepts. That is, we will discuss concepts related to postcolonial literature to better understand its deep relation with cultural and national identity. One needs to have a clear idea about this field to better understand the mechanisms by which postcolonial writers build up their works. That is, in order to better understand how the theme of identity is explored in postcolonial literature, we need to know in the first place the very nature of this field and all the aspects that forge it especially when we know that it is very controversial, so we need to determine the way we will perceive this field. And since the notion of identity is a key element explored by postcolonial writers, we need to know the core of this field, how it works and what the components of this field are. For that, one has to take into consideration that understanding postcolonialism with all its components (theory, literature and criticism) will certainly facilitate the

understanding of the way postcolonial writers explore the theme of identity in their work.

The second chapter will deal with the identity question in itself and its relation to postcolonial literature. In this chapter we will deal with thematic concerns of postcolonial literature related to identity, we will explore items that participate in forging identity and how these items are explored through postcolonial writers.

The third chapter will be devoted to Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's ideological realm and the way he conceives identity and its contingent constitutive components such as the language issue through his different pronouncements.

The fourth chapter will be dealing with the quest for identity in a selected works of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O. This chapter will discuss the way Ngugi has tackled the different aspects that forge the postcolonial identity such as language, home, hybridity, and otherness in his writings through the way his characters live and behave.

**Key Words:**

Postcolonialism, postcolonial literature, identity, Africa, language, hybridity, multiculturalism, otherness, displacement

# Chapter One :

## Theoretical Background and Key Concepts

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## **Introduction :**

The field of postcolonial literature has been a very wide but controversial one. It is controversial not only to the core subjects that it deals with, but also regarding the value of the term postcolonial in itself. So to understand postcolonial literature and its contexts one has to understand first the background of that literature first, since it has been a fertile ground for debates and criticism. So, in this chapter we are going to deal with theoretical background concerning the field of postcolonialism. The first element to be dealt with is the very definition of the term postcolonial in itself. This term has been very controversial as to what it is meant by it, whether it denotes a mere historical context or deeper than that. We are going to see how different scholars perceive this notion in different ways and try to find out a common ground between them.

The field of postcolonialism has led to the emergence of the postcolonial theory which has as a main goal to examine the relation of the colonizer and the colonized, as to define the various ways the colonizer had affected the colonized. We are going to see which kind of texts it deals with and what kind of subject matters it evokes.

After dealing with the key notion of postcolonialism, we have to determine what is meant by postcolonial literature as, since the background it came out of is controversial, and holds a variety of connotations, it surely is a controversial issue by itself. So to understand the main issue of identity in postcolonial literature, we have to understand in the first place what is meant by postcolonial literature in itself, and which category of writers is considered postcolonial.

Also we are going to deal with the postcolonial criticism so as to determine the bulk of this field. Scholars may certainly debate the issue of what makes the canon of postcolonial criticism. This variety of ideas about this notion could be illustrated through the variety of definitions given to it by different scholars. So in this chapter we are going to attempt to provide the different definitions of that notion and find out a common ground between them.

After going through the overall core of the field of postcolonialism we will also deal with a general overview of the link between postcolonial literature and identity to frame our work. All these ideas are going to be discussed respectively through this chapter.



## I- Definitions and Historical Foundations:

In his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, Neil Lazarus pointed out that before the 1970s; postcolonial studies did not exist as academic study field. Nowadays, this field has its place all over the world and in different universities. Many centers concerning postcolonial studies have been established not only in the literary field, but also in other fields such as: culture, history, and so on. Many journals began to see light under the broad term “postcolonialism” dealing with postcolonial theory, literature ... etc. In addition to the considerable publications, articles, books, criticism... etc which concern postcolonial studies.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that works on the postcolonial question did not exist before the 1970s. There have existed records on anticolonial movements and leaders. Many journals were devoted to this issue such as: *African Literature Today* (1986). The term “postcolonial” was mainly used to point at the period following colonialism. As Neil Lazarus emphasizes in the book:

*“Post-colonial” (or “postcolonial”- the American variant), in these usages from the early 1970s, was a periodising term, historical and not an ideological concept. It bespoke no political desire or aspiration, looked forward to no particular social or political order. Erstwhile colonial territories that had been decolonized were “postcolonial” states. It was as simple as that.* (Lazarus 2004: 02)

Even for writers who were described as being postcolonial, the reference was historical. For instance, Chinua Achebe was recurrently described as: *“an Igbo writer, a Nigerian writer, an African writer, a Commonwealth writer, a Third-World writer, but seldom if ever as a “postcolonial” one”* (Lazarus 2004: 03). Leela Gandhi said that it is due to the link between poststructuralism and postmodernism to Marxism that we have postcolonialism. She said in her book *Postcolonial Theory: A critical Introduction*:

*Some hostile critics have been quick to attribute the links between postcolonialism and poststructuralism to temporal contingency and, therefore, to academic fashion alone. And in truth the alliance with poststructuralism has indeed enabled postcolonialism to gain a*

*privileged foothold within the metropolitan academic mainstream [...] thus, in a shift from the predominantly economic paradigms of Marxist thought, postcolonialism has learnt- through its poststructuralist parentage- to diagnose the material effects and implications of colonialism as an epistemological malaise at the heart of Western rationality. (1998: 25-26)*

In fact, if we look for the definition of this term we would find that they refer to it as a postmodern idea. They say: “Post-colonialism (postcolonial theory, post-colonial theory) is a specifically postmodern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism” (Wikipedia).

According to Depika Bahri, Associate Professor in the English department at Emory University, in her article *Introduction to Postcolonial Studies (1996)*, it is known that postcolonialism is a reaction against colonialism which exercises power on natives to abuse their wealth. However, many say that postcolonialism is about the social and cultural changes which take place after colonialism, especially after the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978. This ongoing interest in postcolonialism was reinforced by the publication of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989), which diminished the use of such terms, as: Third World, Commonwealth...etc.

In this context, and according to *The Blackwell Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, there has been a hesitation to use the term Third World. The writers of this Companion think that *“this hesitation reflects the decline of the national movements of the “Bandung Era” [...], leaving us with the question of why and with what effect this decline has occurred, but helping to explain in the meantime the currency of “post-colonial” as [...] a euphemism for third world”* (Larsen 2000: 49). Another factor that helped in the spread of postcolonial literature is the wide expansion of the European Empire and its fall after WWII when many countries got their independence.

The culture and society of colonized countries before colonization help us understand more the colonial mechanisms and the new culture and society of the post-colony. Thus, the term postcolonial may also include colonized countries or minorities belonging to the First World countries. However, the term “Commonwealth literature”

presupposes that only literature written in English or belonging to the “Empire” has got an importance.

In *Postcolonialism: Introduction*, Marie Rose Napierkowski says that postcolonialism refers to the representation of culture, race, ethnicity, and identity in the modern world where many countries became independent. While many critics refer to it as the: “culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today” ( Napierkowski 1998, *Literary Movements for Students*). Adam Storlorow in an interview said:

*Postcolonial concerns are about the encounter of cultures. As the editors of The Postcolonial Studies Reader state in the introduction to their collection, postcolonialism “addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact”(Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, p.2) So we could say it begins with the cultural encounter of colonization. Repression and resistance, hybridity and difference all have their start here. ( Storlorow, 1997)*

In the first half of the twentieth century, according to Napierkowski, the European power held control over most of the countries of the world. Britain, as an example, ruled over half of the world; meanwhile, many countries like India, Nigeria, Canada, Sri Lanka, Australia...etc gained independence from the imperial powers. Postcolonial studies had as a subject the literary productions of these independent countries. According to her, this term was coined in and for academia, mainly in British universities.

George P. Landow, a professor at Brown University, assumed that many debates around the use of the term postcolonial have been held, but all the stylistic terms have weaknesses, and neglect many aspects. So, this term is the best we can find to fit the context of studying all what has a relation to the formerly colonized areas. Landow adds: *“Terms like “postcolonial” or “Victorian” are always open-ended: they are never answers, and they never end a discussion, they begin it. [...] The purpose of using postcolonial as a label is that it provides a practicable, convenient means of discussing texts and other matters that interest us”* (Landow, *Why I Use The Term Postcolonial*)

Landow also thinks that all postcolonial countries have actually nothing to do with their former colonizers. The postcolonial governments in fact have changed and

completely split from the colonizer. Still, the new situation under the new governments, which may or may not go along with what postcolonial peoples expect, forms a topic to be discussed by postcolonial studies altogether with the issue of the relationship between the pre-colonial, the colonial, and the postcolonial periods.

*The Empire Writes Back* uses the term “post-colonial” to refer to “all the culture affected by imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002: 2). But obviously, this definition seems to be too vast and not precise for many people who want to make the term more precise and accurate. To illuminate this point, the writers have argued with what Ngugi has written: **“the purpose of post-colonial studies is to assist the total and absolute decolonization of societies in psychological as well as political terms, involving massive and powerful recuperations of the pre-colonial cultures (Ngugi 1986)”** (Ashcroft et al 2002: 194), they also say that there are other people who think that we cannot presume that a country could be completely independent without being affected by the process of colonization, and they give us the proof that modern issues like “globalization” “are the evidence of the continuing control of the “west” over the “rest”” ( Ashcroft et al 2002: 194); In fact, it is this debate over the meaning and connotation of the term “postcolonial” which gives it its importance. For this purpose, the editors of the second edition of *The Empire Writes Back* sought to “refine” the definition of “post-colonial” so that it refers to:

***All that cultural production which engages [...] with the enduring reality of colonial power [...] “post-colonial is still best employed, as it was in the first edition, to refer to post-colonization. This is process in which colonized societies participate over a long period, through different phases and modes of engagement with the colonizing power, during and after the actual period of direct colonial rule.*** (Ashcroft et al 2002: 195)

From another perspective, Ashcroft et al in their *Post-colonial Studies Reader*, claimed in the preface that no document could ever cover all the views and theories related to postcolonialism. There are two main differing views: The first view says that postcolonialism is a set of “amorphous set of discursive practices”, similar or relating to postmodernism. The second view postulates that this term is merely historical; it points at a certain historical period to which a certain type of writings belongs. But this latter

view is in fact further divided into different views. Some say that “postcolonial” designates only the era after colonialism, or the era from independence till now, and the ones who according to *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*:

*argue that it is best used to designate the totality of practices [...] which characterize the societies of the postcolonial world from the moment of colonization to the present day, since colonialism does not cease with the mere colonial mode to be active in many societies”* (Ashcroft et al 1995: XV).

Imperial powers, under the excuse of civilizing the uncivilized, exported their literatures and powers to the colonies and tried to eliminate indigenous cultures. But, after the two World Wars the situation changed, the colonizers became weaker and independence movements spread all over the world. However, the dismantling of the empire with all the political changes which accompany it did not instantly affect the imperial cultural control, but we cannot deny the fact that the intellectual awakening sprang in the postcolonial world.

Imperialism occurred through different ways and procedures which depended on certain situations, a thing that led to the unexpected. The colonizers tried to take control over, not only the land and the wealth of the colonized, but also the culture of these peoples. But with the emergence of the process of decolonization, these peoples regained not only their lands but they also got rid of the imperial cultural control. In addition, the newly decolonized people used their culture and language together to challenge and replace the colonizer’s culture. So, postcolonialism began within the beginning of colonialism, “*it is the discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brings into being*” (Ashcroft et al 1995: 117). Nevertheless, this ongoing interest in postcolonialism grew up with the emergence of postmodernism a fact that made people confuse between the two concepts.

Kwame.A.Appiah in his essay *The Postcolonial and the Postmodern* says that:

*Postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: of a relatively small, western-style, western-trained, group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism of the periphery. In the west they are known through the Africa they offer; their*

*compatriots know them both through the west they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other and for Africa.* (Ashcroft et al 1995: 119)

To support his view he argues that African postcolonial intellectuals rely on the African university and the Euro- American publisher and reader. He also gives the example of Ngugi wa Thiong'o who used Kikuyu in some of his writings to "escape the west" like many other African writers whose theories are influenced by their Euro-American formation, but this does not deny the fact that they are national.

In the introduction of *Colonialism-Postcolonialism*, the writer Ania Loomba proclaims that the term postcolonialism is so heterogeneous and it is almost impossible to define and describe it in a satisfactory way due to, according to her, the interdisciplinary nature of postcolonialism. Meanwhile, the term postcolonialism has certainly some drawbacks, for that, Loomba has classified these problems as follows: The first one lies in the fact that in English departments it is accepted to discuss cultural differences but it is not allowed to talk about economic exploitation. A second problem that presents itself is that the postcolonial is presented as footnotes in the syllabi. A third problem seems to relate to what she calls "The race for theory", this wide range of theories and theorists may confuse students in terms of understanding the term itself.

When we consider the world history we notice that the children of the formerly colonized countries live in different parts of the world which may insinuate that "the whole world is postcolonial." (Loomba 1998: 7). According to Loomba this term has two implications: a temporal implication which denotes history (after colonialism), and an ideological implication which is the most likely to be studied by critics. But if we take for example the temporal implication, and if we admit that postcolonialism began with the process of decolonization which has taken three centuries: the eighteenth, the nineteenth, till the 1970's, so we might ask ourselves the same question as Ella Shohat : "*when exactly, then, does the "postcolonial" begin?*" (Cited by Loomba 1998: 08). Furthermore, if the postcolonial societies did not begin the process of decolonization at the same time, so they are of different backgrounds and of different conditions, then, can we call them all postcolonial? The writer of this book also proclaims that anti-colonialism does not represent the different kinds of peoples who live in their countries. She argues that:

*African novelists since the 1960's can [...] be regarded as "no longer committed to the nation. The newly independent nation-state makes available the fruits of liberation only selectively and unevenly: the dismantling of colonial rule did not automatically bring about changes for the better in the status of women, the working class or the peasantry in most colonized countries. (*  
Loomba 1998: 11-12)

Loomba thinks that we have to consider postcolonialism as the opposition to colonial rule so that we can include within the postcolonial studies the peoples who were displaced by colonialism such as African-American or people of Asian or Caribbean origin in Britain as postcolonial subjects despite the fact that they belong to the metropolitan centers, we can also include modern opposition to Western and imperial cultures.

Moreover, in the view of George Alva, postcolonialism should be strongly linked to the view of poststructuralism which says that: ***"there is no single history but a multiplicity of histories"*** (cited by Loomba 1998: 13). This is argued by Appiah that postcolonial societies had a history and culture before colonialism, a thing that people always neglect so that we have the feeling that these societies had no culture or history, they are always delimited with the day of their colonization.

To fully understand the postcolonial, though, one has to understand first the process of decolonization and thus, colonialism itself. Loomba says that: ***"Most Marxist thinkers tended to regard colonialism[...] as an exploitative yet necessary phase of human social development"*** (Loomba:21). They argue with what Marx said: ***"England [...] in causing a social revolution in Hindustan [...] was stupid in her manner of enforcing them [...] whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution. (*** (Loomba 1998: 21), so Marx here thinks that the colonizer is the triggering tool for the liberation of these countries.

The colonized countries have fought against colonialism each in his own way and according to the conditions and situations of colonialism in each place. Aimé Césaire thinks that the colonizers legitimized their colonization by claiming that they wanted to "civilize" some countries. He disclaims this belief in the civilizing mission.

On the contrary, he sees that colonization “uncivilizes” the colonizer and draws him down to savagery and bestiality. For this, Césaire gives the example of Colonel de Montagnac, one of the Conquerors of Algeria who said: *« pour chasser les idées qui m’assiègent quelquefois, je fais couper des têtes, non pas des têtes d’artichauts, mais bien des têtes d’hommes »* ( Césaire 1995: 9)

According to Rothermund a decolonization operation took place in the twentieth century in the period between 1947 and 1960, and by decolonization he means like that defined in the *Oxford dictionary* as: the process of a colony or colonies becoming independent.

Senghor once said that: *“the Africans wanted to assimilate and not be assimilated”* (Rothermund 2006: 2), while he himself couldn’t interact with some of his own people in their native language, so he had to use the French language to address them. This could be a strong sign that decolonization should not occur only in the limited scope that we find in dictionaries and other sources. So, the notion of “decolonizing the mind” gained ground and the term postcolonialism appeared to discuss this notion, as Rothermund points out: “there have been lively debates on “hybrid culture” and on the relation between power and knowledge as exemplified by “Orientalism”. (Rothermund 2006: 2). He also thinks that the works about the transfer of power which glorify nationalism are not of a real importance for nowadays readers, that’s why a social and cultural aspect of decolonization is rather needed to more understand the reasons and effects of this phenomenon. That’s why the field “subaltern studies” emerged to speak up for the oppressed people.

But this did not satisfy scholars at that time, so the field of postcolonialism emerged within *“writers who expressed the quest for an identity which had been submerged by the colonial impact”* (Rothermund 2006: 51). This notion had been strengthened by the work of Edward Said: “Orientalism” which added a new meaning to the “decolonization process” meaning. That is, people fought for their political independence, but after the emergence of postcolonialism, and under the influence of Said, postcolonialists as Rothermund pointed out fought for their intellectual and spiritual self-determination.

On this idea, and according to Dirlik, colonialism refers to *“the political control by one nation of another nation or of a society striving to become a nation”*



(Dirlik 2000: 430). Neo-colonialism is *“where a colony had already achieved formal political independence but still could not claim full autonomy due primarily to economic but also ideological reasons”* (Dirlik 2000: 430). While postcolonialism might be interested in the national and cultural identity that resulted from the clash between colonizers and colonized.

The colonizer studied the colonized to put him under control exploring the idea of knowing the natives, as Joanne Sharp states in *Geographies of Postcolonialism*. So, the colonizers wanted to establish native elite to control the lower and middle level governance of their country. By doing this, the colonizer needed to build new values, new cultures and to introduce some notions to these elites such as civil services, education, and unified language for the country. This fact never led the pre-colonial culture to completely disappear; it could have been ignored or underestimated, but not totally destroyed.

However, the colonized society could not prevent itself from being affected or somehow changed by the colonizer’s ideologies. But this led them to think of a substitutive rule, and this “alternative” was, as Joanne Sharp insisted, a postcolonial national identity. So, as the editors of *The Empire Writes Back* think, postcolonialists are in no way continuing or adapting “European models”. Indeed, *“decolonization has involved a radical dismantling of European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses”* (Ashcroft et al 2002: 220)

## **II-The Postcolonial Theory:**

*The Blackwell Companion* begins in part three, claiming that postcolonialism and postmodernism emerged almost in the same period that is why people may confuse between the two terms : *“one of the claims frequently made about postcolonial theory is that it is, in one way or another, the “child” of postmodernism”* (Schwarz and Ray (Alessandrini) 2000: 431). They also give the example of Dirlik’s statement that postcolonialism is a child of postmodernism. Dirlik also goes far by criticizing post colonial theorists for their “residual classical Marxism”. For them, postcolonial theory does not exist only in the field of post colonial studies, but also in the field of globalization and other areas of study since it is relevant to feminism, ethnic and cultural studies...etc.

Ania Loomba criticizes the postcolonial theory for being so dependent on post-structuralist or post-modern perspectives. According to her, this theory insists on the idea of “multiple histories” which blurs the mechanisms by which these histories work together. She also criticizes it for changing emphasis from locations and institutions to individuals and their subjectivities which is due to its reliance on literary and cultural criticism and post-structuralism, so Loomba postulates that post-structuralism is the reason behind the weaknesses of postcolonial theory.

Another aspect which can be seen as a problem for Loomba is: **“to maintain any distinction between ideas (culture, representation and language) and material realities (economic systems)”** (Loomba 1998: 28). The problem here lies in using these two aspects together, we have to inter relate them, but at the same time distinguish between the characteristics and features of each one so that we do not neglect one of them. Again, Loomba comes back to this issue when she says: **“Abdul Jan Mohamed (1985), Benita Parry (1987) and other critics have accused theorists like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak of an “exhorbitation of discourse”- of neglecting material conditions of colonial rule by concentrating on colonial representations”** (Loomba 1998: 59) To say that postcolonial theory originated from English literary studies.

However, Duncan Brown in *The Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature*, says that among the debates about postcolonial theory is its theorization of the silencing of the colonized “within the colonial encounter”. But he says that despite the attempt to **“silence the other”, “the colonized have continued to speak, often in unofficial ways and from unofficial spaces, but also from the centers of their societies”** (Chew and Richards 2010: 47).

In postcolonial theory we find a focus on how hybrids are conceived. Hybridization is seen in a binary way, the mixing of races and the alienation of some races to point at **“the Victorian extreme right which regarded different races as different species [...] according to Robert Young”** (Loomba 1998: 173) and this also gives ground to criticism arguing that the notion of “hybridity” underestimates **“the clash between the colonizer and the colonized and therefore misrepresent the dynamics of anti-colonial struggle”** (Loomba 1998: 181). And again she gives the example of nationalist movements like “negritude” which are alienated and cannot

conform to such a notion as hybridity. Another criticism to this theory is that it has a pessimistic tone since it is, as the writer says, the child of postmodernism.

On the importance of using postcolonial theory, Lang'at, A. K. in the article presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) in 2005, relying on the views of many scholars like Gandhi, summarizes it into the following points: rethinking “self”, deconstructing the discourse of the “regimes of othering”, reconstructing “historical self-invention”, and recreating or deleting the “painful memories of the colonial era” and its consequences after independence like the imperial linguistic, literary and cultural domination.

In the section entitled *Decolonizing Culture* in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Katrak says that some critics try to use what he calls “fashionable theoretical models” for two reasons: the first one is to substantiate postcolonial literatures and to emphasize their worthiness by using “complicated Eurocentric models, and the second one is , as Katrak states, ***“to succumb to the lure of engaging in a hegemonic discourse of Western theory given that it is ‘difficult’ or ‘challenging,’ often for the sole purpose of demonstrating its shortcomings for an interpretation of postcolonial texts”***. (Ashcroft et al 1995: 256).

In addition to that, Martin Denyer, a visiting lecturer in visual culture at Middlesex University, in his essay entitled *What and Where is Postcolonial Theory?*, says that it examines the European domination of non-European peoples, lands, and cultures. However, it examines essentially the immanent views implemented by imperial colonization about Europe being superior to the countries it has once colonized, and the damages it has caused to their self-identity. He adds that the issues of ethnicity, hybridity, and displacement ... etc constitute only three topics in postcolonial theory which lead to discuss the vast topic of the diversity of cultural identity. So, this makes of national identity a main issue in postcolonial theory.

It is known that this theory has emerged with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, which in fact, according to Leela Gandhi, developed in a quite poststructuralist environment incarnated by the figures of Derrida and Foucault. She argues that Said's ideas relied essentially on the work of Foucault, and that Spivak's work dealt with ***“the task of dialogue and negotiation with and between Derrida and Foucault”*** (Gandhi 1998: 26-27). So, it is due to poststructuralism and postmodernism,

and their relation to Marxism that postcolonial theory exists. She blames this theory for its limited constituency and its excessive focus on politics rather than theory.

Gandhi adds to this that its first phase is Orientalism. Postcolonial theory is concerned with defending the “marginalized other” living within “repressive structures” of domination. It is also concerned with reversing the existing order of gender, culture, and race. In a way or another, Gandhi tries to say that postcolonial theory is an extension to western theory. In the section entitled *The Limits of Postcolonial Theory* she says: ***“postcolonial theory is situated somewhere in the interstices between Marxism and postmodernism/poststructuralism”*** (Gandhi 1998: 167).

Professor John Lye, in his essay *Some Issues in Postcolonial Theory*, said that postcolonial theory depends mostly on the notion of otherness and resistance. He says: ***“Post-colonial theory deals with the reading and writing of literature written in previously or currently colonized countries, or literature written in colonizing countries which deals with colonization or colonized peoples”***. The main concerns of this theory are how the literature produced by the colonizers changes the reality of the colonized and immortalizes the sense of inferiority within them; and how the literature of the colonized tries to express their identity and tries to regain their lost past exterminated by the new past which put them in the column of “otherness”. If we look for the definition of postcolonial theory in any encyclopedia, we would find this definition: ***“Post-colonialism (postcolonial theory, post-colonial theory) is a specifically post-modern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism.”*** (WIKIPEDIA)

Postcolonial theory tries to answer questions about the notions of language, home, identity, hybridity and so on, on the basis that the colonizer wants to achieve his control and effect on those notions through the process of “knowing” the other, as Ashcroft says in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*: “to name the world is to “understand” it, to know it and to have control over it” (Ashcroft et al 1995: 283). And as David Washburn in his essay thinks that ***“knowledge is power, and words, whether written or spoken, are the medium of exchange, using words incurs responsibility”***.

Ashcroft et al also define postcolonial theory as a discussion of ***“ migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe [...] and the***

*fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being”* (Ashcroft et al 1995: 2). Washburn says that the critical nature of postcolonial theory brings about the disturbance of western thought, and thus giving room to the marginalized people to make their voices heard and find alternatives to the dominant voices.

Furthermore, Colin Wright in one of his essays said that Terry Eagleton in one of his articles has accused postcolonial theory of: obscurantism, narcissism, solipsism, political disorientation, and complicity with American Cultural imperialism. Many postcolonial theorists think that the colonizer still exercises control over the colonized even after independence, so, as Cotey Binns points out: “by exposing a culture’s colonial history, postcolonial theory empowers a society with the ability to value itself”. Postcolonial theory emerged from the writings of counter-colonial resistance writers such as Fanon, Said and Spivak. As stated in the Oxford dictionary of literary terms:

*Postcolonial theory considers vexed cultural-political questions of national and ethnic identity, ‘otherness’, race, imperialism, and language, during and after the colonial periods. It draws upon post-structuralist theories such as those of deconstruction in order to unravel the complex relations between imperial ‘centre’ and colonial ‘periphery’, often in ways that have been criticized for being excessively abstruse. (Oxford Dictionary)*

As mentioned in *The Empire Writes Back*, the very idea of a postcolonial theory comes out of the incapacity of the existing European theory to handle the complexity and cultural diversity of postcolonial writings. According to it, the political and cultural monocentrism of the colonizer emerged as a consequence of the “representation” system of Europe. So, the notion of expansion grew up in Europe which caused a cultural subservience. The reaction to this was the development of what Ashcroft et al call “identifiable indigenous theories” which was the cause of a growing national consciousness.

The attempt to “marginalize” the colonized world directed the fight of the colonized people towards achieving plurality, multiplicity, and uncentered position, and so, *“marginality [...] became an unprecedented source of creative energy”* (Ashcroft et al 2002: 12). It is true that Europeans presented these ideas before postcolonialists

through poststructuralism; but, being actually marginalized socially and culturally, the postcolonial world came to this situation in an earlier time and in a direct way. According to Ashcroft et al, these ideas and thoughts are present in postcolonial texts from the moment of colonization till now. In this book they say also that even if postcolonial theory was based on European theories and even if it followed their steps, it has done so “cautiously and eclectically”.

Scholars like Homi Bhabha proposed theories based on “*the nature of post-colonial societies and the types of hybridization their various cultures have produced*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 32). Postcolonial theory also deals with “*the problems of transmuting time into space, with the present struggling out of the past, and, [...], it attempts to construct a future*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 35).

Many theorists and critics see that the point that gives postcolonial theory its strength is its comparative methodology and its way of viewing the world in a hybridized and syncretic view. Ashcroft et al proclaim that one has to bear in mind that postcolonial theory cannot be seen as using the other European theories as “contexts” in its development. They say that the European theories form “*the conditions of the development of post-colonial theory in its contemporary form and [...] the determinants of much of its present nature and content*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 153). But this fact, according to them, may be some how dangerous to postcolonial theory because European theories have the “*tendency to reincorporate post-colonial culture into a new internationalist and universalist paradigm*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 154). They also say that the European theories which wanted to encompass postcolonial literature and put it within a postmodern frame, are themselves affected, if not shaped, by the colonial era and the era of decolonization. They say that “*the history of literary and critical movements in the twentieth century is [...] deeply determined by an interaction with imperialism*”. (Ashcroft et al 2002: 154). They add “*since the publication of *The Empire Writes Back* in 1989, post-colonial theory has proven to be one of the most diverse and contentious fields in literary and cultural studies*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 193).

Although Said and Spivak have rejected the term postcolonial for various reasons, their works together with the work of Bhabha, paved the way to postcolonial theorists and helped them in a way or another. Ashcroft et al say in their book that

postcolonial theory is a creation of literary studies. They argue that “ *the discipline of “English” operated as a specific site of cultural exclusion as well as a cultural indoctrination, becoming at once a measure of civilization (in its imperial exponents) and barbarity (in its colonized pupils)*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 199).

The colonizers attempted to hold control over the culture of the colonized. By doing so, they have created a kind of resistance and opposition to this cultural domination in the form of postcolonial writing which opposed and transformed the canon of English literature. In *The Empire Writes Back*, the editors came again to say that postcolonial theory in the 1980s, which sprung out of English Literature Departments, held as a subject the literature written in English, despite the fact that other literatures and other literary thinkers has existed such as the “Francophone African intellectuals” like Césaire and Fanon. But from the moment that postcolonial theory emerged, it has been adopted by several domains and has given a rambling framework to analyze modern cultural and political relations; providing the example of Wales and Scotland “*previously lamped together under a political label such as the “United Kingdom”, or a vaguer, grander term such as “Great Britain”*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 201) where the analysis of political and cultural relations with Britain has completely changed and found a newly enlarged perspective in postcolonial theory.

About the validity of postcolonial theory, Ashcroft et al have been asking many questions like “*has post-colonial theory [...] served to re-colonize the post-colonial world by re-incorporating its agendas into the metropolitan academic concerns [...]?*” “*Who reads the “postcolonial” texts?*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 203). Then they give us an answer that its validity is in its efficacy; that is, its validity depends on the way it has contributed to empower postcolonial intellectuals and to the decolonizing process in general. They add that one of the ways by which the strategies of decolonization work is language which has formed a debatable area in postcolonial studies. Intellectuals have shown uncertainty towards postcolonial theory.

Postcolonial theory has shown positive effect on postcolonial societies; nevertheless, “*fears about its homogenizing effects, and of its dominance by metropolitan-based critics have led to a suspicion sometimes erupting into open hostility*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 205). Ashcroft et al say that this is a consequence of the dominance of certain areas over others where postcolonial theory is rejected in a way or

another. This rejection or resistance constitutes a crucial part of the field of postcolonial studies. They add that postcolonial theory gave its intellectuals enough material to be part of other universal discourses holding to the analysis of their own decolonizing discourse.

Among the issues dealt with in postcolonial theory are hybridity and ambivalence. These two issues are relevant to both the postcolonial world and the metropolitan centers. They say that these two notions are too controversial for *“their apparent failure to take into account the material status of the operation of power”* (Ashcroft et al 2002: 206). But, the two notions have also proven to be of a use to postcolonial critics since they give a subtle and insidious idea about colonial subjectivity and relationships. There is also the issue of feminism which has formed a fertile ground for argument between postcolonial theorists and western theorists; so, this issue is taking a greater space in postcolonial discourse.

Related to this is the issue of race including indigenous minorities, which has also formed a large field of study and which has been replaced lately by the term “ethnicity”, to include a larger scope of human difference such as social make-up, cultural values ...etc, instead of the term “race” which divides human beings according to biological traits. This issue leads to another important one which is representation of the Other: *“the representation of the colonial other by imperial discourse and the contesting self representation by colonial subjects.”* (Ashcroft et al 2002: 207)

According to Neil Lazarus, some critics want the postcolonial theory to talk about two aspects: the environment of colonization and the way it has functioned, and the role of decolonization as a specific narrative of liberation. But they say that postcolonial theory has failed to do so because of its close relation to post-structuralism, and thus, because it has separated literature from politics and economy. Other critics however, think that the relation of postcolonial theory to post-structuralism and post-modernism strengthened its position in the modern world system.



### III- Literature and Postcolonialism: Pillars, Periods and Themes:

Whenever we hear the names: Chinua Achebe, Homi Bhabha, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka, Gayatri Spivak, Franz Fanon, Buchi Emecheta ... etc, we directly think of postcolonial literature. Mark Stein, in his book, *Black British Literatures: Novels of Transformation*, said: ***“Post-colonial literatures can be defined as those Europhone literatures that have arisen in the wake of European colonialism”*** (Stein 2004: 201). In the *Oxford dictionary of literary terms*, we find this definition: ***“postcolonial literature, a category devised to replace and expand upon what was once called Commonwealth Literature. As a label, it thus covers a very wide range of writings from countries that were once colonies or dependencies of the European powers.”*** (Oxford Dictionary). Another distinct definition is that of Marie Rose Napierkowski who said that ***“postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions between European nations and the peoples they colonized”***. (Postcolonialism: Introduction)

However, according to [Paul Briens](#), the problems with these definitions is that the process of colonization in itself is not the core of postcolonial studies, and that many postcolonial works were written during colonization so it would not be correct to say that it is the set of works written after the independence of these countries. Besides, most of the independent countries are still dependent on their former colonizers in a way or another. Another fact is that saying that postcolonial writers were influenced by western studies is not exactly how these writers wanted to be remembered.

History has become a crucial issue in literature thanks to postcolonial literature, and we can see that through its definition. Cultural and ideological implications of a literary text also have become important since the emergence of postcolonial studies. The postcolonial text serves as a vehicle to transmit the identity and national interest of a society. Besides, postcolonial literature attempts to get rid of the fact that it has no history or literature, a quality which was attributed to it by many imperial texts. These facts make the themes in postcolonial literatures widely varying: place and displacement, language, hybridity, identity, colonialism, resistance ... etc.

With time, scholars have tried to refine the definition of postcolonial literature to make it more plausible, such as the following:

*Postcolonial literature (or Post-colonial literature, sometimes called New English literature(s)), is a body of literary writings that reacts to the discourse of colonization. Post-colonial literature often involves writings that deal with issues of de-colonization or the political and cultural independence of people formerly subjugated to colonial rule. It is also a literary critique to texts that carry racist or colonial undertones. Postcolonial literature, finally in its most recent form, also attempts to critique the contemporary postcolonial discourse that has been shaped over recent times. It attempts to re-read this very emergence of postcolonialism and its literary expression itself. (Online Encyclopedia)*

Other scholars say that the postcolonial writers subvert the colonial discourse by using specific techniques such as telling a known story from the view of an oppressed character in it. Also, it is generally recognized that the main characters in postcolonial literature are always struggling to construct their identity feeling trapped between their native culture and the newly hybridized dominant culture.

In the *MA English-Literature* essays, they say that postcolonial literature represents any writings after independence which tackle one of these subjects: the new cultural identity of the colonized (that is to deal with the occurring cultural and social changes within postcolonial societies), the notion of independence in itself (whether these postcolonial societies are really fully independent or not), and the issue of marginalization and alienation ( within the western society, or their own postcolonial society). So, no matters how variant are the ways scholars perceive postcolonial literature, they always get close around the same perspectives.

To strengthen this idea we can look at other definitions. John Lye defines it as follows: *“postcolonial literature is often (but not inevitably) self consciously a literature of otherness and resistance, and is written out of the specific local experience”*. Leela Gandhi in her book *Postcolonial Theory* defines it as follows:

*a contentious category which refers [...] to “literatures in English”, namely, to those literatures which have accompanied the projection and decline of British imperialism. This academic privileging of postcolonial literature is informed by recent critical attempts to postulate the colonial encounter primarily as a textual contest, or a*

*bibliographic battle, between oppressive and subversive books.”*

(Gandhi 1998: 141).

In *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Drabble and Stringer define postcolonial literature as follows: *“post-colonial literature consists of a body of writing emanating from Europe’s former colonies which addresses questions of history, identity, ethnicity, gender and language”* (Drabble and Stringer, 2003), they add that looking for a national political and cultural awakening, postcolonial literatures relied on popular resistance to abolish colonial rule, in a way to unveil the truth that there is no such a thing as a passive native.

Another important definition is that of Ashcroft et al in *The Empire Writes Back*, who think that, semantically speaking, the term postcolonial literature is used to describe the literatures interested in the national culture after independence. To point at national literature people used to say “modern Canadian writing” or “recent west Indian literature”.

However, for Ashcroft et al, the term postcolonial literature is used to denote all literature covering the culture influenced by imperialism from the beginning of colonization till now. On another hand, they hesitate to place the literature of the United States under this category, and they argue that it is due to its relationship to a colonial centre (Britain) that it could be seen as postcolonial.

What is important is that these literatures share the characteristic *“that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre”* (Ashcroft et al 2002: 2) and this is the quality which emphasizes their postcoloniality.

According to *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, postcolonial literature faces a great dilemma which is replacing ‘English literature’ by ‘world literature’ through the process of changing “Anglo-centric assumptions”. For Ania Loomba, books written on postcolonial literatures concern themselves only with *“literatures written in English, or widely available in translation, or those that have made the best-seller lists in Europe and the United States”* (Loomba 1998: 93), a fact that has to be reconsidered. In the *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, Coyle et al say that postcolonial literature is

passive and subjugated in the view of Anglo-European studies, but in their own view this literature is neither passive nor isolated, and we cannot account for it appropriately without taking into consideration its textual relations.

Chew and Richards say that: “*the concepts of “writing” back and re-writing are well established, both in postcolonial literature itself and in writing about it*”. (Chew and Richards 2010: 71). Before the establishment of this notion in postcolonial literature, writers were concerned with the image of their culture and history as represented by colonial views. And here, they give the example of Achebe and Conrad. They say that Achebe tried to “write back” to respond to the colonial view about the colonized, and to “rewrite” a certain “*colonial text by revisiting its plot and/or characters*” (Chew and Richards 2010: 72) .

Postcolonial literature went through phases matching the development of the national uprising and strong desire to split from the metropolitan centre. During colonization writings were produced in the colonizers’ language by “*a literate elite whose primary identification is with the colonizing power*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 5). These texts were primarily produced by writers who represent the colonizing centre: settlers, travelers, soldiers ... etc. These writings, according to Ashcroft et al, cannot be classified under the category of indigenous culture or native culture, despite the fact that they write about the colonized countries, they seem to privilege the colonizing centre. And these literatures’ loyalty to imperialism is hidden under their claimed objectivity which hides the imperial discourse where they were born.

After that period, the “natives” and the “outcasts” produced a literature which was given license only by the empire. Like the nineteenth century literature produced by the “English educated upper class” and the “African missionary literature”. Such a category of writers felt they were advantaged because they had at hand the colonizer’s language and education.

These literatures did deal with subjects like “*the brutality of the convict system [...] the historical potency of the supplanted and denigrated native cultures [...] or the existence of a rich cultural heritage older and more extensive than that of Europe*” (Ashcroft et al 2002: 6) but they could not fully develop the theme of subversion or explore their anti-colonial orientation. These literatures were produced under colonial control which granted permission concerning what is appropriate or not,

and concerning the distribution of the work, Ashcroft et al add to this: *“texts of this kind come into being within the constraints of a discourse and the institutional practice of a patronage system which limits and undercuts their assertion of a different perspective”* (Ashcroft et al 2002: 6). The literature produced by those who wanted to end these restrictions and use their writings for different and more efficient objectives appear in what Ashcroft et al call “modern post-colonial literatures”.

Besides the issues of language, hegemony and what have been discussed before, postcolonial literature discusses the issue of place and displacement in which, as Ashcroft et al think, *“the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place”* (Ashcroft et al 2002: 8). So, and as Lazarus postulates, to say that a writer or a piece of writing is postcolonial was to date it back to a certain moment or to relate it to a specific period in time, or to relate it to a certain community or identity, but with time, this scope has broadened and the reference has changed, and this could be seen in its relation with the world.

On the relationship of postcolonial literature with the western literary canon, John Marx in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* says that he identifies three sorts of relationships but he deals only with two of them which he thinks are familiar to everybody else. The first one is that postcolonial literature repudiates the canon. According to him, the universal audience has become experienced and well trained in considering the colonized literature as the “antithesis” of the literature of the canon and as an effective way to restore the traditional literature and culture that the colonizer tried to erase.

The second point is that postcolonial literature is trying to make a revision of texts and concepts belonging to the canon. And here Marx explains that the audience considers that postcolonial literatures criticize Western literatures by using many techniques like rewriting some works, or appropriating some genres ... etc. He adds: *“the fact that a writer’s capacity to represent a place and its people is widely considered relevant to determining canonicity suggests how dramatically postcolonial literature has changed what we mean when we say “the canon””* (Lazarus 2004: 85)

#### IV- Critical Approaches to Postcolonial Texts:

In the field of critical literature, according to Figueira, there is no clear agreement among scholars on how to approach postcolonial texts or what makes the canon of postcolonial criticism. She claims that with the definitions of postcolonial criticism which we have at hands, we can understand the reason behind this disagreement. For this reason, we shall deal with a sample of these definitions to make the latter idea clear. Ashcroft et al define it as follows: *“postcolonial criticism “covers all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day”*” (cited by Figueira 2008: 31); Mishra and Hodge say that postcolonial criticism *“foregrounds a politics of opposition and struggle, and problematizes the key relationship between centre and periphery”* (cited by Figueira 2008: 31).

The current definitions are given by, as Figueira mentions, anthologies or interpreters to key theorists who never question the attitudes that lead to this refusal to define postcolonial criticism in any way. This ambiguity, she thinks, lies in the relation of postcolonialism to postmodernism and their compatibility, especially in matters like rejecting fixed meanings and stable identities.

Harrington presumes that postcolonial criticism emerges from the assumption to anthropological studies of art. It identifies the irrelevance of indigenous cultures with western aesthetics. He adds that, it deals with the ethnocentric view of other cultures by western discourses and their relationship, and with the exclusionary cultural discourses. Kamada cited what Young observed that *“since Sartre, Fanon and Memmi, postcolonial criticism has constructed two antithetical groups, the colonizer and the colonized, self and Other ... a Manichean division threatens to reproduce the static, essentialist categories it seeks to undo”* (Kamada 2010: 128).

Dirlik says that the field of postcolonial criticism has evolved during this last decade. He says that this kind of criticism has evolved bearing the traits of the early postcolonial discourse, putting the emphasis again on the ethnocentricity of the colonial experience, but this criticism left early discourse behind by questioning the very meaning of colonization. Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, on the origins of the postcolonial criticism said:

*Postcolonial criticism has been influenced by Marxist thought, by the work of Michel Foucault [...], and by deconstruction, which has challenged not only hierarchical, binary oppositions such as West/East and North/South but also the notions of superiority associated with the first term of each opposition. (Bedford Books: 1998)*

The fact that the majority of postcolonial intellectuals belong to the category of English studies, makes of postcolonial criticism of a worldwide interest, since it enhances the universal audience to read in translation. For postcolonial critics, their task is to clarify, unveil, and deconstruct the *“themes of citizenship and the modern state”* (Figueira 2008: 33). She adds that if we study the literature which makes the concern of postcolonial criticism, we would find to which extent the ideological attitudes *“reifying critical jargon and strategies of self-representation”* (Figueira 2008: 38) have restricted the intellectual severity and development of that study or analysis. For her, the task of a postcolonial critic is to reveal the concept of violence exercised by western art and history over subaltern people. She adds that, postcolonial criticism together with socialist and feminist criticisms hold the position about the *“mutually reinforcing significance of class, gender and ethnicity as dimensions of hegemony and domination”* (Figueira 2008: 52).

Dirlik, on contemporary postcolonial criticism, said that it repudiates the Third-World division implemented by developmental meta-narratives. It also favors the marginalized figures of the excluded societies. Dirlik adds that:

*postcolonial criticism has moved past “Manichean” divisions between the colonizer and the colonized, [...], to stress “borderlands” conditions, where the domination of one by the other yields before boundary crossings, hybridities, mutual appropriations, and [...] the everyday resistance of the colonized to the colonizer. (Dirlik 2002: 433)*

Figueira criticized postcolonial criticism by saying that it removes the postcolonial people from their historical and class identification, and thus perpetuates structural racism. While Parekh and Jangne use what Barber proclaims, to criticize postcolonial criticism, that it consigns *“indigenous language expression to the background, paradoxically by an inflation of its role as source and resource to the*

*Anglophone written tradition*” (Parekh and Jangne 1998: 4) thus explores the insecure area of exaggerating and at the same time simplifying the impact of the domination of European languages , and transforming the colonizer to a static “monolith” and the colonized to homogenous “token”.

On this aspect, Dirlik says that postcolonial criticism dehistoricizes colonialism, a fact that blurs the relationship between the period of colonization and its aftermath which has been the reason for the emergence of the postcolonial discourse in the first place. However, he comes back to the reason behind the spread of postcolonial criticism and says:

*contemporary postcolonial criticism derives much of its force and plausibility from radical changes in the world situation, changes that are in part consequences of decolonization, and also of transformations in capitalism provoked by anticolonial struggles of the past* (Dirlik 2002: 439)

#### **V- The Dilemma of Identity in Postcolonial Literature:**

Postcolonial Identity is a central theme to postcolonial literature since it is the result of the process of colonialism; a thing that justifies all the debates and controversies that underlie this notion and which have been dealt with earlier. This identity is forged by the colonial history and the postcolonial predicament a thing that led to the emergence of cultural and spatial elements that affected the postcolonial identity and postcolonial writers. As Albert.J Paolini postulated in *Navigating Modernity*: *“If postcolonialism forms part of a struggle over discursive power in the constitution of identity, then history, in particular colonial history, also pay a significant part.”* (Paolini 1999: 51)

In fact, one of the main reasons that pushed colonized peoples to rebel against colonial powers is the feeling that they begun losing the components that forge their identity. As Paolini reports Stephen Slemon *“to continue the resistance to (neo)colonialism through a deconstructive reading of its rhetoric and to achieve and reinscribe those post-colonial traditions... as principles of cultural identity and survival.”* (Paolini 1999: 64). He carries on postulating that this resistance to



colonization and this search for a distinct independent identity constitute some of the basic elements of postcolonialism.

So postcolonialism is a notion that came to stress the role of postcolonial peoples in the world and to bring to life their voices as distinct from their colonizers' voice. It came to highlight the postcolonial identity as different from the colonial one. For this, Paolini says the postcolonial "Other" comes back in a newly formed identity that is far away from western identity, he reports Helen Tiffin's words that:

*postcolonial writers "rehabilitate" the self against European appropriation. In fracturing imposed European master narratives and perspectives, postcolonialism replaces them with an "alternative vision". This is particularly the case for "indigenous peoples" (India, Africa) who are able "to challenge European perspectives with their own metaphysical systems.* (Paolini 1999: 79)

This postcolonial identity can be defined through various elements that constitute it; for instance Otherness which is a key concept in defining the postcolonial identity as referring to how colonial and postcolonial subjects see each other, or more accurately how the West sees the rest and vice versa; and also how postcolonial subjects perceive themselves within their own societies. For, as Couze Venn said: *"identity is an entity that emerges in relation to an other or others; it is a plural self..."* (Couze 2006: 2)

Not only Otherness is a key feature that defines postcolonial identity, there is also the issue of language and place. John McLeod reported Bhabha's words talking about place and its effect on postcolonial identity when saying that: *"we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity"* (McLeod 2000: 217). The issue of language is widely dealt with since it is a really controversial issue when it comes to studying postcolonial literary works which constituted a unique identity through the hybrid language used by postcolonial writers; that's why hybridity is also one of the key features that forge the postcolonial identity. Some of these key features will be dealt with extensively in the coming chapters.

## **Conclusion:**

From what has been said before, we come to the conclusion that the term postcolonialism came to replace anecdotes such as the term Third-World. It delimits what kind of writers should be called postcolonial, and what literature to be categorized under it. So this term does not only denote the reaction to the colonial process and its aftermath, it also examines the social and cultural change that occurred during and after colonialism and which affected the identity of the colonized.

For, the postcolonial theory for instance examines the imposed superiority that the colonizer exercises on his colonial subjects, a fact that intensifies their sense of inferiority and damages their self-identity; a thing that led postcolonial writers to write against it and try to reinforce that identity. Postcolonial theory also deals with issues like hybridity, ethnicity and multiculturalism.

So, the term postcolonial literature was used only to determine the historical period of colonialism and independence that many postcolonial writers covered through their works. It was also used to denote only literatures written in English, or commonwealth literature, however this term is broader than that since the European languages are not the only means of expression of this literature.

This term also entails, through what has been seen in the debate over its meaning, the representation of identity in the modern world, it deals with cultures and literatures influenced in a way or another by imperialism since the moment of colonization till the present day. So postcolonialism does not only denote the decolonization of lands, but also the decolonization of cultures. And through this process the identity of the postcolonial subjects comes to be affected by that experience and thus changed.

# Chapter Two:

## The Exploration of Identity in Postcolonial Literature

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## **Introduction:**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, among the most prominent subject matters that postcolonial literature deals with is that of identity. This identity is shaped by the colonial experience together with traditional experiences. These experiences mixed together make the current identity of the postcolonial societies.

In this chapter we will deal with some of the basic elements that forge the postcolonial identity. These elements can be divided into cultural elements and spatial ones. The cultural elements are directly linked with the dialectics of language and hybridity, self and otherness; while the spatial elements are deeply rooted in the question of land and identity construction.

Postcolonial writers picture the nationalists as striving to forge an independent identity but one which succeeds in coming to terms with the borrowed notions that have been imposed by the colonizer. But to understand how these postcolonial writers picture out their identity in the literature they produce we have to know first the effect of colonialism on postcolonial subjects.

Imperialism tried to reconstruct a new identity to his subjects so that it can maintain control over them easily. This process went through stages; one of these stages is through internalizing the sense of inferiority of these people, also through displacing them from their lands, or through educating an élite to ensure control over colonies even after independence. So, imperialism was the main reason behind the fact that postcolonial subjects are still wandering to figure out their status in society.

Postcolonial writers try to depict this quest for identity in their literature through concepts such as place and displacement, home and Otherness. All these elements are very important in the making on the identity of people. So through their writings they attempt to depict these notions and their effect on the postcolonial subjects.

These notions are hard to understand and analyze since we are living in a rapidly changing world. So, to better understand how and why postcolonial writers view and treat this subject matter we have to understand first how these notions work in a rapidly

changing society. We have to understand how the postcolonial subjects evolve and behave whether in their original societies or abroad.

After that, and since this social mingling leads to the exchange of cultures we have also to know how these postcolonial subjects managed to form a new hybrid identity which makes them fit wherever they go regarding their multicultural backgrounds. But even if they fit wherever they go, society still holds this distinction Self and Other towards them.

Identity question gives also food for thought around the problem of language which constitutes one of the most controversial debates in the scholarly literary arena. So in this chapter we are going to deal with this aspect as related to postcolonial writers who find themselves trapped between two positions, that of appropriating the Western language or rejecting it. We are going to discuss how different writers perceive this notion as related to revealing their identity.

## **I- Identity crisis and imperialism:**

*Any piece of writing is a product of its time, [...]for the present it will suffice to say that identity was not by any means the single problem which occupied the minds of those who sought to dismantle empire. But it is one that still draws particular attention.* (Elleke Boehmer 2005, 8)

The question of identity is very important to any nation because it shapes its international relations and dictates its behavior. According to Ninkovich “an identity crisis is a period of disorientation in which values and relationships once taken for granted are thrown into question. Questions of self-adjustment that bedevil individuals caught up in an identity crisis like” who am I?” and “where do I belong?”(Ninkovich 2001, 16).

The question of postcolonial identity forms a large disagreement among postcolonial theorists because, according to Hawley, there are two antithetical sorts of identity. The type of identity as viewed by essentialists and that as viewed by constructionists. Essentialists bear the view of nationalists who go for the establishment of a pre-colonial identity on a specific racial basis that is harmless to individual differences; whereas constructionists think that identity is shaped by external forces such as society, and this fact causes a “split” in the identity.(240).

But the fact of achieving an establishment of a pre-colonial identity for Vermeulen and D’haen is practically impossible, and they argue by what Simon Gikandi thinks that this abolishment of the influence of colonization is a way to legitimize the failure of nationalists to “transcend the imperial legacy” (Vermeulen and D’haen 2006, 150) since they use the same principles to highlight one side of national identity over the other sides (150). So, as Leonard Orr in his book *Joyce, imperialism, and post colonialism* said, the “[...] *Question of national identity affects anyone brought up in the shadow of imperialism*” (Orr 2008, 77).

“Colonization=chosification” (Césaire 1955, 12), this is how Aimé Césaire describes the process of colonialism. He said that people describe it as development,

cured illnesses, and high standards of life...etc while Césaire considers it from a completely different angle. He sees hollow societies, stamped cultures, confiscated lands, artistic magnificence wrecked...etc, and above all he sees millions of men who were inculcated fear and the complex of inferiority (12).

The experience of imperialism has been translated textually through the novels of the nineteenth and twentieth century. According to Boehmer in his book *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, the beginning of the European colonization was characterized by the people's need to use ancient stories in creating a new world. The early literature of colonization sustained the idea of exploring, translating and interpreting different countries to enhance their audience to conquer and explore their gains. So, these colonizers experienced an exceptional mobility of people for hunting their accumulations. Thus, through literature, the colonial thought spread in an unprecedented way, and the whole world was actually under colonial control.

This domination resulted in the rise of national resistance in all ways including literature. So, nationalist movements sought to defy "self-representations" of the colonizer through creating a "self-defining story". (13-15). Then, as Kumar Das postulates, the colonial process proceeded through postcolonial and cultural imperialism, but post-colonialism overcame them ***"by resisting and subverting former colonizer. Hence, myth and history, landscape and language, self and other, [became] the ingredients of post-colonialism"***.(Kumar Das 2007,30).

As Blum has reported Chatterjee words, it is under postcolonialism that "nationalism lunche[d] its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not western"(Blum 2007,37). As Blum defines it, it is a "two step process" where they mixed the cultural and material accomplishments of the west together with their customs and tradition to "unify" and "legitimize" the change they opt for. To do so, they revived their native culture since it is a "timeless repository of national truth".

These attempts make the strategies of hybridization perfect, extend hybrid "national identity constructs". (37) The attempt to adopt western ways also is a try to legitimize this change, and this, for Blum, is an "embarrassing degree of assimilation", because by doing so they give up their national identity.

For Said, nationalism represents “the quest for a true, independent identity, but one that can only be attained by coming to terms with what has been borrowed” (Blum 2007, 44) for him, to accomplish a “self-recognition” is to get a space in the room of empire reserved to the subordinate rank, he adds that one has to fight for this position against those who take the inferiority and subordination of the “Other” for granted. As Said puts it in his statement:

*The post- imperial writers of the third world [...] bear their past within them- as scars of humiliating wounds, [...] as potentially revised visions of the past tending toward a post-colonial future, [...] in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance, from the colonist.(cited by Blum 2007, 44).*

So, one could see the two sides of such a process. On the one hand we have the total rejection of western values and a strong quest for the construction of a national identity, and on the other hand we have the assimilation and absorption of western values and practices.

As Blum thinks: “ *rejection of what the nation is not creates a foundation for claims about what the nation actually is, and both provide an implicit sanction for adopting western practices [...]*”(Blum 2007,44). For him, the processes of “rejection and assertion” strengthen national identity in relation to the world (43-44). To support this, we may argue with what Lazarus in his companion, said that Third World nations need to achieve resistance cultures by recognizing their independent “*national identities, but at the same time linking the “popular struggles with the consciousness of a new universality [...]*” (Lazarus 2004, 64-65).

This whole sense of nationalism grew up in the onset of imperialism, and for McPhee and Poddar, the relationship between the two is external, because for them, the matter of a national identity is an “internal” one which cannot in any form be affected by imperialism since it is an external process.(8) However, as Ashcroft et al pointed out, the very fact of colonialism needs processes such as differentiating and discriminating, and erasing the identity of their colonial subjects (34).

As Tzanelli argues: “*The missionary spirit of British imperialism [...] fit perfectly into the nineteenth century European mindset. The “British” set out to*



*civilize others, without questioning (or perhaps in order not to question) the dynamics of their own identity*” (Tzanelli 2008, 8). For the colonizers, as Boehmer says, considered the local cultures of the colonized as being primitive, but despite this fact, the colonizers wanted to know the national heritage of the colonized so that they find easy ways to help them holding control over their colonized subjects, as he says, the purpose of that “was to legitimize colonial rule in an indigenous idiom.”(Boehmer 2005, 19).

The aim of the colonizers was to know and govern other lands, to be the masters; while the colonized were abused, they were treated as slaves, even those who helped the colonizers to rule, and were promised with high positions. So, the colonized perceived the colonizers as destroyers of societies and as monopolist. And as John Nicholson, commander of India’s North-West frontier thinks “*colonial obedience [...] required the brutal humiliation of conquered people*”. (Boehmer 2005, 20) This encounter with colonization caused the process of displacement. The way in which the colonizer perceived the colonized could be obvious in the types of texts produced at that period. They have always perceived the colonized peoples as degrading and naturally inferior human beings, not only that, they have always perceived them as savages, Boehmer says: “*Over determined by stereotype, the characterization of indigenous peoples tended to screen out their agency, diversity, resistance, thinking, voices*”(Boehmer 2005,20) based on the fact of being inferior and subordinate, many postcolonial theorists prefer to point at the colonized peoples as the “ subaltern” or the “other” and thus, the distinctions East/West, First World/ Third World,... etc emerged as a comparison between a superior controlling west to a powerless, inferior dominated and oppressed colonized.

And here, Boehmer uses what psychoanalysts postulate, “that self-identity is constituted within the gaze of another” (Boehmer 2005, 21)(19-21). With the growth of the Empire, the sense of inferiority that invaded the colonized state of being was unacceptable. The imperial identity spread over the old identity of the colonized and thus immortalized the notions of class division and racism.(32) Because of that, it is said that due to the strong belief in theories about racial and cultural supremacy that the empire ruled and held control over these people.

So, Europeans have dominated the world under the cover of civilizing the uncivilized, or savages, and securing their “happiness, prosperity and salvation of dark tribes sunk in barbarism”(Boehmer 2005,35) planting the sense of inferiority, and trying to erase and destroy the colonized identity through different processes, among which are replacing their national identity with an imperial identity were among the ways by which the colonizer, in a sense, shaped the new identity of the colonized, but there has been another successful in a sense way to do so, which is educating a certain class belonging to the colonized society.

Boehmer stated that, in the year 1835 “*Macaulay strongly supported giving a European education to Indians because of the attendant benefits of encouraging “civilized” behavior and hence profitable trade among former” savages*” (Boehmer 2005,35). Almost the same was argued by David Livingston in Africa who said that it was for the sake of “two pioneers of civilization, commerce and Christianity” (Boehmer 2005, 35). These people who were given European education were called: national élite. This class of the colonized people, since the moment it was created, found itself in a catch.

Despite the fact of being bilingual and bicultural and despite the fact of identifying with two societies (the colonial and the colonized), this category of people found itself rejected by the two types of societies. They were seen as belonging to the colonizer in their homelands, and as inferior, controlled and oppressed for Europeans. Even if they were for the split with the empire, because of their belief in achieving a national identity by compromising with the colonizer, they were alienated in their homelands.

Boehmer adds that without the precious help of such a group of people, imperialism could never last as long as it did (110). After that, this élite group split from the institution that shaped their new identities. They wanted to restore the lost identity of their peoples and thus give a hand to the nationalists and speak up in support of their peoples “to claim a part of their wholeness”(Boehmer 2005,117)(117). So, if the colonizer hadn’t used political imperialism together with cultural imperialism, it wouldn’t have succeeded spreading its power.

An example on this category of élites could be Indians. As John McLeod asserted, in the year 1835, Lord Thomas Macaulay said: “*we must at present do our*

*best to from a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect (2006:375)*”(cited by McLeod 2007,3). For McLeod, these feelings are sufficient to show us to what extent has colonialism changed the identity of not only the colonized, but also the colonizer.

So, the binaries “colonizer” and “colonized” don’t represent anything else but newly established forms of identities.(3).For the colonized, it was not that hard to identify within a particular group since in each community, the people belonging to it had only one objective, that of achieving independence, by the colonizer, because they needed to dictate a new unified identity to make their control over the colonies easier. They wanted them to melt, and as in the case of India, as Ania Loomba postulated “the British gave the Indian people a model of “Indian”, of being a British subject, and expected them to embrace it, which, in most cases, they did.

This is what Anderson refers to as “mental miscegenation”. (*Hybridity and National Identity in postcolonial literature*), this is why Bhabha thinks that people who belong to the same postcolonial society share an identity molded by the interaction of their own cultural and societal history together with the colonial power which controlled them.

As VanStarlen assumes, for postcolonial theorists postcolonial identity is the product of imperialism and the strategy of subjugating the culture and identity of the natives. For these theorists, unlike postmodernists and Marxists, not only this category of people should be liberated, there are other categories which deserve attention, and which are oppressed in a way or another like women, minorities, colored people... etc. And this liberation occurs by “allowing them to (re)discover their identity of which they have been robbed” (Van Starlen 2005,223).

Many postcolonial theorists assume that the identity which was created and shaped by imperialism is a “false” identity. This caused some writers like Fanon and Césaire to enquire the ways how the oppressed personalizes the idea of imitating and identifying with the oppressor. (223).Fanon for instance, thinks that the colonizer is still dominating the colonized identity. As Fanon pictures it: they live in a “monde compartimenté (Fanon 1961:31)” (Van Starlen 2005, 225) and he perceives the

apartheid as a good example. For, they have thought of the colored people as wicked and unethical.

For him, the violent ways of the colonizer has infiltrated the way natives interact with each other. He thinks that if the colonized regains his pre-colonial identity the evil unethical behaviors in the postcolonial societies will vanish. Fanon goes on to enumerate some factors which contribute in the blockage of this urge to be liberated. The first one is the ongoing upkeep of relationship between the postcolonial élite and the colonizer. The second one is the planting of the concept of non-violence to guard the imperial ideologies. The third one is that independence should be achieved by what he calls the “lumpenproletariat” and not by the bourgeois layers.

For him, the notion of emulating the colonizer is no good idea, what has to be done is developing “une pensée neuve (Fanon 1961, 24)”(cited by Van Stralen 2005,225).(225).many writers, especially south Africans, according to Van Starlen, have shifted their interest in digging out their own identity in the raise of a new fragile society.(227) But as Bongie assumes, this very concept of “Being” could be an enhancing force that one should think about , but at the same time , if one takes too much time thinking about it, it will keep him back so it would be for his benefit to live without thinking about it. He adds: “the idea of an ancestral identity can be empowering but also terribly limiting”.(Bongie 1998,383), but we find ourselves limited to an “ imperial identity” that remains within us like a “ pain to which we are resigned (Vattimo.181)”(Bongie 1998,383)(383).

As Chew and Richards pointed out, the European colonialism caused distortions in many aspects of the lives of the colonized. Therefore, as Fanon assumed, colonialism did not just take the liberty of those peoples, it worked at deeper levels, on the psychological level. It destroyed the “essence of identity” of the colonized peoples through generating a “form of mental illness” (10-11).Chew and Richards use the words of Lamming when he explores the question of colonial identity :

*Indeed, the colonial experience of my generation was almost wholly without violence.[...]the Caribbean endured a different kind of subjugation. It was a terror of the mind: a daily exercise in self-mutilation [...] the result was [...] the fragmented memory of the African masses: between white instruction and black*

*imagination.* (lamming 1994:XXXIX,XXXVII)(cited by David Richards in: Chew and Richards: 2010,16-17)

So, like Rothermund explains, postcolonial theorists were interested in the writings of African, Asian and Caribbean Diaspora , who write to explore the identity they have lost in the midst of all this colonial process.(31).according to Hawley, post colonialism is framed within its relation to imperialism and colonialism, and since globalization is perceived as a continuation of “European projects of imperialism and colonialism”, it has also participated in the notions that formed the essence of postcolonial studies like resistance, identity and displacement.(210).

## **II- Identity in a Rapidly Changing Society:**

Hutcheon in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* disagreed with the definition of post colonialism given by Daring as: “*the need, in nation or groups which have been victims of imperialism, to achieve an identity uncontaminated by Universalist or Eurocentric concepts and images*”(1987:33 cited by Hutcheon in Ashcroft et al 1995,135)for her this definition is essentialist since post colonial studies assume that it is impossible to achieve such a kind of identity, she argues that the very field of postcolonialism which deals with this area is contaminated by “ colonialism”.(135)

If we take the example of settler societies, we would find that they are in the middle of two different communities. The center from which they migrated, and from which they want to be separated, and the natives who are a symbol of their domination of a country which is not theirs they need to come in terms with the natives to form an “ effective identity” (Ashcroft et al 1995,152). In this reader they ask some questions like, why “some ethnic groups and not others are entitled to the term “ethnic”? And are “indigenous people an invaded colony [...] the only “truly colonized” group?”(213).

For Minh-Ha, no margins means no centre, she said:

*The English and French precipitate towards us, to look at themselves in our mirror. Following the old colonizers who mixed their blood in their turn, having lost their colonies and their blondness [...] they will come to Buenos Aires in pious pilgrimage to try to understand how one cannot be, yet always be (Ortiz 1987:96)*  
(Ashcroft et al 1995, 215)

She thinks that these margins constitute a place of struggle for the marginalized, yet a place of pilgrimage for the center. She assumes that the center wants to keep the division between it and the margin as long as their relations remain safe. She says: “wherever she goes she is asked to show her identity papers” (Ashcroft et al 1995, 216) then she goes on by asking logical relating questions like: “where does she belong ?” and “where does she place her loyalty ?” (Ashcroft et al 1995, 216).

She says that this woman is always reminded that she is migrant, a way to maintain the power of the center. On the other hand, as Minh-Ha adds, she is rejected in her own society, but at the same time, they want to bring her back. Minh-Ha goes on to say that if a community wants to achieve “integration”, it will not succeed if it does not apply “suppression”. This whole process causes displacement. (2006). Minh-ha thinks that “if you can’t locate the other” how are you to locate yourself?” (Ashcroft et al 1995, 217) he goes on to ask more complicated questions about the border line between insider and outsider should they be defined by their color, language, politics? If so, what is the position of hybrids here? (217).

Barth said that ethnic limits define a group, not its cultural diversity; he adds that this group by keeping its identity will decide on which criteria it is going to base its exclusion category. (220) Stuart hall postulates that the ethnicity based on the principles of an English national identity is what causes the recent “British racism”. (226) Furthermore, Janmohamed said that the Europeans always tend to view the others from their view point. For, if they regard the other as similar to them, they would judge him according to their cultural values. If they regard the other as different from them, they feel they don’t want to really judge him according to his cultural values so as to secure their cultural values. By doing so, the center sticks to the view that his values are superior, and wouldn’t give a chance to understand the values of the periphery. (18).

In *The Routledge Companion to Decolonization*, they stress out the obvious new struggles about identity in the new world and nation orders. They give the example of India trying to emphasize the identities of “the one and the many”, and the example of African Négritude. (45). Weaver in *The Blackwell Companion to Postcolonial Studies* said: “*After more than 500 years of ongoing colonialism, indigenous peoples everywhere wrestle with two divergent pulls of identity, one settled and the other diasporic (Said,1996:7)*”(Shwartz and Ray 2000, 232).

The resulting hybrid identity forms the “new universal ideal”, thus privileging certain groups on others; they give the example of migrants on non-migrants, a fact that creates a fragmented identity. (565). In *Feeling Romantic, Thinking Postmodern*, Caton said: “in order to know someone who has been historically oppressed we must first clear away all that makes us different from that person. If not, we will mirror only ourselves, experience only our own ideology”. (23).

There is another fact which is, as the editors of *The Empire Writes Back* see, that one of the consequences of imperialism is the mass displacement of people through many processes such as slavery and settlement. this mass displacement caused a gulf in wealth between the west and the rest, and has reopened the division colonizer / colonized, by doing so, the notion of racism implanted itself in the whole world (217), and thus affecting the sense of identity of many people; and the notion of dominant discourse which was prevailing in these societies spread all over the world with the spread of these people affecting the “global culture”.

And as Clifford puts it: “there is a new world order of mobility, of rootless histories, [...]” (Ashcroft et al 1995, 218). The main concern of this new kind of Diaspora is, as Stuart Hall says, “not subjectivity but subject position” (Ashcroft et al 1995, 218). They opt for a fluid identity, an identity that is constantly changing at all levels. (218).

About the ex-colonized countries, given the example of Kenya, Ngugi in *Decolonizing the Mind* has spoken about Kenya losing her identity to the west, for some intellectuals, this will enhance Kenyans to improve faster and to reach the modernity train.(102) for them, neo-colonialism is the best Africa can adopt to quickly develop.

For other intellectuals, who for Ngugi are in prison or exile, they opt for nationalizing Kenya to make of it a society were different nationalities fit. For them, neo colonialism is the worst Africa can adopt to develop. (103).

On the flexibility of identity, Fanon in “*Self, Community and Psychology*” thinks that “*identity is always a dynamic negotiation with the world around it, always in relation to other people [...]and remains eternally potentially changeable*” (Norman Duncan from social psychology 6-6). But for Bulhan, the development of the identity of “other”, which went through the experience of alienation, goes through

stages. The first stage, as he argues is the “identification of the aggressor”, this identification causes the assimilation and thus the split from the mother culture, for Bulhan, in this stage the “other” experiences the highest of “racial alienation”; to understand oneself occurs through the oppressor’s view point.(6-16) Fanon calls this group the “without horizon”

The second phase, according to Bulhan is transnational; there is an attempt to reject the culture of the oppressor. He gives here the example of “negritude”. And here, the racial alienation is somehow appeased. In the third stage, people are committed to radically change their social status to create for themselves a place in their “social political location”. For Bulhan, these stages cannot be said as separate ones, they could occur at any moment to any marginalized individual. (6-17)(Bulhan, 2004).

In *Navigating Modernity*, Paolini et al say that ***“to admit identity as a key issue in world politics is to admit diversity, difference, fragmentation, and claims to cultural particularism”*** (Albet et al, 1999, 37). They say that the future of the “third world” is bound to the notion of “multiple identity”. They say that, ***“the emphasis has shifted away from the discrete and authentic to the plural and heterogeneous”***. (Paolini et al, 1999, 108). This doesn’t deny the fact of the existence of a single identity (tribes for instance). They add that this concept of “multiple identities” is related to post colonialism but it is shaped by postcoloniality in the first world, as Hall states:

*thinking about my own sense of identity, I realize that it has always depended on the fact of being a migrant, on the difference from the rest of you. So one of the fascinating things [...] is to find myself centered at last.[...] what I’ve thought of as dispersed and fragmented comes [...] to be the representative modern experience! [...] It also makes me understand something about identity which has been puzzling me in the last three years. I have been puzzled by the fact that young black people in London today are marginalized, fragmented disadvantaged and dispersed.* (Paolini et al)(108)

So Hall makes the point that this new identity is in fact not new, it is recognition of what identity always was. And here, Chinua Achebe said: “we lived at the crossroads of culture. We still do today”. (110) And as Heather Sofield in her essay *Introduction: who Am I?: Negotiation of Identity in a Postcolonial State* said that this notion of



identity emerges when one has to define himself in a rapidly changing society. She also assumes that this identity springs out of one's past, and then one can use this identity to position himself within society.

But Sofield asks herself so many questions about this identity if it is, or has to be based on the old one, what if this old one which has been destroyed by the colonizer, and the whole educational system, which is supposed to teach people their culture, is dominated by the colonizer's culture? How can one position himself in such a community? The colonized or now post colonial societies, after independence try hard to create their position, or their entity, in the newly formed world system.

She goes on to say that it will be so hard to regain the lost identity, and that "the consequences of imperial occupation will forever show their mark" she adds that the new generation will find itself in the midst of a "troubled marriage of cultures", they will be hybridized. Sofield comes to a solution which obviously many intellectuals came to; negotiating identity. She says that these societies have to come to terms with, or "compromise, between the past and the future", the past which represents the destruction, and the future which represents the prospective which they hope to reach one day.

But, for Sofield this is practically impossible since the way for achieving this is by forgetting about the past thus achieving the only colonizer's goals, these colonizer's who wanted to civilize the other by making them give up their culture, religion, past, national identity for their "best".

But maybe this change is also due to, as Arbab says, living in a rapidly changing society, the acceleration of the speed of change in the world, for, in the last century a great deal occurred as it has never occurred before, new things every single day, and "old practices" thrown behind one by one and replaced by new useful practices, but society, by rejecting old practices, has failed to generate new valuable ones which caused the world to go in a mess, even those who want to go back to traditions, they couldn't deliver their voices in this world of transformation.

So, the identity of postcolonial societies differs according to the place, community and culture where they live. As Mohanram assumes, "a claim for a homogenous postcolonial identity politics would be naive" (Mohanram 1995,07) since

this identity in the third world is different from that of settler colonies or more, of postcolonial Diaspora living in the metropolis. She adds: “[...] *the difference between the postcolonial and the indigenous person can be positioned in the [...] meaning of “home” to these two groups*” (Mohanram 1995, 09), since identity is related to place, or “home”.

About this, and according to Modood and Werbner, many people bound themselves according to that situation; they feel so comfortable with the fluid cultural identity. (170) This fluidity has created a multiplicity of identity like the: hybrid, diasporic ones. These identities helped the emergence of what they called “a counter history” to imperialism. (172-173)

So, as Bharthari explains identity through translating Bimal Krishna Matilal *“Identity is in the domain of signs. To explain this to my diverse national origin students, I used that Foucauldian sentence: “subject-position is assigned”.*(Glodberg and Quayson 2002,51). Mc Ewan thinks that, in the view of cultural Relativism, imperialism and relativism have only one solution, is by respecting differences and identity pluralities.(302)

So, the world of today is constantly changing and mobilizing, and what was considered as a stable situation in past times reflecting the peaceful condition of a certain country, is now perceived as an oppressive condition shaped by colonialism and the dominating western values, as put forward by Tessler et al. They ask some valuable questions surrounding the former idea such as: *“Can we make some sense of all this rapid change? [...] is it a result of centuries of white racism now finally getting its come-uppance from the earth’s darker-skinned peoples who are own March to equality or even ascendancy? [...]”.* (Tessler et al, 1973: VII).

So, change is inescapable, and everybody has to get along with it, no matters how. This change is occurring so fast that the past is irrelevant *“It is almost as if man advances, whatever that means, by becoming more insecure, less sure of what he really is , or was, or will be. When change is great enough, then the past fails to inform the future and must either be rejected or reinterpreted”.* (Tessler et al, 1973: VII). For this reason, the notion of identity crisis comes into being, therefore, the idea of copying and imitating the other to reach modernity and development may lead to loosing oneself in the other thus, this rapidly changing society leads possibly to under-

estimating traditional culture. This process causes a feeling of being inferior to the other. (VII-VIII).

### **III- Identity question in postcolonial literature:**

Without the emergence of national literature, there would be no field such as postcolonial studies, and as Ashcroft et al in *The Empire Writes Back* say, this literature rejects what the imperial literatures claim: their exclusivity; they add that each literature has got its specific features, as Wole Soyinka calls it “self-apprehension”(16).

Thus it does not mean that postcolonial literatures are completely different; actually they share many similarities like the thematic similarities, among these themes are: “the celebration of the struggle towards independence”(26), given the example of Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat*; the domination of foreign cultures at the expense of postcolonial societies, given the example of Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*; the issue of “home” which evokes that of identity, given the example of Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas* (27).

In *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, Ashcroft et al argue with what Ngugi thinks that literature plays a huge role in constructing a “historical consciousness” opposed to the subservience of colonialist writers in belittling Kenyan identity (162). In a lecture presented by Wilson Harris, cited in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* by Petersen and Rutherford, he said: “*and I believe in my early experiments with poem and fiction I was simply using the word as a tool of identity.*”(Ashcroft et al 1995, 186)

However, CL. Innes, in *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature*, postulates that the postcolonial rewriting discredited the notions of “fixed opposition and hierarchies”, they request for what Edward Glissant calls “Créolité” thus refusing “fixed ancestral identity” in a way to dismantle the canonical narratives chain of authority, by doing so, these writers reveal their identities (75-76). On the other hand, as Nayar says, there is the diasporic literature which emphasizes the identity framed within different places, cultures, races, languages ...etc, a kind of negotiation of identity within new frames as done in the postcolonial literature by migrants(201).perhaps the most eminent aspect that forged the identity of postcolonial society is that of place and displacement.

For instance, Bhabha rejected the notion of “original identity” and opted for the notion of a fluid identity, through literature, those diasporic writers show that they are aware of their “in between” positions (201-203). As in the case for women writers who, according to Yasmina Hussain explore the way women writers from south Asia deal with identity and how it is shaped by ethnicity and gender, and how they changed the view to “diasporic identity”.

Heather Sofield, in her essay *Postcolonial Identity, Postcolonial Literature* quoted what Derek Walcott postulated that the world has produced only “*a literature of recrimination and revenge written by the descendants of slaves or literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters (Walcott, 371)*”, but Sofield asks an important question: “can we negotiate conflicting cultures” to build a strong “sense of identity”? She gives the example of Chinua Achebe who took advantage of the type of his education to empower his culture and to build his own identity.

This re-invention of identity, which many postcolonial writes do serves as a guide and inspiration for readers forsaking them. One of the issues serving the notion of identity is that of language, and this may confuse the readers since they are supposed to read, let’s say, African literature, but they find themselves reading an English novel, another aspect that Sofield brings about is that of education, since it is a very important aspect in forging one’s identity.

She gives the example of an African girl, who so eager to be educated even in schools created by white people, learns that the whites are “more beautiful” thus they deserve more “respect” than them; so, she is taught to desert her own identity, and here lies the struggle of “past, present, and future” which one needs to come to terms with, in what Achebe calls “crossroads”. Through literature, postcolonial writers attempt to strengthen the new national identity they represent.

This seems to be a burden on postcolonial authors. As Tiffin notices, postcolonial writers want to abolish or “deconstruct” European identity, and their novels depict the implication of European domination over postcolonial societies, and to generate their identities. As argued in the essay entitled *Literature and Postcolonial Discourse*, “the text” may be seen as a symbol of nation and identity, and Eagleton thinks, if we consider this text as postcolonial, we would find that this symbolism could be viewed as an ideology of its own.

So postcolonial literature holds as a theme identity crisis, and the way a postcolonial state recovers from a long time of suppression, postcolonial fiction writers may tell their stories (or re-tell them) through the view point of an oppressed minor character, while their protagonists are always struggling to figure out an identity in the midst of clash between a native society and a dominant oppressing society.

So postcolonial literature mainly discusses the change in cultural identity that has already taken place, or the newly established change, and attempts to answer such question as: should postcolonial societies restore their original cultural identity? Should they stick to the new identity forged by the colonizer? Or should they compromise the two ways by negotiating their identities?

Anna Holden Ronning, in an essay entitled: *Literature as an Empowerment of Identity*, said that postcolonial writings refrain the situation of individuals by bringing about a confluence of their cultures and reversing the way they are stereotyped, she continues to say that postcolonial writing is a kind of “writing back” in which the writers relate history to identity for an easier understanding.

These writers use the technique of “storytelling” to narrate the life of a character belonging to a (once) colonized nation or to a minority group to discuss their cultures and values compared to the existing ones. So, by putting the characters in an often odd place, the writers discuss their identities. There are many examples about this fact, for instance, the Native Americans, as Ronning argues, who explore such a theme.

For her the way people understand the identity expressed in a postcolonial text depends on the way they “interpret the text, thus depends on people’s backgrounds and mentalities. Many writers, such as Ngugi, use an open political discourse about the notion of national identity, and as Ronning says: *“Ngugi’s prolific writings are a key to ways of empowering ourselves, and though he is writing of an African context, much of what he states is equally applicable elsewhere in our globalized world”*. Many writers use their pre-colonial past to reconstruct their postcolonial identity.

So as Das pictures it, postcolonial literature asserts identity through its themes and language.(72) According to Ritzer, postcolonial literature could form the basis of the new society which emerges after colonialism.(70). So one of the goals of postcolonial writings as put forward by Boehmer, as:

*The quest for personal and racial cultural identity built on spiritual guardianship of traditional laws; the belief that writing is an integral part of self definition; the emphasis on historical reconstruction; the ethical imperative reconciliation with the past.*

(Boehmer 2005, 221)

And as he puts it, on the analysis of postcolonial writing he says: ***“the analysis generally concentrates on that writing which is consciously formed or wrought, often in service to identity, community, the nation,...”***(Boehmer,2005,05)

It is true that many writers tend to decolonize African literature but not all of them, for, as Bongie points out, there are writers who don't agree with the whole idea of searching or constructing an identity.(50) For this, Boehmer gives us the example of Salman Rushdie who, together with his fellows in his view are “complicit with the legacy of colonialism (“if they do not identify with imperialism, they at least cannot jettison the culture and tongues of the imperialist nation (45)” (Bongie,1998,48).

On the other side Bongie said that they “identify with the culture destroyed by imperialism and its tongue”, by doing so they try to make an atmosphere uncontaminated by imperialism, and for this case he states the example of Ngugi who postulated that “one can and must distinguish between truly African literature and a ***“ hybrid tradition, a tradition in transition, a minority tradition that can only be termed as afro-European literature; that is, the literature written by Africans in European languages”*** (Bongie 1998,48).

As mentioned before, one of those most eminent aspects, together with language, that forged the identity of postcolonial writers is “place and displacement”, as the writes of *The Empire Writes Back* say: ***“it is here that the special postcolonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an identifying relationship between self and place.”***(Ashcroft et al , 2002,8) They continue to say that this displacement results from many reasons among which are, immigration, enslavement, indentured labor,...etc.

The notion of self image is created by displacement. This concept of “place and displacement leads us also to think of the idea of “home”, which is very crucial in forging one's identity and the identity of group, Christina Heckman defines this concept as follows:

*Traditionally home and belonging can be defined as the place where our ancestors used to live, the place of our origin. Consequently, this definition is dedicated to the past without regard where one lives right now. As a result, it is a very passive and static concept, and home is a fixed place.* (Heckman 2006, 2).

But Henchman argues that today, and due to colonization, a lot of people no longer belong to their homes. These migrant people see their homes as ideal or “mythic place” or “imaginary homeland”.(2)So most of the societies concerned with this notion are diaspora who feel “in-between”, but not all of them, since even if in their homeland, many people feel lost and displaced. That is why this notion is always present in postcolonial literature.

#### **IV- Postcolonial identity and the position of European languages in Postcolonial literature:**

One of the characteristics of the third world literature, as the editors of *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* pointed out is: “[*The*] ***adoption and creative modification of western languages and artistic forms in conjunction with indigenous languages and forms.***”(Ashcroft et al 1995, 23).

Fanon described this kind of borrowing as the reinterpretation of “***old legends in the light of a borrowed estheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies***” (Ashcroft et al 1995, 44). So, language is very important in shaping people’s identity and the way people view the world.(55).

Postcolonial studies have been all the time interested in the question of identity through many aspects among which is language. For postcolonial scholars, using the colonizer’s language is a symptom of a distortion in identity, for this, During argues that one’s identity depends upon his choice of which language to use.(125/126). The novel, together with other means of communication, has contributed in the creation of the notion of “nation” and “nationalism” through many processes among which is the standardization of languages by drawing an image of the nation in the minds of the people.(173).

That is why, as Mudrooroo thinks, it is necessary to teach the native language so that people can maintain “the continuity of past and present and future” (231). So

language represents the culture of people, that's why controlling language leads to colonizing culture, the colonizer used many different ways to do so, among which are: the displacement of the colonized language and the placing of the colonizer's language in a different area. The whole process of "knowing" also depends on language; thus, it is through language that one may recognize the world, describe and communicate it; it is through language that one may convey thoughts and ideas, and, shape the world.

For, as Ashcroft et al in their reader put it, "to name the world is to "understand" it, to know it and to have control over it" (Ashcroft et al 1995, 283). According to them, as to many other scholars, there are two ways to decolonize language from the dominant colonizer's language, these ways are "rejection" and "subversion".

The process of rejection could be better presented by the example of Ngugi wa Thiong'o who has rejected the language of the center as being a sign of subjugation or submission to the dominant center, and this rejection relies on the idea that the colonizer's language contributed at large in the displacement of the national identity which could be restored by returning to the use of native language.

Nevertheless, a great deal of writers belonging to the postcolonial writers category prefer to use the European languages as a means of resistance to colonialism, others reshape the colonial language so that it fits their needs, so this way of appropriating language is a kind of subversion, it means that by doing so a writer, somehow, decontextualizes that language and thus rejects the political power once given to it, as Achebe frames it ***"this is a process by which the language is made to bear the weight and the texture of a different experience . In doing so it becomes a different language"*** (Ashcroft et al...,284)

This process has been given a label by Ashcroft et al which is represented by the dichotomy english/English; english as being the foreign language adapted to the need of the mother tongue's structure, and English as representing the colonizer's language. Still, many scholars think that "English", or any other colonizer's language, hold the task of unifying people in the colonized countries even after their independence , among which is Chinua Achebe, who later on described the use of foreign languages as a "fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our literature"(Ashcroft et al 1995,286).(283-286).



This could be sensed in what Kachru pointed out that English represents “power, domination and elitist identity”, it means that the colonizer’s language has become part of the social lifestyle and linguistic background of the formerly colonized countries and the use of the colonizer’s language (English for instance) as a second language preserved the position of these languages as a means of power and control.

The independent governments still use these languages in their administrations, and see it as a linking language (as in the case of English; a universal language), but this privileging attitude cause “social and cultural implication” and native languages begin losing their influence. (291) For, according to Kachru; ***“Whatever the limitations of [English], it has been perceived as the language of power and opportunity, free of the limitations that the ambitious attribute to the native languages.”***(Ashcroft et al 1995, 292).

This adaptation of the colonizer’s language to the colonized contexts on the other hand, makes the authors doing so seem as if they were planting or encouraging alien values, social behaviors and linguistic systems. Though, if we look at this aspect from the perspective that the colonizer’s language is an alien language that transmits native messages we could say that it is powerful and it has become a native citizen in the colonized countries, and to better illustrate this, Kachru has supported his idea by what Raja Raw an Indian philosopher and writer said: “truth can use any language, and the more universal, the better it is”(cited in Ashcroft et al1995, 294). He adds, in the case of the English language, it has so many contexts that English or American literatures represent only some aspect of these contexts, so it would be better if we put these literatures under the label ***“literatures in English”***.(294-295).

According to Ashcroft, postcolonial scholars oppose the idea that all colonial languages are the centre and the other languages are periphery; that is they are somehow marginalized. They opt for the idea that all languages are the same and have the same value, no language is marginal. The postcolonial writing uses the colonizer’s language together with the native language, this is why the usage is so important in this case, the connotation of words should be taken into consideration...(300).

So, the problem that might be the cause of the misunderstanding between the writer and the reader is not the choice of language, as long as this latter is nothing but a

vehicle between the two, the problem lies in their understanding of the connotations of that language, as explained by Ashcroft:

*Understanding is not a function of what goes on in the “mind” at all, but a location of the word in the “message event” that point at which the language, the writer and reader coincide to produce the meaning. The cultural “distance” detected at this point is not a result of the inability of language to communicate, but a product of the “metonymic gap” installed by strategies of language variance which themselves signify a post-colonial identity.* (Ashcroft et al 1995, 302).

About this, Chantal Zabus has argued with what Achebe said about the use of English in his works. Achebe said that he has used an English which already existed in his society, and that he opted for the “Africanization or Nigerianization of English in [his] literature”.(cited in Ashcroft et al 1995,315) and thus created a new English, but sometimes this new English does not really reflect the one used by his people nowadays, and to illustrate that Zabus has taken the example of the, number “eleven” used by Igbos which replaced the old use “ten and one” used by Chinua Achebe in “Things Fall Apart” still, this attempt is seen as part of the whole decolonization process.(315).

Another aspect concerning language is that; besides the fact that the colonizer’s language symbolized unity in many countries where a multiplicity of language could be found, the higher class and the ruling class used it to preserve their place in society; in addition to the fact that this language is the language of politics and economy, and not everyone can use it, so it was viewed as a means of power and control by the independent governments over their peoples.

This fact could be seen in education also in many African countries, as Philip G.Altbach said: *“In both Anglophone and Francophone Africa, virtually all books are published in the metropolitan language. In many former colonies the 80 to 95 percent of the population who do not know English or French are effectively barred from the higher levels of education.”*(Ashcroft et al 1995,487).

Altbach has also evoked a very important factor relevant to the notion of language which is publishing houses. For “the majority of “third world publishers”

privilege the works in European languages just because there are the most demanded by the readers; besides, many “third world” writers tend to use European languages just to be published in European countries and thus get a greater audience and more money, since those countries communicate among each other and can get access to any work published at any country. (486-487).

It is not that easy for postcolonial writers to make their choice since the colonizer’s language has been introduced by different important fields; we can take example of education where the postcolonial subject uses the foreign language at school where he/she spends most of his/her time, and the native language at home, which creates an atmosphere of multilingualism.

However, this multilingualism, according to Anchimbe, is different from European multilingualism but it is studied from the European perspective and thus it is “misrepresented”. He adds that it is necessary to study, postcolonial multilingualism apart from the European perspective by depending on their own linguistic and cultural identity. He sees that this way of studying postcolonial societies contains gaps and to fill in these gaps scholars should

*Focus[ing] on the identity fluctuations of people in postcolonial multilingualism contexts as they go about their daily activities. Explaining how they include and exclude others. How they interpret the mix of languages, and how this, after all, reflects or solidifies their sense of belonging together”* (Anchimbe, 2007, 11.)(10-11).

Anchimbe has also dealt with the spreading of colonial language, and thus identity in the world, he gives the example of the French “civilizing mission”, when the French tried to erase the identity of its subjects by trying to make them French people, we can take example of “l’Algérie française”. He said: *“it [France] imposed on them [colonial subjects] a French identity referring to them as France overseas (France outre mer), which neither fitted their racial origin nor their linguistic heritage”* (Anchimbe 2007,09). So the identity of these colonial subjects was neither completely preserved nor totally lost.

A new hybridized identity was created, but these countries are identified according to their colonial history, they are all the time referred to as Anglophone or francophone countries. (09). Frantz Fanon on this subject matter said: *“to speak means*

*to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization”*(Fanon 1952 ,17) in a way to assume that choosing a language means choosing an identity, and he later on added that mastering a certain language enables people to own the world from the perspective of that language and if one owns the world, this person is in position of power.(18) What if this language has a high status in a country or in the world. According to Jenny Sharpe, the period of decolonization in the late 1970’s witnessed the struggle of the colonized countries to dig out their identity through their attempt to decolonize their culture, literature and knowledge referring to people like Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (113).

If we follow the steps of decolonizing African literature, for instance, we would agree with Tejumola Olaniyan, in *The Blackwell Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, that this process went through three steps: the first step is when the African writers produced their works in the European languages. During this period, most of the African writers were fond of western culture and modern productions but at the same time they were against colonization in all its forms, among these writers are Amos Tutola and the Négritude movement.

The second step is characterized by the mass decolonization process where an anticolonial movement grew up. But after independence they were shocked with the situation they found themselves in, the writers belonging to this period devoted their work mainly to the situation of their countries after independence, among them are Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa thiong’o, Ama Ata Aidoo...etc. These works tried to condition the European languages according to the African context, and to appropriate their original languages.

The third step, according to Olaniyan, seems like the previous step in its characteristics besides a kind of awakening in style and themes. Together with the writers who belong to the previous phase, this step includes also writers like Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba,...etc, and in the words of Tejumola Olaniyan

*From being a borrowed alien tool, African literature in European languages has become an authentic and indispensable part of postcolonial African intellectual life; its language notwithstanding,*

*it has all over it the imprints of the gargantuan agency of Africa.*

(Schwarz Henry and Sangeeta Ray, 2005, 276). (274-277).

These attempts of making the link between language and identity, according to Suleiman, come from the belief that defending the native language means preserving one's values and principles over time and since language is a medium of communication it is the means by which people everywhere socialize and interact, and it enhances their participation in social life and in cultural events: so language carries the link between people's past, present and future (29). One can put this in Ngugi's words:

*Values are the basis of a people's identity their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this is carried by language. Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost undistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next... (Cited in Ashcroft et al 1995, 289).*

According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, in his book *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, and in the case of Africa for instance, the African countries find themselves in a catch-22 situation: on one side the imperial powers are still in control of their resources, economy, culture and politics; and on the other side they are trying to free themselves from such a control to call themselves free countries. Language constitutes a part of this catch. For; on one hand, the language used in the African countries for economy or politics....etc is the language of the empire, but on the other hand, these countries struggle to define themselves in their original societies and attempt to resuscitate their original languages.

Besides, African countries have always been defined according to the language of power. Instead of meaning them geographically or ethnically for instance, they are labeled linguistically as French- Speaking African countries or English-speaking African countries for example (4-5). So as Eric.A. Anchimbe said: *"the history of colonialism involved the conquest of not only peoples but also of their language"* (Anchimbe 2007,04).

Ngugi adds in his book that the African writers themselves opt for using the colonial language for the only reason of universality. He gives the example of Leopold S. Senghor who said:

*We express ourselves in French since French has a universal vocation and since our message is also addressed to French people and others. In our languages [i.e. African languages] the halo that surrounds the world is by nature merely that of sap and blood; French words send 'out thousands of rays like diamonds. (Ngugi Wa Thiong'o 1987, 19).*

This appreciation and worship of the colonial language by Senghor is the same done by Achebe Chinua towards the English language. This category of literature has been given the name of the literature of "Nationalistic or patriotic bourgeoisie" by Ngugi, who used their writings to introduce Africa to the globe, they used their bourgeois literature to criticize the European civilizing mission and pass the message of Africa to the world, but in Ngugi's words:

*In literature as in politics it spoke as if its identity or the crisis of its own identity was that of a society as a whole. The literature it produced in European languages was given the identity of African literature as if there had never been literature in African languages.(Ngugi Wa Thiong'o 1987,22).(18-22).*

For this, Ngugi thinks that this literature is no more than a hybrid literature which cannot be named African, but rather it should be named "Afro-European literature" since it is written by African writers in foreign languages. (26-27)

According to Gilbert McInnis in his essay: *The struggle of Postmodernism and Postcolonialism*; using the European language in postcolonial literature is a way to "deconstruct European identity" in a way to reconstruct the postcolonial identity. He adds that postcolonial writers attempt not only to reconstruct their identity but also to reconstruct, or as he puts it, to "remake" their language and thus reconstruct postcolonial literature, this could be illustrated by what Achebe said: *"I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suite new African surroundings."* (Cited in Thiong'o1987, 08).

But for Ngugi, as the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Studies* pointed out, language is the most important medium by which people perceive the world, thus reading about the world in a European language would send a different perspective from reading about it in African language for instance, that is the reason behind Ngugi's attempt to convince his scholars to avoid writing in English because, according to Lazarus, language can "make and remake" people and places.

This process of rejecting the colonial language in a way or another is called by John Marx "Repudiation". (86) This rejection of colonizing language and values occurred through two major processes labeled in *The Empire Writes Back* as: "Abrogation" and "Appropriation". For the writers of this book, postcolonial writers should hold a position in the world through choosing between one of the two processes mentioned above.

We may start with the process of "abrogation" which denotes a total rejection of the language of the colonizer. Since language is power, and since it is one of the aspects which shape one's identity, many writers choose this way to break the imperial monopoly over communication in general; Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Obi Wali could be given as example.

The second process, which is "appropriation", is a way to remold the context of European languages to make them fit the values, experiences and social status of the postcolonial countries, or as Ashcroft et al say, to make them "bear the burden" of one's own cultural experience" (Ashcroft et al 2002, 38). Chinua Achebe could be given as example.

These writers use the European languages as a means to communicate a totally different postcolonial experience (different from the European experience). So, postcolonial literature is the product of a mixture between the attempt to abrogate the European languages to decolonize culture and literature, and the attempt to appropriate the European languages to convey the spirit of postcolonial societies to the rest of the world. It is this mixture that makes it cross-cultural and hybrid. (37-38)

By attempting to reject, or "abrogate", the colonial language, postcolonial writers tried to find out, or create, an authentic literature true to them and to their aboriginal experiences, and to break the monopoly of the center over postcolonial

cultures. But this search for authenticity in itself is seen as a false idea by many scholars, since this authenticity was created by the colonizer himself. So for them, what is considered as “real” is the “inauthentic and marginal” (40).

This search for authenticity is in fact a quest for an authentic identity since using the colonizer’s language to speak about the postcolonial experience is misleading and speaks in favor of the colonizer, as Jamaica Kinkaid in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* said:

*But what I see is the millions of people, of whom I am just one, made orphans: no motherland, no fatherland, no gods, no mounds of earth for holy ground, no excess of love which might lead to the things that an excess of love sometimes brings, and worst and most painful of all, no tongue. For isn't it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? For the language of the criminal can contain only the goodness of the criminal's deed ... (Ashcroft et al 1995, 94)*

For the second process, and as it has been mentioned before, appropriation is a way to subvert the language of the center. For, according to Ashcroft et al, appropriating the language of the colonizer is a powerful means to reject the power of the center.

They add that in the case of Africa for instance, African writers have given their own “accents” to standard “English” thus making it a new “english” able to bear their postcolonial experiences, basing themselves on the fact that the English language is unable to do so, and that it sends mixed messages.

For them, the resulting variety of “englishes” gives birth to writings which are culturally different (284). As Silvia Nagy-Zekmi in her *Identity Jam and the Postcolonial Predicament* said: “ [...] *the post-colonial discourse in English has thus been labeled a “counter-discourse” which entails writing back with an accent*” (5).



## V- Multiculturalism, Hybridity and Migration :

The new generation of postcolonial writers faces the problem of identifying itself culturally unlike the first generation. For, according to B.T. Williams, this new generation attempts to write beyond borders and constructs its cultural identity basing itself on the basis that it has no “clear sense of home”, their writings keep on wandering from one place to another giving us the feeling that they are displaced, or that they live in nowhere. As Sunetra Gupta puts it:

*I think one has to be comfortable with the notion that one has one's own cultural identity and that one hasn't necessarily to be at "home", so to speak. [...] I think we have to accept that we are going to be perpetually wandering. I mean we can't be at home. Even if we sit at home, we are forced to travel just because of what is going on around us. [Sunetra Gupta (interview)]. (B.T. Williams, Juvert 1999).*

This generation of writers (and the one preceding it) has been given different labels such as: Black-British writers, African-American writers, or Maghreban writers. This kind of labels, Williams adds, could be understood as a new way of marginalization towards migrants, or towards “those not recognized as part of the dominant culture's discourse”.

This generation of writers, especially the migrant ones, try to produce a literature which is neither different nor assimilative to the literature of the center. Their attempt is aimed at the hybridization of the universal discourse, and the claim that cultural identity now is in fact multicultural and flexible. For them identity has no limits, and can't be defined by matters of borders; there are no such terms as center and periphery, or a dominator and a marginalized.

This generation of migrant writers has been divided by Mark Stain in his book *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* into two types; the “wind rush generation” to denote those writers who migrated in the 1940's and 1950's and began writing during that period; and the “post-wind rush generation” to refer to the generation of writers who were born in Britain (36).

According to Andrew Smith, migration became a marker of the new world order, it is growing everyday, and it is the basic reason for the quick change that is going on in the world today. This mass migration has many reasons and these migrants who came from different backgrounds have different reasons to migrate and go through different experiences. This migration started with the rush for power, or imperialism, and has affected local literatures, which has forcibly, because of colonization and cross-culturalism, become multicultural, or universal.

With the beginning of imperialism, many Europeans travelled to Africa and Asia. These travelers wrote about their experiences there, and drew a picture of these continents in the minds of their peoples. They had written accounts about the traditions and values of these places making them seem savage and uncivilized, and planting the idea of the superiority of Europeans over other races.

These travel writings has shaped the European governments as civilizing powers through their colonizing process, or as Smith calls it: “humanitarian intervention”. Consequently, many writers began writing against colonization and against European powers, thus presenting a new kind of literature and a new type of readership to the world. This lead to an ongoing interest in the way a distant writing about a specific social and cultural experience may influence culturally different societies.

In the twentieth century, one can notice the growth, both in number and in importance, of *“figures who address the metropolis using the techniques, the discourses, the very weapons of scholarship and criticism once reserved exclusively for the European, now adapted for insurgency or revisionism at the very heart of the Western centre* [Said 1990: 29]” (cited in N. Lazarus 2004: 244). But still, many writers still opt for the idea that Western culture and civilization are pure.

But with the mass migration, and the prominence of migrant writers, the claims that the identity of a person is not bound to his culture, race or ethnicity have taken place. As Smith adds: “At the very least it is clear that we can no longer hold comfortably on to the notion of a closed national culture, complete within and for itself” (Lazarus 2004: 245).

Out of this idea, postcolonial scholars hold the claim that; with the movement of people towards many places, logically the cultural centre moves into many directions,

and is not static and specific to one society and one culture as some writers claim. So, migration has changed the world's static perception, and brought the notion of mixing cultures to form hybrid literary and cultural works that seem to be present in many places and periods at the same time.

One of the roles of the migrant writer in postcolonial literature could be to uncover what Smith calls "the protected arenas of national culture" through talking about their history and their native people's experiences of all kinds. Thus, the mobility option that migrants enjoy helps them produce works free of censorship and state control; and far away from borders and linearity that many other writers are bound with. They are free, boundless, and limitless and they have no one-sided view of the world around them. However, and as Smith thinks, the people of the world conceive this notion of migration in different ways; some see it as a liberating experience and a domination factor since it has a price like any other merchandise in the world, while others see it as a terrible choice to take. Still, the works of a migrant writer are seen as fluid through exploring the other world and introducing the native culture and thought to the other. Or in Smith's words: "[...] *migrancy becomes [...] a name for how we exist and understand ourselves in the twenty-first century*" (Lazarus 2004: 247).

Besides, migrant works are limitless, fluid and free of linearity; their works are explorative and broader in perspective since they mix different cultures and social values. Their works are free of censorship and transcend national borders and limits. This idea could be backed up with what Homi Bhabha said: "[...] there is "no necessary or eternal belongingness" (Bhabha 1994: 179)" (cited in Lazarus 2004: 248). For, he rejects such dichotomies as local/migrant, and the idea of cultural purity, since he thinks that the so called "cultural difference" that divides and distinguishes between societies is in fact nonexistent; and he assumes that identities, no matters how different they are, are implicated in each other.

So; migration constitutes one of the central interests of postcolonial studies since it brought into being a new way and a different perspective to view identity. The question of identity, as studied by postcolonial scholars, is no more bound to questions of nationality or ethnicity; as imperialism and displacement has lead to the emergence of this new category of people who mix a variety of cultures and traditions, and who

changed the notion of belonging to force the introduction of a new concept to the world: that of hybridity.

Migration has created a new way to view identity, and has contributed to making identity a crucial theme in postcolonial literature (242-248). For, the crisis of identity in postcolonial societies, as the editors of *The Empire Writes Back* pointed out, comes out of the tight link between the place and the self. The mass migration caused by colonization and after colonization periods, deliberate or undesired, hinders the sense of self; and by undesired or forced migration we mean slavery.

These migrants have been appropriated a sense of inferiority and lost their self-esteem; they have lost their cultural pride to and because of the so-called dominant cultures or the centre. They have been inserted the feeling that they are always the Other in their homelands or in the others' lands. (8-9)

In addition to that, we have the notion of hybridity which most of the postcolonial writers deal with in their works, since not only migrant suffer from this dilemma but also people in their own homelands. So, postcolonial literature, as Andrew Hammond asserted, made of this notion of hybridity a very crucial one in its context, as it deals with picturing out how the postcolonial subjects hold their original practices together with imperial ones. This notion raises other important elements in the forging of postcolonial identities like the notion of Otherness. (222)

It is however claimed by Lars Eckstein that this "postcolonial hybridity" does nothing but privileging the colonial centre in a way or another. Since it injects the idea that only literatures that criticize and challenge the Western cannon deserve merit, whereas literature that investigates African or Asian modernity are given a minimized attention. This hybridity in literary texts comes out of the transcultural contact that postcolonial writers hold with the West. It is the way postcolonial literature employs multicultural traditions, religions, and ideologies in its texts to show the multicultural hybrid feature of its societies. (23)

So, as Nayar postulated, not only migrants are hybrid people. Postcolonial literature strives to hyphenate the notion that natives also became hybrid because of the process of colonization which has affected their identities. This encounter with the colonizer have eliminated the existing identity and replaced it with a new one. In

addition, the experience of colonization had led to the existing feature of multiculturalism in the postcolonial societies, since these latter ones have been implanted another language besides their native one, new cultures and beliefs and new traditions.

The fact that they want to create a space where they can reconcile their original identity and their newly forged identity is thus a quest that is strongly present through the postcolonial fiction. Writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o attempt to depict that hybrid nature but at the same time they attempt to find solutions to avoid this hybridity and multiculturalism through their characters and regain an "authentic identity", a quest which seems quite impossible with the demands of the modern world we live in today, this world which notices a lively mobility of people which interact with each other and give it its hybrid multicultural feature.

## Conclusion:

As a conclusion we confirm the fact that postcolonial literature and societies in general are affected by the culture of the colonizer. However, it is obvious that some postcolonial writers try hard to resist that influence while others assimilate the colonial experience. But, we also confirm that postcolonial writers find themselves strolling between their original identity and the influenced identity.

This is to say that the reality of postcolonial literature cannot be separated from that of the postcolonial society. If we deal with aspects of identity in the postcolonial society, this means we are including literature also; since literature like society has been affected by imperialism. So, postcolonial literature depicts the reality of postcolonial subjects as being in a constant search for their identity.

Despite the fact that we are living in a mobile society which embraces the multicultural feature of this new world, postcolonial writers still struggle against such notions as centre and periphery, or dominator and dominated. They claim that since we are living in a mobile world, we have to accept that the notion of centre is also mobile. There is a multiplicity of centers in the world.

So identity is considered as a central theme in postcolonial literature. The majority of the postcolonial writers try to identify with this world and with their own societies through their writings. Not only that, if we take as example African writers, they try to communicate the African experience to the world and to show the world what is the real African identity like and depict the major features that affect it, among which is colonialism.

Among these features is the controversial issue of language, the issue of abrogating and appropriating language as related to the question of identity. Many writers think that the African experience is lost in the use of European languages, and that postcolonial identity is thus forged with a Western flavor. While many scholars opt for the idea that language is but a vehicle to express oneself, and that what is important is the idea in itself. They also think that using a Western language does not diminish the sense of identity of the postcolonial writer; rather it is a means to strengthen his position in the world since his works are going to be read worldwide.

This fact of using European language leads to talk about hybridity and multiculturalism which are inevitable features in the postcolonial self. These factors are depicted by postcolonial writers through their characters and their writings. They always show the postcolonial subject as a person who tries to figure out his in-between position in his society as he does not want to split from his origins but at the same time he is inevitably affected by Western ways.

This search for identity can be portrayed by novelists such as Ngugi wa Thiongo through their characters by depicting key concepts that constitute identity such as home, language, hybridity and otherness.

## Chapter Three:

# The Ideology of Ngugi wa Thiong'o Concerning the Question of Identity

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## Introduction :

The identity question as mentioned in the previous chapters has been a central theme in the works of postcolonial writers; this is the outcome of their own experiences. Through their writings they are not only communicating their feelings and experiences, but also those of their peoples.

And as we all know, Ngugi wa Thiong'O is one of the most world known postcolonial authors who stress this notion of identity through his works. And it is very important to know the writer's personal view point concerning this matter of identity, in order to understand his works. Ngugi in his collection *Homecoming: essays on African and Caribbean literature, culture and politics* said:

*The present collection of essays is an integral part of the fictional world of *The River Between*, *Weep Not Child*, and *A Grain of Wheat*. Most of them were written about the same time as the novels; they have been products of the same moods and touch on similar questions and problems. (Ngugi 1973:xv)*

So in his essays and lectures, Ngugi discussed the same recurring themes in his writings and the works of any postcolonial author. Themes related to the question of identity; themes concerned with the major components of identity such as language, home and place, exile and so on. He talks about these elements and the way they affect literature and society, and basically the way they mix up to give us in the end the current identity of the postcolonial subjects.

In this chapter we shall go through some of these elements from the view point of the person of Ngugi wa Thiong'O. We shall extensively deal with Ngugi's reflections on the whole matter of identity in general as related to his background as postcolonial writer and to him as African writer.

We shall also include some major components of the making of the identity of postcolonial societies and writers, and which seemed really important in the view of Ngugi. These elements are the question of language which is still a dilemma when it comes to postcolonial writers, and the notion of home and exile as part of the African and postcolonial being.

## I-Ngugi and the quest for identity:

The postcolonial states before and after independence needed the feeling of belonging somewhere; they needed a collective identity which may push them to restore unity and independence, Ngugi is among the people who believe in this idea, in the idea that people need to restore or form an identity first then talk about independence, he said in *Homecoming: essays on African and Caribbean literature, culture and politics*: ***“But this is also a statement of what is needed before the restoration of order: an identity that holds things and society together.”*** (Ngugi 1973:93)

Ngugi thinks that imperialism tried to take over all the wealth of its colonies to benefit Europe and enrich its resources, and to do so, imperial powers tried to hold control over the cultural aspect of the colonies. G.D. Killam in *Critical Perspectives on Ngugi* quoted this latter on this aspect:

*To make economic and political control the more complete the colonizing power tries to control the cultural environment: education, religion, language, literature, songs, forms of dances, every form of expression, hoping to control a people’s values and ultimately their world outlook, their image and definition of self.*(26)  
(Killam 1984:26)

This led him to think that the best way to restore all what was stolen is through a complete rejection of the colonial culture and the aim of this is to redefine the world view and give these people the opportunity to “define oneself” through producing an original literature true to who they really are. (26-27)

The identity question as mentioned in the previous chapter contains many elements and aspects that constitute it, among these aspects is language. Ngugi sees that African literatures are losing their identities to Europe when it comes to the question of language, he said in his book *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* “[...] ***Europhone African literature has stolen the identity of African literature.***” (51) In a way to point out that language is a huge marker of identity, and losing it or mixing it with another language could mean losing one’s identity; and this problematic needs to be dealt with in an extended way which will be done in the next element.

But language is not the only element that proves that a postcolonial writer, or subject, is in a constant quest for identity. Ngugi raises the “name” question as being a marker of self-definition. He criticizes the way colonial powers changed the names of people they dominated, and gave them foreign names to make them identify themselves with the colonial power. Ngugi writes:

*They also planted their memory on our bodies. Ngugi became James. Noliwe became Margaret. Our names got stuck with their names. Thus our bodies, in terms of self-definition, became forever branded by their memory. The name-mark pointing to my body defines my identity. James? And I answer: yes I am. (Ngugi 2009:114)*

Ngugi thinks, by doing so, the colonial powers linked their former colonial subjects to them forever; as if postcolonial subjects lost a part of their identity and replaced it with a foreign one which they got used to identify themselves with, since they accepted the fact that they are being called by foreign names and they didn't try to get rid of them or replace them with original names. They are forever identified with the memory of the colonizer. (114)

Ngugi spoke about this matter in his speech *Time for Africa to reclaim the black body* delivered in 2012 in South Africa and published in the *New African Magazine*. Ngugi said: *“the European naming system replaced the African. The very body of the African was defined by the European identity of being: Beatrice, Desmond, James.” (2012:41)*

Another aspect that, for Ngugi, helped in the creation of a crisis of identity in Africa is education. Ngugi wonders why in a time of independence these countries still teach European literatures in their departments, in *Writers in Politics: Essays* he pictures this idea as follows:

*Indeed until a few years ago, the departments of literature (then called English departments) in Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and Makerere Universities would only teach British authors from Chaucer through Oliver Goldsmith to Graham Greene. That is how most of us were brought up under the old colonial system administered from the University of London: but is there any reason*

*why our children in this day and age should be brought up on the same impoverished diet administered in the so-called English departments. [...] The truth is that the content of our syllabi [...] were all an integral part of the same imperialism but now in its neo-colonial phase. Cultural imperialism [...] becomes the major agency of control during neo-colonialism. (Ngugi 1981:5)*

Cultural education for Ngugi is so important in the conception of the self, he thinks that through literature men know who they were, are and will be, as a kind of self recreation. Literature shows people who they really are, and as Ngugi postulates, helps in the shaping of identity of people (5-6). He adds on the same subject:

*At the same time literature is more than just a mechanistic reflection of social reality. As part of man's artistic activities, it is in itself part of man's self-realization as a result of his wrestling with nature; it is; if you like, itself a symbol of man's creativity, of man's historical process of being and becoming.[...] but more important, it does shape our attitudes to life, to the daily struggle with nature, the daily struggles within a community, and the daily struggle within our individual souls and selves. (Ngugi 1981:6)*

So since literature is a vehicle to express oneself, implant cultural values, and help people to define themselves towards their community and the world, Ngugi holds the position that it's better to make this literature true to African experience in order to help in the construction of a true African identity with an African culture and experience. He explains this in his book *Decolonizing the Mind* through saying:

*[...] education in Kenya was an instrument of colonial policy designed to educate the people of Kenya into acceptance of their role as colonized. The education system at independence was therefore an inheritance of colonialism so that literature syllabuses were centered on the study of an English literary tradition taught by English teachers. Such a situation meant that Kenyan children were alienated from their own experience [and] identity in an independent African country.(7) (Ngugi 1986:96)*

So this issue of education is very important in the building of the identity of people and the colonial powers took advantage of this and inserted colonial education in

the colonized countries. In *Something Torn and New* Ngugi says: “*The more educated the colonial subjects are in the culture of the colonizer, the more severe the subjection, with devastating results for the community of subjects as a whole.*” (Ngugi 2009:114)

In *World Literature Today* and under the title *A Globalitical Imagination* Ngugi claimed for colonial powers as making of their literatures the centre of the world literatures. Anyone in the world should take as reference the imperial center neglecting the fact that in the modern world there is a multiplicity of centers, and everyone in the world is the center of his own world.(41-42) This is to say that everyone can identify himself according to his community, without reference to colonial memory or impact.

## **II- The Language Debate for Ngugi: Views and Opinions:**

The choice of language in literature or in daily life is no doubt a crucial element in the shaping of one’s identity. And it is quite obvious that this issue has been a large area of debate especially amongst postcolonial writers and scholars.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, some of them opt for the use of “colonial language (es)” as a way to universalize their cause and preach their voices to the rest of the world, while others perceive the use of colonial languages as a way to give up their identity, and forget who they really are, and where they come from.

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o as we all know is one of the postcolonial writers who started writing using colonial languages, but later on shifted to writing using their mother tongues. One of the main reasons that led him to make this decision is that he thinks language is the vehicle through which a writer can transmit his culture, traditions and most importantly his voice to the world, and the mother tongue is the best way to do so since most of the times meaning is lost in translation, and we may illustrate with what Ngugi said in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*:

*We therefore learnt to value words for their meaning and nuances. Language was –not a mere string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words through riddles,*

*proverbs, transposition of syllables, or through nonsensical but musically arranged words. (11) So we learnt the music of our language on top of the content. (Ngugi 1986:11)*

And this is the best way we can describe how language can play a huge role in showing who people are in reality. But Ngugi asserts in the same book that his lectures' goal is not to discuss the politics of language in Kenya or Africa, nor it is to criticize writers who use European languages; it is rather to defend a view point that he acquired a while after building up his career. He says in the Preface:

*I am not dealing so much with the language policies as with the language practice of African writers. I should here point out and reiterate that there are many writers all over Africa who over the years, over the centuries, have written and continue to write in African languages. (Ngugi 1986:xi)*

So as to prove that it is not impossible for a writer to use one's mother tongue in order to make his voice heard, and his writings universal.

To continue with the same reason, that language is the vehicle by which a writer conveys his messages, we have to know that another linked reason to the former pushed Ngugi to shift from writing in English to using Gikuyu which is the choice of audience. In one of his interviews with D. Venkat Rao, and in his own words taken from *Research in African Literatures*, Ngugi answers one of D. Venkat's questions as follows:

*When I came to The Devil on the Cross, two things have happened. I changed language ... I had to shift the language to Gikuyu .... When you use a language, you are also choosing an audience ... When I used English, I was choosing English-speaking audience ....Now I can use a story a myth, and not always explain because I can assume that the [Gikuyu] readers are familiar with this .... I can play with words, sounds and images, I can rely more and more on songs, proverbs, riddles, anecdotes .... (D. Venkat 1999: 163-64)*

So Ngugi obviously thinks that instead of targeting a foreign audience which may find itself confused when it comes to the understanding of his culture through the language he uses, since many words expressions and thoughts cannot be translated accurately and have to be left as they are, he can just choose to target Gikuyu audience

which understands him easily, without having to translate words or expressions so as to preserve the beauty of the story and the original taste of its culture and identity.

For this, Ngugi calls the languages that a writer uses to target his own community “nationality languages” as a sign that when using your mother tongue you stick to your origins, nationality or more precisely identity. In the same interview when D. Venkat asked him if he thinks that collaboration between different writers could be possible Ngugi gives the following answer

*I believe in this very strongly, particularly when it comes to struggle to write in non-European languages, in nationality languages. Sometimes people who write in nationality languages feel a sense of despair ... because they think that they are not as well-known internationally as their counterparts who write in English or French (D. Venkat 1999: 167)*

So for Ngugi, writers who use “nationality languages” have to collaborate together in order to exchange experiences, and may be make their “languages dialogue one another” in order to break the rule that a piece of literature written let us say in Gikuyu should be translated into a European language to gain a universal readership. So why not translate it in other languages to break this monopoly, and introduce those cultures to one another (167-68).

So again in his preface of *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* Ngugi explains that his defense of “nationality languages” does not mean that he is being offensive towards writers who use European languages. He asserts that holding the thought that it is better to use one’s mother tongue in writing literature does not in any way minimize or underestimate the value of those Euro-African writers. He says:

*If in these essays I criticize the Afro-European (or Euroafrican) choice of our linguistic praxis, it is not to take away from the talent and the genius of those who have written in English, French or Portuguese. On the contrary I am lamenting a neo-colonial situation which has meant European bourgeoisie once again stealing our talents and geniuses as they have stolen our economies. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Europe stole art treasures from*

*Africa to decorate their houses and museums; in the twentieth century Europe is stealing the treasures of the mind to enrich their languages and cultures. Africa needs back its economy, its poetics, its culture, its languages and all its patriotic writers. (Ngugi 1986: xii)*

So, all Ngugi wants is restoring not only Africa's past, wealth, language and cultures, but also Africa's genius writers. And by restoration Ngugi means the coming back to one's native language thus identity. For this, Ngugi thinks that language is a crucial element in the shaping of one's identity, he thinks that for a person to achieve self-definition as related to his homeland, he has to identify with the language he uses, he says:

*It is an ever-continuing struggle to seize back their creative initiative in history through a real control of all the means of communal self-definition in time and space. The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. Hence language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century. (Ngugi 1986:4)*

And again Ngugi points out to the fact that the choice of language in a postcolonial state is not that easy. The postcolonial writer as well as the postcolonial subjects find themselves in a kind of trap between their community and the universe as has been discussed in the former chapters, between the language of the centre and that of the periphery, and most often they find themselves either embracing the center's language, or mixing up the colonial language with their mother tongue due to their colonial education losing authenticity and coming out with a newly hybridized language; and in both cases they lose their self-identification.

Ngugi ascribes this division of Africa according to European tongues during and after colonialism to Berlin 1884. He thinks it was then when Europeans decided on the way to divide Africa, and until now African countries are defined and they define themselves according to European languages, so we say a French-speaking country or an English speaking country instead of linking these countries to their own languages (5).



Ngugi explained his view concerning this matter when he tackled the issue of the 1962 meeting of African writers at Makerere University College in Uganda which had as a title *A Conference of African Writers of English Expression*. This title in itself led Ngugi to raise several questions concerning the identity of African literatures and writers. He wonders about the position of African writers who write using African languages in the field of African literature; he goes even further to wondering about the identity of African literature itself. He raised many questions in this concern. The first and crucial one is that about the definition of African Literature, he says:

*The discussions on the novel, the short story, poetry, and drama were based on extracts from works in English and hence they excluded the main body of work in Swahili, 'Zulu, Yoruba, Arabic, Amharic and other African languages. Yet despite this exclusion of writers and literature in African languages, no sooner were the introductory preliminaries over than this conference of 'African Writers of English Expression' sat down to the first item on the agenda: 'What is African Literature?' (Ngugi 1986:6)*

As if he wanted to say that in order for a literature to be called African, it should be written in an African language so that it talks about the African experience in its appropriate way. Ngugi quotes Achebe when he raised the question of some people perceiving the use of their mother tongue as being distasteful while the use of a European language receives a positive acclaim. Achebe calls it as a “fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our literature” (7). Ngugi carries on quoting Achebe again:

*The fact is, that all of us who opted for European languages \_ the conference participants and- the generation that followed them, accepted that fatalistic logic to a greater or lesser degree. We were guided by it and the only question which preoccupied us was how. Best to make the borrowed tongues carry the weight of our African experience by, for instance, making them 'prey' on African proverbs and other peculiarities of African speech and folklore. (Ngugi 1986:7)*

And this was a way to say that these writers could have chosen to get rid of the use of foreign languages and write using their mother tongue since these languages

cannot carry the African experience the way mother tongues do. And instead of enriching their culture and literature, they are enriching that of the former colonizers.

Ngugi's quest to restore his mother tongue is in fact an attempt to regain his identity, as the editors of *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* pointed out his refusal of the English language use in his works is a rejection of submission to the colonial power. They add: "*This stance of rejection rests upon the assumption that an essential Gikuyu identity may be regained, an identity which the language of the colonizer seems to have displaced or dispersed.*" (Ashcroft et al 1995:283)

Robert J.C. Young in *English and the Language of Others* not only stresses this point through pointing out that Ngugi thinks an African literature worth being called so, is that written in African languages, but also highlights the idea that the fact that Ngugi shifted to writing in Kikuyu was problematic since Kikuyu is a minority language and Kiswahili is the official language of Kenya. Doing this, according to Young, he neglects a language to the expense of another:

*For Ngugi, the practices of writing in English, the language of his former colonial master, became unthinkable, a betrayal of his own national culture. Ngugi's situation, however, was complicated by the fact that his 'nation' operates in a multilingual environment in which different languages are spoken by different ethnic groups. His decision to reject English, therefore, and to write in his native Kikuyu, was in part an anti-colonial strategy, but also simultaneously an assertion of a minority language against the dominant language of Kenya, Kiswahili. (Young 2009:209)*

But Young comments on this through asserting that even if Ngugi defends writing literature in indigenous languages, and even if he himself shifted to writing in his mother tongue, he is translating his works in English, and Young takes that as proof of the power of English over the former colonies. Since even works written in African languages have to be translated into a foreign language to be understood not only worldwide, but also in the writers' homelands.(209)

However, it seems that Ngugi perceives this differently, he works on empowering other languages to break the dominance of European languages, or as he calls them: languages of power. In an interview by Angela Lamas Rodrigues, in *Beyond*

*Nativism: An Interview with Ngugi wa Thiong'o* published in *Research in African Literatures*, and when asked by Angela about the marginalization of some languages because of the domination of others in a globalized world, Ngugi answers:

*If people lose their language, they lose the most important instrument in the definition and production of their own culture. This means to say that they are defined, or define themselves, through a European memory and, in the process, their own memory becomes barred. I think that when we lose our language we can try to create a sense of identity within the language into which we were incorporated but obviously we are still walking on a territory defined by the language of our adoption. (Rodrigues 2004:162)*

Ngugi also carries on, while answering the interviewer, linking the language issue to class system, since when marginalizing the mother tongue we are marginalizing very important social components that cannot use a foreign language to express themselves thus they are not able to define themselves in their societies. And this fact also stresses the dominator-dominated binary and strengthens the concept that these societies still define themselves within the circle of their former dominators (164).

Ngugi also blames the colonial education for marginalizing the native languages. In *Decolonizing the Mind*, he states that colonial powers encouraged their language through teaching literary works to children, and made students who fail in English fail the whole exam, this way, and through language and literature the true identity of the colonized people was being demolished bit by bit (12), he says: *“The language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds” (Ngugi 1986: 12)*

He later on explains the effect of imposing the colonial language over colonized people; Ngugi points out that the colonizer uses his control over language to control culture, which is the most important step in controlling people. He wrote: *“Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people’s culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others.”* (16) He carried on saying: *“the domination of a people’s language by languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized.” (Ngugi 1986:16)*

The elite emerging out of this colonial education came up with a literature that Ngugi thinks far from being African. He wonders whether African literature written in African languages has faded away, or is no longer valid. In a way to criticize these 'bourgeois' writers for struggling to find out who they are and trying to drag the whole society into their fight; he says:

*This very lack of identity in its social and psychological make-up as a class, was reflected in the very literature it produced: the crisis of identity was assumed in that very preoccupation with definition at the Makerere conference. In literature as in politics it spoke as if its identity or the crisis of its own identity was that of society as a whole. The literature it produced in European languages was given the identity of African literature as if there had never been literature in African languages. Yet by avoiding a real confrontation with the language issue, it was clearly wearing false robes of identity: it was a pretender to the throne of the mainstream of African literature. (Ngugi 1986:22)*

Ngugi blames them for creating this crisis of identity out of a factor specific only to them, that of using a foreign language to communicate their experience, and create a falseness in spreading this experience in the world through creating false characters, and here Ngugi gives the example of Peasants speaking English, as if African languages were not good enough to do so. (22) But not all those who had a colonial education did the same; many were true to their identity and defended it through sticking to their mother tongues. (24)

This whole debate over language is an ongoing field of investigation, it is very vast, and Ngugi tried to sum it up in *Research in African literature* under the title: *Europhonism, Universities, and the Magic Fountain: The Future of African Literature and Scholarship*, as such:

*Europhonism has no language or cultural universe of its own. The literature it generates –Europhone Literature—is given identity in the market place of all writings in European tongues by all the reservoir of images in African life and languages. [...] Like a leech it sucks blood and stamina from African languages and it never gives anything back to the people who created the languages and the*

*orature from which it draws so freely to give that identity in the market place of world-wide writings in European tongues. (Ngugi 2000:7)*

This was to insinuate that all these African writers have done through writing in European languages is enriching these latter, as if their ideas are originated in Europhone countries. By doing so, they give up their identity to Europe and enhance the idea that their work is rather European and not African, a thing that could marginalize their own language and thus literature.

Ngugi certainly admits that the English language helped him to build his career as novelist, in *Decolonizing the Mind* he wrote “*The English language opened the door to a wide range of fiction*”. But this did not make him forget who he really is, so he started questioning the fact that he uses a European language to write an African literature that already has a language, he expresses that as being uncomfortable with this through saying (72): “*I was becoming uneasy about the English language. After I had written A Grain of Wheat I underwent a crisis. I knew whom I was writing about but whom I was writing for? [...] ‘I have reached a point of crisis. I don’t know whether it is worth any longer writing in English.’*” (Ngugi 1986:72)

Ngugi calls for coming back to one’s original identity through knowing who he is in the first place, and he thinks when a writer is not using his mother tongue in his works, he certainly is hybridizing literature through creating a new identity that is neither African nor European, He quotes himself from *The Detainee Review Tribunal* where he stresses the point of returning to the roots to be more creative (73), he wrote:

*Kenyan writers have no alternative but to return to the roots, return to the sources of their being in the rhythms of life and speech and languages of the Kenyan masses if they are to rise to the great challenge of recreating, in their poems, plays and novels, the epic grandeur of that history. Instead of being suppressed [...] they should be accorded all the encouragement to write literature that will be the pride of Kenya and the envy of the world. (Ngugi 1986:73)*

### III- Ngugi on: Home, Place and Exile:

*Home, father/ motherland, exile? I , a writer in exile? I had just arrived in Britain on June 8, firmly intending to leave for Kenya on 31 July. In my book, Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary, published the same year as Andrew Gurr's Writers In Exile, I had rejected the option of exile [...]. (Moving the Center, Ngugi 1993:102)*

Ngugi thinks that Home and exile are very important themes in African literature. He himself went through this situation, he was disconnected from his homeland and he wrote novels to rebuild the link between him and Kenya to re-identify himself with his country. He wrote in *Moving the Center: The Struggle For Cultural Freedoms*:

*Then in 1983/84 I wrote Matigari, a novel of return, in the Gikuyu language, and I felt a sense of belonging such as I had felt when in 1978 at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison in Cell N°. 16, I had written Caitani Mutharabaini (Devil on the Cross) as an attempt to reconnect myself to the community from which I had been so brutally cut by the neo-colonial regime in Kenya. Now I had done the same thing and experienced not dissimilar emotions. (Ngugi 1993:106)*

So for postcolonial writers exile is a factor that makes them feel disrupted from their homelands. Aziz Nikhil in *Identifying Centers, Centering Identities* says that Ngugi through his writings and essays opts for “recentering people in the world” in order to break the famous European centering of the world. For this there are two possibilities, either moving the center to another place, or just splitting it into many different centers within every single nation in the world. And this is a way to escape exile and find a way to reconnect with the community.

Ngugi also thinks that writers can feel their “loss of freedom” (106) in exile, and they always look for a link with their homelands. (106) Not only that, he also says that the colonizer through depriving the colonized from their lands is depriving them of a place they can identify with, and dismantling not only those peoples but also the whole continent creating an alienated society.(107) Ngugi writes: “*Africa is continent alienated from itself by years of alien conquests and internal despots. Thus the state of exile in the*

*literary landscape reflects a larger state of alienation in the society as a whole, a clear case of colonial legacy which has left scars on the body, heart, and mind of the continent.*” (Ngugi 1993:107-08) But Ngugi asserts that nowadays not only the postcolonial nations seek this sense of belonging, the whole world is in a state of exile fearing the day when they will no longer find a place to identify with. (108)

Ngugi in his book *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* stated that following the Berlin Conference of 1884 colonial powers divided Africa among themselves, so there was an English Africa, a French Africa and so on. As a result of this act, Africans felt disconnected with their lands (5-6). He said: ***“The subsequent colonial plantations on the African continent have led to the same result: division of the African from his land, body, and mind. [...] yet the state has power over every aspect of his being. Whereas before he was his own subject, now he is subject to another.”*** (Ngugi 2009:6) So the colonial powers disconnected their subjects from their lands thus their identity, since Africans are very attached to their lands and the land is a part of the being for the African people. ***“Wherever they went, in their voyages of land, sea, and mind, Europeans planted their own memories on whatever they contacted.”*** (7)

This element of place and geography was a really important factor in controlling the colonized people through disconnecting them from their lands, when they don't feel a sense of belonging to a place they don't feel the need to resist, and they are easier to assimilate thus to control. This way, and as Ngugi added: ***“A European memory becomes the new marker of geographical identity, covering up an older memory or, more strictly speaking burying the native memory of place.”*** (8-9) and this can be seen in the names issue also, but this time the names of places, which become European names. And in this way, ***“the identity of place becomes that of Europe.”*** Even after independence these countries are still identified as being Francophone or Anglophone. (9) And to conclude with this element, Ngugi said in *Moving the Centre* that writing for him is a way to link himself to the place of his origins he says: ***“Writing has always been my way of reconnecting myself to the landscape of my birth and upbringing ... I lived its landscape, its rivers, its history and only after this imaginative return did I wake up to where I was.”*** (Ngugi 1993:156)

## Conclusion:

Ngugi wa Thiong’O is no doubt one of the postcolonial writers who expressed and dealt with the question of identity thoroughly whether through his essays or novels. Through what has been written before, he strongly thinks that since literature is the bearer of culture it should be true to the identity of the writer and his society.

He wrote in *Writers in Politics: Essays* ***“It is the values that a people have that are the basis of their collective and individual image of self, their identity as a people, since culture is an ideological expression of the totality of their activities.”*** (Ngugi 1981:9)

Ngugi wa Thion’O made his opinions clear through his essays and interviews; he thinks identity with all its elements should be restored through literature. Obviously his struggle was mainly with the question of language but he also dealt with questions of place, home and so on. He illustrates well the crisis of identity that surrounds postcolonial writers and subjects and tries to cure it through giving some solutions.

He also made it clear that his works are the outcome of his own experience and his people’s experience too. It is a result of his true feelings to the condition of his country and of similar postcolonial states also. That’s why he expressed this in his essays as well as his novels. His novels also dealt with the question of identity and the elements that constitute it; a thing that will be dealt with in the coming chapter.



## Chapter Four:

# The Different Pronouncements of Identity Question in the Texts of Ngugi

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## Introduction :

This chapter will deal with a very expressive example about what has been dealt with in the previous chapters, an example that portrays the importance of the wide concept of identity to postcolonial literature. This example is taken from Africa which contains a wide range of postcolonial writers who extensively deal with aspects that forge identity such as language, place, hybridity and otherness and that have been targeted by the colonizing forces to erase that identity and replace it by a new one to facilitate their control over those people. This example is the works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

During his sojourn in prison Ngugi had decided to divorce writing in English and decided to commit himself to writing in his native language Gikuyu. His first novel in Gikuyu, which was written on toilet paper in prison is *Devil on the Cross*, then after being alienated from his home and forced to exile, Ngugi had written his next novel in Gikuyu which is entitled *Matigari*. After that, Ngugi has written his masterpiece *Wizard of the Crow*.

Throughout his career, and like the bulk of postcolonial writers, Ngugi has always depicted the notion of identity. He has inserted this notion in his characters; in their behaviors, in their way of thinking, speaking, and even dressing. However, he was not inserted it haphazardly, he did so because he felt the need to show the world how imperialism has reshaped African identity, and how people like him want to regain, if not reconstruct their lost identity.

Through his works, Ngugi expressed his own quest for his identity and thus his own people's quest which also undermines all Africans' quest, his characters spoke on his behalf. Through them, he wanted to redefine that identity as far from the Western culture and ideology. He satirized people who accepted Western culture together with those who rejected it but wanted to form a new identity in which they choose elements of Western traditions they want and add them to their traditional identity.

In this chapter, we shall tackle the way Kenyan identity has been affected and forged by its colonial experience, and how this idea is depicted in the fiction of Ngugi. We shall also deal with the elements that shape and build one's identity and the way

they are portrayed through literature, mainly through the novels of Ngugi. One of the most important among those elements is the notion of language.

This notion is extremely crucial in forging identity; and for Ngugi, he thinks that writing in the colonial language is a kind of betrayal to the original identity. However, in this chapter we are going to discuss whether this idea is really true. Since Ngugi thinks that divorcing the colonial language means splitting from the colonial culture and regaining or rebuilding the ties with the original identity, it is obvious that even when he wrote in the colonial language he built those ties through expressing African experiences and traditions (using prophecies, spirituality, proverbs and talking about traditional rites monuments) but using different means of expression. Besides, even his novels written in Gikuyu which were meant to express an authentic identity, hold the features of hybridity, since they show the multicultural characteristic of the writer and his people.

In addition to that, we are going to deal with the notion of home. This notion is also crucial in forging one's identity since home, or place, is a reference to the sense of belonging. If a person has this sense of belonging to a place which he conceives as his home he will certainly identify with it; if not he will look for anything that reminds him with his homeland to do so. Besides, place and displacement are very important elements in forging African people's identity, and among the ways the colonizer distorted that notion is displacing Africans from their lands; in addition to the fact that the concept of land is very spiritual for them. And all these ideas are portrayed in Ngugi's works since they speak up for him and for his people.

The colonial experience that Africans went through also led to another aspect that played a huge role in shaping their identities. Ngugi portrayed Africans in his novels as living in-between two worlds, they are struggling hard to stick to their cultures and traditions, but at the same time they cannot escape the new elements that the modern world imposes on them, so the best way to define who they really are and to reconcile between the two worlds is through accepting the fact that they are hybrid people. Furthermore, hybridity and multiculturalism are elements which are specific to Africans. This fact will be illustrated through examples from Ngugi's works.

This longing to define one's identity through literature comes also from a very important aspect that imperial powers implanted in the heads of their former subjects.

This element is called Otherness. It is explored in postcolonial literature and Ngugi is no exception. He tried through his works to redefine this term and the elements that led to it such as the binarities centre/periphery or dominant/marginalized.

These were the important aspects that define one's identity and that constitute a field of exploration in postcolonial literature as discussed in the previous chapters. Since these elements are the components of a very philosophical term, they certainly are overlapping; that is, mentioning one of them directly implies tackling the other. For instance, if we talk about language we have to mention that despite the fact that Ngugi's early works are written in English, he wrote about traditional elements of Kenya such as their feeling of the spirituality of the land. This aspect could be also tackled in the part that depicts the notion of home. So in this chapter we are going to deal with each of the formerly mentioned elements that forge identity and that are explored in Ngugi's works each one at once.

## I-Identity in the Texts of Ngugi:

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is seen as a prominent figure among the postcolonial writers who are preoccupied by notions such as nation and identity through the literature they produce. He also reflects the experiences and relations of his society with the colonizing power. According to Reena Mitra, the legacy of colonialism made him face issues in his quest for identity. He explores constantly this theme through his novels in a way or another.

For instance, in his novel *Weep Not, Child* he explores the story of Njoroge who finds himself unable to continue his studies but he is stroke with the bitter reality about the colonizer, he understands that he is living a dream, then he begins to know who really he is, and where he really wants to belong. As a reference that this character who symbolizes and reflects the feelings of postcolonial subjects who constantly look for a western education as a sign of superiority but then face the reality that they have to come back to their origins to understand and find their real self.

Ngugi's novels also explore the relationship between the individual and his society, and the dilemma he can face to fit in; for instance in *The River Between*, he tells the story of the relation between Christians and non-Christians in the same community, where Christians want to stick to their Christianity but without breaking the ties with their non-Christian fellows. So as to speak, the character of Muthoni who is Christian but who wants to go through the process of circumcision which is a traditional Gikuyu rite, as a sign to the distorted identity of such characters who want change but feel the need to keep the ties with their origins just to fit in their societies.

Later on, Ngugi shifts to writing in his native language as a sign that he wants to break the ties with colonial aspects of identity, and to return to his original identity. He wanted to restore the feeling of belonging through his mother tongue and traditional culture; he did so through either using Gikuyu in his novels written in English or through completely rejecting English as a language of writing. Besides, in either cases he used the same language; the language of myths, songs and traditions. (135-138)

For, the notion of tradition is always present in his works. He seizes any opportunity to use that tradition so as to identify with his society since he feels he has been long away far from them, for instance in his essays entitled "*Homecoming*" he

wrote about the freedom fighters: *“They rediscovered the old songs – they had never completely lost touch with them- and reshaped them to meet the new needs of their struggle. They also created new songs and dances with new rhythms where the old ones were found inadequate” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1972: 30)*” (cited in: Ashcroft et al 1995, 162)

As a sign that Ngugi himself rediscovered his traditional cultural identity that he was exiled from, and had reshaped it to fit his own experience and that the postcolonial people regained their original identities which were never lost but they modeled them to fit their new situation and status, they even created new traditions just to cope with their new situation.

The best illustration on the fact that Ngugi through his writings is a kind of rebuilding ties with his tradition and fighting to regain the lost identity could be his novel *The River Between* where he portrays the process of clitoridectomy as crucial in Gikuyu identity. This novel was as a reaction to the Church of Scotland when they wanted their Gikuyu subjects to reject circumcision, and they split into two communities, one that agreed and submerged to the Church, and another that rejected this pledge and split with the church, but they didn’t give up their Christianity. The first ones symbolize the people who lost their original culture to the colonizer, and the second ones are those who stuck to their origins but without rejecting completely the alien culture; they are those who symbolize the new hybrid identity.

The fact of sticking to tradition and at the same time remaining Christian, as Gikandi asserted, was an attempt to reconstruct a “pure Gikuyu identity” but a one which is framed by a “modern identity” which is synonymous to a “colonial” identity. And this could be seen in what Chege told his son Waiyaki in *The River Between*: *“Arise. Heed the prophecy. Go to the Mission place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites.”* (Ngugi 1965, 20) as a sign that this colonial education by itself could change the identity of a person and take him far away from his traditions; but Gikuyu people don’t want that, they only want to read their enemy but without losing themselves to his traditions and culture.

This operation of seeking a pure Gikuyu identity was mainly held by the nationalists. These nationalists exemplified in the character of Karinga, did not want to restore their original identity, rather they wanted to create a “new Gikuyu subject” able

to choose which elements of the culture of the colonizer to include in their new identity. (22-23)

As to the question of identity of the writer, Ngugi conceives his own identity as a writer, as Gikandi asserts, in relation to how his family lived during colonization, in a state of marginality. He says: ***“I grew up in a small village. My father and his four wives had no land. They lived as tenants-at-will on somebody else’s land ... Just opposite the ridge on which our village was scattered were the sprawling green fields owned by the white settlers.”*** (Cited in Gikandi 2000, 4). These events together with the experience of independence and exile built up a fertile ground for the imagination of Ngugi to write about pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Kenya, and to picture the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. (5)

This relationship, as Gikandi proposes, is stronger than one can imagine. Gikuyu people did not have a “corporate or centralized” identity, they sure did have a common language and common beliefs, but they did not feel the need for social, cultural or organizational institutions. The day the colonizer came to their lands, they felt the need to build an identity which is “corporate” and which meets the urging situation of colonization. This is to say that the Gikuyu identity was forged by “the dialectic of the colonial situation”. (15)

In fact, Gikuyu people used to live in a complete harmony and serenity without the need to identify with any community. Ngugi used this serenity of that past to predict the future his people will face even if he writes about imagined communities. For instance, in *The River Between* he describes how people pay homage to Gikuyu and Mumbe as a reference to that serenity, and then he refers to Mugo who prophesied the coming of the white men to signal the chaos they will face:

***A sacred grove had sprung out of the place where Gikuyu and Mumbi stood; people still paid homage to it. It could also be seen, by any who cared to count, that Kameno threw up more heroes and leaders than any other ridge. Mugo wa Kibiro, that great Gikuyu seer of old, seeing visions of the future and speaking them to the many people who came to see and hear him.*** (Ngugi 1965, 2)

He is referring to his origins; to an imagined past, and then remembering that this past no longer exists, it has changed with the coming of the white man.(50)

The whole process of writing is for Ngugi a “quest for identity”, his novels represent this quest through their portrayal of the reality of Kenya before, during and after colonialism. He explores the notions of exile and alienation which destroy the harmony of a society. And then he gives a solution to those problems through what he calls “a second homecoming”, as B.A. Ogot thinks, this alienation continued even after independence when Africans alienated each other because their cultural identity has been corrupted by colonial identity. And for that, Ngugi thinks that it is his role as a writer to solve this problem, and that the intellectuals should be integrated in their societies since they are the ones who can unveil the reality; the reality about Kenyans which are portrayed by Ngugi and his fellows through his characters as people who went through so many alteration in their lives that they cannot even choose which style of life to follow or how to combine between the two styles of life.

Ngugi’s characters who suffer most from this dilemma are those who seek reconciliation between tradition and modernity. For instance, we have Ngotho in *Weep Not, Child* is character who represents, in the words of Ogot, “*the image of the educated African and ‘a child of two worlds’*”; we can also state the example of Waiyaki in *The River Between* when the children told him that he cannot play a game with them since he was not born again. He was cast aside as he was seen as an alien to them until he followed tradition.

*Waiyaki wanted to be happy, very happy. Was he not going to learn the ways of the land? Was he not going to drink the magic ritual of being born again? He knew he wanted to be like his father, knowing all the ways of the land from Agu and Agu, long ago.(Ngugi 1965, 11)*

Waiyaki was born again, he belongs now to his people, he is man enough to make decisions, he was longing to become a man and to reconsider his status in his society. And this is a reference to the feelings of Ngugi himself as he perceives writing as an effort to understanding and redefining himself and his situation in society and history. (230-232)

For, and as Lingaraja Gandhi pointed out, this quest for adulthood is a quest for an independent status in society, and this independent status contains an independent identity; it could also denote the quest for an independent Kenya.(23)



Furthermore, Ngugi through his novel *Devil on the Cross*, as Paolini asserted, is a projecting how the evil ways of modernity and Western ways can affect the pure Gikuyu identity. Those people who possess Mercedes-Benz, drink western beer and organize ceremonies where they do anything to celebrate wealth. The products they buy to render their skins white, the mixing of English with Gikuyu, and even music has been affected due to the colonial education that people undergo.

The same could be found in *Matigari*, where there are always binaries: “Two worlds”, “two types of people” ..., and Matigari comes out suddenly reminding people that they have to choose, in fact he himself is in a quest for the lost identity of his people, he is always wondering where truth and justice could be found on earth looking for a place to resurrect the lost traditions and culture and thus identity.

There is always that dream that people would awaken one day realizing the evils of the West and breaking their ties with its culture. Almost in all Ngugi’s works there is this resolution at the end. It is, as Paolini said, “**Whiteness that tells us what blackness is**”, which means that to know the “self” one has to contrast his values and thoughts to the “other”; to go through the experience of the Other; in this case it is represented by the conflict between “national identity” and “imperialist domination”, the domination of land and culture, this conflict is what determines identity. (68) For, the domination of land is one of the processes used to break the collective identity, and if the collective identity is broken a new individual identity has to emerge, and there is no doubt that it will be forged by the colonial reality and it will let people struggle to come to terms with the postcolonial reality.

Regarding all the previous facts, and as Sundry asserted, it is obvious that Ngugi suffered regarding this issue of identity. He has all along his career struggled to redefine his identity. And the best way to illustrate this is no doubt his novel *Matigari*. Like his other works, *Matigari* also explores themes of identity, belonging, independence, displacement and so on. (22) It is a suggestion that one has to believe in himself and in his identity to overcome the challenges that colonialism put them in. For, if one does not believe in his identity he is going to become a reflection of the colonizer as portrayed through the character of John Boy “... **the only difference between the two men was their skin colour**” (Ngugi 1987, 43) as a sign that John has wholly embraced

colonial culture and became almost a white man if he were not distinguished by his skin color. (30)

So, Ngugi through his works does not only depict the strong desire of the writer to come to terms with his traditional Gikuyu identity and rebuild the ties with it, but they also depict the writer's and his characters' newly formed identity which is a mixture between their pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial identities.

His works show us how his characters are in a constant quest for their identity, and how they manage to reconcile between their multicultural, hybrid identities and their original one. His use of the language of myths and prophecies is a sign that he misses his past, furthermore, his divorce from the English language in his novels, although he still uses it every then and now in his Gikuyu novels, is another sign of that nostalgia to his home and his hybrid identity.

## **II- The Explorations of the Language Problem in the Novels of Ngugi:**

Most of the generation of writers who witnessed the period of colonization suffered from the process of injecting the colonizer's language and culture in their minds. They have been taught that using the colonizer's language was not only the best way to express oneself but also a huge privilege for those who use it. They have been internalized the fact that their languages are inferior and a sign of underdevelopment and illiteracy; that the only way to show the world they were literate, educated and cultivated is through the use of the colonizer's language.

But they were not convinced by these illusions nor were they sure they were not false. For this concept Ngugi was a witness. Jennifer Rich in her book *Critical Theory* illustrates with what Ngugi said in his article "*The Language of African Literature*" taken from his collection "*Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*", when he divorced writing in English, that the politics of displacing native languages is a crucial tool in the process of colonization. For this case he sets his own experience as an example when his teachers punished him for using Gikuyu at school while he was just a kid. He wrote:

*One of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment—three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks—or*

*was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. (Decolonizing the mind 1986, 11).*

For this, Ngugi considers writing in the colonizer's language as "a mental colonization" that overwhelms the original culture and as a political tool to maintain mental control over (former) colonies to ensure that they are always under the wings of the colonizer. (77-78) He makes this fact obvious in his novel *Devil on the Cross* when the old man from Nakuru told Mwaura that:

*Literature is the honey of a nation's soul, preserved for her children to taste forever, a little at a time! Gikuyu said that he who has put something aside never goes hungry. Do you think Gikuyu was a fool when he said that? A nation that has cast away its literature is a nation that has sold its soul and has been left a mere shell. (Ngugi 1987: 59)*

What Ngugi is trying to say here is that if a writer casts aside his own authentic literature, whether through writing about western stories or through writing about African stories but in western languages, he is in fact losing the soul and the core of his people and thus of his writings; nothing is left for the coming generations to make them build ties and bridges with their origins. By doing so, these generations will lose their ties with their lands and become westernized. They will no longer be the same; they will no longer be African.

Ketu H. Katrak, in her book *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World*, reinforces this view through rejecting the stereotyping of the world as to divide it into English-speaking or French-speaking "geographical areas" and so on; because in her view this categorization still affects the identity of Africa. (29)

This is not the case for Bonnie and William Shullenberger who managed to find out the positive point, or the irony, in acquiring others' languages; they put it in the frame of a joke and say: "*What do you call someone who speaks only one language?*" "*An American.*" "*What do you call someone who speaks several languages?*" "*An African.*" ( Shullenberger and Shullenberger 1998, 58).

But they carry on saying that "the comprador bourgeoisie" satirized by Ngugi through his novels wanted to master the colonizer's language but they were mastered by

it instead losing their identity to the west. (62) These scholars think that Ngugi gained through writing in English the attention of the world, and when he announced that he would stop writing in English, he was aware that his novels would be adapted in other languages; and this, for them, is a proof that he didn't lose his identity and then regained it, but rather he reinforced and imposed it on the Other.

The Shullenbergers admit also that his work is a celebration of the history and identity of Gikuyu population. He also made his culture estimated and important to the world. Also, his controversial novel *The River Between* was destined to Kenyan people who couldn't read it because it was banned by his regime. The audience who read it and paid attention to the corruption in Kenya through it, did so in English.(65-66) That's why Timothy Leonard and Peter Willis ask a lot of questions concerning this issue such as:

*Should the status quo be accepted and best use be made of the colonizer's language? Can it be transformed by the colonized? Should it be abandoned, or at least removed from its central position of authority, and instead the native tongue be embraced, with its own unique capacity and images? (Williams 1998, pp. 36-44)*  
(Leonard and Willis 2008, 34)

According to Modhumita Roy in the book *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: Text and Contexts*, Ngugi has chosen the language of his works on purpose, since he believes in the idea of the huge role that the intellectuals play in framing society. So Ngugi didn't take the choice of his language randomly, he did it after what Roy calls it: "many years of serious political engagement". (169) But still, using this or that language, Ngugi always inserts oral features in his novels. For instance in his translation of his novel *Devil on the Cross* he uses literally translated proverbs "*Too much haste splits the yam*" (15) or when Kareendi says to her boss: "*The yam that one has dug up for oneself has no mouldy patches*" (17) Again in his novel *Weep Not, Child* when Njoroge said: "*A lamb takes after his mother.*"(Ngugi 1963: 48) and this oral language is used extensively by Ngugi whether in his English Novels or the ones translated from Gikuyu.

James Ogude postulates that Ngugi's works developed in an impressive way, thanks to this use of orality in his works. After the publication of his novel *Petals of*

*Blood* he raised the question of the targeted audience that a writer devotes his writings to. He felt he was marginalizing his people, so he has chosen to write in Gikuyu. But this doesn't mean that he neglected his oral tradition and identity, he did write about it but in a different language.

For instance, in *Petals of Blood*, when the children ask their teacher challenging questions about things he had never thought about, as a sign that these children still hold their original identity, while the teacher had lost it to western beliefs and education. He says:

*Man ... law... God ... nature: he had never thought deeply about these things, and he swore that he would never again take the children to the fields. [...] There [in the class] he could avoid being drawn in ... but out in the fields, outside the walls, he felt insecure.*  
(Ngugi 1977, 22)

So this teacher forgot about the relation between these notions, the spirituality of the divinity, and the laws of nature. All he believes in is science and that's what colonial education implanted in his head. This teacher and a lot of people like him used to believe strongly that the use of the colonial language is a privilege and the embrace of western culture is civilization.

This could be set as a proof that although Ngugi had written novels in English, he had never forgotten about his traditions, beliefs and identity. In the contrary, he somehow criticized those people who forgot about their original thoughts and replaced them by new European thoughts. As Ogude says: *“although Ngugi's recourse to oral forms is more pronounced in his works written in Gikuyu, his earlier works have always been rooted in both popular mythology – the popular forms of the Gikuyu- and a fusion of modern Western conventions of writing”* (Ogude 1999, 88).

Ogude says that Ngugi's works could be divided into two periods; the first period is when he targeted English-speaking audience both in his own country and abroad. The second period is when he has decided to address the Gikuyu audience; but in both periods he depicted the same notions and beliefs but using different means of expression.

So, Ngugi was influenced by legends and stories from his own culture. For example, Matigari who, in the view of his people, could change his shape whenever he wants and could incarnate anything he wants to be, a belief that, according to Ogude, is present in many ethnicities in Kenya such as the Luos and the Abaluhia. He was also given supernatural powers:

*'Rumor has it that they have come back with flaming  
swords in their hands!'*

*'Flaming swords?'*

*'Yes! To claim the products of our labour'*

*'Just a minute! Say that again.'*

*'The country has its patriots.'*

*(Ngugi 1987, 72)*

Here we notice the extensive use of popular traditional myths but for a deeper purpose; it is as if Ngugi is saying that this generation is lost to the point that it couldn't consider itself patriot. As if they were waiting for someone to show them the way to who they really are. And Ngugi finds the use of fantastic language a very useful way to convey his message since this fantastic language has its roots in their traditions and beliefs.

But not only novels written in Gikuyu are based on original myths, also Ngugi's earlier novels written in English revolve around these myths. *Weep Not Child*, *The River Between*, and *A Grain of Wheat* all contain the ideas that "cosmic forces" are essential in turning human beings to what they are now. Like what happened to Gikonyo when he said:

*'It was like being born again'.*

*' Before I was nothing. Now, I was a man. During our short period  
of married life, Mumbi made me feel it was all important ...  
suddenly I discovered... no, it was as if I had made a covenant with  
God to be happy [...]'. (Ngugi 1967, 99)*

This idea is certainly African, so we can't say that writing in a different language, mainly the colonizer's language, erases one's identity and replaces it with a different alien identity.

Ogude gives a strong example about this idea that whatever the language of expression is, what really matters is the ideas expressed through it, this example is Mount Kenya, which has a religious and cultural significance for Kenyans and which is used in the majority of Ngugi's works. This hill is the place for rest of their gods. According to him: "***Mount Kenya becomes the centre of the Gikuyu universe, now under the threat of colonization***" (Ogude 1999, 89). So this hill is a symbol of unity and cultural identity for Kenyans.

In his novel *The River Between* the reader is told a myth about that hill. After the creation of Mumbi and Gikuyu (ancestors of the tribe) the great god Murungu told them: "***This land I give to you, O man and woman. It is yours to rule and till, you and your posterity***" (Ngugi 1965, 2).

That's why Ngugi's earlier novels are considered as a narration of the results of alienating people from their land, thus from their spirituality and cultural identity; and this spirituality could be illustrated through the words of their god which were broken by the arrival of the colonizer, who took their land off their hands. "***There shall come a people with clothes like butterflies***" (Ngugi 1965, 19). The one who prophesied this was not believed by his people until Christian missionaries came to their land.

The same thing is done in *A Grain of Wheat* where the arrival of the colonizer was announced through the same prophecy of Mugo wa Kibiro who foresaw the arrival of the "iron snake". Here Ngugi is attempting to naturalize the notion of National identity through using the language of prophecies.

So, the works of Ngugi with their variety tend to create a spiritual link between people and their land. Ngugi is bound to his land, to his identity, no matters the conditions surrounding him. He maintains his national identity whether he uses English or Gikuyu to speak about it and expose it to the world.

In *Weep Not, Child* the same reference to gods giving the land to people is portrayed through Ngotho reminding his children about it.

*But he had shown them all the land – yes, children, God showed  
Gikuyu and Mumbi all the land and told them,*

*“this land I hand over to you. O man and woman*

*It’s yours to rule and till in serenity sacrificing*

*Only to me, your God, under my sacred tree ...”*

*There was something strange in Ngotho’s eyes. [...]. It was as if he  
was telling a secret for the first time, but to himself. (Ngugi 1964,  
24)*

As Ogude adds that the acquisition of the land through the spiritual ancestors creates a form of “collective identity”. This type of identity in the early novels of Ngugi is displayed through the use of the language of idioms and of oral tradition, to make reference to Mount Kenya as a symbol for nationalism. (88-90)

Eileen Julien’s study *African Novels and the Question of Orality* is considered by Ogude as a useful means to understand the novels of Ngugi written in Gikuyu. She comments on *Devil on the Cross* saying that the use of oral language here **“is a quality of Kenyan culture now” and not a tool for decoding the past (1992, p.143)**” (Cited in Ogude 1999, 94). And this orality is not only present in his works in Gikuyu, but also in his works in English. He uses literally translated proverbs in his English novels.

Ogude considers the use of traditional seers and prophets, rumor, gossip and fantastic elements in Ngugi’s work as a hybrid feature for aesthetic purposes. (94-95). For instance, Wariinga dreams about the death and the resurrection of the devil as a prophecy that there will be a “neo-colonial dependency” (the resurrection of colonial identity) after independence. (101).

The characters of Ngugi portray the fact that the identity of workers in *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross* is not clear since we don’t know their shapes. We know nothing about them except that they are anti-imperialist workers. His characters also portray the displacement of Kenyan identity, for example, and according to John Anonby, Njoroge in *Weep Not, Child* portrays the childhood trauma caused by his educating oppressors. (240) When the character of Njoroge is at school and the teacher tries to review with him a lesson:



*Teacher What are you doing?*

*Njoroge (thinly) You are standing up.*

*Teacher slightly cross) What are you doing?*

*Njoroge (clears his throat, voice thinner still) You are standing up.*

*Tacher No, no! (to the class) Come on. What are you, you doing?*

(Ngugi 1964: 45)

After giving the wrong answer the teacher tries again later on with the whole class and they give wrong answers so she punishes them.

In his novels, Ngugi, though regarding Christianity as a threat to Kenyan identity, used Christian language and elements in *The River Between*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Devil on the Cross* and *Matigari* to show that colonialism affected Africa in so many different ways, even through religion. For instance, Kihika's Christ-like, self-sacrificing figure, and Matigari's symbolism of the spirit of truth and justice. (241)

In his quest, Matigari finds himself confused about what identity does he hold: the one of a warrior who fights settler Williams and his fellows, or that of a peacemaker to bring his people together. People have always wondered about this real identity of Matigari, as a sign that Kenyan people is in a constant search for their own identity. They don't really know who they are. They are struggling to find out their position in the new cultural atmosphere of Kenya. They still believe that one day Matigari wa Njariri will come to unveil their real identity and bring them back to their original culture and tradition. (255)

But in reality, this is also a reflection of the deep thoughts of Ngugi; in fact, he also wonders about his own identity after he came back from exile and found out how did his country become, he felt guilty using the colonizer's language that's why he shifted to Gikuyu, in his view this way is a more effective way to speak his mind and feel his selfhood.

Simon Gikandy in his book *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o* thinks that the notion of national identity in the works of Ngugi written in English could be best understood through the use of prophecy and conversion; the conversion from using Gikuyu for the sake of

traditions to using it for the sake of colonial stories. Gikandi thinks that these elements are present in *The River Between*:

*The two ridges lay side by side. One was Kameno, the other was Makuyu. Between them was a valley. It was called the valley of life. Behind Kameno and Makuyu were many more valleys and ridges, lying without any discernible plan. They were like many sleeping lions which never woke. They just slept, the big deep sleep of their Creator.*

*A river flowed through the valley of life. If there had been no bush and no forest trees covering the slope, you could have seen the river when you stood on top of either Kameno or Makuyu. Now you had to come down. Even then you could not see the whole extent of the river as it gracefully, and without any apparent haste, wound its way down the valley, like a snake. The river was called Honia, which meant cure, or bring-back-to-life. Honia river never dried: it seemed to have a strong will to live, scorning droughts and weather changes. And it went on in the same way, never hurrying, never hesitating. People saw this and were happy.*

*Honia was the soul of Kameno and Makuyu. It joined them. And men, cattle, wild beasts and trees, were all united by this life-stream (Ngugi 1965, 1)*

He thinks that this beginning draws our attention to “the Manichean geography of the colonial situation” and that these paragraphs insinuate that although Kameno and Makuyu were radically separated there still is a link between them somewhere. He also thinks that the first paragraph illustrates the constant link between the two communities and the following paragraphs stress the link between them in terms of identity and difference. This could also reflect the two edges of writing of Ngugi, the first one is his use of English; and we can say that even if he used English his origin was still there somewhere within proverbs and traditional stories, within his own culture depicted in his stories and his characters; and the second one is his shift to Gikuyu but there is still a link between the two somewhere in the new postcolonial condition.

To make things clear, Gikandi carries on explaining that this novel opens by stressing the symbolism of the river Honia as a symbol of “mutual identity” and a sign

of “radical separation”. He adds that the ridges forge their personality from the views of their leaders concerning traditions and colonial attitudes, but they speak their minds using the language of Christianity. That’s why Ngugi found it better to use the technique of prophecy to solve the problem of common identity and difference between two communities which come from basically the same background. (49-50)

So the people of the hills want to return to their past, a past full of prophecies and metaphysics, in a way to say that they are eager to return to their precolonial identity. This could be illustrated in the thoughts of people of the hills who consider Waiyaki the teacher as a “reincarnation” of their original dignity, and his school as a resistance to colonial practices.

*Waiyaki was overwhelmed by the warmth and enthusiasm with which his news had been received by the elders. [...] Kinuthia was moved not so much by the words as by the way in which Waiyaki said them. There was fire and conviction in them. Yet he wondered if Waiyaki knew that people wanted action now, that [...] people wanted to move forward. They could not do so as long as their lands were taken. [...] Waiyaki was the best man to lead people, not only to a new light through education, but also to new opportunities and areas of self-expression through political independence. (Ngugi 1965, 118)*

So here the teacher is portrayed as a prophet or deity for the people who counted on him to take them back to their original identity, that’s why Ngugi in this novel used the language of prophecies and the biblical language. Gikandi sets this example on purpose, he wants to prove that the power of this novel comes out of the awareness of Ngugi that “the narrative of communal regeneration” owes to the colonial language.

He argues that it is due to the displacement from traditions that the people of the hills like Waiyaki, in a way to show their identity out of this alienation. In this novel, Ngugi tells us a story of two communities on their way to understand that they form one unified cultural entity. Ngugi here, and according to Gikandi, criticizes the ones who say that they are culturally pure through using a language that shows that they are affected in a way or in another by colonial culture; but at the same time he tries to tell us that the ones who consider themselves as separate from their tribal past are in fact bound to it as it foreshadows their lives. (67-69) “*a man shall rise and save the people in*

*their hour of need. And he remembered his father, and Mugo wa Kibiro, Wachiori, Kamiri, Gikuyu and Mumbi [...]*” (Ngugi 1965, 146)

Alain Ricard, however, thinks that even if Ngugi has shifted to writing in his mother tongue, this doesn't mean that he completely omitted his literary culture, since he has been educated in the language of the colonizer. Ricard also thinks that Ngugi is making a mistake through thinking that he could drop the European influence through writing in Gikuyu. (197)

According to Gikandi in the book *Tongue and Mother Tongue*, Ngugi thought that the identity of Africa was dependent on the appropriation of the colonial language; but later he changed his mind and held the idea that returning to the mother tongue is the best way to regain one's national identity. (22) So Mbele translates Ngugi's shift from writing in English into writing in Gikuyu as follows: ***“(he) is bent on killing the father, the former colonial master, who, through a process of displacement, is represented by the colonizer's language”*** (Cited in Cantalupo 1995, 186) .

The goal of Ngugi was not language itself, but he aimed at Africanizing the language of the colonizer in a way to free the African literature and culture from colonial and imperial control or influence (28), whether through adapting the colonizer's language to African traditions, beliefs and space; or through rejecting it and replacing it with the mother tongue as a kind of rebellion against erasing the African identity and replacing it by the European identity. This doesn't deny the fact that Ngugi wanted to regain his identity through writing in Gikuyu. In *Moving the Centre* he wrote: ***“I wrote Matigari, a novel of return, in the Gikuyu language, and I felt a sense of belonging [...]***” (Ngugi 1993, 106)

The use of proverbs and idioms in his early works written in English is another proof that the language used in writing is but a vessel to convey messages all over the world, and to spread the experience of Africa during and after colonization it has nothing to do with identity. The identity is maintained in thoughts and beliefs, not in letters and words. No matters the language we use to express oneself, what matters is that we adapt it to our origins and our identity. And about the use of proverbs, Deborah Sundry writes: ***“... when writers create characters that use proverbs to express their thoughts, the writers are emphasizing their connection to ‘African culture and wisdom’ as well as an understanding of their ‘heritage and linguistic resources’”***

(Sundy 2010, 72) and to give examples, “ *Muriuki added salt to his story. Their thoughts grew wings*” (Ngugi 1987, 69); or, to add another example: “*One must never scorn a grain of sand or a drop of rain*” (Ngugi 1987, 89)

Gikandi carries on saying that this idea is vague, that “Ngugi was right to argue that the new African literature, by striving to Africanize European forms, was “*wearing false robes of identity*”(22)” (Olubunmi Smith 2002, 36). He says that the only way to establish an African literature is through divorcing the “colonial identity”. But Gikandi disagrees with Ngugi in the fact that language is the fabric that makes the “robes of identity”, he says that writing a novel in a native language doesn’t necessarily frame its identity. (36)

As Albert S. Gérard said, Ngugi started writing in English in clear way, then he introduced Gikuyu words and ideas bit by bit in his writings. He used traditional songs, folk tales and so on. But these words could lose their meaning in translation as for the word *mzee* which means old man in English, but which doesn’t convey the same connotation. In addition to the fact that English readers could get confused or feel lost in understanding the meaning of some words or ideas. (920)

And about the shift to writing in Gikuyu, Gikandi in *The World of Ngugi Wa Thiong’o* says: “*The language of Ngugi’s new writing, however, like many other African languages, exists primarily as an oral medium*” (Gikandi 2000, 180).

So, Ngugi shifted to writing in Gikuyu to create a feeling of belonging; belonging to his own people. And to strengthen this feeling, he tried his best to explore the traditions and beliefs of his people through writing about, and using, the myths and the language of prophecies; in addition to the use of songs and idiomatic expressions which is a prominent feature of the original language used by his own people. Or as they say, he used the technique of orality to reach all the layers of his people, and at the same time, to create a traditional atmosphere for him and for his readers and thus provide them with a sense of belonging and make them identify with his stories through his language.

By doing so, as Sundy Deborah assumes, Ngugi sort of bound his own identity with the language he uses in writing.(22) and it is obvious that even when he shifted to

writing in Gikuyu, he still uses English in his fiction, as a sign that he cannot deny his hybrid nature, a fact that could be understood through the literature he produces.

### **III- Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Take on Home and Place in His Novels:**

*I came back after the first term and confidently walked back to my old village. My home was now only a pile of dry mud-stones, bits of grass, charcoal and ashes. Nothing remained, not even the crops, except for a lone pear tree that slightly swayed in sun and wind. I stood there bewildered. Not only my home, but the old village with its culture, its memories and its warmth had been razed to the ground.*  
(*Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary*) (Cited in: Cantalupo 1995, 59)

Sundy Deborah in her dissertation proclaimed that the breaking of family ties and the displacement of homeland caused by colonization had been a tough experience for Ngugi as for Kenya. This loss is very significant for Kenyans, as Sundy quoted Loflin, *"landscape of Kenya is itself linked to the community's spiritual, social, and political identity. (1995:76)"* (Sundy 2010,23)

Ogut in *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya* asserts that Ngugi thinks to create home to Africans, those people in exile should come back to their original homes in what he calls a *"homecoming"*. After they come back, they have to take part in the making of their new homes. (232) This idea is based on the fact that the majority of African nations is in a state of being built, with the variety of people living in those countries which constitute a variety of identities brought together. (235) So, Ngugi defines home as the place where one's family lives, he states that through his novel *Devil on the Cross* when Gitutu says: *"As for my address, my real home is here at the Golden Heights, Ilmorog. I call it my 'real' home because it's where my wife and children live"* (Ngugi 1987: 100) for him this is what defines a real home because he carries on saying that he owns other houses; he does not even call them homes, in other places in Kenya but he feels his real home is Ilmorog where his family is. Home builds this sense of security for people who have been deprived from it for so long, as Ngugi wrote in *Weep Not, Child*: *"Kamau's going would lead to a final family break –up and ruin the cosy securiry which one felt in thinking of home"* (Ngugi 1963: 48)

That's why, according to Sundy, Ngugi through *Matigari* expressed that Matigari resented coming back home alone, and wanted to find his family first to take

them with him and share their home. She quotes Matigari as follows: ***“We shall enter the house together. We shall light the fire together. After all, the struggle was for the house wasn’t it?”*** (Sundy 2010, 35) This attachment to land and home is what made the basis of the struggle against colonialism and is what makes the basis now for the struggle to define oneself in this world. Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat* said: ***“Then nobody noticed it; but looking back we can see that Waiyaki’s blood contained within it a seed, a grain, which gave birth to a movement whose main strength thereafter sprang from a bond with the soil.”*** (Ngugi 1967: 12) It is obvious that the ties between postcolonial peoples and their lands are so strong that their lands became their reason of existing; they can no longer identify themselves away from their lands.

According to Gikandi in his book *Ngugi Wa Thiong’o*, the main theme that prevailed the novels of Ngugi in the period between 1963 and 1968 was that of “homeward journey” experienced by those prisoners who came back home to find that it is not the same as they imagined it. They found their home suffering of displacement. (29) For instance, in *The River Between*, he has shown how society didn’t grasp the aspect of individualism that forged the new identity. His writings revolve mainly around aspects which form identity such as land, household and community. (40-41) As example we can take what Ngugi has written in his novel *Devil on the Cross*:

***Kenya is our country. We were born here. We were given this land by God, and we redeemed it from the hands of our enemies with our own blood. Today you see us clothed in rags, but we, the Peasants and the workers, are the same People who were around at the time of Kimaathi. No, look at me closely again. I am not a thief. I am not a robber. If you want to know who the real thieves and robbers are, follow me and I will show you their lairs and caves in Ilmorog. Give me a few policemen, and we’ll go right now to arrest the thieves and robbers who have always troubled us. I don’t know about Nairobi or other places, but in Ilmorog, our Ilmorog, thieves and robbers don’t even bother to hide.*** (Ngugi 1987: 40)

This is to say that Gikuyu people stick to their lands, when they came back they found their lands gone, taken by people who looked like Gikuyu people, but who apparently wore the robes of the colonial power or by white people. Ngugi refers to them here as thieves who don’t have to hide but who trouble the others since they are

not like them and want to drive them to become westernized. The original people were displaced and treated as robbers, they were homeless and they want to retrieve their lands from the ones who stole them from them. But unfortunately the real thieves are the ones who found out their position in society, and the authentic individuals could not simply fit in.

For instance, as Simon Gikandi in *The World of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o* explains, Gikuyu people fought for their lands against the white man to come back and find their lands taken and their homes destroyed, so they certainly felt displaced. In *Weep Not, Child* for example, they say:

*My father and many others had been moved from our ancestral lands. He died lonely, a poor man waiting for the white man to go. Mugo had said this would come to be. The white man didn't go and he died a Muhoi on this very land. It then belonged to Chahira before he sold it to Jacobo. I grew up here, but working ... (here Ngotho looked all around the silent faces and then continued) ... working on the land that belonged to our ancestors .... 'You mean the land that Howland farms?' Boro's voice was cracked, but clear. 'Yes. The same land. My father showed it all to me. I have worked there too, waiting for the prophecy to be fulfilled'. (Ngugi 1964, 25-26)*

They came to find their lands gone or divided, they are no longer the same lands they had left, and they felt confused and displaced. (167) And about this notion of land, Ngugi always draws a relation between land, home and nation.

So land or place could be felt as home in any way, and through whatever means, like what Rosemary Marangoly George said about what happened to Ngugi when he transformed an event he witnessed into a scene about the nostalgia for the homeland in "*Homecoming*", he said:

*One day I heard a song. I remember the scene so vividly: the women who sang it are now before me – their sad faces and their plaintive melody. I was then ten or eleven. They were being forcibly ejected from the land they occupied and sent to another part of the country so barren that people called it the land of black rocks. This was the gist of their song:*



*And there will be great joy*

*When our lands comes back to us*

*For Kenya is the country of black people.*

*And you our children*

*Tighten belts around your waist*

*So you will one day drive away from this land*

*The race of white people*

*For truly, Kenya is a black man's country.*

*They were in a convoy of lorries, caged but they had one voice. They sang of a common loss and hope and I felt their voice rock the earth where I stood literally unable to move. (Cited in George 1996, 14)*

This shows the strong sense of belonging that these women express; they show it in terms of time and space. She continues to say that some writers imagine places as homes through articulating them in simple events that evoke memories from home. (14-15)

This sense of home and belonging reflects on the writings of Ngugi. For; as Hilary Chala Kowino in her dissertation entitled *The Problem of Home and Space in African Literature: Reconciling Multiple Belongings and Unbelongings in the Global Age* says, Ngugi wants to regenerate his pre-colonial identity through his character Matigari.

To explain more, she adds that Matigari fought for the independence of his country then came back to find out that his land is no longer the same; he struggles to find out his place in the new home which seems to be a foreign homeland. She carries on saying that the displacement of Matigari “allegorizes” the fact that ex-colonized communities try hard to come back home which becomes a strange space for them, and then they no longer belong to it, or they find it hard to identify with it.

This part of *Matigari* illustrates best the feeling of these people and thus the feeling of Ngugi:

*Many questions crossed his mind. He thought about Muriuki and about all his people. When he had come out of the forest, he had thought that the task of bringing his family together was going to be an easy one. But now? It was already afternoon, and he had not yet made contact with his own; he didn't even know where or how he would begin his search. (Ngugi 1987, 26)*

So here, and as Kowino explains, Matigari cannot reach his people not because he doesn't know where they are, but because they are in front of him and he doesn't recognize them; they have been transformed.(115) He certainly feels lost and dislocated since he is at home, among his own people, but he can't recognize them; as if he were not at home. And the allegory here is that Matigari was in a forest wandering, just like Ngugi who was in his exile, and then he came out of the forest to regain his home which in fact he finds it but no longer recognizes it, and no longer fits in it.

Ngugi also stresses the meaning of land for him and his people. According to Brendon Nicholls, possessing a land means holding a valuable social and economic status; something that helps in the strengthening of one's personality and sense of identity. For, Ngugi writes in *Weep Not, Child*:

*Any man who had land was considered rich. If a man had plenty of money, many motor cars, but no land, he could never be counted as rich. A man who went with tattered clothes but had at least an acre of red earth was better off than the man with money.(Ngugi 1964, 35)*

This, as Nicholls adds, was a reference to soldiers who were prevented from owning lands.(19). But here, it is obvious that this is a special reference to the fact that if one doesn't have land, this implicates that he doesn't have a sense of belonging or importance in his society; land is an important marker of belonging in Africa. Nicholls resumes the meaning of home for Ngugi in *A Grain of Wheat* as being the synonym of nation. He carries on saying: "If home is nation in this novel, then Kenya ends up as a nation divided" (Nicholls 2010, 108). We may illustrate this with what Ngugi wrote in his novel *A Grain of Wheat*:

*'We confessed. I would have done anything to come back home.'*

*'You had a wife. And a mother.'*

*[...] We talked of loyalty to the movement and the love of our country. You know a time came when I did not care about Uhuru for the country any more. I just wanted to come home. And I would have sold Kenya to the white man to buy my own freedom. [...] You see, people like you, who refused to betray your beliefs, showed us what we ought to be like—but we lacked true bones in the flesh. We were cowards.'*

*'It was not cowardice. I would have done the same.'*

*'Why didn't you?'*

*'You want to know, do you?' Mugo said, forgetting himself.*

*Then the temptation fled away.*

*'I had no home to come to', he said quietly, without emotion. (Ngugi 1967, 68)*

Here we notice with no doubt that people in Kenya are divided into two categories, those who fought for the independence of their country at any cost, and those who would have sold it at any moment; those who have a strong sense of nationalism and belonging, and those who have been injected a feeling of loss and unbelonginness. But in either way both categories are dislocated.

Furthermore, Nicholls says that Ngugi uses a “utopian rhetoric” to talk about home as basically dependent upon men and women relationships that build that home. (109) This could also be illustrated with what Ngugi wrote in *Wizard of the Crow*: ‘... *man, woman, and child compose a home, and if one pillar is weak, the family is weak, and if the family is weak, the nation is weak. So what happens in a home is the business of the family and the other way round. (133)*” (Nicholls 2010, 179).

To explain further the notion of land and its powerful link to home and identity, we may support this idea with what Gikandi in his book *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o* quoted from Ngugi's book *Secret Lives and Other Stories*:

*From ridge up to ridge the neat little shambas stood bare. The once short and beautiful hedges – the product of land consolidation and the pride of farmers in our district, were dry and powdered with dust. Even the old mugumo tree that stood just below our village, and*

*which was never dry, lost its leaves and its greenness – the living greenness that had always scorned short-lived droughts. Many people had forecast doom. Weather-prophets and medicine men – for some still remain in our village though with diminished power – were consulted by a few people and all forecast doom. (Secret Lives, pp. 15-16). (Gikandi 2000, 42)*

Gikandi here carries on explaining this passage saying that it could be understood as a symbol of colonization, or the loss of land to the colonizer. But darkness and dry lands could also denote the blanks that set apart the individual from his community or from his homeland, his natural territory. (42)

Ngugi describes this notion also in his novel *The River Between*, when he sort of mourns what life used to be like in the past and what it comes to be now. Because, according to Gikandi, Ngugi postulates that the life in the land of Gikuyu is not the same as it was created for. (167)

*It was before Agu; in the beginning of things. Murungu brought the man and woman here and again showed them the whole vastness of the land. He gave the country to them and their children and the children of the children, tene na tene, world without end. Do you see here? (Ngugi 1965, 18)*

That is, the land for the Gikuyu people used to be a symbol for a vast home where the original mother and father, Gikuyu and Mumbi, lived and had as children all the Gikuyu people. They lived together as one big family on their land which constitutes their home.

As a matter of fact, Ngugi injects the notion of home and belonging because he believes that his task as a writer is to give his people a place to identify with, that's why he extensively refers to the notion of home and belonging in his writings. He is quoted by M.S.C Okolo in his book *African Literature as Political Philosophy* as follows: ***“It is the duty of the African writer to help in the struggle of building a place for African masses to feel at home (Ngugi 1972: 46)”*** (Okolo 2007, 102).

This is set as a sign that all African peoples are displaced, including him, and are constantly in the search of self and origins to define their identity. Since Ngugi had as

home, and for many years, prison and exile. This idea could be extended through this passage from *Petals of Blood*:

*You should know that this world is not our home and we should be preparing them and ourselves for the next one'. 'Don't worry, I myself have never belonged to this world ... even to Limuru ... Maybe Ilmorog ... for a change. (Ngugi 1977, 16)*

This feeling of unbelonging to any place leads some people to escape home, this could be illustrated through what Ngugi wrote in *Petals of Blood*: ***“Munira had been so convinced that this world was wrong, was a mistake, that he wanted all his friends to see this and escape in time”*** (Ngugi 1977, 332) This happens mainly to the elite who had a colonizer’s education and who find themselves caught in a trap since they long desperately to fit in their societies but they are always perceived as aliens since they hold colonial thoughts.

Thus, this feeling of unbelonging may emerge out of the feeling of insecurity, both at home and abroad: ***“Is this not what has been happening in Kenya since 1896? So I said to myself: a black man is not safe at home; a black man is not safe abroad. What then is the meaning of it all?”*** (Ngugi 1977, 165)

That’s why Ngugi in his book *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* said in his own words: ***“The nightmare of the latter half of the twentieth century is the fear that human creation, the Bomb, has come to threaten the very existence of the human race, and indeed all life. A universal sense of exile, of not really belonging, still haunts humankind.”*** (Ngugi 1993, 108)

He says that this notion of sense of belonging naturally means a sense of the identity which constitutes a part of the psychological being. (77) For this, he awaits any moment, any gesture or any movement to recall his memories. He tries to identify with things around him but he calls them a “second home” as he says: ***“For the last six years I have lived in Islington, and this self-contained urban village near the heart of London has become a kind of second home”*** (Ngugi 1993, 155)

In a way or in another, Ngugi portrays not only his own sense of home, but his people’s too. For instance, and as Raji Wumi asserts, the newly emergent Kenyan cities are chaotic since they are ruled by bourgeois people who feel a great pride with the

expropriation of lands like what the colonizer did before to displace people and erase their identity. Raji sets what happened to Gikonyo and Munira as follows:

*We remember how the Member of Parliament plays out Gikonyo in A Grain of Wheat as the latter struggles to purchase a parcel of land in Nairobi, and how Munira, Wanja and Abdulla are in Petals of Blood eventually consigned to the periphery of the social formation in Modern Ilmorog, a city that developed out of their sweat and determination. (Raji , 113)*

Unfortunately, this land fell apart with the arrival of the colonizer; that's why according to Gikandi and Mwangi in their guide, the two first novels of Ngugi, *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between*, depict the alienation of Kenyan people and African people by the colonizer from their homelands. (122) And his later novels depict the alienation of individuals in the newly formed society; as held before, they no longer recognize their homes so they no longer fit in them; and to put the world into picture of these facts, Ngugi writes about it in his novels as to what happened to Mugo in kind of not only alienation from home but a spiritual alienation as Ogude frames it in *Ngugi's Novels and African History: Narrating the Nation*. (90)

*People did not believe him. Some even poured scorn on him, laughing at him, [...]The seer was rejected by people of the ridges. They gave him no clothes and no food. He became bitter and hid himself, refusing to tell them more. He went beyond the hills, to the world yonder, the whole extent of Gikuyu land. [...] Here they thought him dead. But disguised he came back here and settled.*  
(Ngugi 1965, 19)

So here it is an image of how his people became spiritually alienated, and how they alienated him and perceived him as an Other; he felt displaced and alienated so he tried hard to change himself just to fit in his society.

Another aspect of home, which is present in Ngugi's work, is the dilemma of the "love of place" which undermines the identity that is built around the aspects of home, land and community; and the "experience of change" which is undermined by the arrival of the colonizer and the life in the modern world, as pointed out Gikandi in his

book *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o*. He carries on saying that this kind of literature proves that Ngugi is attached to his land. He says:

*This task must begin with the simple observation that Ngugi's love of place, and his experience of change, generates a certain aesthetic form: it is the love of place that makes his Gikuyu physical and cultural landscape – and its multiple conflicts and identities – the raw materials for the early fiction.* (Gikandi 2000, 41).

This notion of home is very crucial to any individual especially those affected by the process of colonization. In fact, it's all about land and home as illustrated in the novels of Ngugi. People work and get educated to have a better home and feel that they fit in, it's the same that happened to the character of Kamau in *Weep Not, Child* when he told his brother: ***“Don't worry about me. Everything will be alright. Get education, I'll get carpentry. Then we shall, in the future, be able to have a new and better home for the whole family”*** (Ngugi 1964: 4) So Ngugi tries to create a link between him and his land through his writings as a compensation for the alienation that he together with his people suffered from, during and after colonization. (40-41)

All this makes it clear how home and its components, such as the extremely important notion of land, are very crucial to African people, in fact to all the people of the world. They constitute an irrefutable part of their legacy, a part of their personality. For, and as stated before, owning land means to African people owning social status and self-esteem. In addition to the fact that land creates a sense of belonging to a place to avoid the feeling of loss and displacement.

That's why Francis Ngaboh-Smart describes land as being a mystical phenomenon which is eminent to “self-formation”. He finds that the following passage from Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child*, taken from the story of Ngotho about the land, better illustrates the idea:

*The creator who is called Murungu took Gikuyu and Mumbi from his holy mountain. He took them to the country of ridges near Siriana and there stood them on a big ridge before he finally took them to Mukuruwe wa Gathanga about which you have heard so much. But he has shown them all the languages, children, God showed Gikuyu and Mumbi all the land and told them, ‘This land I*

*hand over to you. O man and woman it's yours to till in serenity  
sacrificing only to me, your God, under my sacred tree.11 (Ngaboh-  
Smart 2004 ,82)*

According to the interpretation of Ngaboh-Smart, the notion of land in Kenya “has spiritual associations”. As a matter of fact, Ngotho speaks like that about the land because he doesn’t consider it as a mere property which could be added to one’s wealth; on the contrary, he sees in it the spiritual bond between him, his God and his ancestors.

Ngaboh-Smart carries on saying that “place is endowed with a specific potency for generating a sense of identity” (Ngaboh-Smart 2004, 83). (82-83) To better illustrate this, we have to explore the relationship between home and writing. Reena Mitra reflects on this subject saying that, although the exile of Ngugi has been “self-imposed” he reveals that the migration status in which he has been put never endowed him with a “sense of belonging”. Mitra quotes his own words “*You are always on the outside. And then you begin to create an imaginary home—you think about it all the time’ [...] ‘In order to feel connected, I try to reach home by writing, by having a dialogue with home.’*” (Mitra 2005, 136)

Hilary Chala Kowino in her dissertation entitled *The Problem of Home and Space in African Literature: Reconciling Multiple Belongings and Unbelongings in the Global Age* asserted that it is not an easy task to deal with this topic in a few space. She thinks that it is now problematic to locate home within the state of globalization in which the world is living now. (26)

For, and as Rowland Smith postulates, this notion of home depends on what he calls the “homely” and the “unhomely”; since we live in a globalized world were people opt for the notion of sameness. Furthermore, these writers attempt to create, or recreate, an original home for them while they can’t escape the fact that their hybridity helps them feel at home wherever they go. For this reason, Smith quotes Fenwick when he says:

*Just as Brathwaite writes from within an authentically West Indian nation language, Ngugi writes from within an authentically African novel genre, both of which are the result of a cross-cultural process that rejects iconoclastic notions of cultural purity in favour of a vision of cultural forms as inherently partial, relational and*



*processional. The claim of authenticity in both cases is predicated upon the existence of cultural hybridity. Authenticity can thus be defined in these cases as the raising to consciousness of the processes of cross-cultural exchange. (184) (Smith 2000, 09)*

#### **IV- Hybridity and multiculturalism in the novels of Ngugi:**

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is among the writers who think that hybridity is one of the prominent aspects which determine what is an authentic literature. Mac Fenwick pointed out that: "*Ngugi create[s] authentic local forms by rejecting iconoclasm of absolute terms and raising to consciousness the very processes of cross-cultural exchange that are the genesis of local tradition.*" (Smith 2000, 184)

He also stated that for Ngugi a novel is the property of traditions and cultures, and thus the language or the style used in that novel is forcibly a product of hybrid and impure procedure; therefore, could certainly be considered as authentic. And in Fenwick's words, Ngugi holds the viewpoint that an authentic novel relies on "a rising consciousness of the cross-cultural processes of hybridization"; or as they call it "creolization"; to say that any cross-cultural or migrant intellectual could take part in the procedure of "cross-cultural exchange". (186) This cross-culturalism is explored in Ngugi's novels through what he says through Rev. Jackson :

*Ngai, the Gikuyu God, is the same One God who sent Christ, the son, to come and lead the way from darkness into the light,' Jackson would reason out, trying to show that the Christian faith had roots in the very traditions revered by the Gikuyu.*" (Ngugi 1967: 83)

Here what Ngugi wants to say is that African people in a way or another became multi-cultural and hybridized in every aspect of their lives. They not only adopted western ways and replaced them with their own ways, but they also took from the western culture and ascribed it to their own culture. This could be supported by what Ngugi wrote in *Decolonizing the Mind*:

*What they [European-language-speaking members of the comprador neo-colonial class] have produced despite any claims to the contrary, is not African literature ... What we have created is another hybrid tradition, a tradition in transition, a minority*

*tradition that can only be termed as Afro-European literature; that is, the literature written by Africans in European languages.*(1986:26) (Smith 2000, 183)

From this passage we understand that for Ngugi what determines a literature as being African and authentic is language. If a piece of literature is written in a European language, it is not authentically African even if it depicts African societies, traditions and identities. For him, it is deeply necessary to write in the “nation language”.

Ngugi in a way or in another rejects the use of a Creole language giving the reason that the cross-cultural exchange can happen through the use of African languages in African literature to universalize the experience of Africa. Fenwick postulates that although Ngugi rejects the use of Creole languages in the process of cross-cultural exchange, he keeps on framing what he calls his “anti-imperial cultural struggle” with the occurrence of hybridization and cross-culturalism. He goes on explaining that as an alternative to linguistic creolity or hybridization, Ngugi hybridized the genre through writing “a novel in an African language”. Since for him, this genre existed before as oral folk tales; so, it is not really European neither it is African.

So, for Ngugi, as Fenwick asserted, the immanent hybrid feature is the key for generating an authentic African novel. (183-185) That’s the same as what Brenda Cooper in her book *Magical Realism in West Africa Fiction: Seeing With a Third Eye* said about Ngugi and other writers such as Soyinka and Achebe, that these writers are home wherever they go, and they have “appropriated global intellectual and aesthetic traditions” together with their original ones.

Thus for her, even if Ngugi rejects the fact of hybridization he can’t help being hybridized in a way or another. Because, and in Cooper’s words: “[...] *Africa and its writers and intellectuals have not been isolated from global developments and networks, that the past which is excavated is, in fact, constructed, within new contexts and with vastly new tools for the job.*” (Cooper 1998, 58) So, African identities cannot deny the fact that they are hybridized in a way or another.

For this, Peter Simatei in his essay *Hybrid Identities and Cultural Pluralism in East African Asian Writing* assumes that the fiction of Ngugi approves that the construction of national identity can’t be separated from the “experiences and histories”

of the writer and his people; traditional experiences mixed with new ones. Like in the case of the description of Ilmorog in *Petals of Blood*: “[...] *the heart of new Ilmorog, where the light and smoke and the roar of a distant machine announced that a night shift of workers continued the relay to keep the factory roaring its pride and power over Ilmorog*” (Ngugi 1977, 295) Here he talks about alien sounds which became familiar to the Gikuyu people through experience, and became crucial to their personalities, the old Ilmorog they knew added to its shape features of the modern world. Not only this, he speaks about western influence over all African aspects of life; in *Devil on the Cross* he says:

*These countries are finding it difficult to stave off poverty for the simple reason that they have taken it upon themselves to learn how to run their economies from American experts. So they have been taught the principles and system of self-interest and have been told to forget the ancient songs that glorify the notion of collective good. They have been taught new songs, new hymns that celebrate the acquisition of money* (Ngugi 1987: 10)

As a sign that people of Nairobi are no longer the same, they adopted western ways of thinking and forgot about their real identities. They became more material and forgot about their values concerning collectivity. So the colonizer came in and tried to implant this notion within colonized people to succeed in its mission but the colonized people did not yield to this attempt; but soon after colonization it seems that this idea was in fact implanted in their minds. This does not mean that they have lost their traditions and values, but they changed some of them and added new strange ones.

To better support this idea we can also make reference to teacher Muniu, in the novel *A Grain of Wheat*, while teaching his pupils that circumcising women is no good tradition he says:

*Teacher Muniu talked of the circumcision of women and called it a heathen custom.*

*‘As Christians we were forbidden to carry on such practices.’*

*‘Excuse me, sir!’*

*‘Yes Kihika.’[...]*

*'That is not true, sir.'*

*'What!'*

*Even Teacher Muniu seemed scared by the sudden silence. Some of the boys hid their faces, excited yet fearing that the wrath of the teacher might reach them.*

*'It's just the white people say so. The Bible does not talk about circumcising women'* (Ngugi 1967: 85-86)

Here we can see the struggle among postcolonial people themselves; which could probably refer to a struggle within the mind of the writer, when it comes to new ideas concerning traditions. The teacher as belonging to the elite believes that this part of his tradition is not a civilized way to treat women and thus should be thrown away just because westerners say so, and he believes in their superiority, for this he uses all the ways to convince his people too; but he finds himself on the other side faced by a boy who still sticks to his traditions and at the same time sees the westerners as aliens who should not be followed at any cost.

Simatei thinks that in *Matigari* for instance Ngugi pointed out that the diverse identities of Africa can melt within a uniformly national history; however he demonstrates how difficult it is for that national history to base itself upon tradition. And this is illustrated in how difficult it is to fuse the nationalism of *Matigari* with the strong ambitions of Ngaruro wa Kiriro, the leader of workers. As a reference to the fact that pre-colonial identity cannot find its way in the new world order, without fusing some of the latter's features with it.

So, as Simatei postulated, *"Matigari reveals that Ngugi is engaged in a struggle with voices outside the text; voices that obviously suggest alternative ways of grappling with the postcolonial condition."* (Singh and Chetty 2010, 164) He carries on saying that even if Ngugi subdued the other voices, the very fact of their existence proves the heterogeneity of the nation. (162-164)

That's why Laura Wright suggests that the attempt to regain a pre-colonial past is out of reach. That's obvious in what Karega in *Petals of Blood* wished for, that a new hybrid life in Ilmorog could mean a good life on this wholly new world. (36) *"She talked of a new earth, another world, that knew no classes and clans, that leveled the*

*poor and the wealthy, [...] not learning; not positions; not good work: just acceptance ...*” (Ngugi 1977, 298) as a sign to what Wright suggested before, that the old life can never be regained, and that people have to deal with the new hybrid reality and wish for a better life.

This hybrid world begun as a cut between what Nicholls calls “western Christianity and Gikuyu traditionalism”. The characters that live in that world are thus for him hybrid. He says that this could be illustrated in Ngugi’s novel *The River Between*, where the title in itself is an anecdote to the notion of “in-betweeness” in which the river Honia finds itself in the middle of two conflicting identities. Just like Muthoni who is also considered as example of the cultural struggle within Kenyan society and the multiculturalism of the new generation as she claims her desire to be Christian, a fundamental feature in the white man’s identity and culture, but at the same time to follow her Gikuyu traditions and be circumcised. (44)

*‘Father and mother are circumcised. Are they not Christians? Circumcision did not prevent them from being Christians. I too have embraced the white man’s faith. However, I know it is beautiful, oh so beautiful to be initiated into womanhood.*

*You learn the ways of the tribe. Yes, the white man’s God does not quite satisfy me. I want, I need something more. My life and your life are here, in the hills, that you and I know.’ (Ngugi 1965, 26)*

Nicholls carries on saying that the hybridity of Muthoni could be illustrated later on in the novel when she tells Waiyaki: *“I am still a Christian, see, a Christian in the tribe. Look, I am a woman and I will grow big and healthy in the tribe”* (Nicholls 2010, 45)

There is also the example of the educated élite who finds itself caught between two conflicting identities as represented by Waiyaki who is driven into Gikuyu traditions such as circumcision through his father’s teachings and at the same time who is educated in the Siriana mission school. His education puts into his head the illusion that he can liberate his people from their oppressive traditions through educating them in his turn. (47).

Edward Winston Babatunde Woode in his dissertation entitled *Alterity and Hybridity in Anglophone Postcolonial Literature: Ngugi, Achebe, p'Bitek and Nwapa*, asserted that although Ngugi rejected and opposed the Westernization of African literature, he himself happens to be a product of the western canon since he often uses quotations of Western writers in his writings like William Shakespeare, Walt Whitman and even from the bible. He also assumes that Ngugi's novels *The River Between*, *Weep Not, Child*, and *A Grain of Wheat* were all written to unveil the struggle of Kenyans against Western ways.

Waiyaki for instance, as Woode explains, constitutes "an agent of change" in society that cannot escape this fact (the necessity of change); and the solution for him is "Western education". (21-22) This struggle to choose a status between traditions and western culture could be also clearly portrayed in *Matigari* when he addressed John Boy and Robert Williams saying:

*We are the patriots who survived: Matigari ma Njiruungi! And many more of us are being born each day. John Boy, you shall not sleep in my house again. It's either you or me and the future belongs to me! (Ngugi 1987, 124)*

As a sign to the fact that people have to choose either way, and because of Ngugi's nationalist ideology, he wants them to choose the second side, the original identity; a very difficult thing regarding the hybrid nature of the African society. And this can be better illustrated in what Kareendi in *Devil on the Cross* said when her friends tried to convince her that she should change her way of life to fit in the new Kenya, but Kareendi courageously answered them: "***A borrowed necklace may lead to the loss of one's own***" (Ngugi 1987: 15). So this character chose to stick to her "own necklace" and live a simple soft life; be her own self, rather than "borrow a necklace" that might probably not fit in, and cause her misfortunes and hardships that she cannot get away from in her life.

Woode also reveals the fact of the in-betweenness of the Kenyan society which finds itself roaming from the side of traditions and origins to the other side of new ideas and perspectives of the modern world through the position of the elders in *The River Between*, he says: "**The elders are divided. They back Kabonyi's efforts to preserve Gikuyu culture, but also admire Waiyaki's passion for spreading education.**"

**Young Gikuyus give Waiyaki their wholehearted support.”** (Woode 200, 23). For him, this novel reveals the multiplicity of voices that hunt the author.

However, Ngugi in this novel seems to hold a position against the hybridization of culture, he wants his people to remain culturally pure, as Woode argues; he does not want his people to conflate traditional behaviors with Western ways. Woode here points out that Gikuyus are not really concerned with colonization as they are with hybridization of their people, as a sign to Muthoni and Waiyaki. (23-24)

Woode gives another example about hybridity from *Petals of Blood*. He states that they wear European clothes, drink European beer and listen to European songs; they also fuse their traditional thoughts and ideas with western ways.(66)Ngugi wrote:

*young men gyrating their bodies in front of the juke-box; young men in tight American jeans and huge belts studded with shiny metal stars, leaning against the walls by the juke-box ... chewing gum or breaking match-sticks between their teeth with the abandoned nonchalance of cowboys in the American Wild West I once saw in a film; young men and bar girls trying out the latest step. To hell with singers [Munira ruminates]. To hell with Wanja and her stories ... We were all strangers ... in our land of birth (Petals of Blood 101) (Woode 2001, 83)*

This is to say that people of Ilmorog have lost their original identity to the west. They no longer know who they are; they hold neither their traditional identity, nor the Westernized identity; they are hybrid.

So, this novel is certainly a perfect example of what a hybrid writer and literature is. It admires at length the ability of Ngugi to use Western texts in his context and subverting them at the same time. This is what Ngugi does when he incorporates Gikuyu words all over his novels written in English such as the word “mzee” which stands for “old man”, “Mswahili” for “Swahili-speaker”, “ndungu” for “market place”, or “mwalimu” for teacher.

Furthermore, Evan Mwangi in the book *Chewing Over the West: Occidental Narratives in Non-Western Readings*, strongly supports the idea of Woode that the language that Ngugi uses in his fiction is hybridized, even the language of the novels

written in Gikuyu. Mwangi gives the example of the word “riikakiraci” which denotes “an ideal Gikuyu form of government”; in addition that this word contains two parts, the first part is “riika (age-set)” and the second part is “kraci” which is derived from the word “democracy”, so it was borrowed from English in the end.

In addition to the fact that, as Mwangi assumes, in the novels written in Gikuyu, Ngugi resents the use of English by Africans and satirizes them but he does so in the form of injected dialogues throughout the novel. (83) Mwangi here states the example of John Boy who says to the minister *“I am an Anglophile and Proud of it”*. Later on, in *Matigari*, William and Boy talk to each other in English, and their conversations are written in the English language although *Matigari* was originally written in Gikuyu:

*‘Bob, the fellow now claims to know your dad.’*

*‘My father? He disappeared in the forest years ago ... fate unknown... but*

*Presumed dead...’*

*‘Yes...together with my old man...don’t I know?’*

*‘Ask him what happened to them. This play is more exciting than our*

*Evening rides.’* (Cited in Jedamski 2009, 84)

The argument of Mwangi here is that even if Ngugi claims that he used English since it is the language of the colonizer and it best conveys the situation to the reader, he roams far away from his main objective of shifting to Gikuyu in the first place; since his readership here is supposed to be an authentic Gikuyu audience.(84) So here, he assumes in a way or another that his audience is a hybrid one and his characters are hybridized too. That’s why Mwangi commented as follows:

*This is because the Gikuyu language in postcolonial Kenya is affected by English, and Ngugi’s very use of the language as it is spoken in society engenders hybrid texts that are inevitably Anglophone even if they use a local language as their medium of communication. The novels further mix African folklore with*



*European modes of self-expression to decolonize the novel as an elitist Western form.* (Jedamski 2009, 82)

So Ngugi tends to mix some Gikuyu language in his novels written in English, as he uses English in his novels written in Gikuyu; as Woode puts it, in the novels written in English, Ngugi mixes Gikuyu in his characters' utterances; and that is the feature of a hybrid writer who is striving to refuse the idea that the colonial text is present in his writings; in fact, for Woode, Ngugi injects this hybrid characteristic in the reflection of his characters on purpose. (71-72) Mwangi adds, so to speak, ***“Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Ngugi’s novels speak their artistic Gikuyu with a strong English accent...”***(82).

It is true that this hybrid feature comes from the multicultural atmosphere that produced Kenyan society. As Jacqueline Bardolph asserted that novels like *Devil on the Cross* or *Matigari* represent the multiculturalism of the African society, at the same time, they rely mostly on the affirmation of the ethnic identities of those societies. (89)

In fact, Katrina Daly Thompson states the argument that Charles Mungoshi attempted to translate *A Grain of Wheat* into Shona, the language of Zimbabwe, he translated a text written in three languages (English, Swahili, and Gikuyu). Thompson says:

*In comparing the two texts in this chapter, I reconstruct the translation strategies Mungoshi uses to transfer aspects of culture from English, Swahili and Gikuyu (in Ngugi’s text) into shona. I argue that through creative translation strategies, Mungoshi transforms a multicultural text (English, Swahili and Gikuyu) into a mono-cultural (Shona) one.* (Pultar 2005, 142)

Sundy affirms the multiculturalism of Ngugi and his audience saying that he wrote for culturally diverse and multilingual audiences which he himself confirms that they have no problems in fitting in “a local, multicultural or regional identity” (74). Thus, and in Woode’s words, ***“Despite Ngugi’s criticism of Western influences on African intellectuals and writers, he himself is a thoroughly Westernized author ...”*** (87)

Although Ngugi does not opt for hybridized identities and multiculturalism, he asserted many times through his writings that his characters oscillate between two different cultural sides, as stated before, the side of traditional practices which Ngugi strongly opts for, and the side of Western values which he totally rejects. This state of in-betweenness is explained by Woode as follows: *“In-betweenness of characters is the result of their having two or more ‘other’ identities inhabiting their postcolonial subjectivity. The characters are different because they are differently hybridized; their cultural and ideological dualism, their simultaneity [...] is dialogized”* (Woode 2001, 74)

And this in-betweenness and expression of multiculturalism and hybridity is but a reflection of the status of Ngugi himself. He mirrors his state, which he is not satisfied with, through his writings.

### **V- Otherness in the novels of Ngugi:**

Franz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* asserted that the colonizer through his ongoing quest to negate the Other forced the colonized to ask himself a very intriguing question about himself, and that question is: “Who am I in reality?” (Fanon 2004, 182). And this could be illustrated in what people ask about the personality of Matigari as who he was. Sundry claims that through this novel Ngugi wanted to insinuate that Africans have to choose between incarnating the person of Matigari, or being an “Other” in their own country. (33) So the world of Matigari is divided into two worlds: *“‘There are two worlds’, Matigari said to the teacher. ‘There is the world of those who accept things as they are, and there is that of those who want to change things. Which world do you belong to?’”* (Ngugi 1987, 91)

This split in the African world occurs in the first place because of the hegemony that the colonizer creates towards the colonized; and the “west” applies on the “rest”. Then Ngugi holds, as Gikandi postulated, a “utopian desire for a ‘non-alienated mode of cognition” (Gikandi 2000, 12). This concept of Otherness however does not apply only in terms of colonizer/ colonized, it could exist in the same society among people who share the same background or within the same person. This can be illustrated in the character of Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross*:

*Wariinga was convinced that her appearance was the root of all her problems. Whenever she looked at herself in the mirror she thought herself very ugly. What she hated most was her blackness, so she*

*would disfigure her body with skin-lightning creams like Ambi and Snowfire, forgetting the saying: That which is born black will never be white. Now her body was covered with light and dark spots like the guineafowl. (Ngugi 1987: 5)*

This shows that Wariinga is having an inner struggle to determine who she wants to be. She does not want to be black but can do nothing about it; she tries everything to seem to be white but does not succeed in it. All she gets is a make belief that she is white from the outside but she remains black from the inside even if she doesn't want to be so. She now is an Other to herself. She tries to convince herself that she can be more white than that, she doesn't want to surrender to the fact that she is black: *"Wariinga also hated her teeth. They were a little stained; they were not as white as he should have liked them to be."* (Ngugi 1987: 5)

In *The River Between*, this idea could be best illustrated with the Kameno and Makuyu which constitute an Other for each other. It could be also illustrated, as Woode suggests, in the duel between missionaries and tribesmen. This duality is present within the character of Kabonyi, as a sign that Otherness can exist within one person also as having more than one self. There exists a kind of dualisms strongly connected to the notion of Otherness, for example Kabonyi perceives Waiyaki as a traitor while Waiyaki perceives himself as a modernist who opts for the progress of his own people.(27)

This is to say that hybridity strengthened the feeling of Otherness within a society that supposedly shares the same traditions, the same beliefs and culture. In addition to this sense of Otherness within the same society, Ngugi portrays the sense of Otherness between the tribesmen and the Westerners. The tribe "others" together see the Western culture as an "Other", and this, as Woode suggests, could be illustrated in the operation of circumcision that the Gikuyu people cannot get rid of, whether they are Christian or not; they are united against Western beliefs. So the white man here is the real Other in Kenya. (29) This fact can be illustrated in the way Karanja, in *A Grain of Wheat*, found himself in the dilemma of maintaining a good image both concerning his work mates and the white people he works for, but in the end he chooses to work out his image towards white people since he worries most about how the Other conceives him and how to be good in the view of that Other.

*No, what Karanja resented most was not the missions or their triviality, but the way they affected his standing among the other African workers. But on the whole Karanja would rather endure the humiliation than lose the good name he had built up for himself among the white people. He lived on that name and the power it brought to him.*(Ngugi 1967: 36)

The character of Waiyaki himself, in *The River Between*, is perceived as an Other in the view of his people. He is the one who has been educated in Western institutions, just like Ngugi, and as Woode asserted, *“the alterity within his identity creates a colonial desire to displace the ‘other’, the white man, by using Western education, “the white man’s magic” (The River Between) to create a position of privilege for himself in society.”* (Woode 2001, 36) a thing that could be reflected on the person of Ngugi himself when he wanted to displace the “Other” (colonial language) using his novels (white man’s magic) to regain his status in his society. But as Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, stated:

*The question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image. The demand of identification – that is, to be for an Other – entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of Otherness’* (Bhabha 64) .

If we consider the definition of Otherness from Wikipedia the free encyclopedia we would find the following description of the term: *“Other, then, describes the process of justifying the domination of individuals or groups in the periphery to facilitate subordination. The creation of the other is done by highlighting their weaknesses, thus extenuating the moral responsibility of the stronger self to educate, convert, or civilize depending on the identity of the other”*. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Other>). This description denotes that the feeling of Otherness was implanted by the colonizer into the mind of the colonized so as to perpetuate the idea of the distinction centre/periphery. The centre being the West and the periphery being the “rest”; of course the West perceives the rest as Other.

And it is known that Ngugi is one of the postcolonial writers who have devoted their writings to this issue of centre and periphery. Harish Trivedi in *Peripheral*

*Centres, Central Peripheries* claimed that Ngugi dealt with this issue “**not only because he has as double perspective on his home country and the west , [...] but also because he is the only truly bilingual writer among all the postcolonials ...**” (Ghosh-Schellhorn and Alexander 2006, 95-96); indeed, he has written a whole book about it called *Moving the Centre*.

In this book, Ngugi claimed that the literary “centre” has to be moved “**from its location in Europe towards a pluralism of centres**” (Ngugi 1993, 8), he also claimed that African languages are no longer considered as “peripheral” since they have participated in changing the world and making it what is it today, in a way to form a multitude of world centres. (10-11) This could be done as an opposition to Eurocentrism.

As Woode asserted, the characters of Ngugi in *Petals of Blood* have “a self” and an “other”. Not only that but there are also social and political Others in Ilmorog and this Otherness is expressed through maintaining contact with the colonizer. This Otherness is a part of identity since the postcolonial being has the feature of bearing a multicultural identity. (76)

This concept of Otherness is present in the voices of the characters which marginalize each other; everyone of them wants to impose his own ideas on the other without giving importance to the thoughts of the other. For this, Crehan stated:

*What we have in ‘Petals of Blood’, however, is the complicated unraveling and interweaving of four alienated lives, whose connection with ‘social events’ is often verbal or potential rather than real, illustrative rather than organic. All four at various times seek some kind of union with the ‘other’ – whether this be the past, the future, ‘the struggle’, the ancestors, peasants, workers or god*  
(Crehan1995, 104)

And by the four characters Crehan means Munira, Wanja, Abdulla and Carega.

Woode adds that, despite the fact that these characters seem different from each other, they are similar in a way or another. The main similarity between them is that they are all “outsiders” for the people of Ilmorog; but together they form the otherness of Africa vis-à-vis Europe in the novel. (92)

Indeed, there is another process which reveals the notion of Other in Ngugi's works, it is the very fact of rejecting the European languages in writing; for, and according to Chantal Zabus in her book *The African Palimpsest*, the role of the European language became peripheral since African writers began writing in their languages. (206) This way, these writers moved the literary centre to their own countries, if not communities, fulfilling the quest of the multiplicity of centers. (206)

Zabus continues to say that the very fact of auto-translating his own works into English is a kind of Othering the Other language through writing in the original language as the Centre and translating for the Others, or the periphery; like in the case of Matigari. (210). This could be illustrated in *The River Between*, as Gikandi stated, when Waiyaki uses the language of a patriot but is portrayed in the novel as going through the process of **"alienation in the language of the tribe"** (Gikandi 2000, 67). For Gikandi, Waiyaki's sense of displacement from his traditions allows him to make room to a new imagined nation. **"identity is thus sought through alienation and a failed romance"**; and this could be the case of Ngugi himself. (67)

So, one of the aspects that deepen the feeling of Othering is alienation. Ngugi wrote in *The River Between*: **"Waiyaki did not like to be identified with either side; he was now committed to reconciliation."** (Ngugi 1965, 110) he was alienated and perceived as an Other to his people, so, instead of trying to belong to any of the tribes, he preferred to create his own world, a world of "reconciliation" with tradition and bearing of the new identity.

But most of the time it is the intellectual élite who is in the situation of alienation and Othering. Ogude argues that the status of the élite in Ngugi's novels reflect the status of Ngugi in Kenya, characters like Munira or Gaturia, according to Ogude, represent best this idea. (86) Ngugi goes even to portray Njoroge as example of alterity. He conceived him as a character whose education is not complete until he is convinced to give up the view that education as affected by colonial identity is "unproblematic" and manages to deal with his own alterity. (97)

So, as Ogot in *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya* declared, Ngugi thinks that writing is meant for the "quest of identity", and he made that clear especially through writing his novels *Weep Not, Child*, *A Grain of Wheat* and *The River Between* in which he has portrayed how the people of Kenya were alienated from their lands and

from their social and psychological background. Ogot carries on saying that Ngugi later on, suggested that the best way to step over this alienation is through creating a new home where the exiles should come back and get involved in this home. (232)

This idea is suggested by Ngugi in *Decolonizing the Mind* because he thinks that the alienation of culture is held through “*The destruction or deliberate underdeveloping of people’s culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature and the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer*” (Ngugi 1981, 16). This, as Frederick Buell said, means for the colonized that they have to see “*oneself from outside oneself as if one was another self*”, considering the fact that the West was seen as centre and the rest as periphery, or Other. (238)

So all that Ngugi wanted to convey is the idea that there are no such notions as Otherness, centre/periphery, dominator/marginalized and so on and so forth. He wants to say that every one is the centre of his own world and everybody else is an Other to him. There exists a massive amount of centres in the world. So the centre is not a static notion and it “moves”. And as Dipesh Pabari quoted:

*You know, the whole business of living- why is it a problem? Is it not essentially because we think from a particular point of view, from a fixed point of view? We are always thinking from a centre towards the periphery but the periphery is the centre for most of us ... (Krishnamurti, The First and Last Freedom) (Cited in Wainaina and Kalondo: 2004, 85)*

## **Conclusion:**

Through this chapter, we tried to understand how identity is conceived in postcolonial literature through the works of the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o. He certainly has issues with his own identity as with the identity of his people and of Africa in general. And through what has been said before, this writer considers the whole process of writing as a quest for identity.

That identity in his view was lost with the coming of the colonizer and has to be restored; he tries to give solution to this loss of identity through his works but all he does is raising more questions about this issue. One of the solution he found, or to be specific, he started to apply, was the shift from writing in a foreign language to writing in the mother tongue as a sign that those who use a foreign language wear "false robes" of identity, and that to (re)turn to the original identity they had to write in their mother tongues.

As discussed in this chapter, Ngugi himself when using English as a means of expression it was obvious that he was using it as a mere vehicle to transmit the African experience to the world, not to "wear the robes" of the western world. He preserved his Kenyan identity through writing about traditions and using some techniques which are true to the African societies such as prophecies, proverbs and so on. Besides, his novels written in Gikuyu reveal his hybrid and multicultural nature, although they were written in a "native" language. Sure all his novels show that he has a strong sense of belonging and that he wants to reconstruct a pure national identity, but he shows also through his characters that the return to a pre-colonial identity is almost impossible since this latter is constructed through experiences of people, and Ngugi cannot erase or deny their colonial experience which became part of their personalities and lives.

Another solution given by Ngugi among many others is rebuilding a new home, thus a new identity, through integrating all the layers of the African society including the intellectual élite especially the exiled ones. By doing this people accept their differences and their hybrid natures and try to step up the neo-colonial identity in order not to become a carbon copy of the west.

This notion of West and Africa, or as many call it "west" and "rest", also was solved by Ngugi through his novels. The very fact that he universalizes the African



experience through Gikuyu an Swahili languages is an achievement in itself, it helps strengthening the sense of being for African people since they have always been regarded as Other wherever they go. Ngugi by doing so has immortalized the idea that there is no such a thing as centre and periphery, or no such a notion as the anonymous Other. He confirms that the centre moves and is not static, affirms the idea that there are as many centre as people in the world.

So Ngugi through his novels was in a quest to understand the new identities of his people, examine them, and try to find out solutions to reconstruct them on a stronger basis. But in fact this quest is not only for the sake of helping his own people but is a quest for his own identity. He is in a quest to find out who he is, and what the factors that determine who he wants to be are. In fact this quest is not only the quest of Ngugi or his people, it is the quest of any person on earth who has been marginalized, displaced or who has gone through an experience that mixed up things for him like that of colonialism.

## **General Conclusion:**

This research attempted to investigate in brief the postcolonial field of study, specifically that of literature, and how it is shaped by the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial experiences of postcolonial societies. More precisely, how identity is explored in this type of writing.

Postcolonialism did exist before postcolonial countries regained their independence; however, this notion has been controversial in terms of defining it, since there is a debate over the connotation of this term. Some claim that it denotes the historical period after independence, but many others assert that it deals with all that concerns the postcolonial societies since the moment of colonization until the present day.

This literature that is classified under the broad term postcolonialism is the literature produced by writers who come from postcolonial backgrounds and who write against the notions of imperialism and marginality. They oppose them not only because they oppress their societies, but because these elements distort their Identity. That is why these writers have a common background since they all depict this notion of identity throughout their writings in a way or another.

So, the notion of identity happens to be of a great use and interest for the postcolonial writers. This notion has been shaped by the colonial experience but never completely erased. For, and because of the process of imperialism, the subjects of the postcolonial societies find themselves in a dilemma as to which side they go for; the traditional identity which cannot fit the new world order, or the western ways which are alien to them. So naturally this society will find itself divided between those who incarnate the western identity and those who resist to it.

So maintaining a pure identity is difficult in either ways. We are living in a world of constant change, a globalized world where the notions of multiculturalism and mobility are prevailing. Naturally postcolonial subjects will find themselves unconsciously reshaping their identities to make them fit the new world order. But this does not deny the fact that postcolonial subjects, even if they embrace western identity, always maintain contact with their traditions and beliefs.

This dilemma of finding a place in the new world order contributes together with the bitter experience of colonialism to creating a crisis of identity in the postcolonial world. This crisis of identity is what constitutes a fertile ground for postcolonial literatures. Therefore, one of the most prominent themes explored in postcolonial literature is that of identity. Postcolonial writers through their works try to depict the elements that are crucial in forming the identity of the individual and of the group.

This identity has been affected by the imperial reality that these peoples went through. The postcolonial societies lived in harmony without bothering themselves about striving to find an individual or a collective identity. They had their lands to identify with, they had their traditions and beliefs; they knew exactly who they are. But with the coming of the colonizer everything fell apart. This colonial power started by disrupting their beliefs through introducing Christianity to gain their support. After that this power deprived them from their lands so they lost their sense of belonging because of the process of displacement; In addition to the process of educating an élite and importing the colonial ways to these peoples. All these processes together contributed in alienating the postcolonial subjects from their own people and from the world.

This alienation and massive displacement also led to two processes which contributed in creating a new mobile world. These processes are migration which led to exporting postcolonial ways to the world, and framing a new way of understanding the Other, and the other process is globalization which led to importing Western ways to postcolonial societies. So this process of importing western ways, together with the attempt of the colonizer to erase the identity of the colonized so that to maintain control over them, led to making new postcolonial citizens with new identities which are neither completely original nor western, and this is due to the high speed of change that the world undergoes. This rapid change of societies led to creating the mobility and to framing the multicultural feature of the new world.

All these changes in society created a distortion in the identity of the postcolonial society. This distortion is what makes the subject matter of postcolonial literature. For, postcolonial literature and postcolonial writers try to depict this notion through addressing the elements that make up this identity in the person of their characters. Among the elements they discuss and that are of a great importance in

framing their own and their society's identity are the notions of language, home, hybridity, and otherness.

The issue of language certainly is very important since it denotes the hybrid and multicultural nature of postcolonial societies. But what makes a huge debate over this notion is not only the hybrid language of postcolonial societies, but it revolves around the language of writing in itself. That is, many postcolonial writers write about the experience of postcoloniality in foreign languages, mainly that of their colonizers. This aspect is seen as a defect in the identity of the writer in itself, because it cannot "bear the burden" of their postcolonial experience. This process is seen as something that empowers the western literatures and does nothing but alienate more postcolonial societies since it makes the colonizer at the centre and it marginalizes the postcolonial self. On the other hand, using the colonial language does not necessarily entail giving up one's origins; it is something that helps in universalizing the postcolonial experience. However, it is better to use an original language to maintain the authenticity of the piece of literature and to determine the sense of belonging. But either way, the postcolonial writer demonstrates through his writings that he is a hybrid and multicultural person together with his own society.

That is why hybridity is a very crucial element explored by postcolonial writers. These writers portray their characters as different in the way they embrace and mix cultures, but they portray them also as similar to each other since no one of them has completely maintained his original identity. They portray their characters as hybrids through their way of dressing, communicating, and so on. The majority of these writers admit in a way or another that the identity of postcolonial societies is hybrid; the fact that they are multicultural people is inevitable, and their struggle to regain the purity of their identity is quasi impossible.

As mentioned before in the dissertation, all the formerly discussed elements could be portrayed through the works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o. This writer explores the question of identity both through his essays and literary works. In his essays he defends the idea that postcolonial writers and subjects struggle to find out their place in the world. And this is due to the effect of imperialism on their societies, he also suggests some solutions to this crisis of identity; this solution is defended through many

prominent aspects among which is the returning to the native original language and the rejection of any kind of cultural or literary oppression by colonial powers.

This writer depicts also identity through his works as linked to land and belonging as it is to language. Throughout his works he portrays the identity of postcolonial Kenya, or Africa in general, before, during, and after colonialism. He pictures out how this identity has been distorted at first and then bit by bit replaced to take its current shape. What shaped it most is the colonial influence since changing the colonized identity is a primary goal for the colonizer to hold control over the colonies. This colonial process leads forcibly to disturbances in the use of the mother tongue, the displacement of people and thus the loss of their sense of belonging, the hybridization of cultures, and the implanting of the sense of inferiority which leads to the division centre/periphery and thus to the notion of otherness.

The question of language has been very important to Ngugi, not only the hybridization of the postcolonial dialogue, but what is so important to him is the language of writing in itself. He considers language as having a great impact on identity. He uses Gikuyu instead of English because he wants to build a bridge that connects him to his origins. Since he has been exiled from his home long ago, he wants to maintain bonds with his community so that he does not remain alone or alienated. He does not want to be alienated in both worlds, the world he lives in and the world he normally belongs to. But it is true that even through writing in English, Ngugi has maintained this link, since he writes about his people's reality and traditions, about their experiences and beliefs. So it does not matter which language to use in writing, because some works are written in mother tongues but bear an alien identity. What really matters is to communicate one's experience and share it with the world, and this does no harm to identity.

This notion of mother tongue as mentioned above is held to keep in touch with home. So the notion of home is also very important in forging one's identity. Ngugi through his characters depicts how people need to have a place to identify with and call home. This place was disrupted by the colonizer. Imperial powers have deprived colonies from their lands and changed them to suit their moods of life while colonies were displaced and lost because they no longer have a place to identify with. Besides, Ngugi portrays through his works how important is the land for Africans. He portrays

that if one does not have a home, he will be forever wondering who he is? And where does he fit? But this does not mean that this is the end of postcolonial identity, since this fact makes of the postcolonial subject a “universal citizen”.

This universality makes of the postcolonial societies multicultural societies. Ngugi strongly opposes this western influence on postcolonial societies and which makes them multicultural and hybrid; however, his characters obviously portray the marriage between tradition and modernity, between the European ways and the African ways. They also depict the in-betweenness of the postcolonial subjects and their quest to find a status in the new world order.

So these characters are a portrayal that postcolonial societies use hybridity as a way to escape marginalization. But in doing so, they are no longer perceived as Other to the western world, but they perceive each other as Others. This way, individualism takes ground in these societies, and alienation is no longer a matter of centre/periphery, but it moved to be installed in the postcolonial societies.

Ngugi through depicting this very important notion of identity is in fact revealing his own quest for identity. His characters speak his mind; he expresses his longing to regain his original identity and his need to reconstruct a link between him and his origins. He also criticizes implicitly those who try to embrace western traditions and the élite who split from its motherland. This is also an attempt to reconstruct the link between his people. But this does not deny the fact that he is, together with the postcolonial societies, of a hybrid multicultural nature; and that it is not easy to regain a pure identity in the new world order.

This whole field of investigation could be used for further discussions about postcolonialism in general and postcolonial literature specifically. Comparisons between postcolonial writers belonging to different backgrounds and sharing the same experience could be of a great use in understanding how different writers perceive this vast notion of identity. This comparison could be done for instance between African writers and Caribbean writers, or African writers and Magreban writers. The comparison could also be done regarding settler colonies; colonial or western literatures about the postcolonial reality; or even between works of the same postcolonial writer belonging to the period of abrogation and the period of rejection of western ways.

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## Résumé :

La recherche de l'identité est un thème très important dans les études et la littérature postcoloniales. L'exploration d'un auteur postcolonial tel que Ngugi dans la représentation de leur identité culturelle et celle de leur peuple révèle l'hybridité culturelle des sociétés et écrivains postcoloniaux. Ces auteurs abordent l'influence de la décolonisation, l'hybridité, la langue, et le déplacement du mouvement sur la Diaspora. Leur tentative est un essai à la reconstruction de l'identité ou une réinvention d'une nouvelle identité. En discutant ensemble le travail de Ngugi avec son point de vue personnel sur la question identitaire nous allons voir comment considère-t-il ce sujet comme étant un écrivain postcolonial et d'une perspective personnelle à la fois par ses articles et interviews ; mais aussi par la façon dont il a exploré ce thème à travers ses romans. Nous essayerons d'abord d'aborder le thème du post-colonialisme et sa relation avec l'identité, nous essayerons ensuite de discuter la question de l'identité elle-même comme liée à la littérature postcoloniale. Nous tenterons aussi de débattre la façon de voir et la manière de faire dont Ngugi utilise vis-à-vis la question de l'identité sur le plan personnel et la manière dont il traite les principales composantes qui influent l'identité, tel le que langue, hybridité, lieu et déplacement, et « L'autre », dans son travail.

## ملخص:

البحث عن الهوية هو موضوع بارز جدا في الأدب و الدراسات ما بعد الاستعمارية. استكشاف كتاب ما بعد استعماريين مثل نقوقي واثيونقو فيم يخص وصفهم لهويتهم الثقافية هم و مجتمعاتهم يكشف الطبيعة الهجينة لهته المجتمعات و هؤلاء الكتاب ما بعد استعماريين. حيث يعالج هؤلاء الكتاب تأثير إنهاء الاستعمار، الهجانة، اللغة، و حركة الانزياح على الجموع ما بعد استعمارية. محاولاتهم هذه هي محاولات لإعادة بناء هوياتهم أو اختراع هوية جديدة. في محاولة نقاش أعمال نقوقي و مناقشة منظوره الشخصي لقضية الهوية سوف نرى كيف ينظر للموضوع ككاتب ما بعد استعماري و من منظوره الشخصي على حد سواء من خلال مناقشة مقالاته و مقابلاته، و من خلال الطريقة التي عالج بها الموضوع في رواياته. سنحاول من خلال هذا العمل أن نتطرق أولا لموضوع ما بعد الاستعمارية و علاقته بالهوية، و بعد ذلك سنحاول أن نناقش موضوع الهوية في حد ذاته و علاقته بالأدب ما بعد الاستعماري. سنحاول أيضا أن نناقش كيف ينظر نقوقي و يتعامل مع موضوع الهوية على المستوى الشخصي والطريقة التي عالج بها العناصر الرئيسية التي تؤثر على الهوية؛ مثل اللغة، الهجانة، المكان و الانزياح، و موضوع "الأخر"، في أعماله.