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**THE NATURE OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN
SELECTED NIGERIAN LITERATURE: A CASE STUDY OF LITERATURE FOR
CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my late father Nze J.C. Ile, whose wish was to be alive and be witness to the great moments of his children's lives, but who passed on onto the bosom of his Creator and Maker. His earthly works bear witness for him. And also to Mum, Mrs C.U. Ile, whose goodwill and love for her children is immeasurable.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A M P-----A Man of the People: Achebe, Chinua. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1966.

D B-----Destination Biafra: Emecheta, Buchi. Oxford: Heinemann Educational, Publishers, 1994.

D L-----Dangerous Love: Okri, Ben. London: Phoenix House, 1996.

E W B-----The Empire Writes Back: Ashcroft, Bill, et al. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1989.

HYS-----Half of a Yellow Sun: Adichie, Chimamanda. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 2006.

N L E-----No Longer at Ease: Achebe, Chinua. London: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1960.

S A-----Season of Anomy: Soyinka, Wole. London: Arrow Books Limited 62-65 Chandos Place, London WC2N 4NW, 1988.

S Ag-----The Secret Agent: Conrad, Joseph. London: Penguin Books, 1907.

T D'U-----Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Hardy, Thomas. London: Penguin Books, 1994.

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FOREWORD

The essence of scholarship is to bring order where there is disorder, to bring clarity where there is confusion and to make knowledge functional, to bring about an overload of information and to turn too much information - or information-overload - into focused power: the power to make Nigerian literature, a subfield of post-colonial studies, serve practical purposes in national orientation and development.

It was the need to lay a solid foundation for the future development of the Nigerian society that the intellectuals of post-colonial Nigeria evaluated, interpreted and deconstructed the colonial theories that had almost shaped what was perceived as their identity.

The gaining of independence as well as the realities of multi-ethnicity made it even more imperative for these intellectuals to re-evaluate the post-colonial Nigerian condition; for Nigeria had become a society where ethnic diversity fell short of being a rich cultural heritage, which could be galvanised into a unifying force. However, it is this sudden realisation of the need to put things aright that implicates post-colonialism as possessive of regenerative power. It is regenerative in the sense that its theories are needed in order to understand the things that happen in post-colonial societies; it could also be disintegrative once the theories are applied subversively to the point of nihilism. Once they are applied subversively to the point of nihilism, they become, according to

Leela Ghandi, mere theoretical and intellectual activities, which refer inadequately to everyday 'sociality'.¹

Therefore, the effects of the production or the practical functions of the selected post-colonial Nigerian texts, *No Longer at Ease* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1960) and *A Man of the People* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1966) by Chinua Achebe, *Season of Anomy* (London: Arrow Books Limited 62-65 Chandos Place, London WC2N 4NW, 11988) by Wole Soyinka, *Destination Biafra* (Oxford: Heinemann educational, Publishers, 1994) by Buchi Emecheta and *Iska* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1981) by Cyprain Ekwensi, "in and on specific social and historical contexts,"² according to Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffins, will be objects of discourse in the course of the progress of the research, especially in chapters three and four.

Such a discourse will obviously give credence to Terry Eagleton's belief about the ability of literature to make one a better person and the need for that state of being a better person to be concrete and practical.³ In other words, this research will demonstrate that Nigerian literature is highly invaluable in conflict resolution and that scholars of the literature could play a very important role in conflict resolution. They should be

¹ See Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A critical introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 56.

² Bill Ashcroft, et al, *The Empire Writes Back* 2ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 191-92.

³ See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 208 and Bill Ashcroft's *Post-colonial Transformation, 2001*, where he explains what takes place between the writer and the reader of a text, that is, how reading ought to make one a better person.

be involved in conflict resolution because the selected works depict the post-colonial Nigerian political, socio-economic and cultural realities: a conscious effort by Nigerian writers to bear witness for their society, to enlighten the people, energise the environment and thereby cause people to resist, as Said had written, “the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human [Nigerian]⁴ history.”⁵ Simply put, the works of these writers are objects of social change. Of course, the works by themselves cannot do the change: they need human agents to appropriate the information in them to the point of focused power and change their world therewith. These human agents are the readers. However, these readers should be trained; that is to say, they should be professional social scientists or “professional humanists”⁶, that is, literary scholars, whose training in literary scholarship is such that makes them to see the text as embodying various human and societal dynamics. In other words they, as readers, should know that they already exist, according to Ashcroft, as a function in the writing of a text,⁷ because they are part of social forces; in other words, the relationship between social forces, of which they are part, and the text is

⁴ Inhuman practices and injustices abound in Nigeria. These disfigure as well Nigerian history.

⁵ See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), xxii.[my emphasis]

⁶ See also, e.g., Edward Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 2. It is obvious that, for him, the professional humanist is a scholar or academic, who earns a living by teaching literature or by being a critic of literature.

⁷ See Bill Ashcroft, *Post-colonial Transformation* (London:/New York: Routledge, 2001), 72.

the same as that between the social forces in concrete human societies and the text of particular worldviews, representative also of particular historical contexts. However, Ashcroft argues, that although these social forces and these particular world views might be reflective of particular social and historical contexts, yet they could be co-extensive⁸ or universal, giving insight into concrete human and historical experiences. Ashcroft is also of the opinion that within the framework of the social phenomena in question, the writer and reader functions are in a state of symbiotic exchange in the acts of writing and reading just as conversants are in conversation.⁹ Therefore, the reader may be present in a text at a conscious level, in an author's sense of an audience, of a purpose for writing. However, this presence in a text at a conscious level is not necessarily so specific. He believes that the reader function is present in the writing because the act of writing rarely excludes the simultaneous act of reading, and because that moment of writing in which the self is objectivised is also the moment of reading in which the other is constituted.¹⁰ Therefore, he argues that it is the other (even when this other is the objectivised self which confers objectivity on the writing) that constitutes the writing as written.¹¹ Furthermore, he believes that the argument of meanability itself implicates the reader

⁸ Ashcroft, 72.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

function¹², for as he writes, “the space within which the writer meets the reading other is neither one culture nor another, neither one language nor another, but the parole: the situation of discourse.”¹³

This research will engage the theory during the process of trying to use selected Nigerian literature in the resolution of the Nigerian ethnic conflicts. However, it will go beyond the theory to show what could be done by the reader with the knowledge of what takes place between him, the writer and the text.

The unfolding arguments start with chapter one: This will occupy itself with the new trends in scholarship in the humanities, that is, the problems of post-colonial societies, as exemplified in ethnic conflicts.

Edward Said was a strong advocate of these new trends in the humanities. At the end of his long essay on Orientalism, he said that what he wanted to do in the remaining part of his essay was to talk about the new trends in scholarship, criticism and interpretation that, although accepting the basic premises of his book, go well beyond it in ways, that enrich our sense of the complexity of historical experience. Although these trends did not emerge out of the blue and have also not gained the status of fully established knowledge and practices, yet the context of worldly interactions are still dangerously stirred-up, ideologically turbulent and even murderous. In spite of the break up of

¹²Ashcroft, 72.

¹³*Ibid.*

the Soviet Union and the attainment of political independence of East European countries, patterns of power and dominance remain unbearably evident. The global south, which is romantically, and even emotionally referred to as the third world, is entrapped in debt and broken into dozens of structurally weak entities. They are also beset with problems of poverty, disease and underdevelopment that have increased in recent years. And with the death of the non-aligned movement (a movement that ensured that the world was not polarised) and the charismatic leaders, who fought intellectually and otherwise for the decolonization and independence of their various countries, and who are symbols of unity in their countries, a great vacuum was created, leaving the world once again vulnerable. Little wonder one sees again an ever-growing and an alarming pattern of ethnic conflicts and local wars, which are not only confined to the so-called third world.¹⁴

In other words, it is high time scholarship, especially scholarship in the humanities, occupied itself practically with all these devastating occurrences of the contemporary world. It does not, however, mean that the new trends in the humanities entail making literary studies too utilitarian to make it lose its literariness; but again it should not be too

¹⁴ See Said, 2003, 348. It must not be forgotten that he was a teacher of literature at Havard and so understood the need for literary scholars to know that they have to be watchdogs of society.

“literary” as if literature had no vital function in society apart from entertainment or an aloof reflection on life.

The research will make seemingly abstract ideas that exist in the selected texts tangible or graspable by exposing the ideologies embedded in them, especially ideologies that fuel ethnic conflicts, and then historically, culturally, socially and politically ground them in the realities which they seem to reflect or represent. To be able to do this, a brief historical account of the Nigerian ethnic groups and their relationship with one another will be given in chapter two of the dissertation. With that, one would know how they fared in their post-colonial existence as they came face to face with the problems which colonisation itself created, how social and economic competitions have been the sources of instability in the nation-state, how independence failed to make the ethnic groups equal partners in their country’s march to development.

Once that is done in chapter two of the work, the work will progress to another level from chapter three. The major preoccupation of this chapter will be to re-read Nigerian literature: Re-reading Nigerian literature entails studying it as social praxis. The selected texts will be analysed with regard to the nature of ethnic conflict in Nigeria and how this is represented. It will also show how relevant these selected Nigerian literary works can be in national orientation and development.

In chapter four, a working pattern, which may later turn out to be part of a theoretical basis, will be crystallised with regard to how literature could be useful in the resolution of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. Gary T. Furlong's (2005) Circle of Conflict Model will be used to categorise the likely causes of ethnic conflicts in the selected texts in regard to the Nigerian society, while Donald Horowitz's use of Leonard Woolf's novel, *The Village in the Jungle* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913), will be cited to give credence to the use of literary works in the resolution of ethnic conflicts. The chapter will systematise the discourse inferring from chapter three, showing thereby a theoretical basis for the practical involvement of Nigerian literature in conflict resolution.

Chapter five will re-examine the practical implications of literature in a historical context including the metropolitan instances of practical literary involvement in the charting of a new course for humankind from the industrial age through the post-colonial period.

It would be necessary to use three additional literary works to discuss conclusively on the practical involvement of literature in the former colonial centre, England and the post-colonial Nigeria respectively. The works are Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (London: Penguin Books, 1907) for England; and Ben Okri's *Dangerous Love* (London: Phoenix House, 1996) for the post-colonial Nigeria.

Every research, of course, has its problems and limitations. This is no exception. To be able to really appreciate the problems encountered in this research, Viktor Eke Kalu has to be quoted. He writes:

[A]lthough the Nigerian masses pay with their lives for Bourgeoisie (sic) disagreements, Nigerian intellectuals, journalist and novelists do not make heroes out of them. By deliberately omitting the class character of inter-ethnic battles and warfare, they merely strive to create the impression that communal homelands were made for purpose of either defending themselves or attacking others¹⁵

That means that ethnic conflict was always consciously encouraged by the elite for political gains –be it the elite of colonial England or the elite of independent Nigeria. Little wonder Nigerian intellectuals did not talk so much about ethnicity in Nigerian literature as they did about the politics of resistance to colonial theories.

It was not very easy finding material for this research because the criticism of Nigerian literature was focused almost only on thematising the key relationship between the colonisers and the colonised. By omission or commission, critics have avoided issues like ethnic conflict, which has been a cankerworm in the polity.

While the MLA online Bibliography for reference has 3605 entries on Nigerian literature as at September 2007, only a handful of them refer to ethnic conflict at all. This shows how urgent the reassessment of Nigerian

¹⁵ Viktor Eke Kalu, *The Nigerian Condition: Arthur Nwankwo's viewpoints and blueprints* (Enugu: fourth dimension publishing co. LTD, 1987), 5.

literature from this perspective is needed. After all Nigerian writers have always commented on the ethnic situation in their country in their works. Why then are there only a handful of references on the ethnic conflict situations written by these writers? Could it be because their works have not been put to good use? Or could it be that the establishment of a canon must predate the formulation of nationalist issues? Definitely there ought to be a use which their works should have for a researcher.

It is hoped that this research will provide a new approach to the study of Nigerian literature, whereby the text is seen as embodying so many dynamics –value, relationship, information and structure dynamics and serious efforts made to bring practical functions to the literature, especially in national orientation and development through the resolution of the Nigerian ethnic conflicts.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NEW TRENDS IN SCHOLARSHIP AND POST-COLONIAL THEORIES: AN INTRODUCTION

Clearly, literature is widely seen as more than just a simple mirror of society: any effort to hold up the mirror to any given society can be understood as an effort at initiating change. Thus, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan state:

[A] ccording to Marxist criticism, we are all situated historically and socially, and our social and historical contexts determine or shape our lives. This is true of literature as it is of human beings: Literature is not, according to Marxist criticism, the expression of universal ideas, as the New critics claimed, nor is it, as the Russian formalists claimed, an autonomous realm of aesthetic or formal devices and techniques that act independently of their material setting in society and history. Rather, literature is in the first instance a social phenomenon, and as such, it cannot be studied independently of social relations, economic forms and the political reality of the time in which it was written.¹⁶

This is particularly true of Nigerian literature, since it does not act independently of its material setting in society and history and since the preoccupation of post-colonial writers have always been deconstructive and confrontational by nature: a social, political and cultural re-engineering. The deconstructive and confrontational posturing in post-colonial writing made what the authors of *EWB* (New York: Routledge

¹⁶ See Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (ed.) *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Massachusetts, U.S.A: Blackwell publishers ltd, 1998), 234.

Taylor and Francis Group, 1989) called the 'margins'¹⁷ to be privileged and caused the writing itself to produce a particularly practical orientation to questions of theory. This is possible, as argued by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffens, because language is a material practice. It is determined by a complex weave of social conditions and experiences.¹⁸ These social conditions and experiences are reflected and represented in the corpus of the text so clearly and crucially in post-colonial literature that the idea of the text as art, existing for its own sake or appealing to some higher human experience is unacceptable.

If, therefore, language is a material practice, determined by a complex weave of social conditions and experiences, and if these social conditions and experiences are reflected and represented so clearly and crucially in post-colonial literature, then the selected Nigerian texts obviously teem with so many dynamics: value, relationship, and stereotypedynamics; that is to say, they are Nigerian lives, activities, attitudes, Nigerian views, which are sustained by a mass of accumulated negative and positive information held by individuals and groups in Nigerian society. All these dynamics are concrete situations that give rise to various ideological formations. For example, the presence of diverse ethnic groups in the Nigerian polity is a given, that

¹⁷ See also Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffens, *The Empire Writes Back* (New York. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 40.

¹⁸ Ashcroft, Griffit and Tiffens, 40.

is to say, it is a concrete situation. The prejudice and fear of domination that arise from ethnicity are offshoots of the ideological formations that arise from the concrete ethnic situations in Nigeria. Furthermore, ethnic conflict is a problem that is tearing the Nigerian nation apart; and Nigerian writers have endeavoured to reflect it in their writing. Therefore, if Nigerian writers represent the Nigerian ethnic situation in a realistic way, then it is only because they want to point the attention of the society to some issue of national concern. That means their works demand to be used in a utilitarian way, for according to the Prague school of thought:

[E]very object or action, language included, can be assigned a practical function –utilitarian for tools, communicative for language, and so on. If, however, an object or action becomes the focus of attention for its own sake and not for the sake of the practical function it serves it is said to have an aesthetic function.¹⁹

The selected Nigerian literary works under study are the focus of this research, not because of their own sake, but because of the practical function they serve. To be able, however, to serve practical functions, especially resolution of conflicts –ethnic conflicts in particular, these selected Nigerian literary works have to prove themselves as possessing the necessary dynamics for practical involvement in social change, especially in ethnic conflict resolution. However, for them to be able to

¹⁹ See Paul L. Garvin(selector & translator), *A Prague School Reader on Aesthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1964), vii

serve that purpose, the prevailing attitudes of the diverse ethnic groups have to be understood.

Since writing may be representational, characters in literary works may therefore represent the prevailing attitudes of different groups within a locale or community or nation-state. For instance, in *The Jazz and Palm-wine* (Paris: Hapier, 1982), the Francophone writer, Emmanuel Dongala from the Congo shows how a character represents a prevailing attitude when he tells his colleague about what a member of the government had said:

[H]e started by saying that we had to fight against tribalism. That made me laugh, because all three of them, the Secretary-general of the trade union, the new Director and the President of the Republic all came from the same area...oh, careful, now, this is not an attack, since it is perfectly natural that the country be dominated by people who come from the same area and ethnic group as the President, since, just like in a garden, some patches yield better vegetables and fruits than others. [...]. In Africa, you know, competence, like genius, always manages to suddenly flourish in the area or ethnic group of the person in power.²⁰

See also how Achebe portrayed the root causes of ethnic conflict in his novel, *A Man of the People* (1966), through the utterance of a character, who happens to be a minister:

[M]y private secretary has a B.A from Oxford," the minister said. He should have come with me on this tour but I had some office work for him to do. By the way, Odili, I think you are wasting your time here. I want you to come to the capital and take up a strategic post in the civil service. We shouldn't leave everything to the highland tribes. My secretary is from there. Our people must press for their fair share of the national cake.²¹

²⁰ Emmanuel Dongala, *Jazz et Vin de Palme*, (Paris: Hatier, 1982), 104-5.

The Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, shows also in her *Half of A Yellow Sun* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 2006) the role prejudice can play in the escalation of ethnic conflict when a certain man, who was travelling with Olanna, a female Igbo character, on a plane to Lagos, made overtures to her by pointing out to her a newspaper caption on the removal of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos. The man had said:

[T]hey have finally removed that Igbo vice chancellor from the University of Lagos [...]. The problem with the Igbo is that they want to control everything in this country. Everything. Why can't they stay in their East? They own all the shops; they control the civil service, even the police. If you are arrested for any crime, as long as you can say *keda* they will let you go.²²

The man had thought Olanna to be a Fulani, until she corrected, to his chagrin his wrong pronunciation of the Igbo word *kedu*, which means, *how do you do?* He had said *Keda*.²³ *HYS* even offers the reader a possible way of resolving such conflicts when Olanna mused, "if only he knew that his prejudice had filled her with possibility."²⁴ It was definitely the possibility of loving a man irrespective of his ethnic origin.

Furthermore during the conversation between the British character Richard and his British girl friend, Susan, in *HYS* (2006), Richard

²¹ Chinua Achebe, *A Man Of The People* (London: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1966), 12.

²² Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half Of A Yellow Moon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 2006), 226-7

²³ Adichie, *HYS*, 206.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

wondered if Susan knew what was happening in the North. Susan said she knew, but hoped that the riot in the North did not spread to Lagos, because there were also a lot of Igbo people in Lagos.²⁵ Susan had said:

[T] here are lots and lots of Igbo people here –well, they are everywhere really aren't they? Not that they didn't have it coming to them, when you think about it, with their being so clannish and uppity and controlling the markets. Very Jewish, really. And to think they are relatively uncivilized; one couldn't compare them with the Yoruba, for example, who have had contact with Europeans on the coast for years. I remember somebody telling me when I first came to be careful about hiring an Igbo houseboy because, before I knew it, he would own my house and the land it was built on [...].²⁶

Here the writer only wants to show the constructivist nature of the ethnic conflict prevalent in the given nation-state. Therefore, once the Nigerian writer, who also is an African, is able to use the dialectics of his/her ethnic culture in relation to other cultures within the same nation-states, he would have presented a range of resolutions to the conflicts inherent in his society, which he expresses in a text, and which ought to represent a given setting or situation. All the same, it is still the responsibility of the literary scholar to articulate the ethnic conflict situations for possible resolution.

The use to which literary works that comment on ethnic situation in some parts of the world could be put has been demonstrated by the political science scholar, Donald Horowitz, in his book *Ethnic Groups in*

²⁵ Adichie, 154.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Conflict (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). To do this, he chose the novel by Leonard Woolf, *The Village in the Jungle* (1913), in which Leonard Woolf told the story of the Tamil and Sinhalese view of service to the god, *Kandeswami*, a formerly Tamil god that preferred the Sinhalese. The god, *Kandeswami*, chose the Sinhalese because the Tamils to whom he belonged did not have time to serve him.²⁷ Horowitz implied that ethnic conflict had been foregrounded in the novel because it was told from the viewpoint of the Sinhalese, the implication of which was the Sinhalese being considered morally upright. However, the ethnic conflict inherent in the novel also reflected the ethnic conflict situation in colonial Ceylon, where the Tamil were viewed as more hardworking than the Sinhalese, hence their preference for work to service to their god.²⁸ Furthermore, since the literary work contains values that are obtainable in society, since it can reflect how individuals or groups relate to themselves as well as the geography and structure of a nation, the circle of conflict model²⁹ by Gary T. Furlong could be of help to a literary scholar, whose state of being a better person (see Eagleton 1983:208) should be concrete and practical in the resolution of conflict with literature. From the foregoing argument, the writing back

²⁷ See Leonard Woolf, *The Village in the Jungle* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913) 105-6.

²⁸ See also Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1985), 142.

²⁹ See Gary T. Furlong, *The Conflict Resolution Toolbox* (Ontario: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd, 2005), 30.

paradigm of post-colonial theory obviously stops where its practical engagement with society starts.

It has been argued by scholars like Frantz Schulze-Engler that one of the highpoints of Post-colonial theories is the writing back paradigm. This paradigm drew heavily on post-modern and poststructuralist theories of language,³⁰ which are deconstructive of meanings, fixed truths and ideas. Frantz Schulze-Engler had written:

[W]hile the politics of post colonialism is thus basically anticolonial, it avoids some of the pitfalls of cultural nationalism by renouncing essentialist notions of cultural authenticity. Instead, in line with post-structuralist accounts of the necessary indeterminacy of language produced by that famous pair of fish, the signifier and the signified, the new literatures are seen as essentially deconstructive and subversive.³¹

By being, on the one hand, deconstructive and subversive, the new literatures of the formerly colonised imaginatively rewrote the European master narratives, in the corpora of which are embedded colonial theories that disturbed the sensibilities of the intellectuals of the former colonies. On the other hand these master narratives indulged the sensibilities of the western man and even shaped the way he saw the colonised parts of the world, and also the way in which the colonised saw themselves.³² Therefore, if the Western world or “the post-

³⁰ Frank Schulze-Engler “theoretical Approaches: Commonwealth literature: New literatures in English” in Dieter Riemenschneider (ed.) *Postcolonial Theory: The Emergence of a Critical Discourse: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography* (Tübingen: Staufenburg Verlag Brigitte Narr GmbH, 2004), 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

newtonian real world”, as Said had argued, see the world as an observable reality and even establish fixed and universal truths in the form of colonial theories to necessitate and/or even legitimate occupation and exploitation of inhabited lands by overwhelming military power,³³ then the “writing back” of the post-colonial intellectuals, which tends to deconstruct such theoretical postures, tallies with the notions of the post-modern, which usually suggest, according to John Baylis & Steve Smith:

[S]ome kind of crisis in, or departure from, the circumstances of modernity. For example, many commentators associate post-modernism with a demise of foundational knowledge, [*that is colonial theories*]³⁴. From this perspective, the post-modern condition involves the loss of the modern, rationalist, positivist conviction that we can, via science, establish fixed and universal truths and meanings [...]. Ideas of post-modernity often also refer to intensified preoccupation in contemporary society with question of identity. The post-modern individual has a “fractured self” with multiple and fluctuating senses of being and belonging (for instance, in terms of nationality, gender, race and sexuality) [...]. Post-modernism in international relations in addition frequently highlight an end to the certainties of territoriality and sovereign statehood that once dominated the theory and practice of world politics.³⁵

The post-modernist dynamics of post-colonial studies are traceable in Spivak’s argument that since western academics have only succeeded in their colonial theories to produce the marginal, the third world, by constructing an ethnically authentic subject as well as an authentic

³³ See Said, 2003, 47.

³⁴ Colonial theories are good examples of the so-called foundational knowledge, where only European intellectual opinions mattered, not minding how false they could be.

³⁵ John Baylis & Steve Smith, *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to international relations* (2ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 21. [italics mine]

native, post-colonial intellectuals have a chance of avoiding falling into the same pit by not making their claims or formulating theories that are rooted in the other extreme, so as to avoid coding their discourses within the legacy or context of imperialism, making their efforts at theoretical discourses anything but a deconstructive pastime.³⁶ It is this post-modernist paradigm in post-colonial studies that necessitated the question by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin in *The EWB*, who is Post-colonial? They argued that the question: who is postcolonial, might be misleading; that the question was necessary if they had to highlight the problems post-colonial theorists could create for themselves.³⁷ This question was necessary because of efforts by various theorists of post-colonialism to define the field. In order to define the field, boundaries have been drawn, and these boundaries according to the *EWB* authors were designed to include or exclude various groups (Irish/ settlers/ Americans/ African Americans/ Indigenes, and so on. However, the idea of cultural fixity, which these boundaries promote have seemed to some people to contradict the nature of the post-colonial enterprise.³⁸ Any attempt to define the field based on common experience will arrive at a dead end, because the colonial experience of say a Zimbabwean will be totally different from

³⁶ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in Peter Collier & Helga Geyer-Ryan, *Literary Theory Today* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 219-244.

³⁷ Ashcroft, et al, 2002, 200.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

the colonial experience of say a Nigerian. For while Zimbabwe had a considerable amount of white settlers in their colony, Nigeria had no white-settler-colony but a peculiar experience of the jumbling of different and unrelated ethnic groups in a territorial unit for administrative convenience.

And as a result of this hydra-headed nature of post-colonial conditions, Ania Loomba believes that the word post-colonial will always be useful in indicating a general process with some shared features or characteristics across the globe; but that once it is uprooted from specific locations, post-colonial condition can no longer then be meaningfully investigated, but instead it will begin to obscure the very relations of dominations it always sought to uncover.³⁹ As a result of all these discrepancies and diversities, Schulze-Engler insists, “[t] here is no significance in installing a common “colonial experience” or “post-colonial condition” as pivotal reference point for a theory of culture (and more specifically, literature) in the formerly colonised parts of the world.”⁴⁰

Evidently, Post-colonialism, as a set of theoretical approaches and new writings which focus the direct effects and aftermaths of colonization, has been predominantly subversive, oppositional, ironical, satirical, dismantling and deconstructive in thematising the key

³⁹ See Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Post colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 19.

⁴⁰ Schulze-Engler in Riemenschneider (ed.), 2004, 9.

relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. This does not however mean that its theoretical preoccupation should be seen as strongest in being subversive than in its capacity to expose the internal political, social, economic and cultural dynamics of post-colonial societies as Schulze-Engler would have one believe by stating that the subversiveness of post-colonialism in thematising the key relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, “pushed to the background the relationships between these literatures and the internal political, social, economical and cultural dynamics of the formerly colonised societies that have long outgrown the nexus from which they originated.”⁴¹

Furthermore Schule-Engler writes:

[...]. Postcolonial theory is strongest where it can use its poststructuralist critical tools for a critique of “hegemonic master narrative”; it is weakest where it is drawn into an assessment of contemporary political realities which are increasingly difficult to measure against the yardstick of the dichotomy between the coloniser and the colonised.⁴²

It is because of this theoretical position described by Schulze-Engler that scholars like Harold Bloom believe that traditional humanities are politically unmotivated. Bloom is of the opinion that the activity of reading is lonely and asocial; as such literature is not likely to offer a

⁴¹ Frank Schulze-Engler in Riemenschneider, 10.

⁴² *Ibid.*

sound basis for social change, that is to say, it cannot teach anyone to become a better citizen.⁴³ However, for Leela Ghandi:

[A]lthough his arguments are compelling, yet Bloom neglects to observe that humanism proper has consistently regarded literary education as a necessary apparatus for the proper functioning of the state. In other words, humanism has always functioned as an aesthetic-moral ideology which is concerned with, and directed toward the moulding of ideal citizens –subjects.⁴⁴

For Mathew Arnold in his *Culture and Anarchy* “we find no basis for a firm state-power in our ordinary selves; instead, culture – or knowledge – suggests one to us in our best selves.”⁴⁵ In other words, according to Ghandi, “[h]umanist thought is clearly unified in its aspiration to establish a symbiotic relationship between culture –and knowledge – and the state [...]. Therefore, whenever the established state interests are threatened, humanism tends to flourish at most.”⁴⁶

The highpoint of this research, therefore, is a strong methodological argument that post-colonial studies as a new form of scholarship in the humanities should not only be engaged in “writing back”, as Schulz-

⁴³ See Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (New York: Papermac/Harcourt Brace &Co, 1994), 526. The fact that reading is asocial does not mean that one cannot learn anything from the text that one is reading in one’s closet; moreover social change is initiated by man not the text. It is the information which the reader assimilates in his closet while reading that he transforms into knowledge. It is that knowledge that he uses in initiating social change. However, not every one who reads a text and gets empowered by it will turn the knowledge from it into judgement and action; therefore while literature will not be able to offer a sound basis for social change for Bloom because the act of reading is asocial, it may offer a basis for social change for Leela Ghandi in spite of the fact that the act of information acquisition, that is reading, might be asocial.

⁴⁴ Leela Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: A critical introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 49.

⁴⁵ See H.H. Super (ed.) *Mathew Arnold. The Complete Prose Works* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press,1965), 135.

⁴⁶ Ghandi, 1998, 50-1.

Engler believes it to have done to date, but it should also be enhancing, ennobling and improving life, opposing every form of tyranny and domination, exposing not only the interests that propel the production of knowledge, but also the theories that disqualify and subjugate knowledge. Last but not least, it must focus the internal political, social, economic and cultural realities of post-colonial societies, using its instrument –literature – as a tool of practical engagement with society.

After the Berlin Conference of 1885, Great Britain's claim over the area known as Nigeria received international recognition. The following year witnessed what was to be known as the "scramble for Africa". Under the auspices of the Royal Niger Company, colonial venture blossomed all through Nigeria in the nineteenth century up till the middle of the twentieth century. It was an activity that brought about large number of settlers from Great Britain, and who, as Schulze-Engler puts it:

[T]ook possession of the new territory, displacing and marginalizing indigenous populations in the process [...]. Original populations were completely wiped out in the Caribbean and replaced by white settlers[...]. The majority population consisting of slaves were abducted from Africa and additional indentured workforce were brought from Asia. In African context there were colonies with substantial numbers of settlers –South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya [...]. But in the majority of cases, colonial rule brought different ethnic groups together in new territorial units without a significant permanent-settler presence.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Frank Schulze-Engler in Riemenschneider (ed.), 2004, 8.

Nigeria happens to be one of those cases, where colonial rule brought different ethnic groups together in a new territorial unit. The success of this expedition depended largely on the imposing of imperial ideology on the colonised. Ideology itself has been defined by Vladimir Buzuev and Vladimir Gorodnov as “a system of political, legal, moral, philosophical, religious and aesthetic views and ideas characteristic of a certain class of people.”⁴⁸ In the colonial context, it was the views, ideas, emotions and even aspirations, in fact the social consciousness of the ruling classes of colonial England that prevailed in their time. To achieve the goals of the *mission civilisatrice*, schools and churches were built. This did not, however, preclude the original desire on the part of the coloniser: a quest for personal and collective material improvement. In the process, Nigeria’s natural bounties were exploited by the colonisers. Robert Young argued that capitalism, being the driving force of colonialism, had to first of all do away with the institutions and cultures that had already been developed.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Robert Young writes:

[T]he basic need of capitalism is to engineer and encounter between the deterritorialized wealth of capital and labour capacity of deterritorialized worker. The reduction of everything, including production and labour to the abstract value of money enables it to decode flows and deterritorialize the social. Having achieved a universal form of exchange,

⁴⁸ Vladimir Buzuev & Vladimir Gorodnov, *ABC of social and political knowledge: what is Marxism-Leninism* (U.S.S.R: Progress Publishers, 1987), 101.

⁴⁹ Young J.C. Robert, „Colonialism and Desiring Machine” in Gregory Castle (ed), *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 82.

it then reterritorializes -institutes or restores all sorts of residual and artificial imaginary or symbolic territorialities such as nation, states or families [...] deculturation and acculturation by which the territory and cultural space of an indigenous society must be disrupted, dissolved, and then reinscribed according to the needs of the apparatus of the occupying power.⁵⁰

The essence of the *mission civilisatrice*, which consisted in the building of schools and churches and the establishment of colonial government of indirect rule, was to “civilise” the colonised and make them cultured in the ways of the coloniser. The ideas and theories of the metropolitan centre were expected to be so articulated as to achieve their goals of creating mimic men in their colonies, of which Nigeria was one.

However, Homi Bhabha believes the end product, which will result from the imposing of such ideas that represent colonial presence, will always be ambivalent, in his opinion, “split between its presence as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference.”⁵¹ The resultant effect is a state of hybridity, which, according to him is “a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other “denied” knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rule of recognition”.⁵² Maria Varela and Nikita Dhawan believe that these “mimic men” will never in reality be

⁵⁰ Young, in Castle, 2001, 82.

⁵¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 107

⁵² *Ibid.*, 114.

English men; they will, instead, be mediators between the centre and the periphery; and the effort to transform them will only produce mimicry.⁵³ Consequently, the strategic effort to consolidate colonial power will fail once these mimic men realise that in spite of their privileged position in relation to the native, they still remain inferior before the colonial masters.⁵⁴ As a result of the hybridity between the coloniser and the colonised, Bhabha deconstructs post-colonialism and renders it as continuity rather than an epochal change from colonialism; therefore, the coloniser could not have been in total possession of the authority of colonial power.⁵⁵

The imposing of the culture of the coloniser on the colonised could only be possible through education, which, of course, could only take place if the coloniser imposed his language on the colonised. English became, therefore, the official language of Nigeria. Indeed, the knowledge of a language makes one familiar with the culture that carries the language. Therefore, English language, which is the language of the coloniser, is the carrier of the English national culture; and national culture, according to Frantz Fanon “is the whole body of efforts made by a people [in this case the English people] in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the actions through which that

⁵³ Maria Varela/Nikita Dhawan, *Post-kolonial Theorie: Eine kritische Einführung* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2005), 85.

⁵⁴ Varela & Dhawan, 87.

⁵⁵ Bhabha, 128.

people [that is, English people] has [sic] created itself [sic] and keep [sic] itself [sic] in existence.”⁵⁶ This being the case, colonialism then is an effort by the English to keep themselves in existence. For them to really be in existence in the colonies, in this case, in Nigeria, English history, language, religion, literature and science had to displace or marginalise Nigerian indigenous histories, languages, religions, oratures, and sciences. The implication of this is a displaced or alienated people. The occupation and domination were made possible by the introduction of the western formal type of education. Education would definitely, according to Terence Ranger, “tidy up and make more comprehensible the infinitely complex situation of cultures”⁵⁷ [in Nigeria]; however, before the introduction of western education in Nigeria, Nigerian children, according to Emmanuel Obiechina, “were inducted into the traditional way of life in two ways: by formal teaching in initiation ceremonies, and by informal teaching in seeing and following the examples of grown-ups -through “watching & initiating” as Phoebe and Simon Offenburg have called it.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, Emmanuel Obiechina had argued that being part of the everyday activity of the community, the children of the African or Nigerian societies came to know the rights

⁵⁶ Frantz Fanon, in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (ed.), *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory A Reader* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 44.

⁵⁷ Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 249. [my emphasis]

⁵⁸ Emmanuel Obiechina, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 4-5.

and duties of the individual, the values, beliefs and creeds of the community, the sanctions and etiquette of social behaviour; these offered them the opportunity of naturally acquiring knowledge of the significance of the culture in which they exist. It would be expected that cultural content and behaviour would be transmitted to the individual by contact and deliberate induction. It was not easy to have experiences outside the immediate cultural environment because it was inaccessible to the individual through traditional education. The individual would naturally, therefore, tend to see the world in terms of his or her own circumscribed environment, and would understand only those experiences which have been culturally determined for him. The major effect of the introduction of western education was to break the psychic protection of traditional education and limited physical mobility and exchange them with a cosmopolitan and mobile psyche. With the introduction of literacy, the corpus of western, and indeed world civilization, its institutions and values, arts, and sciences, philosophies and theology, its aesthetic values, and the artefacts of its material culture were made available to the people in Nigeria and awakened thereby new aspirations, increased the urge toward new emulation and provided opportunity for discourses.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ See Obiechina, 4-5. While Obiechina referred to west Africa in general, in regard to the introduction of western education in Africa, I narrowed the example down to Nigeria

The discourses that ensued as a result of these contacts proved that colonisation was a material condition. And because the material conditions of people's lives "may" pre-determine their spiritual, cultural and intellectual pursuits,⁶⁰ a conflict arose in the psyche of the Nigerian educated elite with regard to the impositions upon their lives. These impositions were largely not original and were also in conflict with the culture which was the driving force of their existence and which also gave meaning to their lives. Obviously, they had taken the advantages that colonialism offered them, some of which were formal education and bilingualism, to fight the theories that justified colonisation. They believed, perhaps, that they could accommodate outside culture, while retaining theirs; or had just realised that they were simply "mimic men". This psychological conflict was the beginning of a veritable search for identity and it gave rise, therefore, to Nigerian nationalism, which was more a quest for political independence than a desire for cultural assertion. Kole Omotoso writes:

[L]abelling the 'struggle' against British imperialism as 'nationalist' needs to be questioned. The basis for the struggle in Nigeria was not one Nigerian nation. Rather, the 'struggle' was waged on the basis of liberal ideals of self-determination, freedom of organisation and the scrambled pan-African ideals of anti-racism, anti-imperialism. At no time during the 'struggle' was any serious thought given to the idea and the nature of the Nigeria to be established.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Buzuev & Gorodnov, 85.

⁶¹ Kole Omotosho, *Achebe or Soyinka? A study in Contrast* (New Jersey: Hans Zell publishers, 1996), 56.

If indeed founding fathers of Nigerian independence had actually given a thought to the type of Nigeria to be established they would have considered the best option that must reflect the ethnic make-up of the country. But they were under occupation and oppression; therefore, independence was paramount on their minds. And being a marginalised ethnic group based on the colour of their skin, they believed in the restoration of their dignity as human beings first, and the freedom to demonstrate to their detractors that they were capable of ruling themselves.

Therefore, on October 1, 1960, Nigeria became an independent nation. Its independence was achieved peacefully, but a unified national culture failed to emerge,⁶² against Fanon's prediction; instead several distinct cultures emerged. Furthermore Omotosho writes:

[W]hen we come to deal with the agenda of the new nation-states, we find some similarities as well as contradictions when compared with the pan-African agenda. The arbitrary nature of the boundaries determined for African peoples at the Berlin conference of 1884-5 and confirmed by the Organisation of African Unity charter of 1963-4 has been the subject of many studies. [...] These boundaries corralled different ethnic nationalities into new nation-states which had hardly got used to being called Yoruba before they were called Africans by the newly arriving Europeans who hardly recognised the differences between them and now they were to be called Nigerians. The Nigerian national agenda consisted of national unity, economic viability and development and creation of social satisfaction [...] national unity dreamed of having many people, one destiny, and one God and also one language. This aspiration ignored the reality of the composition of the Nigerian state and pushed ahead with the European concept of the nation-state. Along with the aspiration towards national unity was also the issue of cultural

⁶² See Fanon, *On National Culture*, In: Patrick Williams And Laura Chrisman (ed.) *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory* (London: Prentice hall, 1993), 44.

retrieval. Whose culture would be retrieved to represent the culture of the new nation-state?⁶³

Interestingly enough, prior to colonisation, there was no Nigeria; that means, the various ethnic groups that make up Nigeria existed simply as nations. These must have been nations, where there must have been necessary skills needed by individuals to partake meaningfully in their society's auto-functional running of itself. In the course of interaction, which also demands skills, values must have been built; these values must have reflected the society's psychic and cultural make up. Traditions must have evolved in the course of the individual's need to create order and give meaning to his/her existence: No one has portrayed a pre-colonial Nigerian life so vividly and informatively as Chinua Achebe in his Novel *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958). It is a cultural nationalist effort against centuries of colonial domination that only brought devastation on what came to be called by Fanon "the African Psyche" (a postcolonial pathological condition of the black African, who is alienated).

Things Fall Apart is, therefore, a novel of necessity, written to heal the wound of the Nigerian colonial past and place it on its path again towards its own integral evolution: integral because the western intrusion has become part of the Nigerian experience which cannot be

⁶³Omotosho, 1996, 41.

wiped out entirely without wounding the Nigerian soul (a state of having been conditioned by experiences of being, colonisation and postcoloniality). Therefore, as an individual or people without the complexes of colonisation, the Nigerian or Nigerians must then chart their own course, aware though of a western integrated self (the other part of him, which has been influenced by colonialism).

Things Fall Apart (1958) is not so much a revengeful protest against colonial theory as it is a deconstructive protest against whatever portrays life of the Nigerian past as meaningless, as lacking in moments of celebration. In fact, for Achebe himself *Things fall Apart* (1958) was an adequate revolution for him to espouse—to help his society regain its belief in itself and to put away the complexes of years of denigration and self-abasement. The revolution was essentially for him a question of education, in the best sense of that word. It was in his desire to educate his society and his society's need for education that his aims and the deepest aspirations of his society met. He believes that no thinking African can escape the pain of the wound in their soul; therefore, the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact, he believes that the writer should be in the forefront. He, for one, would not wish to be excused. He believes he would be quite satisfied if his novels, especially the ones he set in the past, did no more than teach his readers that their past—

with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the Europeans, acting on God’s behalf delivered them.⁶⁴ Again, in an interview with Bernth Lindfors, Achebe said:

[O]ne big message of the many that I try to put across is that Africa was not a vacuum before the coming of Europe, that culture was not unknown in Africa, that culture was not brought to Africa by the white world [...]. People are expecting from literature serious comment on their lives. They are not expecting frivolity. They are expecting literature to say something important to help them in their struggle with life [...]. So it is a serious matter.⁶⁵

The Novel opens our imagination regarding the pre-colonial society of Umuofia, which is organised and structured, and whose inhabitants play their allotted roles in society. There are moments of heroic achievements as well as moments of abject despair in that society. However primitive the society is, it is no less pluralistic as any other society, haunted by its superstitions and confronted by its realities. One sees the various ideological tendencies not unlike those familiar spectrums of politics from left to right typified in various individuals and their ideological persuasions.⁶⁶

Okonkwo is a symbol of a hero in the Igbo pre-colonial, traditional society: he has a very large barn of yams, has taken so many titles as proof of his wealth and has more than one wife. He is also a great wrestler, whose fame has spread like wild fire in the whole of the clans

⁶⁴ See C.L Innes and Bernth Lindfors, *Critical Perspectives on Achebe* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 38.

⁶⁵ See Bernth Lindfors et al., “Interview with Chinua Achebe,” in *Conversation with Chinua Achebe* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1997), 29.

⁶⁶ James Booth, *Writers and Politics in Nigeria* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), 5.

and villages. His aspirations conform to the positive values and work ethics of his society. His life is a direct opposite of his father's: His father is known to be very lazy, plays only flute and is highly indebted. He is no role-model for anybody and is therefore generally disrespected. Their society is such that respects achievement and places much value on material success. Little wonder then Okonkwo, even though still very young, is a welcome presence in the gathering of elders.

Achebe, thus, appears to be a disturbed native and decides, according to Fanon, to remember what he is by digging deep into his memory to bring to the fore happenings of bygone days of miseries and difficulties which are origins of a veritable search of identity.⁶⁷ Therefore, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) reconfirms the Nigerian past, which is African, and protests thereby against the theories that justified colonisation.

This post-colonial politics of opposition and struggle is not only about the attempt by Achebe to retrieve the past of Nigeria for the Nigerian through the medium of Igbo history and culture⁶⁸, but also the effort in Paris in the year 1934 by the black francophone intellectual and later president of the Senegal, Leopold Senghor, together with his contemporaries in Martinique and French Guyana – Aime Cesaire and

⁶⁷ See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth* (London: 1965/67), 179. Fanon believed it behoved the native intellectual to dig into his past in his quest to discover his identity

⁶⁸ Omotoso, 1996, 42.

Leon Gotran Damas respectively – to break the monologue Europe has had with Africa by celebrating “the glories of African culture and the human-centred simplicity of African civilisations, and in response to France’s cultural policy of *assimilation* in its overseas colonies.”⁶⁹ This celebration the francophone intellectuals called *Negritude*.

Negritude asserted black culture and identity; however, in doing so, it fell into the same trap of categorisation, which European intellectuals have often been accused of. But the Nigerian writer and critic, Wole Soyinka, opposes the concept of *Negritude*. He believes it is Manichean, becoming exactly that which it criticises – that is, like European intellectuals, the proponents of *Negritude* compartmentalise life and become therefore essentialists. He does not believe that it is necessary for a Tiger to proclaim its Tigritude. Leopold Senghor, a proponent of *negritude*, on the other hand, believes that while the “Negro” talks, the tiger does not. Therefore since the gift of speech is part of the “Negro’s” humanity, he cannot possibly be compared to a tiger; moreover the tiger has not been oppressed in the forest, but the “Negro” has been oppressed even in his country.⁷⁰

In spite of the disagreement on the concept of *negritude*, it is, nevertheless, believed to have, according to Sallah and Okonjo-Iweala,

⁶⁹ See, for example, Tijan M. Sallah & Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, *Chinua Achebe Teacher of light A Biography* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc. 2003), 134.

⁷⁰ See also Dorothy Randall Tsuruta, “*In Dialogue to Define Aesthetics: James Baldwin and Chinua Achebe*,” *The Black Scholar*, 12, 2(March/April 1981)

“forced a dialogue: Europe was forced to take notice; to switch roles, and to listen.”⁷¹ Essentialism is thus celebrated: the negative essential reference of Europe to Africa is deconstructed, made positive and acceptable as the essential nature of man. Logic and matter on which European civilisation rest are thought of, according to Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, “as only the outer surface that had to be transcended by intuition⁷² in order to achieve a vision in depth and reality.”⁷³ Everything thus works together to awaken the native’s sensibility: He/She becomes proud of his existence and begins to celebrate the human centredness of his/ her world.⁷⁴

As more Africans become literate, the highly sensitive among them like Achebe begin to write to counter the theories that justified colonisation. In doing that, however, Achebe did not fail to critically expose the imperfections in the African or Nigerian past. In other words, he believed that while there was no justification for colonialism, yet the native did not loose entirely.

Once African writers carved a niche for themselves in the literary world, intellectuals of the imperial centres like England saw the need to

⁷¹ Sallah & Okonjo-Iweala, 2003, 135.

⁷² Senghor and his colleagues believed intuition to be essentially African: A position seen by many critics of post-colonial studies as untrue.

⁷³ Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman [eds.], *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 28.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

redefine English literature. This definition, Chinweizu, Madubuike and

Jemie wrote:

[H]ad to include African literature, but just as a mere extension of English literature or put in their own very words: an overseas department of European literature; in effect it has no tradition of its own which it could build upon, neither does it have models of its own, which it could imitate. No audience or constituency separate and apart from the European and no norm on which to judge its beauty and relevance.⁷⁵

Chinweizu, Jemie Onwuchekwa and Ihechukwu Madubuike desired to decolonize African literature, which to them was still suffering under the grip of western intellectual literary criticism. They had written:

[T]here comes a time, we believe, in the affairs of men and nations, when it becomes necessary for them to engage in *bolekaja* criticism, for them to drag the stiflers of their life down to earth for a corrective tussle. A little wrestle on the sands never killed a sturdy youth. We expect Africa's sprouting modern literature to thrive, as its traditional orature and literatures have done for millennia.⁷⁶

They insisted that African literature was unique and completely different from the European and as such its technique; thematic and ideological preoccupations should not be based on European standards. Furthermore, they challenged the idea of western critics who suggested that European literature was superior because it had a written form with a long history. Chinweizu, Madubuike and Jemie argued, therefore, that

⁷⁵ Chinweizu, et al., *Toward The Decolonization Of African Literature*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, xiv

Orature, the African traditional equivalent of Literature was as good as literature by writing:

[I]n addition to extended written narratives in African languages, there was in pre-colonial Africa an abundance of oral narratives which are in no way inferior to European novels. It might be noted that some of these, especially the epics and epic cycles, when written down, are comparable in length to quite a few European novels. These narratives have made thematic technical and formal contributions to the African novel. Among the formal are contributions in the area of length, structural complexity and textual complexity. In their themes and techniques, African novelists have utilized material from African tales, fables, epigrams, proverbs etc. The structural and textual complexity [sic] of their narration have counterparts in short as well as extended oral narratives. And as for the question of sheer length upon which Adrian Roscoe harps so much, it is not part of the concept of the novel that it must be of the same length as *War and Peace*.⁷⁷

They compared, thereby, the short story to the African tales and fables; the oral epic, to the written novel. They believed proverbs, aphorisms and all other genres of poetry to be common to both oral and written media. In trying to define what African literature is, they argued that while African literature could be any work by an African in an African language, it could also be any work by an African, who employed the European language so adequately as to make it capable of carrying or expressing his/her experiences. Some of the other considerations that could make a literary work to qualify to belong to this canon were (a) the primary audience for whom the work was done, (b) the cultural and national consciousness expressed in the work, whether through the author's voice or through the characters and their consciousness, habit,

⁷⁷ Chinweizu, et al., 1980, 13-14.

comportment and diction, (c) the nationality of the writer, whether by birth or naturalization – a matter that a passport could decide, and (d) the language in which the work was done.⁷⁸

Anthony Appiah, however, rejected the monumental work of Chinweizu et al, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980), for methodically following the critical tradition of Western cultural institution. He does not believe the theoretical stand of the three, that is, that African literature could be an autonomous entity separate and apart from all other literature. For, once the cultural nationalism of Chinweizu, Madubuike and Jemie became categorical, it automatically assumed a universal outlook, which was already the position of western theorists.⁷⁹

At the African Writers' Conference in Makerere in June 1962 African writers had to face the challenge of defining African literature. The Nigerian, Obi Wali, argued in his article that the whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing was misdirected, and had no chance of advancing African literature and culture.⁸⁰

At the same conference, Achebe argued in favour of the use of the English language in his writing as long as the language was capable of

⁷⁸ Chinweizu, et al., 27.

⁷⁹ See Anthony K. Appiah „New Literatures, New Theories“, in *Matatu 7: Canonization and Teaching of African Literature*, Raoul Granqvist (Amsterdam & Atlanta GA: Rodop, 1990), 57-89.

⁸⁰ Obi Wali, *Transition*, 10 September (1963)

carrying his experiences; he did not object to anybody preferring the indigenous languages to the English language. He was not unaware of the reality of the African predicament in regard to colonialism; but again he was not ashamed of making good use of the good things that were the aftermath of colonisation – bilingualism.⁸¹ After all it was the ability of the African writer to seize the language, which was a medium of power of the imperial centre, and adapt it to his situation that demystified the language.⁸²

Therefore, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffins tried to capture the whole gamut of efforts at defining postcolonial literatures in their book, *The E W B* (1989). The understanding of the book definitely leads to the understanding of the development of the literatures themselves, the seemingly cultural dominance of the imperial centre as well as the idea of post-coloniality and theory, which emerged as a result of the failure of European theory. European theory itself emerged from particular cultural traditions. These cultural traditions on the other hand get concealed by the false notions of “the universal”, making it very problematic to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing.⁸³

⁸¹ See Chinua Achebe, “Morning Yet on Creation Day” in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.) *Colonial discourse and Postcolonial Theory* (New York: Heavester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 430.

⁸² Achebe in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 430

⁸³ See Ashcroft, et al, *E W B*, 2002, 11.

Defining post-colonial literatures means for Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffins listing the models of post-colonial literature and elaborating on them; for them, there are both the National and Regional models of post-colonial literatures. They write that the first post-colonial society to develop a 'national' literature was the USA; that the emergence of a distinctive American literature in the eighteenth century raised inevitable questions about the suitability of inherited literary forms; that ideas about new kinds of literature were part of the optimistic progression to nationhood because it seemed that this was one of the most potent areas in which to express difference from Britain; that in many ways, the American experience and its attempts to produce a new kind of literature could be seen to be the model for all later post-colonial writing and that American literature as a distinct collection of texts started being accepted. However, it was accepted as an offshoot of the 'parent tree'.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, American literature soon developed its own distinct characteristics from British literature and became established. The same is the case with Australian, Indian and Nigerian literatures, which could all be considered in relation to the social and political history of the

⁸⁴ Ashcroft, et al., 15.

individual countries in question and could as well be read as sources of veritable images of their national identities.⁸⁵

The intellectuals of these individual countries rejected Europe's claim of being exclusive, once they had studied carefully their national traditions and asserted their nationhood; however, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffins believe that the recent theories and criticisms in post-colonial studies do not reject the fact of the need for there to be original and specific or characteristic differences in national or regional literatures. These theories and criticisms also do not subscribe to essentialist positions that might lead to extreme nationalist, ethnic or even racist doctrines.

E W B (1989) also preoccupies itself with the writings of black people known by the writers as the black writing model. The black writing model, according to the Authors of *E W B* (1989), "is based on the idea of race as a major feature of economic and political discrimination which draws together writers in the African Diaspora regardless of their nationality."⁸⁶ Nevertheless, they believe that this model as criticism "overlooks the great cultural differences between literatures produced by a black minority population in a rich and powerful white country and the ones produced by the black majority

⁸⁵ Ashcroft, 16. [plural mine]

⁸⁶ Ashcroft, et al, 19.

population of an independent nation."⁸⁷ In effect, the disregard of these differences would amount to extremist posturing like European theories have been accused of, seeming therefore very essentialist like the Negritude. They also believe that the greatest achievement of the post-colonial writer is the ability to seize the Language, which was the medium of power, and adapt it to their situation, making it able to carry their own experiences. In remoulding the language to new usages, the post-colonial writers stripped it of its privileges. This brought about a practical approach to questions of theory.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the authors of *EWB* (1989) write:

[T]he syncretic and hybridized nature of post-colonial experience refutes the privileged position of a standard code in the language and any monocentric view of human experience. At the same time, however, it also refutes the notions that cultural practices can return to some 'pure' and unsullied cultural condition, and that such practices themselves, such as the use of vernacular terms or grammatical forms in English literature, can embody such an authenticity.⁸⁹

But, for Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, who has for long been writing in English, until the eighties, when he reverted to writing in his native Gikuyu, the argument for the continued use of European languages in African literature is outrageous. He wonders why African writers should be spicing European literature with the ingredients of their native languages. He would rather Africans nurtured their own Shakespeare or

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Ashcroft, et al, 40.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 40-1.

Tolstoy. He believes that language carries not only the soul and spirit of a people, but also the mind.⁹⁰

It is common knowledge that the intellectuals of the colonising powers were the driving force behind colonisation. Believing they understood “marginal” races better than they understood themselves, they went ahead to depict them in their works only in such ways as would arrest the interest of their fellow citizens in their different countries. The colonial literatures of Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary were rife with condescending European perspectives about Africa. And because they excluded African perspectives, they only reinforced colonial images and entrenched thereby colonial enterprise. They helped to defend the colonial order as a system of values and beliefs brought to deliver and enlighten Africa.⁹¹ As stories they always appeared innocent as in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, where Marlowe is in the boat steaming up the rivers to the Congo, passing those strange beings jumping up and down on the river banks, making horrid faces and the improved native specimen in the boat, who is more absurd than a dog in a pair of

⁹⁰ See Ngugi Wa’Thiong, *Decolonising the mind* in Patrick Williams and Laury Chrisman (eds.) *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory* (New York: Heavester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 448.

⁹¹ Sallah & Okonjo-Iweala, 2003, 54.

breeches trying to make out the witchcraft behind the ship's water-gauge.⁹²

This degradation of human dignity had also thrived for centuries in the Middle East up to the point of carving out a special area of study of Middle Eastern peoples, known as Area Studies or Orientalism. Strange enough, these "area studies" excluded works written by the people under study; it was as a field of study only about the works of Europeans and later Americans acting as specialists in the field. Scholarship, which was supposed to be unbiased, objective and contributory to knowledge, was rather bastardised and became rather doctrinaire, compartmentalising races as superior and/ or inferior. It was, no doubt, the political interest of the West, in this case – Europe and America – that necessitated the invention of the geographical term "Orient" as is also the case with the term "Third World". Edward Said maintained that his idea was that European and American interests in the Orient were political according to some of the obvious historical accounts of it that he always wrote about in his work. It is obvious that both the British and American interests in the Orient were culturally created, because the culture acted powerfully along with brute political, economic, and military objectives to make the Orient the varied and

⁹² See Chinua Achebe, "*African literature as Restoration of Celebration*," in Kirsten Holst Petersen et. al., *Chinua Achebe: A Celebration* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books, 1990), 7.

complicated place that it obviously was in the field Said called Orientalism. Edward Said continued by writing that Orientalism was not just a political subject matter or field that was reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor was it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; it was not representative or expressive of some nasty western imperialist plot to hold down the oriental world. It was rather a distribution of geopolitical Knowledge into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and literary texts. In fact, it was certain will or intention to understand, to perhaps even control, manipulate or even incorporate what was an evidently different and strange world.⁹³ Furthermore, Edward Said wrote:

[I]t is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and existed in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do).⁹⁴

Indeed Said's real argument was that *Orientalism* "is -and did not simply represent - a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world."⁹⁵

⁹³ Said, 2003, 12.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Therefore with his *Orientalism*, he criticised the academic indiscipline of Western intellectuals, who, academically, portrayed the “Near-Eastern Person”, and, of course, every person that belonged to the ‘subject races’ as inferior. He showed as well, how the foreign policies of these Western powers were influenced by the policymakers, who were in the main Orientalists, as well as experts on the *Third World*. He thus deconstructed the ideological postulations of colonial administrators like Arthur James Barfour⁹⁶ and Lord Cromer⁹⁷ as well as imperialist positions of influential people like Henry Kissinger⁹⁸, who believed that it was the duty of the western world, “the Post-Newtonian real world”, who saw the world as an observable reality, to construct an international order before a crisis imposed it on them.⁹⁹ Before Kissinger were people like Kipling. Kipling believed that the world, of which the Empire was a part, was hierarchically structured with the imperial centre or the Queen at the apex of the structure. He was one of those who used literature to promote and advance the imperial knowledge and opinion of self as against the other – that is, European supremacy over the so-called subject races.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Barfour was a member of English parliament, a former secretary for Scotland, former prime minister as well as veteran of numerous overseas missions.

⁹⁷ Lord Cromer was known as Evelyn Baring alias ‘Over-baring’. She was England’s representative in Egypt between 1882, the year in which England occupied Egypt and ended the nationalist rebellion of Colonel Arabi, and 1907

⁹⁸ Henry Kissinger was former United States’ Secretary of State

⁹⁹ Said, 2003, 47.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

Way back in time, scholars of Europe depicted the Orientals in deprecatory manner. Their religion was mocked, while Mohammed was ridiculed. They were seen as never-do-wells and licentious; they were also believed to be incapable of logical thinking: stereotypes used also by colonial theories to describe Africans before, during and perhaps even after colonisation. These racist, stereotypical and biased tendencies nourished the ground on which the Oriental ideologies of later Orientalists like Flaubert, Napoleon and many more would germinate and flourish. As an unhealthy ideological spillover into the twentieth century, it definitely infected policy analysts like H.A.R Gibb, who could still not get off the old stereotypical way of seeing the Oriental: to him the Oriental was still lacking in a sense of the knowledge of the law as well as in rational thinking.¹⁰¹

Edward Said, thus, lamented the American social science deliberate avoidance of literature in its studies of the Orient. The American orientalist pretends to be so much concerned with facts: a subterfuge for the avoidance of literature, which definitely will disturb his or her conscience in treating the Orient. Said saw this trend as dehumanising, reducing the region and its people to attitudes, trends and statistics. He believed that in literature, the Arab poet or novelist wrote of his or her experience, values, humanity and thereby disrupted the images,

¹⁰¹ Said, 105-6.

stereotypes, clichés and abstractions by which, otherwise the Orient might have been represented by the so-called Orientalists.¹⁰²

While Said deconstructed “Area Studies” in a post-colonial discourse analysis, Homi Bhabha deconstructed Said’s Orientalism, seeing it in the same light with colonial theories of empire, which were rife with binary oppositions. He went therefore beyond Said’s binary opposition noticeable in his Orientalism, anchoring the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised in a complex reciprocity.

Like all post-colonial intellectuals, the post-colonial Nigerian intellectuals tried to root their being in history; but they failed to consider the fact that, outside of cultural issues, political and economic competitions among the ethnic nationalities have been the cause of social instabilities in their various stages of development. They also failed to convert the gains of cultural diversity of the ethnic nationalities and lost thereby the opportunity of resolving the conflicts that always arise from the competition for scarce social, economic and political resources. As a result of this failure, the educated elites of the Nigerian nation made themselves reproachable.

However, the greatest achievements of Nigerian writers, according to Omotosho, have been the ability to translate their cultural specifics into the generalities of pan-Africanism, like Achebe has done with his

¹⁰² Said, 291.

Things Fall Apart; but their greatest failure is the inability to use those cultural specifics for the creation of a community of sensibilities in a new Nigerian nation-state.¹⁰³ In other words, there is need to create a new community of sensibilities not only against the degeneracy of post independence, but also against the dangers of ethnicity and bigotry. By a community of sensibilities, Omotoso means a multi-religious, multi-lingual and a multi-ethnic community; he insists that a common sensibility ought to express the totality of the ideals of the various languages, ethnicities as well as religions characteristic of the community in question.¹⁰⁴ It behoves, therefore, the Nigerian writer to create these new sensibilities in his or her work, while the literary scholar or professional humanist explains or interprets and articulates the phenomena in order to improve life in a positive and practical way through the resolution of the Nigerian ethnic conflicts. This is one of those aspects of Nigerian life on which its literature comments and which has not been properly interpreted or explained in literary discourses of postcolonial writings, especially postcolonial Nigerian writings.

The need to employ literature and particularly Nigeria literature in conflict resolution cannot be overemphasised. Omotosho had implied

¹⁰³ Kole Omotosho, *Achebe or Soyinka: New perspectives on African Literature* (London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1996), 42.

¹⁰⁴ Omotosho, 59.

this when he said that there was an overwhelming emphasis by post-colonial Nigerian educated elites on the politics of opposition between the coloniser and the colonised; that there was need for a new community of sensibilities in post-colonial Nigeria, where the educated elites ought to shift attention from the usual politics of opposition or resistance characteristic of traditional post colonialism to contemporary Nigerian problems of ethnicity.¹⁰⁵ Ethnicity has, therefore, become, for Nigeria, a new stage of the post-colonial in a neo-colonial nation-state. This is the preoccupation of the next chapter

¹⁰⁵ Omotosho, 59.

ETHNICITY IN NIGERIA

Is man a tribal animal as is postulated by Desmond Morris?¹⁰⁶ Or is ethnicity an ideological framework for Africa constructed in the West as argued by Aidan Campbell?¹⁰⁷

Desmond Morris, by arguing that man is a tribal animal, only wants to assert the fact that man, whether western or southern, is essentially savage in nature. This in effect means that man, in spite of the physical civilization around him, is still very much close to nature in his being. Little wonder there is still so much ethnic and racial hatred around the world even in the west, where high-tech advancement and “civilization” are still not able to make the ordinary western man exercise control over his or her primordial instincts let alone exercise control over his or her society’s degeneration. Yet, according to Aidan Campbell, high-tech enhances consumption and engenders the comfort of passive individuals¹⁰⁸, who would rather watch society go down in evil than speak out against it. Therefore, Donald Horowitz believes “the upsurge of ethnic sentiments in Western countries demonstrates that ethnicity

¹⁰⁶ Desmond Morris & Peter Marsh, *Tribes* (Exeter: Pyramid books, 1988), 9.

¹⁰⁷ Aidan Campbell, *Western Primitivism: African Ethnicity: a study in cultural relations* (London: Cassell Wellington House, 1997), 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

could not be explained solely in terms of a fading traditionalism that the West had outgrown.”¹⁰⁹

Before the coming of the Europeans to Africa, African peoples lived as nations. In other words, that which was viewed as pre-colonial tribalism, according to Basil Davidson, (it should be noted that Okonkwo in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a case of pre-colonial nationalism) “was in every objective sense a history of nationalism”¹¹⁰; however, for Otite Onigu:

[T]he concept of “tribe” was readily available. It satisfied the self-assumed superiority of foreign scholars and political administrators who regarded African social arrangements and cultures as primitive, barbaric and atavistic, in a lineal human evolutionary-development model. The concept of “tribe” also provided a neat small-scale scope on the basis of which academic empires and grand theories were formulated by scholars who were almost entirely foreign to Nigeria and Africa.¹¹¹

It was this disregard for African social arrangements as well as the need to reorganise Africa for imperial exploitation that made colonial administrators to politicise “tribal” arrangements, by arguing for the urgency of the need for big political units instead of tribal units. Therefore, by the conquest of northern Nigeria for the crown in 1903, Lord Frederick Lugard began to call for a policy of indirect rule. That is, a way of ruling through the local chiefs or the emirs and kings. By 1914

¹⁰⁹ See Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 97.

¹¹⁰ See Basil Davidson, *The Black man’s burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1993), 75-6.

¹¹¹ See also Onigu Otite, et al., *Ethnic groups and Conflict in Nigeria* (Ibadan: The Lord’s Creations, 2001), 15.

the northern and southern protectorates were amalgamated by Lord Lugard as a political unit. In effect, as Otite Onigu still argues:

[T]he formulation of Nigeria in 1914 necessitated new identities as units of sociological analysis. These new larger units, defined by exclusive systems of cultural symbols have become the relevant ones which interact with one another in the competition for the scarce political and economic resource available in the new state. The older units of the “tribes” as governmental societies with separate political jurisdiction, have become part of ethnic group. They are now better classified as sub-ethnic group.¹¹²

The consequence of that interaction is “tribalism”, that is, actions of discrimination and divisiveness in the struggle for the control of the scarce political and economic resources. And for Okwudiba Nnoli:

[Tribalism] occupied an important place in this racist ideology of Colonialism. It was represented as primitive and barbarous mystique peculiar to the African, the major link between this a-historical, primitive and barbarous past in which no system of ethics and no principle of conduct were developed, on the one hand, and the “civilising mission” and “white man’s burden” of the colonial order on the other.¹¹³

It is of course a reactionary racist conceptualisation of the African dynamic¹¹⁴, according to Nnoli, because it first affirmed the existence of human groups having no culture; then of a hierarchy of cultures; and finally the concept of cultural relativity.¹¹⁵ The colonialist, who, of course, had a particular mind-set, which was informed by an ideological racist view of Africa, started to categorise African linguistic groups as

¹¹² Otite, et al., 18.

¹¹³ See Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978), 3.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press), 31.

tribes and to ascribe to them differences in cultures and ways of life. With such action, according to Nnoli, they distorted the meaning of the word “tribe”¹¹⁶; for, as Mamood Mamdani maintains:

[T] here was a time when the word possessed scientific content, when it characterised those social formations that did not possess a state - the communal, classless societies, as for example, the Germanic tribes [...]. What is it that makes 2 million Norwegians a people and just as many Baganda a tribe? A few hundred thousand Icelander people and 14 million Hausa-Fulani a tribe? [...].¹¹⁷

In the opinion of Otite Onigu, et al, as the concept of “tribe” and “tribalism” became obsolete as a result of their derogatory nature, sociologists preferred the terms ethnic group for “tribe” and ethnicity for “tribalism”.¹¹⁸

Therefore, Okwudiba Nnoli argues further that ethnicity is a phenomenon associated with interactions among ethnic groups.¹¹⁹ These ethnic groups are themselves part of social formations. Therefore the understanding of the dynamics of their interaction will definitely advance the knowledge of the social relations that are necessary for social transformation not only in the area of ethnic relations, but also in the field of social relations in general. This would lead to social development.¹²⁰ However, social development is closely interdependent

¹¹⁶ Nnoli, 1978, 3.

¹¹⁷ Mamood Mamdani, *Politics and Class formations in Uganda* (New York: Monthly Review, 1976), 3.

¹¹⁸ Otite Onigu, et al, 18.

¹¹⁹ Nnoli, 13.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

with other forms of development, that is, economic and political development of the society. Therefore, it is the duty of all social analyses to create a better world.¹²¹

Furthermore, Ethnicity has been defined in various ways by Don Handleman, Hutchinson and A.D. Smith as being characterised by perceived cultural differences between members and non-members of an ethnic group. It also involves interactions within member groups as well as distribution of resources to benefit members; it also includes a development of common interests in political organisations through which members' interests and goals are expressed, and lastly it is characterised by the existence of an ethnic community which expresses all of the above in addition to the existence of a permanent, "physically bounded territory" to which the group has political control.¹²²

The word ethnic is derived from the greek word *ethnos*, which literally means herd or nation/people, tribe, according to Reinhard Meyers, Kathrin Ahlbrecht, Annegret Bendiek and Sabine Wagner.¹²³ They believe that literally the word ethnic may sound very simple because people could differentiate themselves from others through their language, religion or customs. In other words, ethnic membership

¹²¹ See Nnoli, 13-14.

¹²² See Don Huthandleman, *The Organisation of Ethnicity* Ethnic Groups, Vol. 1, 1977, 187-200; and J. Hutchinson and A.D. Smith (eds.) *Ethnicity* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1996), 6.

¹²³ Reinhard Meyers, et al, *Konfliktregelung und Friedenssicherung im internationalen System* (Hagen: FernUniversität in Hagen, 2007),36.

would refer to a mixture of inherited physical characteristics and transmitted customs and character traits. They believe, however, that a second look at the seemingly clear understanding of the term ethnic would raise doubts at the meaning of the term, because, even a quasi-objective facial or physiognomical differences between the ethnic groups are always not recognisable; even religious or linguistic criteria are not particularly reliable methods of distinguishing membership to an ethnic group.¹²⁴ For Ojiji, Ochinya Odada, "ethnic groups are distinct social groups whose membership is ascribed at birth (that is, parents being members of the group entitles the child to automatic membership)."¹²⁵ Furthermore, he proposes another definition, "[A]n ethnic group is a contemporary association of persons within a territory they regard as their own; whose agreement for membership is the history of common descent and culture embodied in the shared language of members."¹²⁶ J.D Toland defined it as "the sense of people-hood held by members of a group sharing a common culture and history within a society."¹²⁷ While in the book edited by L. Diamond and M.F. Platner it was defined as "a highly inclusive (and relatively large-scale) group identity based on some notion of common origin, recruited primarily

¹²⁴ See Meyers, et al, 2007, 36.

¹²⁵ Odaba Ochinya Ojiji, *Value Orientation And Preference For methods Of Conflict Resolution In Nigeria* (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Research Publications, 1998), 6.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²⁷ See also J.D Toland (ed.), *Ethnicity and the State. Political and Legal Anthropology series*, no. 9 (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1993), 3.

from kinship.”¹²⁸ They believe that, typically, the word ethnic manifests some measure of cultural distinctiveness.¹²⁹ If, therefore, it is so conceived, “ethnicity easily embraces groups differentiated by colour, language and religion; it covers “tribes”, “races”, “nationalities” and castes.”¹³⁰

Similar to the definition is that by A. Thomson, who sees ethnicity or ethnic group as “a community of people who have the conviction that they have a common identity and common fate based on issues of origin, kinship, ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a language.”¹³¹ But Tokunbo Simbowale Osinubi and Oladipupo Sunday Osinubi believe that ethnic identities are not primordial; they believe instead that they are consciously constructed and constantly modified.¹³²

Ethnicity has been defined in various ways by researchers in the field so much so that Professor Eghosa Emmanuel Osaghae in his unpublished PH.D dissertation insisted “there is no acceptable definition of ethnicity, understandably because of the multiplicity of

¹²⁸ See L. Diamond and M.F. Plattner (eds.), *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), xvii.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ See A. Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 58

¹³² Tokunbo Simbowale Osinubi and Oladipupo Sunday Osinubi, “Ethnic Conflicts in Contemporary Africa: The Nigerian Experience,” *Journal of the Social Sciences* 12(2): 102, (2006)

concepts that have generic common ancestry."¹³³ These are concepts like Tribalism, Communalism, Ethno-centricism and even Nationalism. He, however, considered ethnicity as a derivative of ethnic group.¹³⁴ On the other hand, for Abner Cohen, an ethnic group exists only when "it forms a part of a larger population, interacting with people from other collectivities within the framework of social system."¹³⁵ Furthermore, for N. Glazer and D.P. Moynihan it could be said to be a condition of being a member of a particular ethnic group with a very special characteristic sense of pride.¹³⁶ R.A. Schermerhorn for his part defined ethnicity:

A collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: Kinship pattern, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group.¹³⁷

Therefore, from the primordialistic view of ethnicity, ethnic membership consists in natural/biological and spiritual affinity; for, according to Clifford Geertz, "virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments seem to flow from a sense of

¹³³ Eghosa Emmanuel Osaghae, *Ethnicity And Federalism In Nigeria*. A PH.D Dissertation, submitted to the Faculty of Social Sciences, university of Ibadan, 1984, 26.

¹³⁴ See Osaghae, 27.

¹³⁵ See Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974) ix

¹³⁶ See also N. Glazer and D.P. Moynihan, *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1.

¹³⁷ See R.A. Schermerhorn, *Comparative Ethnic Relations* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 12.

natural –some would say spiritual –affinity than from social interaction.”¹³⁸ From the constructivistic view, ethnic identity is socially constructed.¹³⁹ And like every other social category, it is capable of undergoing changes.¹⁴⁰ It could be changed by socio-economic processes, foreign influence like colonialism, cultural discourses, and activities of individual actors, for example, individual actors like political elites¹⁴¹. In fact the role of the colonising powers in the construction of ethnic identity cannot be underestimated.¹⁴² However, while the constructivistic view of ethnicity considers ethnic identity to be flux –but only through certain consistency for the reason of common social experience, history, collective memories and norms, –the instrumentalistic view considers ethnic identity as a continually changing mass that could be manipulated by holders of power to suit their own selfish interests.¹⁴³ In other words, it is based on “rational choice theory”, which means that the ethnic groups, in pursuing their

¹³⁸ Clifford Geertz, “Primordial Ties” in John Hutchinson/ Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 42

¹³⁹ Meyers, et al, 2007, 38.

¹⁴⁰ See James D. Fearon/ David D. Laitin, “Violence and Social Construction of Ethnic Identity” in *International Organisation* 54., (2000), 845-877.

¹⁴¹ See Meyers, et al., 38.

¹⁴² See Donald L. Horowitz, “Ethnic Identity”, in Nathan Glazer/ David P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience 5th Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 157; see also Christian P. Scherrer, *Structural Prevention of Ethnic Violence: Regulating Conflict through Autonomy, National Policies and Self-governance* (Moers: Institute for Research on Ethnicity and Conflict, 1999), 18.

¹⁴³ See again Meyers, et al., 39.

various interests, have the costs and advantages of such pursuit in mind¹⁴⁴; but Ted Robert Gurr argues:

[I]n short we assume that ethnic identities are enduring social constructions that matter to the people who share them. How much they matter depends on people's social and political circumstances [...]. Ethnic identities are not 'primordial' but nonetheless based on common values, beliefs, and experiences. They are not 'instrumental' but usually capable of being invoked by leaders and used to sustain social movements that are likely to be more resilient and persistent than movements based solely on material or political interests.¹⁴⁵

Therefore during the struggle for independence, the new Nigerian nationalists were able to instrumentalise ethnic identity in order to fight colonialism. They fought it with their innate pre-colonial tribalistic proclivity because they were able to see themselves as an oppressed ethnic group regardless of their different ethnic backgrounds. In other words, they were black and Nigerians first and foremost. Secondly they were under colonial rule and therefore 'oppressed' and marginalised. Therefore, they could only fight for a common cause once they were able to work together. Tribalism at the time had no negative value in the context of social conflict, because there were still colonisers, and colonialism did not give room for a national conflict. But, with independence, according to Basil Davidson "the new political parties drew authentic and sometimes overwhelming popular support from

¹⁴⁴ Meyers, et al., 39.

¹⁴⁵ Ted Robert Gurr, *People versus State: Minorities at Risk in the New Century* (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace, 2002), 5.

their ethnic roots.”¹⁴⁶ Davidson argues that the ethnic unions used to be powerful instruments in raising the expectation of the people with regard to a better life after colonial rule; but once colonial rule was over, the leaders of the ethnic groups, who happened also to be the leaders of the new nationalism, became the potential or actual leaders of their newly independent nation.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, he believes that the leaders of these newly independent nations, of which Nigeria is part, turned from being instruments of pressure against foreign rulers, and rather became instruments of rivalry within the political arena of their nation-states. Their competing interests became more important to them than the interest of the great number of the population, who they represented. As such the “social conflict” became subordinated to the “national conflict”; and “tribal unions” such as the Igbo National Union and the Yoruba Egbe Omo Oduduwa became competing tribal unions. They destroyed thereby that national unity, which was initially empowered by a social unity behind social aspirations during colonial rule; moreover national unity was supposed to be ideal behind the whole independence project.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, the various ethnic groups developed ethnic identities by socialisation among themselves, and they

¹⁴⁶ Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, 111-112

¹⁴⁷ Davidson, 111-112.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*,

evolved values that act as rationale for their actions.¹⁴⁹ As Ojiji Ochinya

Odada has argued:

[T] here is, in other words, a close link between ethnic identity and value orientation. The literature on the origin of values and the growth of ethnic awareness shows that both are learned within a particular socio-cultural context. Learning to set standards for action and state of existence (values) is tied to the demands (goals) of a given society. Accordingly, values become intricately tied to the experiences of people in a particular culture (ethnic group).¹⁵⁰

Therefore, their different states of existence or values, may predetermine their goals, interests and; and the pursuit of those goals and interest may bring about conflicts. Furthermore, the Amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates, which in reality was the merging of the “tribes”, engendered cultural pluralism. In other words, there was going to be a clash of incompatible values and institutions. And if one has to follow arguments proffered to justify colonisation, colonialism ought then to be a modernising process, hence the amalgamation. The colonial officers might have intended through this to bring about a contact situation among the “tribes” and enhance thereby economic competition: such contact situation might have been expected to trigger the modernisation process. Such competition for the available scarce economic and political resources, which were valued in common, would certainly become the source of conflict. And the elites would play

¹⁴⁹ Ojiji, 70.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

an important role in exacerbating the conflicts. The political elites of the various ethnic groups became the representatives of their people in the various political parties at the time. Therefore, while Action group became a predominantly Yoruba party, NCNC (The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons) was mostly Igbo and NPC (The Northern Peoples Congress) remained overwhelmingly Northern. Therefore, Horowitz writes, "the very elites who were thought to be leading their people away from ethnic affiliations were commonly found to be in the forefront of ethnic conflict."¹⁵¹

In his book, *Just before Dawn* (1988)¹⁵², Kole Omotoso narrates, satirically, Nigerian history, beginning from the years before independence to the years after independence. He shows how tumultuous the road to the Nigerian nationhood has been, the factual and fictional roles played by the Nigerian nationalists before and after independence, how they used the power of their ethnic affiliations to canvass for political support for their various parties, how ethnic suspicion and prejudice have been the bane of the Nigerian state.

The Nigerian State comprises many ethnic groups. The three major ethnic groups are the Igbo in the south-east, the Yoruba in the south-west and the Hausa in the North. The major means of interaction among these ethnic groups prior to colonisation was through trade and

¹⁵¹ Donald L. Horowitz, 1985, 97.

¹⁵² Kole Omotoso, *Just Before Dawn* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1988)

commerce. Having become a nation-state after independence, a sense of natural or spiritual affinity, difficult to do away with, among the members of each ethnic group still persists so much so that it is considered at present, according to Ike Udogu, “a very significant variable in the political character of a nation-state,”¹⁵³ especially in traditional or modernising societies, even in the so-called modern societies.

To better appreciate the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria, a brief historical account of the three major and competing ethnic groups has to be given: an account that will highlight their various institutions and values. As Ojiji Ochinya Odada had noted in the research he did on the value orientations of about six Nigerian ethnic groups:

[T]he first hypothesis relating to ethnic group differences in value orientations received considerable support from this research. The six ethnic groups differed significantly from each other in their value orientations. More significant, however, is the finding relating to achievement values which was found to be higher among Yoruba, Idoma, Igbo, Urhobo Hausa and Ibibio in that order. Earlier studies of values in Nigeria were unanimous in Igbo superiority in achievement Values (e.g. LeVine, 1966; Okpara, 1988).

Ojiji’s research findings obviously contradicted the findings of R. A. LeVine (1966) and E. Okpara (1988). Ojiji, however, admitted that this was the first time H.S. Schwartz’s value scale was used in Nigeria; and that a direct comparison of these findings to previous ones was difficult to make. Furthermore, Ojiji argued that methodological differences in

¹⁵³ E. Ike Udogu, *Ethnicity and Theory in African Politics in The Issues Of Political Ethnicity in Africa*, E.Ike Udogu, (ed.), (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001) , 17.

the researches as well as in the measures used offered explanation for the differences between the findings; for while R.A. Levine (1966) and E. Okpara interviewed children in secondary schools, his research sought information from university students.¹⁵⁴ And as such he believes “there is a possibility that ethnic groups converge in their achievement value as they attain higher education and some become even higher than the Igbo who were higher at younger age and lower educational levels.”¹⁵⁵ Ojiji also believes that any differences in values could be traceable to differential socialisation. In other words, the ethnic groups learn their values in their given cultural contexts.¹⁵⁶ In the research findings of Ojiji, the Hausa and the Yoruba are conformists more than the Igbo. Their conformist nature is traceable to the aristocratic nature of their traditional political organisations. Their leaders, the obas and the traditional chiefs, exercise full authority over them as subjects. In these societies, total obedience is expected from the subjects; therefore, the growing child is taught very early to be obedient to constituted authorities.¹⁵⁷ Ojiji found the Igbo less conforming to authority; but he attributed the nonconforming nature of the Igbo to authority to their early contact with the west and argued that this was so because the emerging organisations were not strong enough to induce conformity,

¹⁵⁴ Ojiji, 161-2.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 162-3.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

the traditional practices having been damaged.¹⁵⁸ This argument is, however, not true because the Igbo have never had aristocrats (apart from the Obi of Onitsha, whose aristocratic powers are not absolute) around whom power revolved. Instead, in the opinions of Jonah I. Onuoha and Tochukwu J. Omenma:

Kinship forms the basis of the political organization. Each Lineage is a political unit, represented by a head who acts as a representative on larger councils. This form of representation and hierarchy is expanded into larger units through the village leader ... power and authority belong to all, but by virtue of their seniority and ontological status, some individuals are known to exercise greater powers and influence than others. This is thought necessary in order to ensure an effective political system.¹⁵⁹

Furthermore, Ojiji found the Yoruba and the Hausa stronger in their desire for security more than the Igbo. He argues that those ethnic groups with a stronger sense of security have strong traditional governments and this make them to be dependent on those authorities for their sense of security. On the other hand, those who scored low on security, in terms of having to depend on a constituted authority, do not have monarchical traditional governments on which to look up to for security. Therefore, the people from less-tradition-oriented societies tend to believe in individual freedom and are, thus, more prepared for

¹⁵⁸ Ojiji, 164.

¹⁵⁹ Jonah I. Onuoha and Tochukwu J. Omenma, "The Seniority Ideology and Governance in Igbo Culture." *Ikenga International Journal of African Studies* Vo. 9 No. 1&2 December (2007), 146-7.

the challenges of modern life.¹⁶⁰ Further findings by Ojiji showed the Hausa scored lowest in self-direction, while the Igbo scored highest. The Yoruba and the Hausa scored highest on tradition more than the Igbo. He believed that the Yoruba scored high on tradition probably because of their renewed pride in their culture. He found that the Igbo scored high on self-direction because of the principle of individual freedom in their culture. With stimulation, the Yoruba was highest, while the Hausa was lowest. He attributed the low score of the Hausa on stimulation to their traditional and authoritarian society, where Islam holds sway. He attributed the high score of the Yoruba on stimulation to the open nature of their society. Furthermore, the Yoruba and the Igbo scored very high on universalism. However, the Yoruba were slightly higher than the Igbo on universalism. All the same, he attributed their high score on universalism to their high level educational attainments. And he believes that the motivational goal of universalism is understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection of the well-being of all people and for nature.¹⁶¹

With all these in mind, one may be able to appreciate the historical background of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and therefore be in the position to understand the nature of the conflicts they find themselves in.

¹⁶⁰ Ojiji, 165.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 164-7.

2.1 The Igbo People of Nigeria:

The Igbo dwell in the south-eastern part of Nigeria. There have been different historical accounts of their origin as a people. Some theoretical school believe that the Igbo are denizens of the area known as Igboland. This school believes that the Igbo did not migrate from anywhere; that is, they were created in their present abode. This theoretical school propounded the Autochthony theory.¹⁶² Another school of thought propounded the Niger-Benue Confluence Theory, which believes that the Igbo belong to the Kwa language family of the Niger-Congo language family. This school believes that the Kwa language family, which is a branch of the Niger-Congo language family of Africa gave birth to the Igbo, Yoruba, Edo, Idoma, Igala, Igbira, Ewe, Akan, Nupe and Bassa language families, but that Igbo and Yorube separated from the Kwa proto-language family about four thousand years ago.¹⁶³ However, the school of thought that propounded the Theory of the Jewish Origin insisted that Igbo is the lost tribe of Israel. According to Otagburuagu Emeka J. and Nwankwo Nwaezeigwe T.,:

[U]nlike the conventional Oriental hypothesis which was inspired by European colonial and Arab adventurism in black Africa, the Igbo theory of Jewish origins began as a pre-colonial reaction against European slavery and racism in diaspora.A-

¹⁶² See Emeka J. Otagburuagu and Nwaezeigwe T. Nwankwo, *The Igbo and their Nri neighbours* (Nsukka: Institute of African Studies, 2008), 26.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 27.

part from being based on extant culture similarities it coincided with the era when the Jews were still in bondage in several countries of the world like the Black Africans.¹⁶⁴

Remy Ilona, for his part, believes:

[T]he oral traditions about the origins of the Igbo is quite unique and interesting at the same time. Unique in the sense that some of the lore dealing with the origins of the Igbo start from Israel and terminate at the Eri axis, comprising the Nri, Aguleri, Umuleri, etc, clans. However, one on which a movie, -“Roped Verses”, has been based, points toward Ethiopia as the probable original homestead of the Igbo. ¹⁶⁵

In Igbo-land, lineage is the basic unit of social and political relations. Great emphasis is placed on the equality of the associating units; leadership, performance and achievement are more important than the inherited authority of say a king. This is also applicable to the Tiv-people of Nigeria.¹⁶⁶ According to V.C. Uchendu:

[T]he affairs of the village are decided by a general assembly in which men and women can participate. However, effective control is in the hands of the elders, members of an age set whose turn it is to govern the village at a particular period in their age-grade cycle.¹⁶⁷

The political units in the Igbo communities consist of the family, the compound, the village and the village group or the clan.¹⁶⁸ And lineage is patrilineal, whereby descent is traced to the father.¹⁶⁹The egalitarian

¹⁶⁴ Otagburuagu and Nwankwo, 30-1.

¹⁶⁵ Remy Ilona, *The Igbos: JEWS IN AFRICA?* (Abuja: Remy Ilona, 2004), 35.

¹⁶⁶ See Professor Okon Edet Uya, *Nigeria: THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE in CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA* edited by Okon Edet Uya (Argentina: EDIPUBLI, 1992), 17.

¹⁶⁷ See V.C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of the South East Nigeria* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 46.

¹⁶⁸ See T. U. Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy* (Ikeja-Lagos: Nigerian Lantern Books Ltd., 1985), 165.

¹⁶⁹ See Onuoha and Omenma, 146.

nature of the Igbo made it nearly impossible to introduce indirect rule in Igbo-land except through the appointment of warrant chiefs during the implementation of an indirect rule system by Lord Frederick Lugard, who was instrumental to the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates. It was not so easy with the Igbo as it was with the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba, who had monarchs. Furthermore, the Igbo worldview is characterised by seven principles: the society is integrated, dynamic, market oriented, encourages status by achievement circle; the society strives for balance, maintains a strict code of conduct and a world of change and freedom are achieved through adherence to the phenomenon of seniority.¹⁷⁰

The Igbo do not have a large landmass; they, therefore, live in a densely populated area. Naturally, the pressure on the land would be much that one would only expect a low level of production in agricultural products. This condition has already programmed in advance migratory tendencies on the part of the Igbo. With colonialism came western education. This was going to ensure an adequate build-up of colonial workforce. Unable to depend on the proceeds from the land as a result of poor soil, the Igbo sought alternative ways of self-improvement and actualisation. They found solace in western education and commerce.

¹⁷⁰ Onuoha and Omenma, 151.

2.2 The Yoruba people of Nigeria:

While some accounts even speculate that the Igbo belong to the lost tribe of Israel, who, during the great dispersion migrated to their current place of settlement, the Ife lore, according to Akinjogbin, has it that “Oduduwa descended from heaven by an iron chain, landing on a small island in the midst of a world that was covered with water [...] He was said to have been commissioned by God to go and create land out of the watery surface of the earth.”¹⁷¹ Myth has it that Oduduwa was not the first leader of the Yoruba race. In fact, according to Akinjogbin, the lore maintains that Oduduwa took power from Obatala, who was tipsy on the way from heaven.¹⁷² The great Yoruba historian, Reverend Samuel Johnson recorded that Oduduwa was the founder of the original Yoruba kingdom at Ife. He believed that Oduduwa was the son of Lamurudu, the king of Mecca. He recorded that Oduduwa reconverted to paganism from Islam; that he was particularly denounced by a young man called Braima for relapsing to paganism and that the young man was sentenced to death by burning for disrespect. He recorded that the Muslims in the kingdom revolted against his father, Lamurudu, who eventually died, most likely, of depression. Oduduwa himself was

¹⁷¹ I.A. Akinjogbin, *Milestones and concepts in Yoruba History and Culture* (Ibadan: Olu-Akin Publishers, 2002), 15.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

banished from the land. He migrated to the area known today as Yorubaland and settled at Ife.¹⁷³ But Akinjogbin insists:

[O]duduwa did not descend from heaven by a chain nor did he migrate from Egypt as a result of religious conflicts. He probably was already settled in the stranger quarters in Ile-Ife and must have been there for sufficiently long time to know the community very well and to make friends with some of them. Where he came originally must continue to remain a debatable point.¹⁷⁴

Furthermore, Robin Law argues that there is no evidence for the existence of Yoruba traditions earlier than Johnson's account in the 1890s in the Middle East that claim descent from Lamurud or have origin in Mecca.¹⁷⁵

Yoruba worldview manifests in their urban way of life as well as their developed political and economic institutions. It defines both the physical space and social positions of their men and women.¹⁷⁶ This worldview consists, according to Samuel Johnson, in the "love of independence, a feeling of superiority over all others, a keen commercial spirit, and of indefatigable enterprise..."¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the traditional Yoruba social structure is hierarchical rather than egalitarian; however, according to Helen Callaway, it is "not rigidly authoritarian but giving

¹⁷³ Rev. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba Earliest Times to the Beginning of British Protectorate*, edited by O. Johnson, (London: Routledge, 1966), xxi-xxii.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁷⁵ Robin Law, "How Truly Traditional is our Traditional History? The Case of Samuel Johnson and the Recording of Yoruba Oral Tradition in Toyin Falola (ed.) *Pioneer, Patriot & Patriarch Samuel Johnson and the Yoruba People* (Madison: African Studies Programme University of Wisconsin, 1993), 50.

¹⁷⁶ See Helen Callaway in Shirley Ardener (ed.) *Women and Space. Rules and Social Maps* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Limited, 1993), 165.

¹⁷⁷ See Samuel Johnson, 1966, xxi-xxii.

the impression of power radiating from a central source, male-orientated, male-dominated, with a distinct separation of spheres.”¹⁷⁸

And according to L.J. Kamau:

[T]he centre of the compound is the dwelling space of the head of the patrilineage. The spatial design of the cosmology is thus replicated at each level from the universe to the person in the male-orientated vision of power structure.

At the centre of this power structure is the Oba in the traditional Yoruba society. His palace “is the converging focus of all interests...”¹⁷⁹ But as

Helen Callaway argues:

[A]lthough the traditional society had its class divisions of royal families, chiefs, commoners and domestic slaves Yoruba history shows how individual men used strength in war and skill in negotiation to gain political power and wealth.¹⁸⁰

The early encounter with European traders and explorers, no doubt, impacted on the Yoruba economic and political life. European explorers, especially the British, whose trading adventures took all along the West African coast, ventured into Yoruba land as early as in 1826. This was a period of great political turmoil during which Kosoko and Akintoye were at each other’s throat over who would succeed the throne of Eko or Lagos. At the behest of Akintoye, the British Navy, which was stationed then in Lagos, came to his aid and thus drove out Kosoko, who was accused of being a slave trader. But this, according to Akinjogbin, was

¹⁷⁸ Callaway in Shirley Ardener(ed.), 1993, 166.

¹⁷⁹ Krapf-Askari, *Yoruba Towns and Cities. An Enquiry into the Nature of Urban Social Phenomena* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 39.

¹⁸⁰ Callaway in Shirley Ardener (ed.), 180.

only a ploy on their part for want of a genuine reason to drive him out.¹⁸¹

Proximity to the Atlantic necessitated trade and commerce between the Europeans and some powerful Yoruba Kings or Obas. The British also mediated in their wars and established Christian missions on the one hand while also involved in slave trade on the other hand. Christian missions entailed education. As such mission schools were established to introduce the Yoruba Christian converts to western civilisation. The Yoruba benefited, therefore, from western education in that its people became the most educated during the colonial period. Also majority of the slaves who were set free at Freetown, who had become “miniature” Westerners, were Yoruba free-slaves. They added to the number of Yoruba western educated men, so that, as Akinjogbin argues, “when the colonial administration started in Lagos, the lower cadres in the civil service were manned by Yoruba men and people of Yoruba descent from Sierra Leone and the West Indies.”¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Akinjogbin, 66-67.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 86.

2.3 The Hausa-Fulani People of Nigeria:

Of all the major ethnic groups in the North, the ones that are of interest here are the Hausas and the Fulanis. The Hausa-Fulani civilisations date centuries back before even the spread of Islam by Othman Dan Fodio. The Fulani are nomadic. They played an important role in spreading Islam. In the bid to spread Islam, Fulani scholars launched a Jihadist movement that had far reaching effects all through West Africa. According to K.B.C Onwubiko, “[A]lthough it was a religious movement, yet there was a mixture of political, economic and intellectual factors as well.”¹⁸³

There are two types of Fulanis, according to C.N. Ubah: the nomads and Fulani Gida, that is, town Fulani¹⁸⁴ But John N. Paden insists that there are three different groups of Fulani, which the Fulanis themselves had distinguished at the beginning of the twentieth century: these are the nomadic cattle pastoralists otherwise known as the *Bororo*; the settled villagers or *Fulanin Kuaye* and the urban dwellers or *Fulanin Gida*.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, Paden writes that the Fulani are patriarchs by tradition.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ K.B.C Onwubiko, *History of West Africa* (Onitsha: Africana Educational Publishers, 1967)¹⁸³, 205.

¹⁸⁴ C.N. Ubah, *Colonial Army and Society in Northern Nigeria* (Kaduna: Nigerian Defence Academy, 1998), 4-5.

¹⁸⁵ John N. Paden, “Urban Pluralism, Integration, and Adaptation of Communal Identity in Kano Nigeria” in Ronald Cohen and John Middleton (eds.) *From Tribe to Nation in Africa* (Scranton, Pennsylvania: Chandler Publishers Company, 1970) 254.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

While “the Fulani ethnic group regard themselves as having a common ancestor, who was the product of a marriage between an Arab Muslim military commander and a Jewish woman from Palestine”¹⁸⁷, the Hausa believe themselves to have originated from Bayajidda, who had come from the east in a bid to escape from his father. On arriving at Baya he engaged the services of the local blacksmiths, who fashioned a knife for him with which he went to Daura to free its people from the oppression of a sacred snake that occupied their well and prevented them for as much as six days from fetching water from it. As a sign of gratitude, the queen of Daura offered herself in marriage to Bayajidda. From the marriage came seven healthy sons, each of whom ruled the seven city-states that make up the Hausa-land.¹⁸⁸ The Hausa city-states are Daura, Kano, Rano, Kastina, Zazzau, Gobir and Garun Gabas and they shared a common language.¹⁸⁹ Paden argues that the Hausa society is bilateral and tends towards patrilineal descent among the upper-class political elite and religious leaders.¹⁹⁰ Apparently, the history of the Hausa people is intertwined with those of the Fulani as a result of the spread of Islam. The Fulani had wrested political power from the Hausa in the cause of spreading Islam.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ See Paden in Cohen and Middleton, 1970, 254.

¹⁸⁸ See Onwubiko, 40-1.

¹⁸⁹ See again Paden, 254.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Mahdi Adamu, *The Hausa Factor in West African History* (Ibadan: Oxford University press, 1978), 5.

The British exploratory voyages did not exclude the North. In 1914 it was the North and the South that were amalgamated by Lord Fredrick Lugard. He also introduced the system of indirect rule, which was much easier for the North to adopt as a result of its monarchical system. As a result of the Islamic influence on the Hausa-Fulani society as well as the patriarchal nature of the culture of the North, as M.G. Smith believes, has always been a place where every one is conscious of his or her status.¹⁹² Smith argues further, “[O]ne of the first things which a stranger is told in Hausa-land is the importance of the distinction between the *Sara Kuna* (chiefs) and *masu sarauta* (office holders) on the one hand, and the *talakawa* (subjects, commoners) on the other.”¹⁹³ As such indirect rule succeeded tremendously in the North as it did in the Western part of Nigeria. Attempts by the missionaries to introduce Christianity in the Northern part of Nigeria were strongly resisted by the Moslems. As a result Western education made little or no impact in the Northern region, especially the Moslem parts.

This was to become their great undoing as they missed the privileges and advantages Western education brought along. This educational disadvantage was going to contribute immensely in stoking the embers of ethnicity in the polity.

¹⁹² See M.G. Smith, “A Hausa Kingdom: Maradi under Baskore, 1854-75”, in Forde D. and Kaberry P.M. (eds.), *West African Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century* (London: 1967), 93-122.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

2.4 Independence and the Competition For Scarce Political, Social and Economic Resources:

Political independence in Nigeria ushered in a post-colonial era, and this was not without its problems. An independent nation ought to be addressed as a nation. But is Nigeria a Nation? Is homogeneity in language and culture a prerequisite for Nationhood? Oxford English

Dictionary defines a Nation as:

A group of humans who claim and are accepted to share, in some sense, a common identity. This identity often consist of common element such as language, religion, ideology culture and history usually common elements are the result of a common origin, in the sense of ancestry, parentage or descent.¹⁹⁴

Going by this definition, Nigeria cannot be a nation. However, the Nigerian ethnic groups are. This sense of nationhood is traditional, because a nation could also be multicultural, whereby a relatively large group of people or ethnic groups can be organized under a single, usually independent government of a country.

With colonisation came the building of colonial trading firms like John Holt, UAC, Leventis and a whole lot more. These trading companies ensured that cash crops that were locally produced were exported to the metropolis for repackaging and eventual re-exporting to the colonies for public consumption. The need for the requisite labour cannot be over emphasised.

¹⁹⁴ See Oxford English Dictionary

This means that the Igbo, who could not depend on the yields from their land, therefore, had to migrate to the various cities of Nigeria in search of jobs and for entrepreneurial reasons. This in effect necessitated a contact situation between them and the original settlers of the immigrant region in question. The same was for the Yoruba, who had over the years made tremendous investment in education and had therefore sufficient labour force for the labour market. Therefore, J.I Elaigwu believes ethnic consciousness was to be transformed into a weapon of offence and defence in a competitive way; in other words, the ethnic groups compete among themselves over scarce resources by mobilising their members with the hope of maximizing gain at the expense of other competing groups.¹⁹⁵

The competition for political power entails alignment and realignment in order to position or reposition oneself or one's political party. During the colonial era, in the early 1920s, the honourable Herbert Macaulay, a returned Yoruba slave, had formed the NNDP (The Nigerian National Democratic Party). It was a political party that represented colonised Nigerians, who had become an ethnic group in the fight for political independence and the racial marginalisation that was concomitant with colonisation. Again Akinjogbin wrote:

[B]y the end of 1930, and early 1940s, the younger generation

¹⁹⁵ J.I. Elaigwu, *Ethnicity and the Federal Option in Africa*, The Nigerian Journal of Federalism, Vol. 1, 69-85

of the Nigerian educated elite started feeling that the old parties were not militant enough. In 1944, a group of students under the leadership of Hezekiah Oluwasanni (later Prof. H.A. Oluwasanni), vice chancellor of the University of Ife (1966-75) summoned a mass meeting that resulted in the formation of the National Council of Nigerian and the Cameroon (NCNC). They invited Herbert Macaulay, the most prominent politician of the day to head the organisation. By then, Dr. Azikiwe, the first Igbo man to attain prominence in Lagos was made the secretary of the organisation.¹⁹⁶

Nnamdi Azikiwe's dynamism, nationalism and firebrand journalism made him a household name in Nigeria so much so that he virtually became the leader of the NCNC once Macaulay was out of the picture as a result of age. He founded the Igbo State Union and believed that it behoved the Igbo race to lead Africa to the promise Land. He was of the opinion that God had specially created the Igbo people to suffer persecution and be victimised because of their strong desire to live; and that since it was their lot to undergo suffering, they could afford to be sacrificed for the ultimate redemption of the children of Africa. He argued that the Igbo were fortunate to be among the few remnants of indigenous African nations that were still plundered by artificial niceties of western materialism. He insisted that it was historically significant that throughout the glorious history of Africa, the Igbo were one of the select few to have escaped the humiliation of the conqueror's sword to be a victim of a Carthaginian treaty. He argued that if one searched through the records of Africa, one would fail to find an occasion when,

¹⁹⁶ Akinjogbin, (2002) , 87.

in any pitched battle any African nation had either marched across Igbo territory or subjected the Igbo nation to a humiliating conquest. Instead, there was a record to show that the martial prowess of the Igbo, at all stages of human history, had enabled them not only to survive persecution, but also to adapt themselves to the role otherwise thrust upon them by history, of preserving all that was best and most noble in African culture and tradition. Therefore he insisted that, placed in his high estate, the Igbo would not shy away from the responsibility conferred on them by their manifest destiny; for having undergone a course of suffering the Igbo should take possession of their heritage by asserting their birthright without apologies.¹⁹⁷

This was obviously an ethnically biased statement that would not be expected to augur well with the leaders of other ethnic groups, who henceforth had to be conscious of their identity within the Nigerian nation or risk domination by the Azikiwe's Igbo folks. Thus, Awolowo and his group formed the Egbe Omo Oduduwa in 1944. This cultural organisation was to become what was later known as the AG (Action Group), a predominantly Yoruba party.

Whether the embers of ethnicity were stoked by Zik's statement or the formation of Egbe Omo Oduduwa by Awolowo and later the Action Group, the bottom-line was each politician was positioning himself

¹⁹⁷ See Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Zik: A selection from the speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 242-3.

through his ethnic group for political power. In other words, political power was a scarce commodity and the politicians were competing for it. Of course such competition always degenerates to conflicts. In this case it degenerated to ethnic conflicts. As Paul Unongo argues:

[T]hese politicians who were very often the indisputable leaders of their various tribal associations would be so naïve or so self-centred, as not to realize the lunacy of continuously publicly interpreting before their tribesmen that the battle was on and so the tribesmen should do everything possible to ensure that their own tribe's people were elected or face the fate of being ruled and dominated by other inferior tribes, was, and still is, another justification for blaming Nigeria's problems on politicians. It should have been quite obvious to Nigeria's politicians that the way people were excited, it would be impossible for them to maintain effective control over these people who had their tribal diversities exaggerated out of all proportions, and their tribal animosities over-aroused. It is the irrational miscalculations and the gross exaggeration of our tribal differences which make these inciting politicians blameable. They did not create our tribes. They only intensified and strengthened the tendency of most us Nigerians to see the destinies of our young nation in terms of our tribal interests. They only exploited our weakness through and through with little foresight or consideration for the consequences. ¹⁹⁸

And so when Nnamdi Azikiwe, whose party had won the majority vote in Western House, lost the premiership of the Western region as a result of the Carpet-crossing of most NCNC (National Council Of The Nigerian And The Cameroon) members to AG (Action Group), he went back to Eastern House, where his influence was much felt, and removed by intrigue Eyo Eta, the then leader of the NCNC in the Eastern Region. Of course the seed of ethnic suspicion and distrust had been sown, and out of it would only grow ethnic conflicts. Achebe had written in his *The*

¹⁹⁸ Paul Iyorpuu Unongo, *The Case For Nigeria* (Lagos: Town and Gown Press, 1968), 62.

Trouble with Nigeria (1983) that as a student in Ibadan, he was eye-witness to the momentous occasion when Chief Obafemi Awolowo stole the leadership of Western Nigeria from Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in broad daylight on the Western House of Assembly and sent the great Zik scampering back to Eastern Nigeria.¹⁹⁹ On the economic front, Okwudiba Nnoli had noted:

[S]ince the migrants were too poorly educated to compete against the British for socio-economic resources they turned their competitive energies against fellow Nigerians. The resultant struggle produced frustrations. The unsuccessful competitors found it easy and convenient to blame their plight on the advantages possessed by members of other groups. Once the members of a particular group gained access to the best jobs and other resources, they used their positions to find jobs for others or at least pass on news of job opportunities to them. The repercussions were felt in unequal levels of unemployment and income as well as in different degrees of social status among the communal groups. Attempts by each group to escape the negative consequences of this phenomenon led to the further strengthening of communal associations.²⁰⁰

This practice has continued. The northern pogroms of the fifties and the sixties against the Igbo were offshoots of ethnicity; ethnicity on the other hand gave rise to nepotism, bribery and corruption. The Nzeogwu coup of January 1966 sought only to clear the nation of these vices. The primordial ethnic suspicion already endemic in the society made the Northern elements doubt the sincerity of that purpose. The consequence of it was the pogrom of the same year against the Igbo in the North and a subsequent counter coup of the Northern military elements. The ethnic

¹⁹⁹ See Chinua Achebe, *The trouble with Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing CO. LTD, 1983), 3.

²⁰⁰ Nnoli, 1978, 97-98.

nature of the upheavals of those years were captured by Wole Soyinka in his *The Man Died* (London: Arrow Books Limited, 1987): an account of the anguish of prison life and the Northern riot of 1966, which followed the military coup of the same year, in which many politicians and important personalities were killed by the soldiers who carried out the operation. He feels that the killing of the Igbo in the North was a well thought-out and thoroughly executed plan of the Northern elite of which the military was also culpable. He compares the treatment of the Igbo then to the treatment of the Jews in the Nazi Germany.

Soyinka's humanism led him to act as a mediator between the Federal Republic and the seceding Biafran Republic. He succeeded in making the better person he had become through literary studies, concrete and practical. He was misconstrued and framed to want to procure fighter jets for the "renegade" republic. He was therefore arrested and put to jail. He believes his imprisonment as well as the incarceration of many innocent Igbo, for no better reason than the fact that they are Igbo, to be gross injustice. He portrayed the then head of state, Gowon, as the head of a Gestapo with a Hitlerian mentality, serving only the interest of the Northern establishment.

CHAPTER THREE

NIGERIAN LITERATURE AS SOCIAL PRAXIS: ITS IMPLICATION FOR ETHNIC CONFLICT, NATIONAL ORIENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The nature of a given society could possibly be understood by studying its literature. It is a rich medium for understanding the differences and similarities among people and societies. That is possibly the reason the former Nigerian head of state, Ibrahim Babangida, who delivered a lecture at the occasion of the prestigious Nigerian literature and science award, sponsored by the Nigerian Liquified Natural Gas, had admonished policy makers in Nigeria that Nigeria's pursuit of scientific knowledge must not be at the expense of the humanities, especially literature, since, according to him:

[L]iterature, more than any other discipline in humanities and I dare say, even science, provides us with the best prism through which we could take a holistic view of ourselves, our social environment and even our comparative location in our material world made possible by science, in order to ensure that we protect our humanity, and even raise it to a higher level of honour and integrity.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ See Ibrahim Babangida, "Human Capital and National Development" *Sunnews*, October 14, (2007).

Furthermore, the authors of the *World Literature and its Times* (2000) are of the opinion that, “at the foundation of *World Literature and its Times* (2000) is a belief that within a people’s literature are keys to their perspective, their emotions and the formative events that have brought them to the present point.”²⁰²

While not disregarding the validity of recorded scientific facts, it remains all the same incontrovertible that literary works will either reflect reality, by unveiling its potential development or by obscuring it and seducing attention away from it.²⁰³

Klaus Stierstorfer bore witness to the ability of literature to represent reality in his treatment of the work of the Hong Kong writer, Ping-Kwan Leung. He describes vividly how Leung “packs into the comparatively short circumference of his story a striking wealth of imagery that focuses the multifaceted realities of Hong Kong in 1997 in greatest intensity in his short story ‘Postcolonial Affairs of Food and the Heart’.”²⁰⁴ These multifaceted realities are offshoots of Hong Kong’s hybrid identity, which Leung represented with a strange fruit given to the narrator during the birthday party of his friend. The narrator had

²⁰² See Joyce Moss and Lorraine Valestuk (eds.), *World Literature and its Times* Volume 2 (New York: Gale Group, 2000) vii

²⁰³ See Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Literary Sociology and Practical Criticism An Inquiry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 7-8

²⁰⁴ See also Klaus Stierstorfer, „1997: The Decolonization of Hong Kong in Contemporary Fiction in English“, In Rüdiger Ahrens et al. (ed.), *Anglophone Cultures in Southeast Asia* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag WINTER, 2003), 179-80.

described the fruit as “a cross between a bean and a logan”²⁰⁵. These were all Ping-Kwan Leung’s experiences in regard to his society.

Like Ping-Kwan Leung, the Nigerian writer writes about his or her experiences in regard to his or her society. There is for them an umbilical connection between experience and form. They engage in realism, however, in a critical way, by reflecting contemporary social, political and cultural life, not in a monolithic way, like socialist realism will represent the life of the working people and the party, but in a ramified way, embracing all aspects of life.

By reflecting the Nigerian realities in a critical way, Nigerian literary works expose the potentials of development inherent in those reflected realities. For example if they expose the nature and causes of ethnic conflict in the Nigerian society, they invariably offer their conscious reader the opportunity of resolving the conflicts, which are also the realities of the Nigerian condition.

While on the one hand Sony Labou Tansi had endeavoured to address this thin line of relationship between fiction and reality in his novel, *The Haunted Country* (1981), by insisting that a literary work is, supposedly, a work of imagination which must find its place somewhere in reality,²⁰⁶ Dominic Thomas, on the other hand, believes that the writing of a novel without some reference to a reality that

²⁰⁵ Stierstorfer in Rüdiger Ahren, et al (eds), 179-80

²⁰⁶ See Sony Labou Tansi, *L'état honteux* (Paris: Seuil, 1981)

exceeds the reproduction of an ideological agenda is an extremely difficult task,²⁰⁷ because, as he argues:

[T]o a certain degree, all cultural practitioners prescribe a way of writing and use literature to advance a cause. Generally speaking, official writers also abide by a strict set of aesthetic codes – Socialist Realism, accessibility, communicability, simplicity, and glorification of heroes –and have a clear understanding of what constitutes literature. Non-official writers subscribe to aesthetics of *avant-gardism* in which stylistic experimentation is fore-grounded, while maintaining an independent agenda and positing or suggesting alternative alignments that may find a place in the future.²⁰⁸

Furthermore, he insists:

[T]he works of non-official authors expose the manner in which members of the post-colonial political elite acquire, maintain, and manipulate power, and in doing so undermine these processes and subject them to the scrutiny of outsiders. In the case of the writers, their texts are circumscribed by the sociological reality. For non-official authors, that same reality serves as the point of entry to the process of artistic creativity, but the text then distances itself from that reality to suggest another. Official writers defend a specific vision of a post-capitalist society and dedicate their creative activities to achieving those ends.²⁰⁹

Nigerian writers are not official writers; as such they do not defend a governmentally approved vision of a post-colonial Nigeria. While their writings, which is termed Nigerian literature, may reflect eternal beauty, empirically, it is the reflection of public taste, a social product expressed through the medium of language; and language itself is, according to Albert Gerard “a set of symbols which embody, beyond their plain

²⁰⁷ Thomas, 2002, 36.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 36-7.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

literal meaning, all the customs, feelings, beliefs of the group [people].”²¹⁰

However, this set of symbols in a novel were seen in the 70s and 80s by some modernist school, according to Audrey Jaffe, “as not reflecting a particular social world but rather it was perceived as “a cultural artefact”, a repository of cultural and historical knowledge, which point beyond any particular text’s frame of reference.”²¹¹

Granted that societies experience in literary works phenomena, which are in some instances universal, yet again in some other instances, the phenomena are tied to time and place²¹²; this is clearly the case with Nigerian literature, which is, according to Chidi Amuta, “a product of people in society, a social institution, a super-structural manifestation of a fundamentally material process, the process of creation of ideas and values within limits prescribed by the social essence of language.”²¹³

While one cannot rule out completely the fact of contemporary Nigerian literature being consciously guided by concepts of an ideological nature, the Nigerian writer is far more preoccupied with visionary projections of society than with speculative projections of the nature of literature. He seeks to reengineer his or her society by trying to

²¹⁰ Albert Gerard, *Literature and Society* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1972), 4. I prefer people, because, in this instance, it is about the people of Nigeria particularly.

²¹¹ *Journal of Narrative Theory – “Realism in Retrospect”* Volume 1, eds., Audrey Jaffe and Abby Coykendall (Eastern Michigan University, 2006), 311.

²¹² See Joyce Moss & Lorraine Valestuk (eds.) *World Literature and its Times*, vii.

²¹³ See also Chidi Amuta, *The Theory of African Literature: Implications of Practical Criticism* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1989), 9

make the people conscious of the bastardised state of things in the polity as well as the destructive effects of ethnicity. He or she asks questions and causes questions to be asked, as Ikem Osodi, the editor of the Gazette, in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) believes writers do. He or she aspires to reform his or her society with his or her works. As Ikem Osodi had said:

[R]eform may be a dirty word then but it begins to look more and more like the most promising route to success in the real world. I limit myself to *most promising* rather than *only* for the simple reason that all certitude must now be suspect [...]. Society is an extension of the individual. The most we can hope to do with a problematic individual psyche is to *re-form* it.²¹⁴

Therefore the selected²¹⁵ post-colonial Nigerian literary works attempt to reform the individual psyche of Nigerians, to make them conscious of the state of things in the polity and, thereby, awaken in them the need to change their situation. They conceptualise or extend actuality beyond the purely narrative and reveal realities beyond the immediately attainable, according to Soyinka²¹⁶; they, also, upset conventions in an effort to liberate society from historical and other superstitions.²¹⁷ For example, by exposing the ambivalent situation of Obi Okonkwo as regards his inability to marry Clara, a girl he loves, because she is *osu*,

²¹⁴ Chinua Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* (London: Heinemann Educational Publisher, 1987), 98-99.

²¹⁶ See Wole Soyinka, *Myth, literature and the African World* (USA: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 72.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Achebe's *N L E* (London: Heinemann Educational Publishers, 1960) sought to upset the convention of the osu caste system and liberate the Igbo society thereby of the historical superstitious belief that somebody could be dedicated to the gods and be seen as an outcaste and social pariah.

Obi Okonkwo is the case of an alienated individual in the colonial and post-colonial context. He sees certain practices of his people as driven by superstition; still he is incapable of breaking out from the grip of such practices as he bows to pressure from his townsmen not to marry Clara because she is Osu. (120-121)

Clara as a character embodies a primordial value of the Igbo traditional society, which is the Osu caste. An Osu in Igbo traditional society is a man or woman selected by the gods to mediate between them and men. He or she is usually a slave or somebody rejected by society for "abominable deeds". (See Okeke 1986, 31; 60)

The selected Nigerian literary works focus, therefore, the outcome of social conditions in Nigeria's struggles as an entity, and reflect the realities of post-independence inherent cultural contradictions, political and economic turmoil, ethnicity and social injustice. They allude to the pains of the people who suffered social injustice and economic

deprivations.²¹⁸ In them memories are kept alive: memories that help judgement. They save future generations from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of mimosa, by escorting them, eradicating in the process the ignorance that would have engulfed them (See *Anthills of the Savannah*, 123-4). In other words, the literary works do not just reconstruct society anymore than they reflect experience: they also project into the future, seeing a social vision of the Nigerian society. However, it is in their social vision of society that they tend to strengthen the bond between experience and medium by preventing the entrenchment of the habitual, according to Wole Soyinka, and by the shocking of the imaginative function by that past or present reality upon which they reflect.²¹⁹

Their visions go beyond ethnic conflicts and struggles in the logical interaction of their components. The conscious reader is of course part of those components, just as the writer is. It is, therefore, the interaction between the writer, the text and the reader that justifies the selected Nigerian literary texts as social praxis. This is true because the writers of the selected texts are, certainly, affected in several ways by the way power is organised in Nigerian society, and also because they are first and foremost human beings, and are, therefore, products of history.

²¹⁸ See Adekunle Olowonmi, "The Writer and the Quest for Democratic Governance in Nigeria: Trascending Post-independence Disillusionment," *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.2, no.3, March 2008.

²¹⁹ See Soyinka, 1995, 64.

Being members of society, they possibly belong to a certain class, according to Ngugi, and take part in the class struggle of their times.²²⁰ Most often, they are the voice of the common man as well as watchdogs of society, constituting danger to governments, making their works subject to strong government scrutiny. The fact that in so many countries the subject of the writer is controlled and his freedom of expression oftentimes limited, the fact that Achebe was being hunted when he wrote *A Man of the People* (1966), because of its visionary prediction of the first Nigerian military coup, and the fact that the writer may even express the taste of a certain class, go a long way to show that politics is part and parcel of the writer's territory. Therefore the Nigerian writer's subject matter is history, which according to Ngugi is "the process of a people acting on nature, changing it, and in so doing, acting on and changing themselves. The changing relations of production, including power relations, are a whole territory of concern to the [Nigerian] writer."²²¹ Furthermore, Ngugi writes:

[T]he product of a writer's imaginative involvement what Shakespeare called mirror unto nature becomes a reflection of society: its economic structure, class formations, conflicts, contradictions, political and cultural struggles and its structure of values – particularly the conflict and tensions arising from the antagonism between those which are dying and those which are pointing to the future. Hence literature has often given us more and sharper insights into the moving spirit of an era than all the historical and political documents treating the same movement. The Novel in

²²⁰ See Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics: A re-engagement with issues of literature and society* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1997), 67.

²²¹ Ngugi, 1997, 67. I have to emphasise the Nigerian writer to show that what Ngugi is saying is also applicable to literature in Nigeria.

particular, especially in its critical realist tradition, is important in that respect: it pulls apart and it puts together; it is both analytic and synthetic.²²²

What this means, in effect, is that the selected works of Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Wole Soyinka and Buchi Emecheta are, on the one hand, pulling apart the obstacles that hinder Nigerian progress - obstacles like ethnicity- and, on the other hand, building up edifices to sustain the moral weight of the Nigerian society. For example, Achebe is not a Marxist like Ngugi, but he believes that a writer has some responsibility to his art and to his informing society. In an interview conducted by Feroza Jassawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrook, they had wanted to know from Achebe if a writer could prescribe solutions to a problem. Achebe answered by saying that he thinks that the writer could if he or she wanted; but that the real concern of the writer is to give headaches.²²³ He continues by saying:

[Y]ou can't really say this is what a writer must do. I am so democratic that I will fight to the death to let my opponent have his say. In other words, if the writer feels he has a prescription to give, let him do so. I don't feel that's my responsibility. I don't think that's in the nature of my work. I think what is in the nature of my work is to expose a condition to a reader and get people agitated and bring in as many people as you can into the process.²²⁴

Irele Abiola, for his part, believes that it is the responsibility of the writer to bear witness for his society, using not only his heightened

²²² Ngugi, 1997, 67..

²²³ See Feroza Jassawalla and Reed Way Dasenbrook (eds.), *Interview with Writers of the Post-colonial World* (USA: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), 67.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

capacity to perceive but also his intelligence and ability to give expression to his most original thoughts.²²⁵ In doing such a job, Irele Abiola continues, “the writer’s expression must not only capture the flow of experience but also propose a broader vision of life that transcends the immediate situation to which his work refers.”²²⁶

The writer and social critic, Arthur A. Nwankwo lends also his voice as regards the role and place of the writer in society especially the Nigerian society by saying that the writer is first and foremost an individual, a concrete human being who has a vision; and whose intentions are to reconstruct society, both literally and figuratively, along an envisioned line of action. Therefore he insists that a writer’s first and primary task should be to procreate humanity, using the published material as a tool. This task should centre on the writer’s immediate geo-physical and social surroundings as well as the history or evolution of those surroundings. Therefore whether or not a particular writer would be relevant would depend on the extent to which he successfully explains the past history of society, the extent to which he identifies society’s propulsive force in its movement from one landmark of development to another, and the extent to which the writer

²²⁵ See also Abiola Irele, *The African Experience In Literature and Ideology*, (London: Heinemann, 1981), 2.

²²⁶ Irele, 2.

in question understands and predicts society's immediate circumstances with a view to changing them.²²⁷

This is possible because the work of the writer, which is the text, embodies both objective and subjective realities. It is the platform for the phenomena of the mind during the process of the logical interaction of the various components of the text, which includes the conscious reader. It is only when one of those components, the conscious reader, understands those morbid conditions, having experienced them in the texts, that it becomes absolutely possible, in the opinion of Soyinka, to impose a resolution on them.²²⁸ This is true because the conscious reader would see, as Abiola Irele suggests, how much the literary works responded to the deepest "facts" of human existence in Nigeria and how much they intervened in areas of experience to make the conscious reader assume consciousness of his or her situation with regard to others and the world²²⁹; and if in being conscious of their situation they find it oppressive, change becomes inevitable; but if it is positive, it calls for celebration. It is this conscious need to want to change one's situation or to want to celebrate it, that practical functions could be ascribed to the selected Nigerian literature, a part of world literature, which Terry Eagleton wants to be transformative, by using the social

²²⁷ Arthur A. Nwankwo, *Before I Die: Obasanjo-Arthur Nwankwo Correspondence on One-Party State* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1989), 177.

²²⁸ Soyinka, 1995, 72.

²²⁹ Irele, 1981, 23-4

context as raw material, so that their ability to make one a better person would no longer be judged from the perspective of the liberal humanist, whose concept of the ability of literature to make one a better person is rather abstract.²³⁰ Furthermore, Terry Eagleton writes:

[W]hat it means to be a better person, then, must be concrete and practical – that is to say, concerned with people’s political situations as a whole – rather than narrowly abstract, concerned only with the immediate interpersonal relations which can be abstracted from this concrete whole. It must be a question of political and not only of ‘moral’ argument: this is to say, it must be genuine moral argument, which sees the relations between individual qualities and values and our whole material conditions of existence.²³¹

By being concerned with people’s social and political situations, Nigerian literature tends, therefore, to function as a social commentary. However, the fact that all literature in the Nigerian context tends to function as social commentary does not mean that Nigerian literature necessarily represents history accurately. Nevertheless, the images promoted by the most powerful Nigerian literary works, especially the selected ones, leave impressions, which are commonly taken to be historical. They produce, as Eagleton would believe, representations of the real into imaginary objects.²³² They afford the reader scope for the study of a society in the process of socio-economic, political and cultural

²³⁰ See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 208.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

transformation. If they “distantiate”²³³ history, according to Eagleton, then it is not because they transmute history to fantasy, shifting from one ontological gear to another, but because the significations history works into them are already representations of reality rather than reality.²³⁴ Reality, according to George Biztray is rarely static; it is always represented as process in great literatures.²³⁵

Just as Reality is represented as process in great Nigerian literary works, the process itself represents social praxis. Therefore since Nigerian literature is social praxis as well as product of society, the social relations, economic forms and the political reality of the time in which each of the selected Nigerian literary work was written could be studied within the context of the historical time, and social circumstances in which the action of the work occurred. Furthermore, Nigerian habits, comportments, and even cultural and national consciousnesses expressed in the literary works by the characters or even the narrator’s voice could all help one to understand the prevalent historical, cultural, social or political conditions under which each given literary work was written. The characters in the works obviously inhabit their world and live out their lives to the very fullest, representing, as M.H. Abrams argues “persons in a given locale, historical time and

²³³ See also Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and ideology* (London: NLB, 1976), 74-5.

²³⁴ Eagleton, 1976, 74-5.

²³⁵ George Biztray, *Marxist Models of Realism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 16-7

social circumstances, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral, dispositional, and emotional qualities that are expressed in what they say and by what they do.”²³⁶ They reflect attitudes which are, as Emenyeonu argued, attitudes of their societies and generations.²³⁷ For example, the attitude of the Umuofians in *N L E*, who leave home to find work in towns and cities all over Nigeria, is such that they regard themselves as sojourners in every part of Nigeria where they reside. They always take back what they earn to where they call home. (4) The differences and similarities in Nigerian life as portrayed in the novel give insight into the Igbo strong sense of identity and ideological stand in regard to Nigeria. Perhaps this outlook made them be seen as exploiters by some other groups.²³⁸

Obviously historical significations have been worked into *N L E* and these are already representations of reality, because Umuofia is an Igbo name of a village; therefore it represents a typical Igbo village. If Umuofia is a representation of a typical Igbo village, its people, who leave it to find work in the towns all over Nigeria (4) are Igbo. In other words, the Igbo see themselves as sojourners in these Nigerian cities. They return often to their villages. If they have saved enough money, they asked their relations at home to find them wives or they build

²³⁶ Abrams, 1993, 23.

²³⁷ Emenyeonu, 110.

²³⁸ B. Dudley, *Instability and political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1973), 132.

modern houses on their family land. (ibid.) Therefore the social context of the Igbo life was used as raw material to recreate the Igbo life of the colonial and pre-independence periods. The significations that history worked into the selected Nigerian literary works made it a lot easier to see that the problem confronting the post-colonial Nigerian society resulted from the failure of its leaders, right from independence, to achieve national integration and unity. The national project has not been very successful in that it has only worsened ethnic rivalry and conflict.

In using power mechanisms to consolidate their power bases, governments and political leaders have created pronounced differences in economic standards and thus succeeded in entrenching ethnicity, which is a clog in the wheel of progress and development of any multi-ethnic nation. This was vividly illustrated in Achebe's *AM P* (1966) when Chief Nanga said to Odili, "I want you to come to the capital and take up strategic post in the civil service. We shouldn't leave everything to the highland tribes. My secretary is from there; our people must press for their share of the national cake."(12)

Apparently the ethnic groups view the state as a cake and so each group would be better off with what it would get out of it. The implication of this would be a debasement of value for which even western education could not provide an answer for Obi Okonkwo, who had wondered why government was "they" in Nigeria instead of "us",

why it was an alien institution and why people were only after how much they could take away from it without getting into trouble? (*N L E*, 29-30). Furthermore, the implication of the statement: *not leave everything to the highland tribes*, is an acknowledgement of the fact that the highland tribes may be possessed of political power. And if in a plural society political power remains in the possession of a particular ethnic group then that society is definitely fractured structurally.

The statements by Chief Nanga, though rendered in four sentences, capture the depth of the bond of kinship or ethnic patronage in the society. As Donald Horowitz writes:

[T]he power and permeativeness of ethnicity in the developing world owe much to the considerable strength of kinship ties in Asia and Africa[...]. Reciprocally, the need and expectation of help strengthen the bonds of the extended family [...]. Where extended kinship is well established as an affiliation invoked across an array of social, political, and economic transactions, it is a small matter to take the next step and call upon ethnicity – kinship greatly extended – in those transactions.²³⁹

This bond of kinship was also vividly portrayed in *N L E* during the attempt by Elsie's brother, Mark, to bribe Obi Okonkwo. His conversation with Obi Okonkwo revealed the fact that recourse was always taken to the bond of kinship in the competition over scarce economic, social and political resources:

[Y]ou want application forms? asked Obi..
No, no, no. I have got those. But it is like this.
I was told that you are the secretary of the
scholarship Commission and I thought I

²³⁹ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 1985, 63.

should see you. We are both Ibos and I
cannot hide anything from you. It is all very
well sending in forms, but you know what
our country is. Unless you see people [...].(79)

It is always expected that the ramified kin network will be a way, according to Parkin, “of communicating information about matters of common ethnic interest, thus keeping people alert to the possibility of more mobilised, collective action.”²⁴⁰

In *N L E*, the people of Umuofia conferred among themselves in regard to matters of common ethnic interest and alerted themselves to the possibility of more mobilised and collective action when Obi Okonkwo was charged to court for bribery and corruption. They had to save a kinsman in trouble instead of blaming him; however annoyed they were with a kinsman, their anger had to be felt in the flesh not the bone. (89) Therefore they contributed money to find a lawyer, who would defend their own, whom they felt was being victimised by the state for trying to be a proud representative of his people of umuofia. The people had tasked themselves to train Obi Okonkwo, their son, as a way of preparing themselves for the struggle over scarce economic, social and political resources.

Before independence, the ethnic oriented organisations like the Igbo State Union, the Egbo Omo Oduduwa and so forth had been very active

²⁴⁰ See Parkin, “Congregational and Interpersonal Ideologies in Political Ethnicity,” in Cohen, ed., *Urban Ethnicity*, 149.

in the training of the members of their group through the provision of scholarships.

In recent times ethnic oriented organisations of different ideological shades have emerged and more often than not, they challenge the authority of the state in their bid to safe-guard their own ethnic interests: There is *The Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra(Massob)* of the south-east, *The Egbesu Boys* and *The Odua People's Congress* of the south-west, *The Turaki Groups*, representing the Hausa-Fulani groups of the North as well as *The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People*. Oftentimes they may be violent in the pursuit of their ethnic interests. As Bolaji Akinyemi writes, "the rise of the militias is a feature of plural societies [...], which has fractured structurally and where the laid down mechanism for dealing with such pluralism has failed or is in the process of failing."²⁴¹ All these militant organisations were formed out of genuine frustrations, which resulted from deliberate deprivations, fear of domination and perceived injustices.

In all the selected works, there are incidents of ethnic conflicts given form largely by the perceptual or oral expression of prejudice, fear, anxiety, avoidance, discrimination, physical attacks and even extermination by the characters in the works. In Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1983), Chief Oluremi Odumosu from the south-west viewed the

²⁴¹ Bolaji Akinyemi in Oladele, D., *The Ethnic Militias in Nigeria* (Bremen: 2004), 5

average Northerner as intellectually weak and as such he was not prepared to accept the leadership of the North. He had orally expressed his prejudice and probably the prejudice of his people by saying:

[T]his is just the beginning, you know. As I see it, the greatest battle is still ahead. Then we will have the Nigeria we dream of, where we will really be free, where will be ruled by our own people, not by those gworo-eating wanderers from the North [...].(23)

The expression, *gworo-eating wanderers from the North* became, therefore, the stereotypical depiction of the average northern person. This is a stereotype that is sustained by prejudice. In the same novel Alhaji Manliki had expressed anger at the killing of the Sarduana, making a prejudicial statement that attests to the existence of ethnic hatred during Alan's visit to his palace with his friends, Giles and the Chaplain from Northern Ireland. Alhaji Manliki from the North had said:

[L]ook captain, what is your country doing to our country, eh? You see the army boys trained in your country come and forget our tradition. No anointed King's son was ever killed without great bloodshed following. I wish those southern Kaferi soldiers had consulted me as their man in the North [...](DB, 70).

In Cyprain Ekwensi's *Iska* (1981), Musa Kaybi's expression of shock and disapproval of his son's marriage to a woman he loves was based on the fact that his son's action was capable of putting his family in bad light and make him therefore lose the chances of becoming the chairman of the council, an offer made to him by the party leadership once he would be able to stop his son from bringing dishonour to the community by

marrying a southern girl. Meanwhile, Dan kaybi, liberated by education, does not see anything wrong in marrying a fellow Nigerian girl from the southern part of the country. Apparently the cultural uniqueness of the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria became a source of arrogance instead of being an opportunity of appreciating the rich cultural diversities. Musa Kaybi had berated his son for his unbecoming behaviour by saying:

[Y]ou will not see what is wrong. You have never seen what is wrong. You were born a Northerner. You would not study your Koran. You would not go to the mosque. You went to school. You would not wear robes and sandals, only English dress. You speak English all the time. You associate with other tribes. Now this is the result. What do you call it? (30)

In Achebe's *NLE*, the president of the umuofia town's union and the oldest man in the union had prayed saying:

[W]e do not seek to hurt any man, but if any man seeks to hurt us may he break his neck. We are strangers in this Land. if good comes to it, may we have our share. But if bad comes to it, let it go to the owners of the land who know what gods should be appeased. (5-6)

The people of umuofia always expressed their desire to stay different wherever they were; but in Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* (1988) the people of cross river treated the people from across the river, a people, who lived in their own part of the country, as strangers based on the fact that they were not Moslems. Like the deeply religious ruling class, the poverty-ridden *talakawa*, common man, of the north in Nigeria, sees the Christian south as unbelievers. From the religious point of view,

nothing good can come from an unbeliever. The clerk, who is Zaki's spokesman, had accused Salau, the prisoner, of selling his portion of land to total strangers. Salau said he was misled. In response, the clerk, Zaki Amuri's spokesman says:

[M] misled. Are you a goat with a halter round your neck? Misled! Perhaps we should put one round it now so we can know for sure whether we are dealing with a goat or a responsible head of a family [...]. Strangers come to you, complete strangers from across the river. Not even men of faith but *kafiri*! They make you promises, bribe you and you agree to foment trouble among your kith and kin. You proceed to sow disaffection against the subjects of the Zaki!(125)

As far as Zaki was concerned it was sacrilegious for Salau, the prisoner, to sell his portion of land to the blaspheming strangers, to have ever thought of placing his affairs in the hands of strangers from the south, when he could have sought help from his father, Zaki. If he ever felt he had been cheated by the white man, the person to turn to for redress was not the strangers from the south –even though the South was in the same country with Cross-river –but instead to the person who had given the white man his blessing in the first place, that is, Zaki Amuri.

The irony of this all is that Zaki Amuri, the tyrant from Cross-river does not see the Whiteman as an alien, but instead he makes Salau, the prisoner, and the subjects of his little empire see their fellow country men, who happen to come from other sides of the country and who happen to speak languages different from his people's language as aliens.

The structures and representations of reality in the works encompass all the inherent dynamics of life, especially the values of all the ethnic groups, how they relate to themselves, and the influence of colonialism on the native and so on. For example, Obi Okonkwo in *N L E* typified the state of the educated colonial subject during and after colonisation. His western education, the reality of the multi-ethnic nature of his society as well as the cultural values of his ethnic group, which he carries within, all become sources of internal conflict in his being. As Ernest Emenyonu writes:

[O] bi, the hero of the book, is outwardly a refined man, idealistically seeking for change in his society he has new ideas about progress. But he has not changed inwardly. He is critical of the old ways but not necessarily entirely committed to the new the result is a type of loneliness and alienation which brings about his downfall. He is in many ways a reflection of the mood of his society - a society confused by its multiplicity of races and of values, and by the bewildering search for a workable compromise.²⁴²

Unlike Obi Okonkwo, Dan Kaybi in Ekwensi's *Iska* epitomises the positive value of western education, in that he marries, in spite of his father's objections and in spite of his society's disapproval of such union, Filia, a Christian girl from the south-east of Nigeria, the cultural opposite of the Moslem north. These two young people represent a new paradigm in the national body politic, where young people try to live up

²⁴² See Ernest N. Emenyonu, *The Rise of the Igbo Novel* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1978), xix

to the genuine ideals of the Nigerian state in the day-to-day human interactions in their country. These ideals revolve around some principles of a higher culture embedded in true Nigerian values: the values of peace, faith in the country and unity in diversity. They, nevertheless, encounter difficulties in the process, because they are also dealing with ideological formations that are offshoots of concrete human situation.

Apparently, the value dynamic (see again Ojiji, 1998:61-3 on values in Nigeria) is very important in the understanding of the nature of ethnic conflicts in the Nigerian society as expressed in the selected literary works. For Gary Furlong “values include terminal or life-defining values (such as religious beliefs, ethics, and morals), as well as simpler day-to-day values employed in business or work contexts [...]”²⁴³ For Weeks, a value is something one considers very important to one.²⁴⁴ One of the earliest views on value was by M.B. Smith, who defined it as conceptions of the desirable, which are relevant to selective behaviour.²⁴⁵ According to Ochinya Odaba Ojiji:

[M]ost value scholars today accept the definition that values are enduring prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs that specific modes of conduct (instrumental value) or end-states of existence (terminal values) are preferable to other modes of conduct or end-states of existence.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Gary Furlong, *The Conflict Resolution Toolbox* (Ontario: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd., 2005), 31.

²⁴⁴ Weeks, 52.

²⁴⁵ M.B. Smith, “Personal Values in the Study of Lives”, in R.W. White (ed.) *The Study of Lives* (New York: Prentice Hall)

²⁴⁶ Ojiji, 11.

For J.O.C. Ozioko, “values are a particular kind of belief having to do with the appropriateness or acceptability of behaviours, events and objects.”²⁴⁷ Rokeach believes “values provide individuals with standards employed to maintain and enhance self-conception.”²⁴⁸

Therefore, in the various works under study, honesty, Justice, truth, hard-work, love, spirituality and uprightness are all positive values which the writers considered very important, not only to themselves but also to the entirety of the Nigerian nation; dishonesty, injustice, lie, laziness, corruption, prejudice, ethnicity and hate are equally values, which they also considered negative. And their society was such where negative values prevailed to the extent that the values were viewed, most often, in a positive light. For example, in Ekwensi’s *Iska*, Musa Kaybi, Dan Kaybi’s father gave expression to general religious beliefs in the Moslem north when he accused his son of forsaking Islamic values, for example, reading the Koran, going always to the mosque, and forsaking everything that is western. (30)

In the selected Nigerian literary works, Nigerian society’s propulsive forces in its movement from one landmark of development to another are identifiable and the society’s immediate circumstances are also predictable. Therefore, they could only be changed by individuals who

²⁴⁷ J.O.C. Ozioko, “Human Values”, in J.I. Onuora & J.O.C. Ozioko (eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences* (Enugu: Acena Publishers, 1995), 202.

²⁴⁸ M. Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973)

have become conscious and energised by the information they obtain by studying the works. For example in Buchi Emecheta's *D B*, the propulsive forces in Nigeria's movement from colonialism to independence and from independence to the immediate circumstances of postcoloniality were identified. These propulsive forces from colonialism to independence are identifiable in the characters of the three colonial officers; Sir Fergus, Alan Grey and Macdonald, who structured to a very great extent, through their stereotyping, the way Nigerians were later to see themselves. In their conversation they had said:

Alan Grey: Good heavens. The man really means what he has been saying all along. I thought he was only playing politics. You know he did not want Nigeria to be an independent nation – that was one of the reasons the North was the last to get regional independence. He probably needs someone to tell him that if he refuses to rule, he will be selling his people to the southern politician.[...]. The situation is not as simple as that. It would be easy if we had only the Hausas to cope with. But there are the other tribes – the Yoruba have been dealing with us for decades. And then there are the Ibos. They are ambition personified. Every beggar boy in Enugu or Owerri wants to be a doctor.

Sir Fergus: There is no doubt that they are extremely intelligent. But they are greedy as well, and their arrogance could lead them into trouble. Also the greater portion of the oil areas is in their region; so one has to be very careful how the country is divided constitutionally (*DB*, 3-7).

The immediate circumstances of the postcolonial independent Nigeria are identifiable in the ethnicity that was to be the bane of the Nigerian society. Apart from cultural differences which are enough to trigger ethnic conflict in the Nigerian society, the imposition of northern

leadership on the rest of Nigeria by the colonial officers worsened ethnic relations in the country, because the wielding of political power by a person from a particular ethnic group entails favouring his or her ethnic group. In the case of Nigeria, political power has been in the hands of the Hausa-Fulani since Nigerian independence, which is the 1st October 1960, till the year 1999. The Yoruba have ruled from 1976 to 1979, when General Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba took over the realms of power from General Murtala Mohammed after the latter was assassinated in a very bloody coup d'état executed by Major Dimka. The Yoruba have continued once again to hold political power from 1999 till 2007, while the Igbo as an ethnic group have only had one of their own at the helm of affairs in the person of general Ironsi from January 15th 1966 to July 29th of the same year. On the other hand, the people of the South-south of Nigeria, the immediate neighbours of the Igbo in the South-east, have not tasted political power what-so-ever. This imbalance in power equation also engenders lopsided infrastructural development as well as a great deal of injustices and inequality in the distribution of wealth and amenities as Chief Nanga testified to Odili in *A M P*. After a phone conversation, he, on dropping the phone, says in the hearing of Odili:

[T] hat was Hon. T.C Kobino. Very stupid man! The cabinet has approved the completion of the road between Giligili and Ananta since January but this foolish man has been dillying and dallying, because it is not in his constituency. If it was in his constituency he wouldn't listen to experts[...]. (42)

As had been argued before, the system of government in Nigeria is such that depends largely on ethnic patronage for survival, which, of course, makes corruption very hard to control. And that is why a federal minister of works from a particular ethnic group will ensure that all the roads in his or her constituency are constructed without scruples on the need for an equitable construction of federal roads all over the federation.

If being in power, therefore, means actually to get a greater slice of the national cake, then, it can only engender marginalisation. Suberu had argued that the Problem of the Nigerian federal structure is that the minorities are inadequately incorporated into the larger ethnic groups of the regions, making them feel marginalised.²⁴⁹ However, Oyeshile insists:

[I]t is interesting to note that the three major groups (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba) who most often than not pretend to represent the interest of the minority groups are propelled by their urge to dominate and further the interest of their kinsmen within the polity. For instance, the Hausa/Fulani believe not only that they are more in population but also that they are lagging behind the Igbo and Yoruba in terms of educational development and commerce. So they do everything to control the political machinery and determine who rules the nation.²⁵⁰

All these have been relived in the selected works, making the society conscious of what is happening and how it is happening. It is always

²⁴⁹ See Suberu in Diamond and Plattner, 1994, 58.

²⁵⁰ Olatunji A. Oyeshile, *Reconciling the self with the other: an existentialist perspective on the management of ethnic conflicts in Africa* (Ibadan: Hope Publication, 2005), 15.

such conscious awareness that will motivate a person to the action of changing his or her situation. As such, Nigerian literary works are engaged, according to Chidi Amuta, “in a painful process of self-interrogation.”²⁵¹ Their contextual framework is basically the Nigerian nation as an objective reality.

In *N L E*, the 20 pounds bribery accepted by Obi Okonkwo is a social reality. Achebe just chose the Obi Okonkwo instance to show the nature and dimension of corruption in the polity. Of course there are attenuating circumstances: the insurance increment, the Town Union’s Meeting’s scholarship grant which he has to repay, and so on, but the fact is that he eventually accepted the bribe. The manner in which he was approached both in the office and at home is predicated on some ideological formations: The generally accepted belief in the country that every person has a price as well as the belief that membership to a common ethnic group necessitates being favoured by one’s “tribesman”.

It is also common knowledge that women believe themselves capable of getting whatever they want out of life as long as a man is involved, because they believe that a man is incapable of resisting the seductive moves of a desperate woman, hence Miss Elsie Mark in *N L E*, whose brother had approached Obi Okonkwo in the office regarding the inclusion of his sister’s name in the list of those who should attend the

²⁵¹ Chidi Amuta, *The Theory of African Literature*, 66.

interview for the award of Government Scholarship. Miss Mark had to visit Obi Okonkwo in the house to make up for what she thought was her brother's improprieties.(83-5) She wouldn't mind sleeping with Mr Obi Okonkwo just to get what she wanted. Practical examples of such concrete situations that engender a relative, ideological formation abound. Today in Nigeria one talks of the Abuja girls: a new breed of self-willed women with no scruples at attaining their goals.

African countries in general and Nigeria in particular, are evolving a democratic tradition. This is as a result of a conscious effort on the part of the ruling elite to set things right. Prior to this time, the Nigerian state was a marshal state, where militarism prevailed. Therefore, at that particular point in Nigerian history military rule was a concrete situation. This was what Achebe set out to represent in his *Anthills of the Savannah*. And because it was the concrete reality of the Nigerian situation, it engendered some ideological formations whereby there was always the innate proclivity by military heads of state to perpetuate themselves in power. Secondly, the military became attractive to most young men, who felt it was the surest way to riches and fame. And to hold on perpetually to power, one has to eradicate all oppositions to the plan, more so when the opposition is coming from people well known to the dictator in question. The reality of opposition is a concrete situation which engenders an ideological formation on the part of the

opposing groups. In this sort of situation, the opposition sees itself as the watchdog of the society, as embodying its conscience, hence Ikem Osodi's treatise on women, writers and society.

The corruption and tribalism of the post-independent Nigerian civilian government necessitated the military coup of the 15th of January 1966. It was the monumental squander of public funds by corrupt politicians, the crass encouragement of ethnic battle for the national cake as well as the abject moral decadence on the part of public office holders that Achebe depicted in his *A M P*. The existence of people like the character, Nanga, in contemporary Nigeria is a basic reality; therefore it is a concrete situation. It is also a fact that they see themselves as representatives of their various ethnic groups and as such should be grabbing the national cake on behalf of their ethnic groups.

Wole Soyinka's *S A* treats the corruption, the ethnicity and the exploitation of the poor masses by the Cartel as the concrete situations of the Nigerian condition. The categorical statements of the Clerk about the people he considers to be foreigners in Cross-River depict the extent of ethnic distrust and hatred in the society. It has already been mentioned that the multi-ethnic nature of the country, Nigeria, which is depicted fictionally as Aiyetomo in *S A* is a concrete situation, that is, it is the reality of the existence of the space called Nigeria. The ideological formations arising from it could be traced to the statements of the Clerk

in his interrogation of the Prisoner. Essentially, the Clerk and his master Zaki are Cross-River people: in the Nigerian condition they represent the North. The people they call strangers from the south or across the River are the Yoruba and the Igbo. In the case of *S A*, these people from across the river are particularly the Igbo. In essence, 'Hausanness' or 'Northernness' is a concrete situation, just as 'Igboness' and 'Yorubanness' are. The Ideological formation resulting from it lies in the fact of the Northerner seeing the Southerner as the other and vice-versa: a deliberate essentialising for political and economic reasons.

This research has endeavoured so far to reread selected Nigerian literature, *NLE, SA, DB, ISKA, AMP*, by identifying it as a social praxis, and rooting it in the historical and social circumstances that influenced their production.

In all, the selected Nigerian literary works closely studied are very relevant in national orientation and development, because they preoccupy themselves with the socio-political and even the economic problems of the country and go as far as contextually providing alternative ways to a healthy national life. It behoves, therefore, this research to devise a functional way or method of appreciating Nigerian literature so that its role in national orientation and development may be better appreciated. One particular way of using Nigerian literature to foster national development is to use it to resolve ethnic conflicts. And

to resolve these conflicts, Nigerian literature has to first of all serve as a source of orientation.

This research endeavours in the next chapter, which is on Nigerian Literature and Conflict Resolution, to create an alternative way of appreciating Nigerian literature toward conflict resolution.

NIGERIAN LITERATURE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE
PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Every step in the process of trying to understand a conflict situation starts with a story; and the selected Nigerian literary works under study are stories of the Nigerian condition. However, the interest of this research is only on the ethnic conflict paradigm.

Donald Horowitz had tried to show in his book *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (1985) the implications of a story in understanding the sources of ethnic conflict. He chose the Novel of Leonard Woolf, entitled: *The Village in the Jungle*. It is a novel about life in colonial Ceylon, which, according to Horowitz, “describes an incident that cuts to the heart of ethnic relations in country after country.”²⁵² It is a story about a Hindu god called Kandeswami. The Buddhist Sinhalese had come to honour him. According to Leonard Woolf the god Kandeswami went down to the plain beyond the river to live. Being at the time a Tamil god, he called to a band of Tamils who were passing, and asked them to carry him down across the river. The Tamils answered and said to him that they were poor men, and had travelled far on their way to collect salt in the lagoons by the seashore. They said that if they stopped, the rain might come and destroy the salt, and their journey would have been for

²⁵² Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 141.

nothing; therefore, they had to go on; however, they promised the god, Kandeswami, that on their way back they would carry him down and place him on the other side of the river as he desired. Thus, the Tamils went on their way; but the god was angry at the slight put upon him.²⁵³

Furhermore, Woolf writes:

[S] hortly afterward a band of Sinhalese came by: they were also on their way to collect salt in the lagoons. Then the god called to the Sinhalese, and asked them to carry him down across the river. The Sinhalese climbed the hill and carried the god down and bore him across the river, and placed him upon its banks under the shadow of the trees, where now stands the great temple. Then the god swore that he would no longer be served by Tamils in his temple, and that he would only have Sinhalese to perform his ceremonies; and that is why to this day, though the god is a Tamil god, and the temple a Hindu temple, the Kapuralas (temple custodians) are all Buddhists and Sinhalese.²⁵⁴

The work is a tale told from the viewpoint of the Sinhalese. The devotion of the Sinhalese to the Tamil god, in the opinion of Horowitz, was not explained in terms of cultural transfer but rather in terms of moral evaluation of Tamil and Sinhalese behaviour.²⁵⁵ Horowitz, therefore, goes further to highlight the ethnic conflict dynamics inherent in that tale, by referring to the hardworking nature of the Tamils, who had no time to perform meritorious service even for their own god.²⁵⁶ Horowitz argued that it could be inferred that the Sinhalese, for their part, understood the nature of religious service, and had demonstrated their sincerity by their unselfish conduct. They were ready even to put

²⁵³ Woolf, 1913, 105-6

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ See Horowitz, (1985), 141.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

important work aside to serve a Hindu god not their own. With that they made good the deficiency of the Tamils in fulfilling their obligations. Therefore Horowitz argued that the generosity of the Sinhalese stood in marked contrast to the narrow calculativeness of the Tamils. After all, the god, Kandeswami, had concluded that the Sinhalese were morally worthy people.²⁵⁷ Furthermore Horowitz had written:

[T]hat the Sinhalese version of the episode has a more general meaning for ethnic relations is apparent from the congruence of the story with studies of stereotypes conducted in Ceylon.²⁵⁸

From the studies of stereotypes conducted in Ceylon, Horowitz writes:

[S]inhalese respondents considered themselves to be kind, good, and religious, albeit twice as lazy as the Tamils, whom they viewed as cruel and arrogant as well as diligent and thrifty. How such views come to be held is a subject to which I shall soon return, but I want to examine the more general moral of Kandeswami's tale, which is to be found in the domain of group comparisons. The version we are given demonstrates that groups are felt to have different mixes of attributes. Groups attributes are evoked in behaviour and subject to evaluation. The groups are in implicit competition for a favourable evaluation of their moral worth. The competition derives from the juxtaposition of ethnic groups in the same environment, here represented by ethnically differentiated but otherwise indistinguishable bands of salt collectors. Responding to an identical they reveal markedly different qualities.²⁵⁹

Horowitz has been able to cast a view into the nature and sources of ethnic conflict in multi-ethnic societies through the paradigm offered by the novel of Leonard Woolf, *The Village in the Jungle*.

²⁵⁷ See Horowitz, 142.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Horowitz., 142.-3

Conflicts, according to Onigu Otite, “arise from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals or groups in defined social and physical environment.”²⁶⁰ M. Deutsch on the other hand believes that conflicts generally exist whenever incompatible activities occur.²⁶¹ For Park and Burgess “conflict is designed to resolve divergent dualism (and achieve) some kind of unity even if it be through the annihilation of one of the conflict parties.”²⁶² It is for L.A. Coser, “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals.”²⁶³

Furthermore J.W. Burton believes that conflict resolution is about the outcome of conflict situations²⁶⁴; therefore, it is expected to alter the perceptions, images and attitudes of the parties in conflict and widen their range of options.²⁶⁵

In a plural society like Nigeria, the resolution of conflicts can be quite complex, basically because of the effects of culture and language

²⁶⁰ See Onigu Otite and Olawale Isaac Albert [ed.] *Community Conflicts in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1999), 1.

²⁶¹ See also M. Deutsch, „Conflicts: Productive and Destructive“, in F.E Jandt [ed.], *Conflict Resolution Through Communication* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 156.

²⁶² R.E. Park and E.W. Burgess, *Introduction of the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), 574.

²⁶³ L.A Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Glencoe 111: The Free Press, 1956), 8.

²⁶⁴ J. W. Burton, „Conflict Resolution as a Political Philosophy“ in D.J.D. Sandole and H. van der Merwe[eds.], *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice Integration and Application* (Manchester: Manchetser University Press, 1993), 55.

²⁶⁵ C.R. Mitchell, in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice Integration and Application*, 1993, 82.

symbolism, according to Otite Onige.²⁶⁶ However, Avruch and Black believe that culture cannot be relegated to the background in conflict resolution²⁶⁷, for, according to Otite it determines how information is processed as well as how metaphors and language are used in the bargaining and debating process. Therefore if the intricate cultural questions are properly attended to, those apparently irresolvable conflicts could be resolved.²⁶⁸ Charles Jarmon explained what authors like Vicker and Post think was the reason why the Nigerian first Republic failed in what they termed the structure and conflict in Nigeria. First, according to Charles Jarmon, they considered conflict in terms of Nigeria as a conglomerate of societies, where emphasis is on the nature of conflict in regard to the tension that goes with mobilisation and differential incorporation of different cultural groups into the wider society.²⁶⁹ Second, Charles Jarmon thought that Vicker and Post viewed conflict “in terms of the way it arises in the structural frame of the political system, where the emphasis is on the functional and dysfunctional attributes of the constitutional and institutional matrix of the political system –that is, on the conditions of maximising or

²⁶⁶ Otite, in *Community Conflicts in Nigeria*, 1999, 7.

²⁶⁷ K. Avruch and P. Black, in *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice Integration and Application*, 1993, 132.

²⁶⁸ Otite, 7.

²⁶⁹ Charles Jarmon, *Nigeria: Reorganisation and Development since the Mid-twentieth Century* (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1988), 55.

reducing conflicts."²⁷⁰ Thus the structure and institutions of the political systems became rigid.²⁷¹ Furthermore, Charles Jarmon argues that in the third model, "conflicts are viewed in terms of a system of rewards, where the emphasis stresses rewards associated with the capacity to mobilise material resources."²⁷² And "the structure of rewards model refers in a broad sense to the control of the political power and the distribution of material rewards in the country."²⁷³ Again, Charles Jarmon believes Vicker and Post:

[A]nalytically separate the three levels in order to point to sources of conflict within the total Nigerian society, where the nature of the structure of the society is seen as the basis of the conflict. Thus, under the conglomerate model of society, the various ethnic groups are held to possess different capabilities for competing in the modernising sectors of Nigeria.

Interestingly enough, all the selected works under study contain all these three model analysed by Charles Jarmon. And by appropriating the models and maps for analysing, diagnosing and resolving conflicts, as propounded by Gary T. Furlong (2005), this research could be a general principle offered not only to explain the ethnic conflict phenomenon in Nigeria through their literature, but also to engage the literary works in conflict resolution.

The selected Nigerian literary works are a description or representation of Nigerian life and could, therefore, help to visualise

²⁷⁰ Jarmon, 55.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 56

ethnic conflicts, which most often cannot be directly observed. They are able to help in visualising ethnic conflicts because they are a representation of reality and detail perceptively why ethnic conflicts occur. They also identify barriers to settlement, and indicate procedures to manage or resolve the disputes.

A scholar of literature, who has become a better person by reading these works, may naturally aspire to transform his or her state of being a better person into something concrete and practical as Terry Eagleton suggested. He may become, therefore, concerned with people's political situations as a whole – these political situations are already represented in the selected literary texts – rather than being narrowly concerned with immediate interpersonal relations which can be abstracted from the concrete whole.²⁷⁴

Just as Nigerian literature does not preoccupy itself only with political questions, and moral arguments, its scholarship ought to be able, therefore, to equip its students with the ability also of a genuine moral and political argument, with the depth of insight and critical thinking to see the relations between individual qualities, values and the whole material conditions of existence in Nigeria.

In studying the works, the scholar should be able to interpret and evaluate information in them from a variety of sources, making complex

²⁷⁴ Eagleton, 1983, 208.

intellectual connections across disciplines, Nigerian cultures, and institutions. And since the information in the literary works is a carrier of knowledge, the scholar should also be able to appropriate the information in them and transform them into knowledge –knowledge of the Nigerian condition, the corruption, injustice and ethnic conflicts – and then transform that knowledge into action; for example the resolution of the ethnic conflicts. Trying to resolve the Nigerian ethnic conflicts is an effort to make a change. Therefore, the scholar should be able to manage the change. In the course of studying the works, he should have acquired a deep understanding of himself and respect for the complex identities of others, including the histories and cultures of Nigeria. Thereafter, he may want to participate actively as a citizen not only in the complex democracy of the globalised world, but also in the politics of Nigeria, being able to discern the ethical consequences of decisions and actions of leaders like Zaki Amuri in *Season of Anomy*, Chief Oluremi Odumosu in *Destination Biafra*, Chief Nanga in *A Man of the People* as well as Musa Kaybi in Ekwensi's *Iska*. He may likely begin to see Nigerian Literature as existing generally within Nigeria's specific culture. He would even see that the literature ennobles and validates the culture. Therefore, the version of high culture it imparts, according to

Said, should not be marginal to the serious political concerns of [the Nigerian] society.²⁷⁵

Edward Said had accused professional humanists of telling their students and their general constituency that they defend the classics, the virtues of a liberal education, and the precious pleasure of literature even as they show themselves to be silent on or even incompetent about the historical and social world in which all these things take place. This has led to an institutional divorce of the cultural realm and its expertise from their real connections with power. This was wonderfully illustrated to Said by an exchange with his old college friend, who worked in the department of defence for a period during the Vietnam War. The bombings were in full course and Edward Said was naively trying to understand the kind of person who could order daily B-52 strikes over a distant Asian country all in the name of the American interest in defending freedom and stopping communism. His friend had told him about the defence secretary, whom he considered a complex human being. His friend believed that the defence secretary did not fit the picture Said might have formed of the cold-blooded imperialist murderer, because the last time he was with the defence secretary in his office he had noticed Durrells' *Alexandria Quartet* on his desk. By that

²⁷⁵ See Edward's Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic*, page 2. While Edward wrote about the ennobling and validating role of literature from the universal point of view, I believe also that Nigerian literature exists within Nigeria's specific culture and that Nigerian literature ennobles and validates Nigerian culture.

Said's friend implied that no-one who read and appreciated a novel could be a cold-blooded butcher one might suppose the defence secretary to be.

The whole implausible anecdote made sense to Said after many years and struck him as typical of what is obtainable, that is, that humanists and intellectuals somehow accept the idea that you can read classical fiction as well as kill and maim because, according to Said:

[T]he cultural world is available for that particular sort of camouflaging, and because cultural types are not supposed to interfere in matters for which the social system has not certified them. What the anecdote illustrates is the approved separation of a high-level bureaucrat from the reader of novels of questionable worth and definite status.²⁷⁶

In other words, the cultural world should not be separated from the political world, because politics gets sustenance from values and values are cultural types expressed always in literature, which itself is a humanistic enterprise, that is to say, it is about human beings and their values, capacities and worth.

The humanism in Nigerian literature centres on human lives in Nigeria as well as Nigerian values, individual capacities and worth. It is also about the interests, needs, and welfare of Nigerians. Therefore a humanist in the Nigerian sense of the word should be the one, who makes human life, interests, values and needs in Nigeria the objects of his or her preoccupation. Understandably, according to Abrams, a

²⁷⁶ Said, 2003, 2-3.

humanist in the sixteenth century was one who taught or worked in the humanities; and the field of humanities then included grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy.²⁷⁷ Abrams was of the opinion that the field of humanities was distinguished from fields less concerned with the moral and less imaginative aspects and activities of man, such as mathematics, natural philosophy, and theology.²⁷⁸ He insisted also that in the nineteenth century, the new view of the word implied the dignity and central position of man in the universe; therefore, the study of classical imaginative and philosophical literature was encouraged and emphasis was on the moral and practical values rather than aesthetic ones. Reason was expected to always prevail over instinct and wild passion and the rounded development of the various and diverse powers – mental and physical – of man was of great importance, while technical or specialised training had lesser appeal.²⁷⁹

In the twenty-first century, Abrams insists that a humanist or humanities as a field of study often connotes a person who or a field which bases truth on human experience and bases values on human nature, rejecting the belief that religious enlightenment guarantees all truth and values.²⁸⁰ In other words, a humanist of the twenty-first century or humanities as a study in the twenty-first century ought to

²⁷⁷ M.H. Abrams, *Dictionary of Literary Terms 6th edition* (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1993), 82.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 83

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

concern itself with human experiences which are both objective and subjective as well as values which are also both practical and abstract. The primary concern of a humanist or humanities, therefore, should be to study aspects of the human condition in regard to how human beings respond to or cope with the encompassing totality of the experience of being human and living human lives, in this case, specifically in Nigeria.

Post-colonial Nigerian studies, being part of the new humanism, is a study about the human condition in Nigeria; therefore it should have practical implications, which should emanate from the studies of the Nigerian literature.

Therefore, the practical implications of the selected Nigerian literary works which have been studied so far should necessarily consist of those things with which the writer engaged himself or herself in relation to his or her society; that is, the corruption, ethnicity and so on. It should also consist in knowing what those things mean to the reader or audience, how he or she could be affected by the information he or she appropriates from the works as well as what the duty of the professional humanist is in imparting knowledge and disseminating information appropriated from the selected literary works. All this constitutes a theoretical basis for the employment of Nigerian literature in the resolution of conflicts, especially ethnic conflicts, which is just one of those areas of the practical implications of literature.

While Bill Ashcroft's constitutive theory may be useful in understanding what happens between the writer and the reader of a literary work, this research goes beyond it to demonstrate what can be done with that which happens between a writer and the reader, and of course the teacher, the professional humanist, who may as well be a reader. Ashcroft theorised that just as a reader rewrites the text in the process of reading the text and just as the reader-function is present in the writing as the focus of "meanability" of the writing, the author is also present in the reading.²⁸¹ For Ashcroft, "this is the specific and practical way in which consumption and production are linked. Again, this is firstly true at a conscious level, where the reader accepts the conviction that the author is telling him or her something through the text."²⁸² Therefore, he argues further that readers respond to the text as telling them something because language is used in such a way as to make the text tell something. However, in his opinion, "one cannot tell others anything that they do not incorporate or tell themselves"²⁸³; for as he argued, "the mind is active in knowing: whether a child learning a language or a scientist "observing" an "objective" universe, knowing is conducted within the *situation* of horizons of expectations and other

²⁸¹ Ashcroft, *Post-colonial Transformation*, 2001, 73.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

knowledge.”²⁸⁴ Furthermore, Ashcroft is of the opinion that as a reader reads a text, a horizon of expectation is partially established by the text as it unfolds, while the horizon of knowledge which is acquired through other texts, a *relevance* of other knowledge, is established by exploration. The reader thus constructs the other dialogue pole of discourse. This is possible because speaking is a social act.²⁸⁵ However, according to Ashcroft:

[R]eaders do not simply respond to the “intentionality” of the work itself, quite apart from imputation of an author. The work is a way of seeing and responding, a way of directing attention to that which is “given to consciousness”. It is more accurate to say that the reader sees according to, or “with” the text rather than “see it”. This orientation to the intentionality of the text occurs whenever we assign an author to a text. We can deduce from this that the intentionality of the text can be *put for* the direction of the author’s consciousness. Thus interpretation is never univocal but the reader is subject to the situation, to the rules of discourse and to the directing other as the author is subject to them.²⁸⁶

In trying to see “with” the selected texts by analysing their contents as conflict stories so as to apply them to the resolution of conflicts, the various dynamics they contain have to be identified. However, detailed linguistic analysis may not be necessary except acknowledging the effect of the writer’s use of language.

Furthermore, in categorising the value, relationship, external factor, data and structure dynamics inherent in the works, which are the causes

²⁸⁴ Ashcroft, 2001, 73.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

of ethnic conflicts, the scholar is only engaged in a process of transforming information gained into knowledge. The knowledge so far gained would always be useless if it was not turned into action.

Therefore, as a human being, the scholar may choose to carry on with his life as if nothing is wrong with his country. He may even choose to whine and cry about the wrong in his country or he may choose like Ofeyi in Wole Soyinka's *SA* to start educating the people on the wrong in his country or doing something active about the sordid condition of his country. Once he decides to be active, then he has succeeded in transforming the knowledge that he has gained into judgement and action.

A literary scholar or professional humanist, quite unlike the ordinary reader, is constantly active²⁸⁷; that is, he or she is in a position to be transforming knowledge into judgement and action: The information acquired from reading ought to affect him or her in a different way because even when he or she derives pleasure in reading, reading, evaluating and interpreting are the demands on him by his profession:

²⁸⁷ Being a professional humanist, or somebody that earns a living by teaching literature, he or she has to prepare for lectures; for example, if he or she is to teach, say Shakespeare, he or she must have read Shakespeare and prepared the lessons or information he or she would give out to his or her students or at least information that would engender a situation of discourse between him or her and his or her students. The act of having to read Shakespeare might be a leisurely act for an ordinary reader; but for the professional, it has to be both a leisurely and professional act, hence being constantly active.

his or her responsibility is to consciously transform information into knowledge for his or her audience: the students and perhaps the public.

If he has to teach or study the selected Nigerian literary works, he has to know what, *S A*, for example, means to him, what the writer was trying to do in the work, why he even wrote the work, for whom he wrote it, about what he was writing and to what use he can put the work. To him, *S A*, for instance, ought to be a representation of the state of things at a given historical time in a particular geographic entity. It has to be an embodiment of the values and ideological shades prevalent in a particular historical time and space. This does not, however, mean that its universal appeal should be disregarded.

Ofeyi as a character may represent a value or values. Aiyero as a break-away state from Aiyetomo may represent an ideology or ideologies. The cartel may represent negative values in a society as well as propagators of divisive ideologies. It would only be fair to the writer and to the professional humanist, who may also be a reader, to let the writer of the work say what he thinks he does in his works.

In an interview with Wole Soyinka in 1985 by Mary David, Soyinka had been asked:

[I]n the course of your reflections on your fiftieth birthday you referred to yourself as belonging to a 'wasted generation'. Were you speaking as a Nigerian or as a writer?²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Mary David in Sushelia Nasta (ed.), *Writing Across Worlds Contemporary Writers Talk* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 27-8

Soyinka answered by saying that when he said that theirs was a wasted generation, he was definitely saying that as a Nigerian. He said he did not feel that his creative life had been wasted; but that he was depressed and frustrated very often by the inability of many individuals like himself who had given quite a lot of their energy and capacity to energize their environment. He said they found that they have been frustrated at every turn and that they have had to do something like the labour of Sisyphus rolling the stone uphill all the time until it reached the top and instead of it being built upon, was given a push back down again. He maintained that the political forces were such that thwarted their attempts to really build a viable society so that they did not have to feel like abnormalities within society. In other words they believed they had to regenerate their environment in the same way as they regenerated themselves. He said that effort had always been thwarted by political forces.²⁸⁹ Therefore, Soyinka believed that with a book like *S A*, he was definitely trying to energise his environment, awakening consciousness and thereby moving people like himself to help in building a viable society. The reason he wrote the book is embodied by *Ofeyi*: It was a conscious effort on his part to educate the people on the

²⁸⁹ Mary David in Sushelia Nasta(ed.), 27-8.

wrong in the country and awaken their consciousness into active involvement in social change.

Soyinka has been known as an obscurantist writer: his literary language is as rich and beautiful as it is complicated and impervious. As such he was not writing for ordinary folks: he was writing for the intellectual. With this, he placed a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of the intellectual, the responsible intellectual with a sense of vision. Once the responsible intellectual, that is, the professional humanist or literary scholar, gets conscious and energised by what he reads, he takes up the responsibility of social change –he becomes socially, politically and culturally involved with his society. In other words, he has accepted the conviction that the writer was telling him something through the text and he begins, therefore, according to Ashcroft, to construct the other pole of discourse.²⁹⁰ By doing this, he seeks balance. And Jeaneane D. Fowler believes:

[B]alance means an active and dynamic approach to life. It means a certain *struggle* to maintain a healthy balance in societal and global policies and out-comes, and it means meeting the challenges that threaten the stability of a healthy balance in all areas of life[...].²⁹¹

In the case of the Nigerian society, one of the challenges that threaten the stability of the Nigerian state is ethnicity. Therefore, the balance the

²⁹⁰ Ashcroft, *Post-colonial Transformation*, 2001, 73.

²⁹¹ Jeaneane D. Fowler, *Humanism: Beliefs and Practice* (UK: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 140.

literary scholar or professional humanist may seek in this regard will consist in eradicating the ethnic conflicts that threaten the stability of the Nigerian state with Nigerian literature.

The selected Nigerian literary works –that is, Wole Soyinka’s *Season of Anomy*, Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People* and *No Longer at Ease*, Cyprain Ekwensi’s *Iska* and Buchi Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* are not textbooks on conflict resolution and therefore they cannot be prescribed in a direct resolution of conflicts. They are, instead, like a canvass of human activities rife with so many dynamics. The reader is an observer of those activities and dynamics. He or she takes note of the behavioural patterns and thought processes of the characters on the canvass, their utterances, narrator’s comments, and so on, which emanate from real human experiences and which give him or her insight into human nature, nature of ethnic conflicts as well as the general human condition in the referred nation.

The reader of the work, who may be a literary scholar or even a professional humanist interested in conflict resolution or in the practical involvement of literature in our lives and societies will then have to transform the information from the utterances and thought processes and moods of the characters as well as the narrator’s comments, which all represent the dynamics in the society, and turn them into knowledge:

knowledge of the root causes of corruption and how they manifest, knowledge of the root causes of ethnic conflicts.

To transform this knowledge into judgement and action is to want to make a change. For a scholar of literature or a professional humanist to be able to make use of information in any of the selected works to resolve conflicts, he has to know that, first of all, they are about human conditions. Reading them makes him or her understand the dynamics of the society in question: the nature of ethnic conflicts, the depth of corruption and injustice as well as other sundry vices and virtues alike. But because his or her major concern is on the nature of ethnic conflict and its resolution, he or she concentrates on the ethnic conflict dynamics, comparing the values implied in the works with those of the society it is representing, that is, the Nigerian values in regard to ethnicity. The comparisons he or she makes must include not only the value dynamics, but also the relationship, external factors and other dynamics that make up the ethnic conflict dynamics. He or she has to know the consequences of social mobilisation in ethnic societies by understanding the way it was relayed in the selected literary works in relation to their informing society.

It has to be imagined that in trying to reconcile parties at conflict, for example in trying to reconcile the conflict among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, the representatives of the groups have to be brought

together at a conference and that they would be asked to tell their stories by airing their grievances, prejudices, perceptions and misperceptions in regard to the other groups with which they are in conflict. It has to be imagined that the people at the conference are their audience and that the umpires in the form of conflict managers are there to mediate between them, to articulate their conflict stories.

In the case of the selected Nigerian literary works, it has to be imagined that they are the conflict stories of Nigerians and that the readers are their audience, while the professional humanist or the literary scholar is the mediator, the articulator of the conflict stories.

Quite unlike in a conference, where the ethnic groups may all have been invited to air their grievances and so on, the Nigerian literary works have the capacity of reaching a wider audience, because the great number of literature students who get into the university every year to study literature are potential audiences for the literary texts as well as potential articulators of the conflict stories immanent in them.

It has to be imagined that while the representatives of the ethnic groups air their grievances, prejudices, perceptions and misperception in the stories they tell in regard of the other groups, that the conflict managers will want to understand what values the groups have and where these values clash. They would want to understand what perceptions and misperceptions the groups have of themselves in the

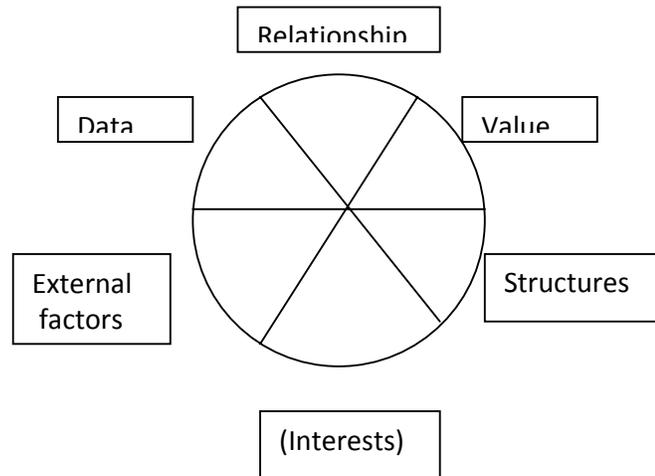
course of interacting among themselves; they would want to understand what differences the groups have culturally, politically, economically and socially. Having understood these, they would begin the process of clarification, so that the groups will understand what is happening among them and how it is happening.

In the case of the Nigerian literature and conflict resolution, the professional humanist or scholar of literature involved in conflict resolution encounters the groups in the works. Like in real life, the groups air their grievances, prejudices, perceptions and misperceptions and he or she tries like the conflict manager to understand their values, differences and so on. Having understood them as well, he or she begins to clarify them, but this time, not to the groups, but to his or her students, who are members of the groups and who now have a better understanding of their ethnic make up and the problems that result from it.

The work of the scholar of literature in trying to resolve the ethnic conflicts would be akin to the one done in *Season of Anomy*, *Destination Biafra* and *Iska* as conflict stories.

To be able to engage the works in conflict resolution, a model of analysing, diagnosing and resolving conflicts by Furlong will be used in order to demonstrate that the value, relationship, data, external-factor and structure dynamics could be articulated by the literary scholar and

be used to involve Nigeria literature in conflict resolution. The appropriate model for this analysis is the Circle of Conflict model of conflict resolution (see Furlong, p. 30 for diagrams), which, according to Furlong, “attempts to categorise the underlying causes, or ‘drivers,’ of the conflict situation that the practitioner is facing, offering a framework to diagnose and understand the factors that are creating or fuelling the conflict.”²⁹²



The wants, needs, hopes and fears of the ethnic groups make up the interests.²⁹³

²⁹² See Furlong, *The Conflict Resolution Toolbox*, 30.

²⁹³ Furlong, 38.

CIRCLE OF CONFLICT: DIAGNOSIS

<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>Repetitive negative behaviour: nepotism marginalisation Poor or failed communication Stereotypes Prejudice Negative experiences in the past</p>	<p>VALUES</p> <p>Belief systems: Christianity & Islam, etc. Corruption Right and wrong Good and evil</p>
<p>EXTERNAL FACTORS</p> <p>Presence of crude oil Demography Infrastructure Education Wealth</p>	<p>DATA</p> <p>Misinformation Ignorance or Lack of information Unnecessary information</p>
<p>STRUCTURE</p> <p>The structure of government to ensure a healthy balance in the polity: Federal, con-federal, unitary, or quasi-federal.²⁹⁴</p>	

²⁹⁴ See also on page 30 Gary T. Furlong's Circle of conflict: diagnosis. Note that there are slight differences: while wealth belongs to Structure format in Furlong's Circle of conflict diagram, it is categorised under external factors in this research. Again while Furlong concentrated more on interpersonal relationship, the research occupied itself with ethnic conflict. However, the Circle of conflict model is applicable to every other conflicts, which are not interpersonal.

And with the Circle of Conflict model, the things to watch out for are the values in Nigeria as the writers want their audience to know in their works: These include the belief systems, ethical values, the types of experiences the ethnic groups have been able to have in Nigeria to justify how they relate to one another, the external factors, like the presence of raw materials, which are contributing to the conflict situation, the information collected by each ethnic group regarding their situation and the perceived state of affairs of each group in relation to other groups and finally, the nature of the structure under which these groups co-exist.

The process of applying the works in conflict resolution starts, first of all, with a professional reader, that is, a literary scholar, for whom reading is a profession, reading the works as conflicting stories. In reading the works, he or she may get captivated by the writers' use of language. The beauty and force of their language may urge him/her to read on. He or she follows the developments of the works and reads on patiently and assiduously. He or she gets immersed in the world of the works. It may strike him or her in the process that the writers are talking about something serious. In other word, the works are telling him or her something.²⁹⁵ The characters express the feelings he/she most likely is

²⁹⁵ See Ashcroft, *Post-colonial Transformation*, 2001, 73.

very familiar with as well as the experiences he/she knows: he/she, therefore, jumps in and out of the work at will, acquiring thereby a deep understanding of his/her nature and respect for the complex identities of others, including diverse Nigerian histories and cultures. He/she begins to interpret and evaluate the information in the works from a variety of sources in relation to the society and the writers; he/she would definitely make complex intellectual connections across disciplines, cultures, and institutions of Nigeria while reading the books. He/she will begin to exchange the world of the works he/she is immersed in with the world that he/she knows; and the world that he/she knows is Nigeria: he/she becomes, therefore, conscious of the Nigerian condition. He will then begin to categorise the dynamics, that is, the values, relationship, external factors, data and structure.

Value operates on the cultural and political realms, while relationship is a social phenomenon. Resources pertain to the economy and Information is the carrier of knowledge. Furthermore, Nigeria as a country functions under a particular structure of government. Being a multi-ethnic society, the values of the groups in it are bound to differ. These values also possess the capacity to determine the state of the relationship among the ethnic groups.

The way resources are distributed contributes a great deal to how the ethnic groups will relate to themselves, while the information they assimilate will either make or mar them.

To begin his or her work of conflict resolution using the literary texts, he or she compresses the conflict stories, presenting them in summarised forms to his audience, making sure that the summaries contain all the probable causes of ethnic conflict in the Nigerian society as presented by the writers of the works. This is possible because as Timothy J. Lomperis, Pratt and John Clark argue, "through literature we can explore ambiguities and work toward synthesizing an enormously complex and painful experience."²⁹⁶

The knowledge of the history of Nigeria helps him or her to draw parallels between the contents of the works and the complex and painful experiences of the Nigerian condition.

Furthermore it has to be imagined that the work of conflict resolution is taking place in the classroom and that the audience is sophisticated because they are all literature scholars and as such must participate in the diagnosis and the analysis of the conflict stories, so that the mediating scholar wouldn't be biased. The interaction between the instructor of the literary works, that is, the mediating scholar and the other scholars, who constitute the audience, is already a situation of

²⁹⁶ Timothy J. Lomperis, Pratt and John Clark, „*Reading the Wind*“ *The literature of Vietnam War: an Interpretative Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 5.

discourse. Their discursive choices would, definitely, reflect views about conflict, its origin and where justice lies. By decoding the pattern of views they could understand how to avoid conflict. While important, the decoding process is also risky, because it involves multiple moments of interpretation and translation; and third party facilitators encourage the conflict parties to perceive the shadow of the future and to contemplate cautious cooperation.²⁹⁷ Reading the texts, while it could be a leisurely act, will always be a professional demand on the scholars; as such, the literary texts ought to be telling them something.²⁹⁸ The interdisciplinary historical and theoretical knowledge derivable from literary studies, the need for balance as is requisite of scholarship in the humanities²⁹⁹, offer them the opportunity of being able to function as mediators. However, whether they would be better mediators or not would depend on how able they are to make the better persons which they have become, (that is, persons, who are determined to make knowledge functional) concrete and practical.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ See Dan Smith in *Language and Conflict: A Neglected Relationship* by Sue Wright [ed.] (Birmingham: Multilingual Matter, 1998), 18.

²⁹⁸ See Ashcroft, 73.

²⁹⁹ Fowler, 1999, 140.

³⁰⁰ See Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 1983, 208

4.1 *Season of Anomy* as Conflict story: A case study

Season of Anomy mirrors a Nigeria in Turmoil in the sixties. It captures the ethnic violence of those years that took place in the Northern part of Nigeria. It is rife as a conflict story with all the dynamics inherent in ethnic conflict situation.

As a conflict story, it revolves around a humanist character called Ofeyi. He worked as a promoter for a cartel in Aiyero. Aiyero is a progressive society, whose sons and daughters, making exploits in distant lands always come back home, bringing new ideas along. The cartel sent him abroad for studies. He returned and noticed that the cartel had allied with the military government and the bourgeoisie to exploit the people. He met a dentist from Aiyero at the airport on his return. The aim of the dentist was to assassinate the representatives of this exploiting bunch. Ofeyi pretended to be working for the cartel; but he was subverting the interest of the cartel by hiding ironies and counterpropaganda in his promotional adverts for them. He believed that it was time to educate the people on a truly comprehensive scale. Nothing for him could be achieved by isolated acts; there was need to come together as a force against the cartel.

The government sent a trouble-shooter to call Ofeyi to order. They soon began to hunt down men of Aiyero, who symbolised progressive political opposition to the cartel.

Ofeyi had a girl friend called Iriyise, who had relocated to the North. Ofeyi's search for her made him aware of the bestial nature of the violence directed against Aiyero people by the Cross river people on the instigation of the cartel, the government and the bourgeoisie.

Elihu, the Catechist, had told Ofeyi how Aliyu became a member of the church in Cross River: a predominantly Muslim state. He said Aliyu had been with them for some time, and that he waited outside the temple on Sundays to beg for alms. The minister asked him (Aliyu) once in a while to help him in cleaning the premises and sweeping the temple. Aliyu became thus part of the congregation. When he saw their leader struck down during the mayhem in cross river he rushed at the mob and attacked them with his staff - and a few curses too. The mobs were all people from the next township. Aliyu came from there and so knew the mob that attacked his church minister. (277)As the mob approached the temple, he confronted them, and told them they would have to kill him to get at the temple. As Aliyu narrated his ordeal to Ofeyi, Ofeyi was struck by a sudden certainty and he asked Aliyu whether he himself was a Cross-riverern. Aliyu was of course from cross river, but their murdered church minister wasn't. Aliyu was attacked by a feeling of guilt, because he thought he should have gone to meet the mob as they attacked foreigners among them more so since he spoke the language of cross river people. But he could not confront the mob

because he was afraid: Although they (he and the mob) were all Cross-river they again had important differences. Where Aliyu came from people tend to look down on others from Kuntua. The sight of him could have incensed the rioting mob inordinately. (277-8)

Zaki Amuri is the traditional ruler of the Cross-river people. Cross-river may be symbolic of Northern Nigeria. He had imprisoned Salau, one of his subjects, for selling his piece of land to some strangers from the south. He is looked upon like a demigod by his people. He is revered to the point of worship. There is much to be gained by the conversation between him and his clerk as well as the prisoner, Salau, who are interesting characters in the novel.

The Clerk asked the prisoner to crawl doglike to Zaki. He wished to know if Salau, the prisoner, was the man who sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage. The Prisoner said he was misled. The Clerk believed he must really be a goat to have allowed himself to be misled. He wondered why strangers would come to him, complete strangers from across the river who were not even men of faith but *kafiri* and made him promises, bribed him and he agreed to foment trouble among his kith and kin.

The Prisoner out of earnest fear tried to prove his innocence by swearing before his highness by Allah that he was no trouble-maker. He argued that the land was truly ruined, that he sold the land to strangers

from the south because he was only an ignorant man and because there was no one to advise them on what to do. He said that the land was barren through and through. Nothing grew, farming was impossible. And it wasn't as if he had a job to turn to like his brother-in-law Abdul and one or two others. But for the mercy of Allah his little one would have perished of hunger. (124) He said that once or twice he even stood beside the gates of the mining company to beg from the white-man – after all it was their doing that brought ruin upon the land. But that the gateman chased him away. He had accused him of dirtying up the white-man's gate. When he came back again the gateman called the police and they put him in gaol for a week. (121) He said he could virtually do nothing when these strangers came other than to sell the land to them, since it was already costing more to till than it yielded.

The Clerk told the prisoner that he has brought himself great misfortune by placing his affairs in the hands of strangers from the south, instead of turning to his father, Zaki. He told the prisoner mockingly that his land and those of the others now belong to aliens who pretended to be their brothers. (125) Zaki Amuri out of anger said he wanted a clean sweep of Cross-river so that no stranger remained. (126)

If an arbitrating panel was set up to look into what led to the conflict between the people of Cross-river and the people from Across the river

in the world recreated by Wole Soyinka in his *SA*, the panel would definitely be told a conflict story. For an instructor in literature, who is interested in conflict resolution, *S A* in itself is a conflict story, the dynamics of which need to be diagonalised, clarified and resolved, using a model, for example, Gary Furlong's Circle of Conflict Model (see Furlong, 30).

- Circle of Conflict: Diagnosis: Values, Relationships, External factors, Data and Structures

The literary scholar mediating begins to compare the values in *S A* with the values he/she finds current in Nigerian society. One of the Nigerian negative values implied in *S A* is corruption, which is represented in the cartel. It has to be born in mind that this mediation might be asocial, that is, it could be happening while the scholar is reading the text in preparation for his or her class; or it might be taking place between him/her and his audience, the students. However it takes place, *S A* has to be seen and treated as a conflict story.

Ofeyi subverted the interest of the Cartel by hiding ironies and counterpropaganda in his promotional adverts for the Cartel, because he believed that the Cartel was corrupt. Corruption is a negative value in Nigeria; but it has become so endemic that it seems to have lost its identity as a negative value. It became rationalised, because it was legitimatised by the ethnic groups in order to strengthen their ethnic interests. This rationalisation, as Peter Ekeh had argued, was as a result of the two public realms created by colonialism.³⁰¹ That is, ethnic or primordial and civic or modern realms. Both the primordial and civic realms related differently to the private realm in regard to morality. The primordial public realm is based on the cultures and traditions of the

³⁰¹ Peter Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1975), 108.

different ethnic groups and they reflected for the ethnic groups a high moral standard rooted in their cultures, while the public civic realm is associated with illegitimate and exploitative colonial rule. This realm had no moral connection to private realm; in other words it was amoral, because it saw the state as something that has to be exploited for the benefit of the primordial realm, that is, the ethnic groups³⁰². This amoral attitude toward the colonial state was transferred to the post-colonial state, and as Attahiru Jega has argued, “[I]t defines the parameters of relative non-commitment to the Nigerian nation-state and commitment to other levels of primordial identity.”³⁰³

Ofeyi’s desire to do that which is right portrays him as an honest man. Therefore, honesty is a positive value desirable in any society. The Cartel sent a trouble-shooter to hunt Ofeyi down because they believed he was ruining business for them. The people at the top, like Zaki Amuri and Chief Batoki, who are supposed to be doing everything within their power and within the bounds of the constitution to improve and ennoble the lives of people under them, rather spend their years in government embezzling public fund, leaving the poor masses wretched and impoverished.

³⁰² Ekeh, 108.

³⁰³ Attahiru Jega in *Identity Transformation and Identity politics under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2000), 43.

When, during the mayhem against the people from across the river, the minister was attacked, Aliyu, who now shared a sense of brotherhood with his church pastor, rushed at the mob and attacked them with his staff – and a few curses too. Although Aliyu was their kinsman, but good conscience and a sense of brotherhood made him understand that the pastor was his brother, not just the other stranger. It is by comparing the values, both positive and negative, like honesty, healthy conscience, sense of brotherhood, corruption, and so on, which are all in the work and those of the society it is reflecting, that one sees another human dimension in conflict resolution through literature: Aliyu had proved himself to be a genuine human being, because he showed solidarity towards human suffering in the form of the suffering of his church pastor, who happened to be a stranger in Cross River, the symbolic North in the Novel. Aliyu therefore represents the sense of one being one's brother's keeper. Therefore the need for Nigerians to achieve authenticity as human beings like Aliyu is highly desirable.

The killings and maiming of the people from across the river, a symbolic terminology for the people of southern Nigeria, particularly, the people of the southern eastern Nigeria, the Igbo, is for Aliyu an absurdity, hence his revolt.³⁰⁴ He has shown by that singular act of protest that Nigerians could make their lives have meaning by loving

³⁰⁴ See J.I Unah, *Heidegger's Existentialism: An Essay on Applied ontology* (Lagos: Panaf Publishing Inc., 1996), 42-3

and supporting one another in their country, and working together to create their common humanity by building a nation that will fulfil the needs of all. Their humanism should consist in the mutual recognition of their human needs and of their right to their satisfaction.³⁰⁵

The killing of the church minister was as a result of the fact that he belonged to an ethnic group which was hated in Cross River because they possessed positive traits that was needed for the development of any society; but for which they were envied. Already the people from across the river had been described by the clerk of Zaki Amuri as strangers and blaspheming *kafiris*, unbelievers all because they did not subscribe to the Islamic code of existence. But being members of the same country, they were supposed to coexist under the same ideal.

The ideal inherent in the motto of the Nigerian state is faith and unity. This means that Nigerians have to first of all have faith in their country and trust their ability to live together regardless of their cultural diversities. Chinua Achebe had argued that the end to which unity in Nigeria is directed must be seen by Nigerians as unimpeachable. Only then would unity as a notion be valid.³⁰⁶ Once Nigerians are able to have faith in Nigeria and are able to live together regardless of their diversities, then the genuine need of the peoples of Nigeria to work, do

³⁰⁵ See J., Lowen, "Jean – Paul Sartre: Philosopher for the 20th Century," *Free Inquiry*, 1999/2000, 59-60.

³⁰⁶ See also Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (London: Harcourt Heinemann, 1984), 12.

business or go to school in any part of their country would not be hindered by ethnic hatred as was the case with the people from the South in Wole Soyinka's *S A*, who resided in Cross-river: they were seen and treated as strangers in the country they rightly belonged to.

Social mobilisation gave rise to an inter-ethnic relationship in Nigeria that is not without its disadvantages. *S A* represented the morbid state of ethnic relations in Nigeria, especially in the north, where so many skilled and unskilled workforce in the south had migrated as a result of the vibrant economic activities in Kano, one of the cities created by the colonisers during colonial period. The people from across the river, as they were referred to in *S A*, migrated to the north because they knew that they would be able to fill the vacant positions there since they were better educated and most of the jobs there required qualifications. In other word, they were educationally at an advantage. The cross river people should therefore be made to understand the values and advantages of education. The average northern person should be made to look beyond the horizon of reading the Koran and going to the mosque, the ethical code Musa Kaybi had wanted his son Dan Kaybi to imbibe. (*Iska*, 30-1) The reason for the sorry state of education in the northern part of Nigeria is traceable to the period of colonialism. According to Charles Jarmon, "the highly theocratic Fulani-Hausa system was left intact and Muslim leaders achieved concessions with

respect to exercising control over the penetration of western influence in the area. Christian missions and schools were limited and education continued to centre in koranic schools and reflect Arabic teaching."³⁰⁷

The need to make sure that cross river people or the Hausa-Fulani measured up or are developed should not necessitate the implementation of policies which would deepen the existing ethnic conflicts instead of resolving them. For example, critics of governmental policies believe that the term federal character as a governmental policy, initiated by the federal government headed always by people from cross river in S A and the Hausa-Fulani-Kanawa-Kanuri or the North in the reality of the Nigerian condition, has been used as a subterfuge to unleash unprecedented injustice on the people from across the river in S A or the people from the south, particularly the Igbo and the Yoruba, in the reality of the Nigerian ethnic condition. Federal character was a term invented by the Constitution Drafting committee inaugurated by the military head state of Nigeria, General Murtala Mohammed, on the 18th of October 1975, to promote national unity.³⁰⁸ Furthermore, most ethnic conflict theorists like G. William believe:

[T] he federal character of Nigeria refers to the distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty, and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation notwithstanding the diversities of ethnic origin, culture, language or religion

³⁰⁷ Charles Jarmon, 1988, 108-9.

³⁰⁸ See Adiele Afigbo and Toyin Falola (ed.), *Nigerian History, Politics, and Affairs: The Collected Essays of Adiele Afigbo* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2004) 423.

which may exist[...].³⁰⁹

Donald Horowitz for his part insists:

[M]odernisation theories of ethnicity commonly also stress that the benefits of modernity are not equally spread among ethnic groups. This uneven distribution of economic and educational opportunities in the modern sector is an important source of group tensions. How and why? one answer given by modernisation theories is that, because some groups gain a head-start in the competition for the rewards of the modern world, the social classes that emerge tend to overlap and reinforce ethnic group boundaries, thereby making ethnic groups confrontations more intense.³¹⁰

However, Ike Udogu believes that one of the ways of ensuring that peaceful coexistence is achieved among the various Nigerian ethnic groups is for government to guard against its application of federal character. This policy ensures that very good students from the so-called educationally advantaged states in the southern part of Nigeria are denied places in the federal universities, while their counterparts in the so-called educationally disadvantaged states with much lower test scores are given places. This can only imbue a sense of injustice and marginalisation in the people so treated.³¹¹ Furthermore Udogu writes:

[I]f the diverse marginalisation experiences of Igbos and oil-producing minorities teach anything, it is that ethnic grievances do not go away until a government acts affirmatively, via an effective reconciliation policy to remove those grievances.³¹²

³⁰⁹ G. William, *Class Relations in Neocolony: The Case of Nigeria*, in Nnoli Okwudiba, *Ethnicity and Development in Nigeria* (Hants: Ashgate Publishing, 1995), 151.

³¹⁰ Horowitz, 102.

³¹¹ Emmanuel Ike Udogu [ed.], *Nigeria in the Twenty-first Century: Strategies for Political Stability and Peaceful Coexistence* (Trenton: African World Press, 2005), 63.

³¹² *Ibid.*

In other words merit and hard work should be encouraged so that marginalisation, which encourages ethnic conflict, could be eradicated from the body politic of the nation-state. Marginalisation is a negative value. By marginalising others or giving preferences to some one from one's ethnic group or race, one would be encouraging injustice, disregard for merit, and hard work as well as unhealthy racial or ethnic competition.

The Hausa-Fulani or the cross river people could not compete in the open market economy, because they lacked the necessary skills needed to be able to compete with others in the modern world. They are educationally disadvantaged because they were suspicious of western education, which, however, held the key to success in the modern world in which colonial Nigeria found itself.

They also saw the colonialist as the victorious Christian invaders of a Moslem society. And because the Igbo of southern Nigeria are predominantly Christians, they considered them and the colonisers as infidels, with whom one should hardly get into a relationship. The economic prosperity of the southerner, especially the Igbo, angered the Hausa-Fulani, who could not compete with them in the capital market. The domination of all aspects of life by the Igbo would definitely perpetuate for the Hausa-Fulani the humiliation of colonial experience and even make it seem probable that they were going to be further

colonised again by the people from across the river, symbolic for the Igbo in S A. As Otite and Albert had argued:

[T] here is need at this point to shed some light on why the 1953 and 1966 ethnic hostilities occurred in Kano it was more against the Igbo than the Yoruba or any other group[...]. The Igbo dominated the economy of Kano and were the most easily blamed for the "colonisation" of the city's economy. To further complicate the matters, the Igbo were found by their Kanawa hosts not to be receptive to Islam and the social practices that predominated in Kano. On the one hand, some of the Yoruba immigrants who were Muslims were easily disposed towards Hausa-Fulani socio-cultural practices.³¹³

The nature of ethnic relations as is portrayed in SA in regard to its informing society which is Nigeria is a clear case of ethnic relationships in an unranked society. In the reality of its informing society, the Igbo and the Hausa are perfect examples of unranked ethnic groups. For as Horowitz points out:

[I] n unranked systems, on the other hand, parallel ethnic groups coexist, each group internally stratified. Unlike ranked ethnic groups, which are ascriptively defined components of a single society, parallel groups are themselves incipient whole societies and indeed may formerly have constituted more or less autonomous whole societies.³¹⁴

Of course the Nigerian ethnic nations were all autonomous whole societies before colonisation. Toyin Falola had made several important points that Professor Adiele E. Afigbo had made about the make-up of pre-colonial Nigerian society in his researches, which showed that

³¹³ Otite & Albert, 283.

³¹⁴ Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 22-23.

southern Nigeria, the subject of his research, was made up of largely autonomous societies in pre-colonial era.³¹⁵ However policy makers in Nigeria have repeatedly closed their eyes to that fact, which would have really helped Nigeria to fashion a system that would have ensured justice and equity among its citizens. The writer Wole Soyinka, a courageous critic of the various Nigerian governments acknowledged this when he said that partly because the human factor was the most demonstrable determinant of social changes, he would caution himself and try substituting peoples for nations, for it was better to believe in people than nations. In moments of grave doubts it was essential to cling to the reality of ethnic groups, for such realities hardly ever vanish: they cannot be questioned, because they exist. Soyinka believed that for the truly independent thinker it was always easy – and often necessary – to recall the artificiality, the aristocratic arrogance, the exploitive motivations which went into the disposal of African peoples into nationalities. Soyinka was of the opinion that the sense of humiliation that accompanied the recollection of such a beginning would be overcome once one established one's essential identity as that which went into creating the entity of a people. He could not see that essence as part of the entity of boundaries. He argued that Judgement in its basic ethical sense could only be applied to ethnic groups, just as loyalty,

³¹⁵ See Falola (ed.), 2004, 2.

Sacrifice, idealism, and even ideologies were virtues which were nurtured and exercised on behalf also of ethnic groups. Therefore any exercise of self-destruction solely in defence of the inviolability of temporal demarcations called nations was a senseless imitation of idealism.³¹⁶ For Soyinka, “[P] eoples are not temporal because they can be defined by infinite ideas. Boundaries cannot.”³¹⁷

One would have expected that after the great wastage of human lives in a civil war just to keep Nigeria one, issues of ethnicity would have been overcome. But the years of oil boom gave the naïve leaders of the Nigerian state a false sense of accomplishment whereby they believed that their sudden wealth meant eternal solution to questions of ethnicity in Nigeria. But with wealth came modernity and industrialisation. Nigeria witnessed a proliferation of cities. These cities became again gathering points of the ethnic groups of Nigeria. Whenever a member of each of the ethnic groups moves to the city, he or she first of all seeks out his own people. He or she joins their various unions, as was the case with the people of Umuofia in Chinua Achebe’s *N L E*, where they resolve to be of help to their members. They also articulate their interests there. Apparently they would become more and more alike and their tangible interests would increasingly be in conflict. However, this interaction of the ethnic groups in the cities ought to really

³¹⁶ See Wole Soyinka, *The Man Died* (London. Arrow book limited, 1987), 175.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

engender the production of a third culture, for they would begin with contrasting perceptions and behaviour. The interaction should definitely create a unique environment for a genuine relationship to develop, for in the coming together of their separate cultures, a more inclusive third culture ought to be created, which would enable effective communication among the ethnic groups, harmonising the composite parts into a coherent whole.³¹⁸ This is possible, because, according to H.J Blackham, who was quoted by Jeaneane D. Fowler in her Book *Humanism: Beliefs and Practices* (1999):

[M]an, then, is born potentially human and becomes human in a society; he is bred in a culture. In so far as he never knows anything that is not mediated through that culture he remains imprisoned within it, relativised by it. When he becomes aware of other cultures, other ways of being human, he can begin to separate himself from the culture in which he is bred and to identify himself as a man. This independence, though of supreme importance, is relative, for man always remains dependent upon society and largely determined by the culture in which he is bred. Nevertheless, the relative personal independence which he can achieve is the supreme human achievement.³¹⁹

Once one is able to identify oneself as man, having separated oneself from the culture in which one was bred, one could be said to be tolerant; therefore, tolerance, which is a very positive value in every relationship, is also inherent in that third culture that would evolve once people have

³¹⁸ See F.L. Casmir and N.C. Asuncion-Lande, „Intercultural communication revisited: Conceptualization, paradigm building, and methodical Approaches”, in J.A. Anderson [ed.], *Communication Yearbook*, 12 (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publication, 1989), 294.

³¹⁹ See Fowler *Humanism: Beliefs and Practice* (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 142.

succeeded in separating themselves from the culture in which they are bred. This, however, does not seem to be the case in Cross river, the symbolic northern Nigeria in *S A*.

In *S A*, Ofeyi was shocked by that great exhibition of intolerance by the Cross-river people in refusing to accept the fact that the people from across the river had the right to choose to stay different in that part of country. The people from across the river did not need to be Moslems to live their lives in Cross-river. Such intolerance on the part of the people of Cross-river gave force to the great destruction of life and property in the Cross-river pogrom.

The coming together of the people from across the river and the Cross river people in the same environment had made it possible for them to find a way of comparing themselves regardless of the fact that they are all coming from different cultural, historical and psychic backgrounds. In comparing themselves, stereotypes, of course, crystallise. These stereotypes definitely affect the way the ethnic groups relate to one another. For example, the article written by one Johnson Toyo, an Ijaw youth, as a response to the article of Chinedu Ogoke, a doctoral student in Mainz, was a realistic exhibition of prejudice, stereotyping and misperception of a person or a group as the case may be about a particular group.

Chinedu Ogoke wanted to make a case for the Igbo of Nigeria, by arguing that the Igbo predicament in Nigeria was as a result of the Nigeria/Biafra civil war. The Igbo had sought for a nation of their own, having believed their interests could no longer be protected in Nigeria after the genocide directed against them in 1966. Chinedu's use of language in his essay was very literary, depicting with imagery and metaphor, the sordid conditions of the Igbo nation. He had written:

[...]. Everybody must get something at the Igbo's expense [...]. You take your chance, make your "firstbone" when they come, then come for your national award. It has been promoted as a virtuous act. Our fellow Africans have inherited the blood lust of their parents. They think we know how to take shit. They may not have anticipated it before now but there exist[sic] one or two not so visible ethnic groups whose dynamism will soon draw their envy as well. Those will inherit the very reason for which Igbos are killed in Nigeria.³²⁰

In trying to counter Ogoke's argumentation, Johnson Toyo wrote a rejoinder: his was an article rife with prejudice, misperception and hate. He started by ironically praising what he called the Igbo Industry, hard work and enterprise; thereafter, he gave vent to his venom, which he called the truth about the Igbo: he wrote that the Igbo politics of the 60s cost them the war; that the Igbo were pushed to the wall and as such had no choice than to defend themselves. He opined that no sane people could sit back and watch the carnage that took place in the North after the June 1966 coup without being forced to do something. He admitted

³²⁰ Chinedu Ogoke, "Massob, The Janjaweeds And The Rogue State," *Nigerianworld*, July 31(2006).

that the Igbo explored all possible avenues to resolve the escalating conflicts peacefully, but wondered why, before the war, the regional government of eastern Nigeria, which he believed, was overwhelmingly Igbo, and did not take into account the interest of the minorities. Therefore, when new states were created, the eastern Nigerian minorities were greatly elated because they were now free from the Igbo “stranglehold”. And because they could not stand the Igbo guts, they gave the Nigerian soldiers access to the Igbo hinterland. He tried to justify the seizure of Igbo properties in Port Harcourt by saying that because the Igbo never practised in the eastern region the kind of politics that would have made them loved and admired, and because they did not practise that kind of politics expected of them they could not secure the loyalty of the minorities and therefore the loss of the war and the seizure of the properties they laboured over the years to acquire were some sort of comeuppance. He argued that the Igbo were travellers and never stayed at home; that they lived abroad and brought all the gains of their hard work home; that the mad rush for money was the major problem of the Igbo. In other words, in Igbo land money determined everything. He maintained that the average Igbo family would disown their own if they came home during Christmas without enough money to prove to their neighbours that theirs was a better family; that the Igbo sold inferior goods on the market, obtained money

under false pretences and did ritual killings in order to be wealthy; that while the average Igbo girl was preoccupied with the thought of getting married to a very rich man, the average Igbo young man was dreaming of being that man. He wrote categorically, that the value system in Igbo land was conditioned by money.³²¹

It is the stereotype of the Igbo being too aggressive in business and money-loving that Zaki Amuri, the leader of Cross-river detested. He felt that if land was sold to the people from the south, which symbolised the Igbo and possibly the Yoruba, with their sharp business acumen, they could take complete possession of the whole land. But people like Zaki Amuri in Nigeria ought to be taught that human perception does not depend solely on the senses and the mind. For if they say that the people from across the river are strangers and unbelievers, then their judgement, which does not depend solely on the senses and the mind, has definitely imposed categories of thought on the people from across the river as objects for them to be able to make sense of what they sense. Therefore they became aware of these groups as strangers and unbelievers because they have perceived what they believe as realities through the lens of preconceived categories existing in their minds.

In a recent editorial in the newspaper, the former minister of the federal capital territory of Nigeria, Mallam El'Rufai, was said to have

³²¹ See Johnson Toyo, "A Rejoinder to Ogoke's Massob, The Janjawees and The Rogue State," *Nigerianworld*, August 3 (2006).

said that although 68 percent of the land in Abuja was allocated to the 19 northern states, Abuja being part of the north, yet the Igbo own 73 percent of landed property in Abuja.³²² The same applies to all the cities in Nigeria. He therefore praised the Igbo enterprise and contribution toward the social and economic development of the capital territory. Therefore, Zaki Amuri's fears are not necessary in a country where positive values reign. But then the fears prompted his hostility to the people from across the river.

Therefore when the people of Cross- river initiated ethnic violence against the people of the south, Ofeyi, at the gory sight of the great human wastage, mused that differences in culture and material envy alone were not enough to justify such hideous wastage of human life, because a relish had coloured those actions, a deep desire for perversion such that seemed as if they sought to balance unnatural shortcomings, their human failings with a vengeful outrage on the face of humanity. (*S A*, 275-6)

Like in Nigeria, where the presence of natural resources have been contributing to ethnic conflict, in *S A* some of the causes of the ethnic conflict are also the presence of natural resources. While it is about crude oil in Nigeria, it is about Cocoa and land in *SA*. All the same it is

³²² Mallam El' Rufai, "The Igbos own 73% of Abuja," *Thisday*, May 21 (2007).

an acknowledgement that external factors play a big role in the escalation of ethnic conflicts.

Soyinka may not have used them as direct sources of ethnic conflict, but the need for them by the cartel, who exploited the poor masses, exposed the nature of ethnic conflict in that given literary society, which is symbolic of the Nigerian society.

Since the discovery of Crude oil in the Niger Delta of Nigeria in 1958, the nature of ethnic conflict in Nigeria has taken another dimension. It is such that even policymakers, who are also participants in the affairs of their societies, even may entertain hostile feelings toward members of other groups. If they do not entertain such hostile feeling towards members of other groups, they at least have a view of inter-group relations that sees ethnic conflict as necessary for the advancement of the interests of their group,³²³ hence, the disproportionate derivation policies, which leave meagre 13 percent mineral revenue to the oil-producing states. Ogoni and other Niger Delta groups are demanding 50 percent total control of their resources. However, the Nigerian Federal Government could adopt only 18 percent increase in the revenue accruing to the oil-producing states at the National Political Reform Conference in 2005-2006.³²⁴ It should be recalled that Zaki

³²³ See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 564.

³²⁴ See Policy Briefing, International Crisis Group, 18 September (2008).

Amuri had ordered a clean sweep of cross river of everything supposedly alien.

Apart from the presence of natural resources, the availability of overwhelming human resources in some part of the country, in terms of highly educated professionals, has also engendered discriminatory policies that in themselves fuel ethnic hostilities and hinder innovation.

Furthermore, the people from across the river, symbolic for the South, being an advanced group in a backward region, the North, they are likely to export surplus capital and population outside their region. Their prosperity will generate investment that does not respect regional boundaries and their education will of course create a talent pool in search of opportunities.³²⁵ However, it is their envied positions in the country as well as the putative qualities associated with their positions- ascribable qualities that crystallised out of association in a common environment- that will engender ethnic conflict in their given environment.

It is interesting to note that although Zaki Amuri, the powerful tyrant from Cross-river and Chief Batoki of Gborulu are both leaders of the cartel, whose loyalty to a sodality transcends mere regionalism, yet Zaki Amuri sees the people across the river, to which Chief Batoki

³²⁵ See Horowitz., 250. Naturally, those who create wealth will always create new opportunities, which will require educated men and women to explore. In Nigeria, the Igbo and Yoruba have a lot of educated workforce that will readily move to the Hausa-Fulani region of the North in search of opportunities once they are created.

belongs, as strangers in his Cross-river. Their genuine economic adventures in his Cross-river is suspect to him and his folks, hence the debriefing of the prisoner by the clerk in the manner expected of the Cross-river elite, who seem always to be taking advantage of the educational backwardness of their people in enriching themselves. But then again, Chief Batoki believes that the only true party that transcends local boundaries is the party of the mint. That means that he is not so much troubled that his people are being butchered in Cross-river.

In Nigeria while the ruling elites engineer ethnic hatred and conflict among the ethnic groups, they share among themselves the gains of dividing the people and ruling them in sodalities that transcend ethnicity. Isaac Albert and Onigu Otite have noted at their methodical appendix that in the course of their research on the causes of ethnic conflict they had sought to know from their informants how they thought ethnic or religious conflicts could be managed; that the impression they got was that the people had a good knowledge of how to live together in peace among themselves in spite of their ethnic differences but that there was no serious institution put in place to galvanise their knowledge into concrete policies. They also said their informants believed that the conflicts were politically motivated by the elites.³²⁶ These elites have become strong political forces who seek to

³²⁶ See Otiti and Albert, 306.

pull together the largest coalitions –be they ethnic, religious or regional –which would guarantee them access to power. These political forces know that in the process of living together in a common environment, groups build up stereotypes against one another. They also know that the pieces of information the groups store up for themselves in regard to others are more often than not pieces of information gathered from what other groups say about them or from what other groups feel about themselves in regard to others. But rather than emphasise the benefits of Nigeria’s cultural diversities, they exploit the advantages of the conflict these diversities cause.

Clearly, *SA* should be seen as more than just a simple mirror of the Nigerian multi-ethnic society, because by reading the work, one experiences the dangers of ethnicity and sees the need for the ethnic groups to respect their cultural diversities. One would also see the need for the ethnic groups to copy whatever good values there are in their respective cultures. For example, if the Igbo are said to be industrious, instead of grudging them their industry, the Hausa-Fulani and the other ethnic groups should try instead to learn that Igbo industry that makes the Igbo to be seen as very enterprising and wealthy, instead of being envious of their material success. One would also see the need why the ethnic groups should respect the need for each one of them to preserve their identity; in other words, there is need to respect one another’s need

to stay different in whichever part of the country the individuals of the various ethnic groups find themselves, just as the people from across the river desired to stay different in Cross-river. As William Zartman writes:

[P]erceived collective need that is denied is the basic condition for conflict. Denied need can refer to a broad range of grievances, from relief from political repression to redress for economic deprivation. These needs can be codified as rights, but they are ultimately subjective; it is not possible to establish a hierarchy of needs [...]. Needs are flexible and are satisfied at different levels under different circumstances; needs satisfied at one time do not always remain so, and need satisfaction – like other satisfactions – is a function of expectation, which are themselves manipulable.³²⁷

Therefore it behoves the scholar articulating the conflict story to make the people of the different ethnic groups of Nigeria to understand that ethnic conflicts are outgrowths of the diversity that characterizes their thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and social systems and structures; that it is as much a part of their existence as is evolution.³²⁸

Once they are able to understand this, they would have conquered their fears of being dominated by any group; for the only cause that is beyond mere differences in culture, beyond material envy is fear of domination which is always an offshoot of assimilated information reproduced as negative knowledge; for example, the people from across the river, symbolic for the Igbo in the context of SA in regard to Nigeria,

³²⁷ William Zartman, "Sources of Settlements of Ethnic Conflict" in Andreas Wimmer, et al., (eds.), *Facing Ethnic Conflict: Toward a New Realism* (UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 141.

³²⁸ See Dudley Weeks, *The Eight Essential Steps To Conflict Resolution* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1994), 7.

being an advanced group in a backward region, are seen by the cross river people as highly motivated, diligent, intelligent and dynamic. And because they are seen as such, they believe themselves to be all those things; and if they are all this, it can only be assumed that the people of Cross river will see themselves as they are seen by others outside of their group, that is, as indolent, ignorant and failures.³²⁹

In *S A*, there is Cross-river, there is Aiyero and there is Aiyetomo, the state from which Aiyero broke off and there is Gborolu. From the knowledge of contemporary Nigerian history which the novel represents, Aiyetomo is Nigeria. Cross-river is Northern Nigeria. Aiyero is South-eastern Nigeria, while Gborolu is South-western Nigeria. Each of these regions is different by reasons of culture, language and location. Furthermore, each of these regions contains ethnic minorities; as such, ethnic conflict has been fore-grounded in the founding of the geographical entity called Nigeria. Measures have been taken by various regimes at restructuring governmental apparatuses as well as the territorial constitution of the country.

After independence, the first Nigerian republic, which was from 1960 to 1966, was made up of three regions, the Northern region, the Western region and the Eastern region. These three regions were dominated by the three major ethnic groups: the Igbo, Hausa and the

³²⁹ See also Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in conflict*, 233.

Yoruba. As such, in the opinion of Horowitz, "the dominance of the three major groups in their regions weakened the representation of minorities by opposition parties. Patronage, coercion, and the apportionment of seats worked together to over-represent the regional majorities."³³⁰

The first republic was terminated by a military coup of January 15, 1966, whose executors, being largely Igbo, were accused of being ethnically biased in the execution of the coup. At the failure of the coup, Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, another Igbo became the head of state. His unification policy was again misconstrued as a ploy by the Igbo, who already were over-represented in the professions, administration, trade and commerce, to dominate³³¹ Nigeria. The reason for the Igbo presence in almost all sphere of Nigerian life is already known.

The prevalent ethnic distrust³³² engendered a Northern counter coup which aimed at checking the presupposed Igbo domination of the country. Consequently, the North took over the affairs of state, and the aftermath of all this is the civil war that lasted three years from 1967.

Once in power, the Northern military head of state with his cohorts attempted to restructure the existing quasi-federal system. In 1967, they

³³⁰ Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 603.

³³¹ See B. Dudley, *Instability and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press, 1973), 132.

³³² See also P.C. Lloyd, "The Ethnic Background to the Nigerian Civil War" in S.K. Panter Brick (ed.), *Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to the Civil War* (London: Insitute of Commonwealth Studies, 1972), 1-13.

carved out twelve states from the three regions in order to counter the Biafran charge that Nigeria was dominated by the large Northern Region as well as secure the loyalty of Northern minorities strongly represented in the army, and wean the eastern minorities away from Biafra.³³³ In other words the state took upon itself the responsibility of resolving conflicts. And because politically power always somehow manages to remain with the north, state involvement becomes biased accordingly, repressing the political expression of other cultural identities. These cultural identities take recourse to ethnic clientelism, differentiation and polarization.³³⁴

From the first republic to the present fourth republic thirty-six states have been created in Nigeria and the regional strongholds have supposedly been destroyed³³⁵, yet ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts have persisted. Alternative systems to the quasi-federal system have been suggested. Systems like confederation and true federation and even a reversion to the old regionalism, which, in the main, was federal in structure and practice.

³³³ See Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 108.

³³⁴ See Pierre Englebert and Rebecca Hummel, "Let's Stick Together: Understanding Africa's Secessionist Deficit." *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society* Volume 104 Number 416 July (2005), 425.

³³⁵ See Titilayo Fasilat Adejumobi, "A Literary Understanding of Nigeria's Political Crisis: A Construction of Ills Past and Future" in *Development Policy Management Network Bulletin* Vol. V111, N.3, September (2001), 37-39.

4.2 Iska as Conflict Story: A Case Study

The ethnic conflict dynamics in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Iska* centre on value systems, ethnic relations, external factors and mass of accumulated negative or positive information.

Iska is a conflict story of Dan Kaybi and Filia. Filia is a civilised Easterner, who marries, against the wishes of her parents, Dan Kaybi, a westernised Northerner. Dan Kaybi's parents are Moslems, but their son does not believe in either tradition or religion. The Chairman of the local council sees Dan's father and wonders whether what he has heard is true, that is, that Dan wants to marry a stranger.(30-1) Dan Musa himself, on visiting his son in the hospital wants to confirm the rumour that is going around with him. Dan is annoyed at his father for asking him, upon his first visit in the hospital, whether it is true that he wants to marry a girl from the East, instead of enquiring about how he fared. Dan confirms the rumour by telling his father that the person he is referring to as that girl is his wife.

His father begins to wonder what madness it is that has got into the young men of today. He wonders if there are no more girls in the whole of the North that his son should go as far as marrying a girl from the East. He believes that what his wife said is true, that is, that the girl has cast a spell on their son. Dan maintains that he is under no spell, that he

sees nothing wrong in a young educated man marrying any girl of whatever "tribe" of his choice. His father believes he is not capable of seeing anything wrong with his choice. He tells his son that his choice is wrong, because he is born a Northerner. And that any Northerner worth his salt, that is, who studies the Koran and goes to the Mosque, who wears robes and sandal and despises western education, who does not value any other language except Hausa or Arabic, who does not associate recklessly with people from other ethnic groups, would see what is wrong in marrying any person that is not of the North. (30) Dan wants his father to understand that things are changing fast in the world and people have to change along with the time.

His father argues that one must not forsake his origin because things are changing; that the fact that things are changing will not make him cease to be a Northerner from Nupeland, a kingdom founded by the great Tosede, the great masters of the River Niger. Dan tells him that his choice of life does not mean a denial of his origin. (31)

The Patients in the same hospital ward with Dan believe that he is mad to want to marry a southerner, because he ought to know that the Southerners hate them. (31) Dan's father makes him understand the implication of his marrying a Southerner: He would not become a director anymore as was promised him by the chairman of the local

council. His son tells him strongly that Nigeria is one country whether people like him like it or not.

In another episode, Dan was asking Hankuri the chemist how his business fared. Hankuri says fine. Dan wonders how things could be fine with him and his Igbo-folks when actually they, as an ethnic group, are having it tough at the moment. He jokingly attributes his happiness to the fact that he does not smoke and the fact that he is marrying four wives. (39-40)

Hankuri makes him believe that his stoicism is based on his belief that people are only human and that there is no "tribe" which is all bad any more than there is one which is all good; that there is no man, who loves every one in his "tribe" and hates every one in the other. Dan lets him know that he is Hausa, but that he has an Ibo wife. Hankuri goes on and on to tell him how much he has integrated himself in the North, how he even changed his religion to become a Moslem, how he travelled to Mecca and married four wives upon return, how he believes that people tend to hate another "tribe" when that "tribe" goes to a new country and prospers conspicuously. He believes it creates resentment. Hankuri says that the Northern Nigerian is afraid the Igbo's material success is a threat and that the only way out of the pangs of ethnic conflict is total integration in the form of inter-ethnic marriages. (*ibid.*)

- Circle of Conflicts: Diagnosis. Values, Relationships, External factors, Data and Structures

The professional humanist or scholar of literature articulating the conflict stories will expose the fact that if Dan Kaybi chose to marry Filia from the south it must be because he believed that in the modern world, ethnic origin or religion should not prevent any man from marrying any woman of his choice. In other words, love should bring a man and a woman together not circumstances of belonging to a common ethnic group or proclaiming the same faith.

Musa Kaybi, Dan Kaybi's father, however, represents a different opinion. For him, a Northerner has to marry a Northerner; and a Moslem has to be faithful to the faith by marrying a Moslem as well; besides, his chances of moving up in his political career depend on his loyalty to his "tribe".

Theirs seems to be a clash between tradition and modernity. Apparently, *Iska* (1981) was set in Kano, which is a rallying point for almost all the northern states because of its historical importance. Being part of the Sokoto caliphate it became also significant as the centre for Islamic activities in the north; therefore Islamic values held sway. In the north, cultural and religious values are interwoven so much so that they determine the social practices there. Therefore, the nature of Kano itself in regard to cultural values has already foregrounded ethnic conflict.

For, upon migration to the north, full integration seemed impossible for the Christian Igbo in the state of the host, because of the unilateral preponderance of Islamic culture in Kano. Such unilateral preponderance of a particular culture is usually regarded in conflict resolution as unjust and cannot be treated as relations of coexistence.³³⁶

Abu-Nimer says:

[C]oexistence generally refers to an accommodation between members of different communities or separate countries who live together without one collectively trying to destroy or severely harm the other. This minimal level of coexistence is compatible with competition and even conflicts, if conducted through legitimate channels. It is also compatible with significant differences not only in values or cultural patterns, but also in economic standing and political power. It can be viewed as a minimal level of peace.³³⁷

However, in the Nigerian situation as portrayed by Ekwensi in his *Iska*, this minimal level of coexistence was somehow complicated by the peculiar nature of Nigeria and the ethnic groups, for there was no mutual tolerance and respect anymore than there was relative equality in economic positions and political power between the Igbo and the Hausa: The Igbo had the disadvantage of being in an environment in which Islamic culture was being unilaterally imposed, while the Hausa had the disadvantage of being economically inferior. But again, they had political power, which had its advantages. Furthermore, Abu-Nimer insists:

³³⁶ See Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Reconciliation, Justice and Coexistence: Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 47.

³³⁷ Abu-Nimer, 47.

[...]. Great differences in economic conditions and power are likely to mean that one party dominates another and that the accommodation is not symmetrical [...]. The character of the coexistence between peoples matter. One or more parties may judge a form of coexistence as a violation of their sense of equity or fairness. What is just and what is unjust depends upon the standard of judgement parties use, and all sides in a social relationship often do not share those standards.³³⁸

Great differences in economic condition meant that the Hausa-Fulani felt in *Iska* that the Igbo intended to dominate and possibly enslave them. Therefore, by refusing to integrate into the preponderant Islamic culture of the north and by being economically superior, the Christian Igbo from the south attracted the envy and hate of the Islamic Hausa-Fulani of the north. The consequence of that soured relationship was persecution of and subsequent genocide against the Igbo.³³⁹

Furthermore, a literary scholar articulating the conflict story inherent in *Iska* cannot but notice that the patients (31) in the hospital with Dan represent public opinion in the North which is of the view that the people from the south hate people from the North. As such marriage with them would only amount to an unholy union. Evidently, the majority of people, who stick to a particular way of life, do so because it is the tradition, not because they believe that particular way of life to be right, but because it is a way of life that has been before them, the

³³⁸ Abu-Nimer, 47.

³³⁹ See page 10 of the petition by the apex organisation of the entire Igbo people of Nigeria in October 1999; see also Alexander Madiebo, *Nigerian Revolution and Biafran War*, 1980, 84.

violation of which they would rather not have imputed to them. The people from the north must have formed that notion of being hated by the people from the south because of the hostility that exists among them. The reason for the hostility should therefore be identified and treated instead of being avoided.

Avoiding a person or group or even a situation brings about a delusion that the conflict situation is non-existent; however, by avoiding themselves, the groups would have missed the opportunity that conflict situations offer people or individuals to understand themselves, to live together tolerating and accommodating one another's strengths and weaknesses. Avoidance, according to Wilmot and Hocker:

[A]llows conflicts to simmer and heat up unnecessarily rather than providing an avenue for improving it. It keeps one from working through a conflict and reinforces the notion that conflict is terrible and best avoided. It allows partners to each follow their own course and pretend there is no mutual influence, when, in fact, each influences the other. It usually preserves the conflict and sets the stage for a later explosion and backlash.³⁴⁰

This was the case in Ekwensi's *Iska*, where a conflict situation had been allowed to simmer until it blew up when the Igbo buyer offered more money for a commodity, the price of which an Hausa buy was still bargaining to bring down. (22-3) In Emecheta's *D B*, the conflict was allowed to degenerate into civil war, while it came down to ethnic cleansing in Soyinka's *S A*.

³⁴⁰ See W.W. Wilmot and J.L. Hocker, *Interpersonal Conflict* (Boston: Massachusetts: McGraw Hill, 1998), 116.

Apparently the ethnic groups in conflict in each one of the books held too strongly to their positions or opinions or perceptions, misperceptions and prejudices, so much that it made it absolutely difficult for them to satisfy one another's interests and needs. The consequence was bloody for each one of them. The message that underlies the works is the need for the ethnic groups to come together to find ways of resolving their differences and guaranteeing peace. However, it is understandable why they could not come together: They deliberately avoided themselves and pretended that all was well. As Olawale Isaac Albert and Otite Onigu have argued:

[T]he proliferation of community and governance conflicts in Nigeria stems from the fact that Nigerians generally favour avoidance as a style of conflict management. At community and national levels, groups that feel aggrieved about certain issues complain very loudly about their predicaments but hardly get listened to by their adversaries or those that have the statutory responsibility to give them attention. The ignored groups soon take to violence and immediately get recognised by everybody.³⁴¹

In *Iska* the anger and negative information piled up by the Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani against one another was let off on the day a fight broke out between the Igbo and the Hausa buyer at the market. The Hausa-Fulani might have been aggrieved for long about the Igbo shrewdness in business, while the Igbo must have loathed the Hausa-Fulani's aristocratic indolence. These parties must have held strongly for long to their views about one another.

³⁴¹ Otite & Albert [ed.], *Community Conflicts in Nigeria*, 37.

Musa Kaybi, Dan's father is a typical case of one holding strongly to a position or a view. His views represent extreme views in any society. His son's insistence on marrying outside of their ethnic group and religion provides clarification for the father as well as the society. It goes also a long way to show that ethnic relation is an extension of family relation, however imperfect, and as such some of the hostility manifested in interethnic relations can be an extension of hostility expressed in interfamilial relations.³⁴²

Just as Dan battles to throw some light into what he believes to be his father's dark side, which borders on intolerance, Filia, on her part, rebels against her own mother's choice of husband for her. Filia's mother believes that Nafotim, the businessman cum politician is able to provide her daughter the security she needs in terms of material well-being and the supposed understanding that accompanies endogamy, that is, marriage within one's ethnic group.

Although the relationship between the Igbo and the Hausa was of utmost concern to the author, his novel, *Iska*, was all the same a conscious exposition of the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations among the ethnic groups of Nigeria.

The episode in which Filia's mother tells Filia about an incident in the market between the Hausa and the Igbo (22-3) is an occasion of a

³⁴² See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 62.

conscious exposition of the degree of hostility between the rival ethnic groups as well as the implied causes of the outbreak of those hostilities.

The incident of the Hausa man buying some potatoes at one shilling and the Igbo man adding three-pence on it to out-bargain the Hausa man led to a fight that involved the Igbo and the Hausa. (*ibid.*) The fact that the writer chose such an incident meant that his consciousness would have been directed towards the reason for such hostilities against perceived strangers: the Igbo who are predominantly Christians resisted assimilating the cultural practices of their northern hosts, who are overwhelmingly Moslems and whose cultural practices are infiltrated with Islamic culture. As a result of this, the Igbo are seen as complete strangers and infidels even when Nigeria is a secular state. For Ismene Zarifis, "Nigerian constitution upholds the ideals of a secular state by prohibiting the adoption of an official religion under Article 10, and guaranteeing the freedom of religion in Article 38 [...]." ³⁴³

The economic superiority of the Igbo in the host's territory complicates the already strained relationship. The Igbo man who paid more to have the potatoes must have felt he was richer than the Hausa man who was still bargaining to see if he could buy the potatoes for one shilling. It was absolutely natural for the Hausa man to feel humiliated because he could not buy the potatoes he loved: the Igbo man offered

³⁴³ Ismene Zarifis „Rights of Religious Minorities in Nigeria“ *Human Right Brief*, Volume 10 Issue 1, (2002), 22.

more than he did to have them. Therefore, arrogance of wealth or economic disparity, just like arrogance of power, has the capacity of arousing ill-feeling and resentment³⁴⁴ among the ethnic groups in the polity. Their conflict, apparently, found its root in their differentially distributed needs³⁴⁵: the Hausa are economically poor and may therefore covet the Igbo wealth; the Igbo are politically poor and may therefore covet the Hausa political power. The interplay between the two could get sustenance from many other material, psychological, and existential factors.

In the course of the fight between the two, the Hausa colleagues that came -instead of trying to find out what was wrong -joined their brother to fight the Igbo man, just like the Igbo colleagues that came joined, without questioning, their brother to fight the Hausa men. This singular act by the parties involved shows that there has always existed among them this strong feeling of animosity that is seeking a favourable time and event to live itself out.

While the works under study may have common external factors, each of the writers chose a particular factor or particular factors as points of reference. While cocoa and land (symbolic for crude oil) were the external factors Soyinka chose as some of the sources of conflict,

³⁴⁴ Eghosa E. Osaghae and Rotimi T. Suberu, "A History of Identities, Violence, and Stability in Nigeria." Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, Crise Working Paper No. 6, January (2005), 17.

³⁴⁵ See Stratmann, in Wimmer (eds.), 2004, 142.

Ekwensi, among other things, chose money or economic disparity as one of the external sources of conflict. In a capitalist society like Nigeria, being rich could also be tantamount to getting whatever one wants, even if it means having to do a way with a sense of morality.

In Ekwensi's *Iska*, Iloma Enu believed it was not fair for the Igbo buyer to top money on the price already given by the seller of the potatoes to the Hausa buyer. But, once the seller is ever willing to sell his or her ware to the highest bidder, without any sense of ethical responsibility, the willing buyer will always buy the ware at whatever price as long as he or she finds utility in what he or she buys regardless of how hurt the loser in the capital market feels. Yet again, it is this sense of loss and pain at the mockery seemingly made of his poverty that could make the Hausa buyer take recourse at his repository of negative information piled up against the Igbo in his structure of feelings.

A lot of other psychological factors would have aided the external factor, that is, wealth or economic disparity and natural resources, in the case of Ekwensi's *Iska* as is argued by Horowitz on his thesis on the advanced-group-and-backward group psychology, whereby the advanced groups see themselves and are seen as hardworking, intelligent and progressive and see the backward groups as lazy and failures and lacking in dynamism.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁶ See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 233.

The mass of stored information which is the premise upon which each group bases its opinion of the other groups is expressed by the characters in *Iska* in the persons of Musa Kaybi, Dan Musa's father, the patients in the ward of the hospital, where Dan Musa was hospitalised at the time he had sustained injury as a result of his intervening between the Igbo and the Hausa groups that were fighting among themselves.

Musa Kaybi had wanted his son to know that he was born a Northerner. And that if he studied the Koran and visited the Mosque, he would see the reason he would not marry a girl from the South nor associate with other tribes. (30-1) In other words, an average Northern Moslem sees mingling with other tribes as an act of sacrilege. That is the reason the Clerk in Soyinka's *S A* sees the people from across the river, that is, the southerner, who are not Moslems, as *Kafir*s, unbelievers. (*SA*, 125) If one sees another person as unbeliever, invariably, the person is seeing himself or herself as a chosen one of God. That is possibly the reason one sees on the number plates of cars from a particular Northern state in Nigeria: "Born to rule."

When one of the patients in the same hospital with Dan Kaybi wonders whether Dan actually knows that the Southerners hate the Northerners, one begins to wonder as well how the patient came to the knowledge that the Southerners hate the Northerners. And if the chances of Musa Kaybi, Dan's father, of becoming a director depended

on his maintaining the status-quo, that is, ensuring that there was no intermingling among the various ethnic groups, it could then be concluded that the kind of information let out to the public in the North could be such that could only make them feel hated by the southern people, because the information could always be politically motivated. Again it could be said that the model of conflict engineered by people like Musa Kaybi is such that is based on a system of reward.³⁴⁷

The social circumstances in *Iska* as well as their implications are very explicit in regard to the rigid structural and institutional imbalance in Nigeria so much so that it is virtually impossible for a Southerner living in the North to see himself as a *bona-fide* member of the Northern society and vice-versa.³⁴⁸

Hankuri Chemist had described the North as a Moslem country. Therefore, he expected every Easterner coming to the North to try to learn some Hausa or Arabic. Not only that, he expected them to intermarry with the Northerners, just as he also expected them to become Moslems in order to be fully integrated in the Northern society. He believes himself to be so far a Northern Nigerian even though he comes originally from Eastern Nigeria

While Dan believes learning Hausa or Arabic, becoming a Moslem and intermarrying are all one way of solving the problem, he doubts

³⁴⁷ See Charles Jarmon, 1988, 55.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

whether everyone who leaves his village can sacrifice everything like that just to be accepted. (*Iska*, 39-40)

While regionalism was capable of fostering development at individual pace, it created a sense of being a stranger in a different country in another region of the same country. However, this sense of being a stranger in a particular region of one's country persists because the immanent diversity and cultural differences have not been appreciated positively.

At the present, there are no regions anymore in Nigeria: instead, there are states, which have broken regional loyalty based on common ethnicity; however, the quest for political power by the ethnic groups has necessitated geopolitical rearrangements based again on ethnicity and common interests, hence the South-south, South-east, South-west, North-east, North-west and the North-central.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ Osaghae and Suberu, January (2005), 20-22.

4.3 Destination Biafra as Conflict story: A Case Study

The setting of *DB* (1994) traversed three periods in Nigerian history: the period before independence, the period shortly after independence and the period of the civil war to its end. In 1964, the period shortly after independence, Nigeria had a chance to try parliamentary democracy. It was a period during which Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, leader of the party, NPC, said to have won the majority vote in the parliamentary election, became the Prime Minister; Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, leader of the NCNC, the supposed second-runner-up, became the President, while Chief Obafemi Awolowo, leader of the AG, the supposed third-runner-up, assumed the role of opposition with his party.

The writer Buchi Emecheta chose, therefore, fictional characters to represent the historical personalities and events that characterised the nature of the Nigerian state. (*DB*, ix)The novel preoccupied itself with the nature of the ethnic conflicts, which contributed greatly to the Nigerian civil war.

The deep-rooted ethnicity and corruption of that era necessitated a military coup planned and executed by some patriotic Igbo military officers. Brigadier Onyemere became the Head of State after the coup in which so many Northern leaders lost their lives, including the Sarduana of Sokoto, the spiritual leader of the Hausa-Fulani and the prime

Minister, Alhaji Sir Abubarka Tafawa Balewa. Onyemere tried to unify the country in order to disabuse the minds of disgruntled elements in the military that are already imputing an Igbo conspiracy against the coup plotters of any thought of Igbo conspiracy. (65)

The Northern soldiers executed a counter coup, and killed Onyemere and Momoh became Head of State, a position Abosi refused to recognise. The disagreement between the two degenerated. Following the massacre of the Igbo in the North and the refusal by Momoh to heed the Aburi conference recommendations, war broke out between Nigeria and the new Biafran Republic, created by Abosi to give refuge to the Igbo, who were fleeing from persecutions in Nigeria. (94)

The role of colonial administrators in fuelling ethnic conflict in Nigeria was also captured. Macdonald, one of the colonial administrators of Nigeria believed the Nigerian situation at the time prior to independence to be delicate. He also believed that they, that is, the British, had more at stake and as such could not afford to handle the situation of independence for Nigeria badly in order not to pay for it for a very long time to come. Macdonald, therefore, told Alan Grey that the Sarduana had said he was not going to leave his palace to come and live with the "Kaferis" - non-believers - in the south if he was elected prime minister. (66) The Sarduana would rather live in his palace there in the

North. Macdonald wondered what they would do. They were not going to force the Sarduna to come and rule his own country.

Alan Grey maintained that the Sarduana never really wanted Nigeria to be an independent nation and that was one of the reasons the North was the last to get regional independence. He insisted that the Sarduana probably needed someone to tell him that if he refused to rule, he would only be selling his people to the southern politician. He insisted that the situation was not as simple as that. He maintained that it would be easy if they had only the Hausas to cope with. But there were the other tribes – the Yoruba, who had been dealing with them, the British, for decades and there were the Igbo, whom he described as ambition personified. (8)

Sir Fergus said of the Igbo as being extremely intelligent. He believed that they were greedy as well, and that their arrogance could lead them into trouble. Furthermore, he believed that they had to be careful how the country was divided constitutionally, because greater portion of the oil areas were in their region. (8)

Chief Oluremi Odumosu had hoped of a day that they all would have the Nigeria of their dream, where they would be free and be ruled by their own people of the South-west and not by those gworo-eating wanderers from the North [...]. (23-4)

Alhaji Manliki a close associate of the great Dr Ozimba believed that if he had been consulted by the unbelieving southern soldiers before the coup at least he would have advised them to leave Sarduana out of it, for he was an anointed son of the North, whose killing would be avenged with a lot of bloodshed. As if that was not enough, the Igbo still made fun of them, claiming the death of their great one for a victory. (66-7)

After the counter coup by the Northern soldiers, they rounded up many Igbo soldiers for humiliation: They were asked to eat their excrement. Ejiofor was one of the Igbo soldier asked to eat his excrement. Upon refusal, his shoulder-blade was torn with gunshots. When he asked the soldier, who had shot him what he did to deserve such humiliation, the soldier laughed and said it was because they wanted to rule the country by rushing into the army and the government, and into all the lucrative positions in the country. And as if doing that was not enough, they also killed all the politicians from the other ethnic groups and then allowed their tribesman, Brigadier Onyemere, to appoint himself the head of state. (78)

- Circle of Conflicts: Diagnosis. Values, Relationships, External factors, Data and Structures

It is obvious in Emecheta's *DB* that it is the clash of values that resulted in the two military coups that redefined the terms of ethnic relations in Nigeria. Agitations for self-rule by the West and Eastern Nigeria led to the British granting the two regions right to self government in 1957.³⁵⁰ The North felt Nigerians were not yet capable to rule one another. To the west and eastern peoples of Nigeria, only mental indolence and physical unpreparedness of the Northerners could make them want colonisation to continue. Incidentally, some of these values were fuelled and sustained by the opinions held by the colonial masters about the ontological make-up of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria: Alan Grey, a colonial administrator believed it would have been much easier for the British if they only had the Northerners to contend with. Their ill-luck, therefore, was having the intelligent and greedy Igbo and the enlightened Yoruba to also contend with. (8) Sir Fergus himself was of the Opinion that the Igbo arrogance would soon land him into very big trouble. This was a case of construction of ethnic identity. The prejudice resulting from it was going to be instrumentalised by the political elites of the various ethnic groups.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ See Osita Agu, "Reinventing Federalism in Post-Transition Nigeria: Problems and Prospects", *African Development* Vol. Xxix, No2, (2004), 31.

³⁵¹ See Meyers, 2007, 3; see also Gurr, 2000, 5.

By implication, what Grey and Fergus were trying to say was that the Hausa were not as intelligent as the Igbo or Yoruba. Therefore they would be able to live with the British as inferior beings; in other words, the British could contend with them. Therefore, the Igbo and the Yoruba would likely think the Hausa-Fulani to be mentally handicapped.

The first military coup of January 15 1966 by Kaduna Nzeogwu and his group, who were overwhelmingly Igbo military officers, was based on their value judgement that the Aegean stable called Nigeria needed to be sanitised.³⁵² Therefore Henry Bienen writes:

[T] his coup was perceived widely as Ibo sponsored coup, although its originators were largely officers who were not ethnically motivated but who were interested in freeing Nigeria from what they understood to be the thrall of ethnic strife and corruption.³⁵³

An instance of the imputation by the coupists on the leaders at the time of encouraging ethnicity is traceable to the statement made by the then prime minister, who was both a Northerner and a Moslem: He talked openly of the possibility of continuing the uninterrupted Islamic conquest of the sea.³⁵⁴ Incidentally, the spread of Islam never succeeded in the South-east and South-south Nigeria, which are the homes of the Igbo people of Nigeria. Furthermore, the Sarduna of Sokoto, and the

³⁵² See Arthur Agwuncha Nwankwo and Samuel Udochukwu Ifejika, *Biafra: The Making of A Nation* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 3.

³⁵³ See also Henry S. Bienen, *Political Conflict and Economic Change in Nigeria* (London: Routledge, 1985), 10.

³⁵⁴ See Tafewa Balewa, quoted in Richard L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 98.

then Premier of the Northern region, Ahmadu Bello, was deeply tribalistic. He had once said that the Northernization policy did not only apply to clerks, administrative officers, doctors and others, but it also applied to all strangers. Therefore, they did not want to meet strangers catching fish in their waters and taking them away, leaving them (Northerners) with nothing. They did not want to go to Sokoto and find a carpenter who was a stranger nailing their houses; he said that he did not want to go to Sabon-gari Kano and find strangers making the body of a lorry, nor did he want to go to the market and see butchers who were not Northerners.³⁵⁵ Statements as these will make one understand why many prominent personalities from the North in the persons of Sarduna of Sokoto, the spiritual head of the Islamic North, as well as the incumbent prime minister, Tafewa Balewa, were all murdered at the time of the coup in January 1966. Nevertheless, the North believed there was an Igbo conspiracy to dominate Nigeria.³⁵⁶

Therefore, no matter how well intentioned Brigadier Onyemere, the character that represents Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, wants to be, meanings would be read from all his actions and inactions.³⁵⁷ Naturally all his unification policies, especially the civil service unification policy,

³⁵⁵ See the House of Chiefs Debate, 19 March, p.55(mimeo), quoted in Isaac O. Albert, "The Sociocultural Politics of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts", in Ernest E. Uwazie, Isaac O. Albert and Godfrey N. Uzoigwe (eds), *Inter-ethnic and Religious Conflict Resolution in Nigeria* (Lexington Books, Lanham, MD/Boulder, Co/New York/Oxford, 1999), 73.

³⁵⁶ Jarmon, 1988, 59.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

which was to usher in merit in the recruitment of staff, was seen as a ploy to flood the Northern civil service with the better qualified and better educated south-easterners. This mind-set takes one back to the earlier discourse on advanced and backward groups expounded by Danold Horowitz.³⁵⁸

Already, the average Northerner had been made to believe that the Igbo are everywhere exploiting³⁵⁹ other people: that is, the Igbo are greedy. They love money. They could do anything for money. These are the usual prejudicial statements. To the average Northerner, the Igbo want to dominate the country; if they did not want to do that, why would they rush into the army, the government and the professions.³⁶⁰ Something had to be done to keep them, therefore, in check. (78)

However, the educated southerner did not come of his own accord to the North to take up positions as government salaried workers: the educationally unpreparedness of the Northerner or the Muslim Hausa-Fulani made it inevitable to bring labour-force from the South to fill relevant positions.³⁶¹ It seems therefore as if the average Nigerian, especially the Northern Nigerian, forgets that the Southerners, especially the Igbo, are where they are today probably because they

³⁵⁸ See again Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 233.

³⁵⁹ Dudley, 1972, 132.

³⁶⁰ See also Osaghae and Suberu, 17.

³⁶¹ See Ayo Olukotun, "Traditional Protest Media and Anti-military Struggle in Nigeria 1988-99," *Journal of the Royal African Society* Volume 101 Number 404 July (2002), 247.

value achievement and that the qualities that encourage achievement, qualities like honesty, hardwork, discipline, wealth as well as loyalty to community, are emphasised in the early upbringing of their children.³⁶² Therefore, such qualities, which, of course, are not the exclusive preserve of the Igbo should be encouraged in the generality of the Nigerian body politic instead of trying to hold any progressive section of the country down with cheap policies that encourage ethnicity. For example, the Igbo have argued that they have been excluded from occupying certain "sensitive"³⁶³ offices since the end of the civil war, even when they contribute more than other groups to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. As Olanrewaju Akinpeju Olutayo observed:

[W]ith little or no government assistance, the Igbo have moved from trade to industry since the end of the war. Most of these new Industrialists possessed elementary education, apprenticeship, and trading experiences before they undertook their industrial venture.³⁶⁴

It is possible that the Igbo value or outlook has been misconstrued by their neighbours and as such evaluated wrongly. It is also possible that the Islamic orientation of the cultural system of the Hausa-Fulani is such

³⁶² See also M. M Green, *Ibo Village Affair* (London: Sidwick & Jackson, 1947), 88.

³⁶³ See the petition to the Human Right Violation Investigating Committee by the apex organisation of the entire Igbo people of Nigeria (Ohaneze), October (1999).

³⁶⁴ Olanrewaju Akinpelu Olutayo, "The Igbo Entrepreneur in the Political Economy of Nigeria", *African Study Monographs* 20(3): 147-174, September 1999.

that advocates subservience to one's superiors.³⁶⁵ These superiors are mostly aristocrats or religious leaders. The ordinary Hausa-Fulani person possibly accepts his status as ordained by providence and therefore depends on his or her superiors. On the other hand Okwudiba Nnoli insists:

[...]. [I] gbo society looked down on people who accepted superiors, depend[sic], or relied on them for their progress. Subservience and unquestioning obedience signified weakness and lack of masculinity. It placed a premium, instead, on occupational skill, enterprise and initiative. The man who was respected, powerful and influential was the one who was self-motivated to work hard and successfully compete with, and challenge the power and wealth of his superiors. His success was basically self-made rather than attained through climbing the socio-economic and political apron-strings of his superiors.³⁶⁶

Emecheta, like Ekwensi, was virtually dealing with the nature of the relationship of the ethnic groups in Nigeria, particularly between the Igbo and the Hausa: A relationship marked with prejudices, stereotypes, misperceptions and religious intolerance. In each one of these cases, the values, interests, economic states and power equations, always determine the nature of the relationship.

Furthermore, if the average Northerner believes that the Igbo is everywhere (78) and they decide to remove the Igbo, like they did through a counter coup in July 1966, and introduce another policy, how would they want the Igbo to feel about them? Already policies abound

³⁶⁵ See Ojiji, 163.

³⁶⁶ Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, 132.

in Nigeria which tends to be discriminatory and harmful to development.³⁶⁷ This has been discussed fully in the previous conflict stories. Some see the body responsible for admission into the Universities as an instrument of check on the educational adventures and advancement of the Southern peoples of Nigeria. Another policy of check, which is purported to promote the principles of federal character, but which tends to stagnate other groups, is the Northernisation policy. The North hopes to advance itself through this means. However, Whitaker writes:

[N] of all broad preferential programs originate in constitutions, and not all constitutional provisions authorise broad programs. In the first Nigerian Republic, the former Northern Regional Government adopted a policy of "Northernization" that affected the tender of contracts and employment in the public service. The results were dramatic. In 1959, only one senior civil servant in eight in the region was a Northerner; by 1965, Northerners outnumbered expatriates and Southerners together.³⁶⁸

Moreover, as Johannes Harnischfeger had argued:

[T]he policy of discrimination against non-indigenes started in the Northern region, at the end of colonial rule, when the three regions into which Nigeria had been divided were given internal self-government. Northerners resented the appointment of Nigerians from the south to most of the administrative positions. The majority of these civil servants were Christian Igbo and Yoruba, who were, by and large better educated [...] with the Northernization policy, initiated in 1954, most of them were retrenched from the regional service, but they often stayed in their new home where they established themselves as traders and artisans. Their success in the private sector, however, also caused

³⁶⁷ See, for example, Peter M. Lewis, "The Dysfunctional State of Nigeria", in Nancy Birdsall et al. (eds.) *Short of The Goal* (Washington: Centre for Global Development, 2006), 95.

³⁶⁸ C.S. Whitaker, Jr., *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946-1966* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) 390; paraphrased in Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 654-5.

resentment, so the Premier of the Northern Region, Ahmadu Bello promised to push them out.³⁶⁹

Even Donald Horowitz emphasised that at the national level, regional quotas were also used for recruitment to the officer corps of the army and for scholarships for higher education. He believed that the Biafra war, about which Emecheta occupied herself in her novel, *Destination Biafra*, altered the way Nigerians thought about such things as quota system. In general quota system strengthened the forces opposed to parochial discrimination. However, before the return to civilian rule, the military regime set aside state policies that permitted preferential terms of employment for indigenes of a state.³⁷⁰ Furthermore Horowitz writes:

[N] evertheless, the constitution of the second republic contained provisions, stating in general terms that public-sector appointments should “reflect the federal character of the country” and insure that “there shall be no preponderance of persons from a few States or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups” in central government agencies.³⁷¹

It is also common knowledge that on the basis of the constitution of the second republic there are demands to review the existing imbalance in the composition of the Nigerian civil service, in which the North is

³⁶⁹ Johannes Harnischfeger, “Sharia and Control Over Territory: Conflicts between ‘Settlers’ and ‘Indigenes’ in Nigeria.” *African Affairs: The Journal of the Royal African Society* Volume 103 Number 412 July (2004), 443.

³⁷⁰ See Horowitz, 655.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*: within the citation he also cited the constitution of the federal republic.

overwhelmingly represented more than other groups in spite of the fact that they are the least qualified.³⁷²

While the colonialists saw the need to grant independence to Africa, they did also see the need to make sure that the colonies never ceased to be sources of raw materials for the enrichment of the imperial centres. In the case of Nigeria it was not only coal, rubber, iron ore and various other raw materials that were of great interest to the colonialists, but also crude oil, the discovery of which became the bane of the Nigerian nation. This important discovery was of great concern to the British in regard to granting independence to Nigeria as well as dividing the country constitutionally. There had to be a demographic imbalance for their plan of being neo-colonially relevant to materialise. This constitutionally accepted demographic imbalance was to ensure that the North, which they 'could' deal with, as a result of all the imputed "shortcomings" peculiar to backward groups, remained in power, that is, if majority votes won would always be a criterion for ruling the country.³⁷³ There are calls from all quarters on the need for Nigeria to do another census to really determine the actual population of the country. The people of southern Nigeria have already shown great ambition in trying to justify their existence. In other words, they seemed unlikely to

³⁷² Jarmon, 1988, 56.

³⁷³ See Arthur Nwankwo and Samuel U. Ifejika, *The Making of a Nation: Biafra* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1969), 2.

admit the imputation on their inferiority by the colonial masters. Now, at Independence, just as sir Fergus had suggested, the British were very careful how they divided the country because, having their values and interests uppermost in mind, they made sure power remained in the North. As we already know, they could contend with the Northerners, a belief based on value judgement. From then on, according to Gboyega, “electoral victories are only expected to confirm the North’s predetermined right to rule, and if they do not, they are treated as illegitimate and subject to reversal.”³⁷⁴

Furthermore, the disparity in the level of educational attainments became also another serious source of ethnic conflict in Nigeria. The overwhelming presence of south-easterner in the army, government and all the lucrative positions in the country (as mentioned by the soldier, who had shot Ejiofor in the shoulders in Emecheta’s *DB*) which was as a result of their educational qualification and skill, was rather seen by the average Northerner as a proof of southern domination of the whole country. However, just as the North cried foul when only better qualified people, mainly from the south, occupied all relevant positions in government and corporate bodies, the south now cry foul because merit has been discarded in the pursuit of equal representation, and

³⁷⁴ Alex Gboyega, “Nigeria: Conflicts Unresolved” in I. William Zartmann [ed.], *Governance as Conflict Management: Politics and Violence in West Africa* (New York: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 150.

political power seemed to have permanently remained the exclusive preserve of the North as if federal character or quota should affect other things but political power.

Misinformation, prejudice, misperception or even a mass of received negative information, as evident from Soyinka's *S A* as case study of conflict stories to Ekwensi's *Iska*, contribute greatly to the escalation of ethnic conflict in Nigeria: what would it mean, for example, for a leader in the character of Chief Oluremi Odumosu of the south-west to refer to the Northerners as *gwor-eating* (a derogatory term for a lazy imbecile, who does not care the least about things happening around him or her once he or she has some teeth-staining kola-nuts in his or her mouth)?

Invariably it could be said that in the part of the country Chief Oluremi Odumosu comes from, it is common knowledge, a knowledge which the elite group help to spread for obvious political reasons, that the average Hausa or Northerner is lacking in intellect, is lazy and unstable, lacks initiative; he or she is, in fact, a *gwor-eater* from the North. Also for the Igbo, the Hausa is lacking in intellect.

Therefore, when the soldier tells Ejiofor, whom he had shot in the shoulder that the Igbo want to rule the country by rushing into the army, the government, and into all the lucrative positions in the country, he was only relaying a mass of accumulated negative information about the Igbo greed, ambition and so-called intelligence.

And when their counter coup succeeds and they begin to rule the country, which they have always accused the Igbo of wanting to rule, the Igbo may begin to accuse them for arrogance of power, for lacking in initiative and intelligence and for being illiterate. In fact *gwor-eaters* from the North!

The phenomena of prejudice, fear, anxiety, avoidance, discrimination and even physical attacks and extermination are offshoots of psychological conditions engendered by particular states of affairs. A prejudiced person like Chief Oluremi Odumosu or persons are bound to make negative remarks about a person or a group that he dislikes or they dislike. *D B* presents itself as a means of national orientation and development, in that it embodies maps or carriers of different models of conflict resolution strategies, for its structures and representations approximate reality in a simpler and clearer way.³⁷⁵

Structurally, as it has been identified in the diagnosis of *Season of Anomy* as conflict story, the first Nigerian republic was a parliamentary system, that is, it had a head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, whose functions were largely ceremonial and a prime minister, who was the head of the government. Furthermore, Nigeria had, at the time, three federating regional units: the Northern Region, The Western Region and the Eastern Region, all with its own premier.

³⁷⁵ Furlong, 2005, 8.

As such political power was decentralised. Each region administered itself independently, sharing, however, certain responsibilities with the federal government in its concurrent lists. Yet again, there were areas where the federal might prevailed, that is, in the executing of the executive responsibilities of the federal government. And because so many factors contributed to the emergence of a Northern Prime Minister, factors like colonial interests and demographic imbalance, conflicts, that is, ethnic conflicts were already fore-grounded. Apparently, the southerners especially the Igbo and the Yoruba, being educationally highly qualified, occupied all requisite positions in the government and its parastatals: a situation that would later be reversed by the government presided over by a Northerner, hence the introduction of the Northernisation policy. The consequences of these are corruption, ethnicity and nepotism, which the patriotic military officers, led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, intended to address with a change of government, which was later to fall to the lots of General Ironsi, who originally did not support the coup³⁷⁶, but who was called upon as the most senior officer to lead the government after the bloody coup had failed. Himself being Igbo, like the other coup plotters, the coup was seen by the North as an Igbo conspiracy to dominate the country.

³⁷⁶ See Nwankwo and Ifejika, 1970, 4.

Ironsi's government in wanting to restore integrity to governance abolished the federal structure of government that involved the regional federating units. In the place of a federal government was a unitary government, where ultimate power emanated from the centre. The implication of the unification policy was the unification of the federal services, so that merit became once again the only criterion of getting into a government or corporate employment thereby exposing the Northern services to the influx of better qualified southerners. This would mean again to the average Northerner another ploy to keep them under subjugation.³⁷⁷ This policy aroused displeasure in the heart of the Northerners, who planned and executed a counter coup in July of the same year, 1966, in which Ironsi and so many other Igbo and Yoruba military officers and civilians lost their lives.³⁷⁸ Before then, the Igbo had to be demonised in the North as greedy, self-seeking, over-ambitious and dangerous; as such they had to be eliminated.³⁷⁹ Apparently, according to Martha L. Cottam, "Social stereotypes, group conflict, and social comparison processes are important factors in understanding ethnic conflict in Nigeria [...]."³⁸⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu while not in support of the coup, had to accept it as the reality of the time. However, to ensure that this circle of

³⁷⁷ Osaghae and Suberu, 18.

³⁷⁸ See again Nwankwo and Ifejika, 1970, 4

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ Martha L. Cottam, *Introduction to Political Psychology* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 173.

revenge was broken, he insisted that the person to be the next head of state must be the highest ranking military officer.

However, lieutenant colonel Momoh or Gowon, who was rather more interested in protecting the interest of the Northern Establishment, refused to heed what Lieutenant colonel Abosi or Ojukwu was suggesting. Momoh went ahead to become the head of state. Abosi refused to acknowledge him as his head of state. The Igbo having been demonised as greedy and wanting to dominate the country, they became targets of attack in the North. The Igbo, feeling unsafe in the North, where there was an organised genocide against them, moved en masse home, bringing along with them their dead. Abosi was forced to declare the republic of Biafra since the South-easterners no longer felt safe and protected under the federal republic of Nigeria under Momoh.

Therefore, the ethnic conflict typical of multi-ethnic societies was responsible for the civil war. There is no proof, however, that all the ethnic prejudices, stereotypes, communalism and suspicion have all been overcome in a post-war Nigeria.

Nevertheless the need for Nigerians to coexist peacefully cannot be overemphasised. However, this peaceful coexistence should not be an imposed order like the Nigerian state tries to always do but a strong desire for a harmonious coexistence devoid of physical or structural violence: Physical violence like the people from across the river

experienced in cross river as expressed in *Season of Anomy*; or structural violence like the Igbo have been accused in *Destination Biafra* of being every where and needed therefore to be curtailed.

An imposed peace is a negative peace, while peace achieved through structural violence may be termed to an extent positive peace. Louis Kriesberg insists, "Negative peace refers to the absence of war; it may connote order and security, but it may also connote suppression of struggles to redress injustice."³⁸¹ Furthermore he believes "positive peace refers to at least a minimal level of equity in the life conditions of the people in the social system."³⁸² All the same, Nigeria requires neither negative nor positive peace; it requires instead justice and equity in the real sense of the words. Her leaders should be able to give the people a sense of belonging instead of creating, like Zaki Amuri in *S A*, divisions based on ethnic affiliations.

Finally, in the process of trying to involve Nigerian literature in ethnic conflict resolution, the communications and utterances of the characters in the works as well as the narrator's comments were clarified. The implications of the perceptions and misperceptions as well as their expressions of prejudices, which are all causes of ethnic conflicts, were exposed. Awareness on the inevitability of conflict in the

³⁸¹ Louis Kriesberg, "Changing Forms of Coexistence" in Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Reconciliation, Justice and Coexistence: Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 47-9.

³⁸² Kriesberg in Abu-Nimer, 47-9.

Nigerian state was created; options of resolutions were also generated. With all these, the Nigerian ethnic conflicts stand the chance of being resolved and the scholar of literature, aside of his mediating role in articulating the conflict stories and facilitating the resolution of the conflicts presented by the texts, can now function conventionally as a mediator in ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. The conflicts should no longer be viewed as misunderstanding since misunderstanding could be resolved by ensuring that the groups communicate their grievances clearly and completely.

Granted that perceived injustices, stereotypes and misperceptions have so far been clarified in the process of trying to understand the causes of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria and the possibility of using their literature to resolve the conflicts, it is indubitable that ethnic conflicts are not necessarily resolved simply by clarifications.

In other words, while clarification is one of the ways of resolving the ethnic conflicts, incompatibility of objectives³⁸³ or values as Robert Lawrence Heath and Jennings Bryant have argued are the major causes of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria: while the average northern person, who is likely to be a Moslem is concerned with being a good Moslem as well as accepts his situation in life as a given, the average southern person,

³⁸³ Robert Lawrence Heath and Jennings Bryant, *Human Communication Theory and Research: Concepts, Contexts and Challenges* (NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 253.

especially the Igbo hardly accepts his situation as a given.³⁸⁴ He also believes that children of God never lack. These outlooks influence their objectives in life and even contribute to the way they perceive themselves.

Therefore these values or objectives have to be identified in a collaborative way; thereafter, how they clash to cause conflicts should then be clarified so that the groups involved would understand where the problem lies. Using the literary works as a big screen for the groups would be very helpful.

Having identified the values and objectives of the various parties involved in the conflicts as well as clarifying to them where these values and objectives clash to cause conflict, all within the context of the references made to those things by the literary works under study, compromise would be suggested to the groups in conflict as a way for them to resolve their conflicts, since their conflicts revolve mostly around their values and their values already predetermined their goals as well as their interests. As such, a *zero-sum-game* theory of winning at one thing and loosing at the other is applicable.³⁸⁵ Naturally, *zero-sum-game* theory entails compromise. And compromising certain ideals and values that drive their various goals and objectives, would make competition among the groups to be healthy, in that what used to be

³⁸⁴ See again Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, 132.

³⁸⁵ See Meyers, 97.

stereotypes, prejudices and misperception would lose their negative attributes, making the groups to bring out the best in them from what used to have negative connotations. However, while efforts should be made by every research on ethnic conflict and resolution in Nigeria to articulate and clarify the values, interests, goals and orientations of all the ethnic groups in Nigeria, the role responsible and visionary leadership play in giving the people a sense belonging and faith in the country should not be underestimated; because it is when the results of these researches are responsibly articulated into policies and applied that these conflicts would possibly get a chance of being resolved. And the application of these policies would require not only social scientists, but also well-meaning individuals of repute as well as relevant non-governmental organisation.³⁸⁶

Therefore, A. de Reuck's belief that in the resolution of conflicts, "representative of parties in a dispute should meet in the presence of a small panel of disinterested consultants, professionally qualified in the social science, in order to analyse and possibly also resolve their conflict, in conditions of total confidentiality"³⁸⁷, is questionable, because the consultants or mediators must not necessarily, as has been proven, be qualified in the social science to be able to mediate or facilitate the

³⁸⁶ See again Meyers, 100-108.

³⁸⁷ A. de Reuck, "A Theory of Conflict Resolution by Problem-solving", in John Burton and F. Dukes [ed.], *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1990), 183.

resolution of the conflicts. Furthermore, Myron Magnet believes the social scientist's mantra, "the plural of anecdote is not data" is totally mistaken³⁸⁸, because, he continues:

[A]n accumulation of accurate stories about how the human world works, stories that provide an account wrapped in an interpretation, adds up to knowledge, better knowledge than we can get elsewhere. Data are meaningless until we can articulate a story that makes sense out of them, and literature makes sense out of the data of human experience.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Myron Magnet "What Use is Literature?" *City Journal*, Summer (2003).

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

LITERATURE, THE WORLD AND SOCIAL CHANGE

As had been argued by Terry Eagleton, it was not very easy up till the eighteenth century to find a definition of what literature ought to be as well as what its role should be in society.³⁹⁰ During this period, any writing of substantial value to society was considered literature; that is – philosophy, history, essays, letter as well as poems. There was no doubt as to whether the Novel was literature or not: it was all about whether the new form of the novel conformed to certain standards of writing.³⁹¹ As can be seen, the criteria of what counted as literature at the time were purely ideological. For, according to Eagleton, “writing which embodied the values and “tastes” of a particular social class qualified as literature, whereas a street ballad, a popular romance and perhaps even the drama did not.”³⁹²

In view of the fact of urbanisation and industrialisation of these periods, the ballad, which was seen in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century as offering only crude, but popular journalistic information, became a way of presenting the realities of the time, by reproducing urban and industrial life, expressing the frustrations and

³⁹⁰ See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 17.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁹² *Ibid.*

injustices of the class struggle, showing the emotional life of the people in relation to their work, as well as reflecting the violence and vanity of street life.³⁹³ In other words, apart from philosophy, history, essays, letter, poems and fictions, the drama, which includes ballad, joined the class of valued writings called literature.

From the eighteenth century to the twentieth century the functions and role of literature became very obvious in that most writers, who had profound knowledge of the economic, social and educational theories of their time, either used literature to counter certain theoretical postulations or used it to illustrate theories of practical education, combining them with their sociological and economic beliefs, providing always the alternative and increasing knowledge thereby. Writers like Maria Edgeworth were known for this.³⁹⁴ Therefore, Ria Omasreiner stated that in Edgeworth's model societies conflicts were neither given by nature nor were they immanent in society.³⁹⁵ He argued that Maria Edgeworth's desire to add to knowledge through literature made her provide in her writings alternative arguments against the popular theories that conflicts in societies were given by nature by insisting that these conflicts did not result from unequal distribution of wealth or class difference, but from greed, envy, laziness or individual foolishness.

³⁹³ See Rainer Schöwerling, "19th-Century Popular literature" in Ulrich Broich, et al, (ed.) *Functions of literature* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1984), 224.

³⁹⁴ See also Ria Omasreiner, „Maria Edgeworth's Tales in *Functions of literature*, 201-2.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

With this view, also, she contradicted a popular theory of her time. She also provided alternative argument against Malthus, who originated the idea that the struggle for existence, which he recognized in society, was a law of nature. The logical consequence of this law was the belief that the mortality of the poor was necessary, while the rich were only passive observers, who were able to lead a life of luxury and ease because of the necessary death of the poor. This theoretical position of Malthus became a catalyst for Darwin's theory of the biological struggle for existence. Omasreiner argued that Darwin explicitly acknowledged in his *Origin of Species* the major influence of Malthus's work on his ideas. Darwin discovered in nature the same laws that Malthus had found operating in society. Omasreiner maintained that, eventhough Maria Edgeworth admired Malthus greatly and sanctioned his *laissez-faire* principles, yet she opposed his theory of the natural disharmony of society and social change.³⁹⁶ Furthermore Ria Omasreiner writes that Maria Edgeworth, in her bid to prove Darwin and Malthus wrong, made sure that in her literary works like *Simple Susan* and *Rosanna* the socially weak did not become the victims of natural law, but obtained their deserved rights by prudence, industry and patience.³⁹⁷

From the twentieth century onward, Gerd Stratmann believes "we need a new conceptual framework for literary history, flexible enough to

³⁹⁶ Omasreiner, in *Functions of Literature*, 201-2.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

integrate the various aspects and approaches elaborated by contemporary criticism, and yet consistent enough to put the description of literary evolution on a more systematic basis.”³⁹⁸

Furthermore, he writes:

A concept would have to mediate between the extreme dogmatisms of the New Critics and the sociologists of literature, between a pure history of ideas and an equally one-sided history of isolated poetic “forms”. In short, it would have to aim at something very much like the “Funktionsgeschichte der Literatur”, i.e a history of literature in its functional context, as advocated and developed by Erwin Wolff for more than twenty years.³⁹⁹

In other words, ideas in literary texts ought to be made emotionally graspable and, according to Stratmann, be transformed into practical terms of social reality⁴⁰⁰, for therein lies the essential function of literature for him; in other words, literature should mediate between the changing demands of society –ethnicity inclusive and the knowledge created and developed by both the colonial and post-colonial institutions of our time.⁴⁰¹ This is what this research has tried to do from the Nigerian literature as social practice to the Nigerian literature and conflict resolution.

Literature not only encourages the beauty from within, but it also brings about social change, because, according to Lothar Bredella, “it is

³⁹⁸ See Gerd Stratmann, „The Contextual Functions of Literature: The Concept and its Prophet“, in *Functions of Literature*, 1.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

the only place where we find the image of a better world.”⁴⁰² For Wolfgang Iser, “literature is a place of detached enchantment, an imaginary museum that offers mankind the chance of gazing at itself in the mirror of its achievements, which is made tangible in history.”⁴⁰³ In other words, it is for him “a release from an oppressive present and retrospective contemplation of the past, whose preserved contemporaneity in the treasure-house drives out the threat of the real world and thus offers humankind help on the path to its humanisation.”⁴⁰⁴ As such, even if literature, as Wolfgang Iser puts it, “has become a fringe phenomenon in our society, it is the fringes that allow us to focus on what is happening in the turbulent and incoherent centre, and this is what endows literature with its unexpected importance.”⁴⁰⁵

There will be need, therefore, to go back again in time to observe closely to what extent literature was practically engaged in society; and to what extent it is of practical importance in the post colonial era of the twentieth-first century.

In order to demonstrate the practical involvement of literature in society on a general scale, some more literary works may have to be

⁴⁰² Lothar Bredella, „How Can Literary Texts Matter?“ in Rüdiger Ahrens/Laurenz Volkmann, *Why Literature Matters: Theories and Functions of literature* (Heidelberg: C. Winter Universitätsverlag, 1996), 102.

⁴⁰³ Wolfgang Iser, „*Why Literature Matters*“ in Rüdiger Ahrens/Laurenz Volkmann (eds.), *Why Literature matters*, 15.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

used –works like *Tess d'Urbervilles* (1994) by Thomas Hardy and *The Secret Agent* (1907) by Joseph Conrad in the case of England as well as *Dangerous Love* (1996) by Ben Okri in the case of post-colonial Nigeria.

5.1 The Metropolitan Dimension

The bloody civil war of seventeenth century England was responsible for the severe class conflicts and terrible social disorders of the eighteenth century. Such state of degeneracy could only make people long for the classical notions of Reason, Nature, Order and Decency, which were all represented in literature.⁴⁰⁶ Eagleton writes about that period:

[T]he need to incorporate the increasingly powerful but spiritually rather raw middle classes into unity with the ruling aristocracy, to diffuse polite social manners, habits of 'correct' taste and common cultural standards, literature gained a new importance. As can be seen, literature was expected to interfere in a tangible way in unifying the middle class with the ruling aristocracy as well as to diffuse polite social manners. In effect, it included a whole set of ideological institutions: periodicals, coffee houses, social and aesthetic treatises, sermons, classical translations, guidebooks to manners and morals. Literature was no longer a matter of 'felt experience', 'personal response', or imaginative uniqueness.⁴⁰⁷

Therefore, since literature was no longer a matter of felt experience, personal response, or imaginative uniqueness, its practical involvement in the solution of societal problems could be traced as far back as the Romantic period in Western Europe, and possibly beyond. Romanticism dates as far as back as the late 18th century in Western Europe.

⁴⁰⁶ See Eagleton, 1983, 17-18.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

During the enlightenment period, modernity was ushered in because the past was judged by the civilised standards of the eighteenth century and people openly expressed dislike for the primitivity and barbarism of medieval times⁴⁰⁸, especially in literature and philosophy. Modernity brought along with it technological innovations and scientific breakthroughs, the consequence of which was great industrial revolutions and competitive capitalistic market economy.

England for its part was luxuriating on its economic progress; a progress made from the eighteenth-century slave trade and imperial control of the seas.⁴⁰⁹ It became thus the world's first industrial capitalist nation. But the new bourgeoisie seemed too materialistic and dashed thereby the dreams and visions of the energies released by the previous revolutions. Human relations were thus reduced to mere material exchange of goods and commodities. Art on its part lacked value because it was unprofitable. Therefore, Arthur Mitzman argues:

[T]he English romantics protested simultaneously against the scarring of the natural and cultural landscapes by the industrial revolutions and against the desiccated utilitarianism that accompanied it; and the German romantics against the bureaucratic *Kleinstateerei* held in place by the Napoleonic invasion and against the unimaginative rationalism that characterized both the old and the new oppressors; the French romantics against the utilitarian, materialist values, the atomization and the social injustice of the new bourgeois society.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ See J.H.M Salmon, „The French Romantics and The Renaissance” in Michael Wolfe et al., [eds.] *Changing Identities in Early Modern France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 25.

⁴⁰⁹ See also Eagleton, 19.

⁴¹⁰ Arthur Mitzman, “Romanticism and Revolution: The Vision of Jules Michelet” in *Revolutionary Romanticism: A Drunken Boat* (North Carolina: City Light Books, 1999), 83-84.

In fact, according to Jeff Lewis, "Romanticism challenged the alienating and dehumanising effects of technology and industrialization, but it did so through a general rendering of individualism and individual freedom and not through a more substantive questioning of the capitalist or modernist projects."⁴¹¹ Furthermore, Lewis maintains:

[R]omanticism celebrated the moral possibilities of personal and spiritual transcendence; it praised the virtues of nature, naturalism, the imagination and reason, though some significant Romantic writers remained deeply suspicious of direct political activism, the industrial working classes, Marxism and the French Revolution.⁴¹²

Maurice Hindle believes "romantic hindsight pierced through the gains of industrialism and the market economy to what in the process was being lost, and its melancholic gaze remains revolutionary to the extent that it shatters the very notion of progress."⁴¹³

The American New Critics, who were literary humanists, dedicated themselves to restoring those dreams and visions of the energies released by these revolutions in the midst of industrialisation⁴¹⁴, that is, the human relations which were already reduced to mere material exchange. They continued to improve upon their increasingly sophisticated techniques like close reading of the text and challenged with determination contemporary modern science. They also

⁴¹¹ Jeff Lewis, *Cultural Studies: The Basics* (California: Sage Publications, 2002), 22.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴¹³ Maurice Hindle, "Revolting Language. British Romantics in an Age of Revolution" in *Revolution and Romanticism: A Drunken Boat*, vi.

⁴¹⁴ See Eagleton, 1983.

endeavoured to rehumanise human relations in the face of intensifying industrialism.

For the New Critics, literature was autonomous and unconnected to the real world around it; it was also irrelevant as social practice: as such it should not be dragged down to mere economic exchange in the socio-economic world. By this singular effort, they only opened up a new practical engagement for literature, which was no longer going to be in any other domain outside of the text.

In 1957 Northrop Frye tried to put forward arguments that proved wrong the belief that literature was only a subjective exercise as well as an idle gossip. He recommended, therefore, an objective system. In this system, literature had to work under objective laws formulated by systematic criticism. These laws were the various modes, archetypes, myths and genres by which all literary works were structured. This way literature had to assume a practical function by taking the place of religion in seeking to better the moral and transcendental human force.⁴¹⁵

By the 1960s the New Critics had become too methodical in their ways of approach to issues. They seemed no longer interested in the broader horizon of literary engagement; rather they concentrated largely on the isolated literary text and its aesthetics, and nurtured too

⁴¹⁵ See Eagleton, 1983.

delicately the human perceptive and interpretive faculties. Meanings in texts took endless nihilistic turns, causing literary studies to become somewhat disengaged practically.⁴¹⁶ Edward Said insists that during this period literary theory had become nihilistic. Efforts were made by scholars to ensure that all the domains of human activity could be seen, and lived as a unity.⁴¹⁷ But that was not to be, for as Edward Said puts it:

[F]rom being a bold interventionary movement across lines of specialization, American literary theory of the late seventies had retreated into the labyrinth of "textuality," dragging along with it the most recent apostles of European revolutionary textuality - Derrida and Foucault - whose trans-Atlantic canonization and domestication they themselves seemed sadly enough to be encouraging.⁴¹⁸

Said argued that American literary theory and even European literary theory, for that matter, now explicitly accepted principles of non-interference; and that their peculiar mode of appropriating their subject matter was to leave out anything that was worldly, circumstantial, or socially contaminated.⁴¹⁹ Furthermore, Said maintained that textuality was the somewhat mystical and disinfected subject matter of literary theory. It has therefore become the exact antithesis and displacement of what might be called history. For him the new critical argument implied that textuality was considered to take place. Said did not doubt that it

⁴¹⁶ See Eagleton, 1983.

⁴¹⁷ See again Edward Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 3.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4

took place, but he believed that the nihilistic argument of textuality would also wonder whether it took place anywhere or at anytime in particular. The text is produced, yes, but by *no one* and at *no time*. It could be read and interpreted, yet reading and interpreting are routinely understood to occur in the form of misreading and misinterpreting.⁴²⁰ Furthermore, Said wrote:

[T]he list of examples could be extended indefinitely, but the point would remain the same. As it is practiced in the American academy today, literary theory has for the most part isolated textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work.⁴²¹

Apparently it is the desire to look at the world more objectively like the scientist, the search for principles of order, coherence and meaning that Structuralism as a literary theory manifested. The French thinker and philosopher Saussure was the avant-garde. For the Structuralist, everything is textual, and of course the producer of the text is dead. For the post-structuralist and the deconstructionist, meaning is endless.

The New critics' structural method emphasised a close-reading of the text, without any regard for extra-textual sources, for example, the author's intent or an informing society. Close reading for them involves careful, persistent interpretation of a brief passage in which the particular is of more importance than the general. In other words, close

⁴²⁰ Said, 3-4.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

attention is paid to the word, the syntax and the order in which sentences and ideas unfold in the course of reading them.

In analysing the text, the subject-matter, that is, that which the author is saying, the author's judgement of his or her subject, his or her use of language, that is whether he or she is using language connotatively or denotatively, his or her moods as conveyed by his or her tone, his or her use of signs and symbols, his or her method of ordering events in his or her work, his or her method of creating images as well as his or her level of involvement in speaking to the reader are all issues that matter very much to the New Critics in analysing the text. What these formalists have not really considered is that the reader of the text, being himself textual is already extra-textual in regard to the text; and that the reader lives in a society which is also to the Structuralists textual, and whose culture is also textual: that is, the individual should not have anything to do with culture, as if culture was not produced by him, anymore than culture should have anything to do with the individual, as if the individual lives in a vacuum. Textuality is, in effect, a way of propagating Art for Art's sake as if writers of imperial centres have ever written only for art's sake. This tendency is the idea that verse and fiction are without any moral, social, cognitive, or other extra-literary purposes; and that the sole objective of a work of literature is to be beautiful, well structured, and well written; that we learn absolutely

nothing about life or about values from literature; that the questions of content therefore have no legitimacy or relevance in writing, reading, studying, and judging literary products; that the art of literature evolves on its own grounds exclusively; that it neither reflects nor is affected by the social, historical, or biographical circumstances of its creation; and finally, that literature is one thing – a combination of words, images, text, system of signs, a self-contained artefact, a pure fiction – and the real world another.⁴²² Furthermore Bell-Villada states:

[A]rt for Art's Sake, after all, is an ideology; and like all ideologies it has a definable setting and a history. It is, to begin with, a specifically western notion, generated on European soil by European writers, and then culturally diffused to such Occidental outposts as the United States and the Creole sectors of Latin America. From my own meagre knowledge I gather that the idea of an aesthetic realm, totally separate from life, has no immediate roots in non-industrial, "primitive" cultures or even in the more "developed" nations of the Near East and Asia, where the arts remain closely bound up with religion or with other, larger, indigenous spiritual traditions and practices. Aestheticism, in sum, is a theory with no major, vital resonances or academic standing outside western (and westernised) societies [...] Even today ideas of "pure art" are first heard about in classroom (at least in the United States); outside a segment of educated elite circle, notions are largely unacknowledged or unrecognised in our time.⁴²³

Moreover, if the writer had not died for the new critic, probably he or she would also have been textual in relation to his or her work. But is the writer really dead? Arguably, the writer's ideological insertion within the general ideology is detectable in his or her work. Granted that the writer's work assumes an independent life once published, yet

⁴²² See Gene H. Bell-Villada, *Art for Art's Sake* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986-7), 3.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

the essential nature of this independent life of the work of a writer is composed not only of the composite ideology of the society as a whole, but also the writer's ideological insertion within the society's general ideology of which even he or she is part. Should one then call the writer's motive commitment? Probably yes, for the writer is committed to his or her work in that he or she feels some responsibility to his or her informing society or to his or her true human or spiritual essence, regardless of his or her shortcomings as a human being. According to Chidi Amuta:

[C]ommitment in order to command relevance and strike a socio-political significance must be aligned, for the socio-political world which the writer inhabits and which the literary work mediates is a function of structural contradictions and conflicts among identifiable social forces which in themselves compel choices and options.⁴²⁴

Furthermore, Raymond Williams argues that by conscious alignment, or conscious change of alignment in any specific society, at a specific phase, writers are capable of discovering in their writing the realities of their social relations, and in this sense their alignment. If they are determined to change these social relations or alignment, the reality of the whole social process is at once in question. And the writer in a

⁴²⁴ Chidi Amuta, *The Theory of African literature* (London: Institute for African Alternatives, 1989), 115.

revolution is necessarily different from the writer under fascism or inside capitalism or in exile.⁴²⁵

Furthermore, Joseph Conrad had once said that he had been called a writer of the sea, of the tropics, a descriptive writer, a romantic writer – and also a realist; but, that as a matter of fact, all his concern had been with the "ideal" value of things, events and people – that and nothing else. The humorous, the pathetic, the passionate, the sentimental aspects come in of themselves.⁴²⁶

In the same vein, Thomas Hardy, in his explanatory note to the first edition of his novel – *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* – had said:

[T]he story was sent out, in all sincerity of purpose as an attempt to give artistic form to a true sequence of things; and in respect of the book's opinions and sentiments, I would ask any too genteel reader, who cannot endure to have said what everybody nowadays thinks and feels, to remember a well-worn sentence of St. Jerome's: If an Offence come out of the truth, better is it that the offence come than that the truth be concealed.⁴²⁷

For James Joyce, it was about going out to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race.⁴²⁸ Each one of these writers

⁴²⁵ See Raymond William, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 204. He is invariably saying that writers have different motives for writing depending on the condition they find themselves at particular periods

⁴²⁶ See Conrad's letter of 18th march 1917 to Sir Sydney Calvin in Allan Hunter's *Joseph Conrad and the Ethics of Darwinism* (Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm Ltd, 1983), 162/163.

⁴²⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urberville* (London: Penguin Books, 1994) v

⁴²⁸ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1996), 288.

confesses commitment in choosing to write. And what they write is a reflection of that commitment.

Hardy's sense of commitment in writing *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* derived from the suffocating Christian morality of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century England as well as the equally suffocating alternative: the conservative Hellenistic paganism of the same century. Hardy seemed also piqued with the hard-necked prevalent traditionalism of the time, which found expression in the worship of nobility and the fastidious tenacious grip on family honour and name: things that hindered the fullness of living.

Tess Durbeyfield, Angela Clare, Mr and Mrs Clare, John and Joan Durbeyfield, Alec D'Urbervilles as well as the strange character that Angela Clare met in his peregrinations in Brazil all serve to express the complex human nature which the narrator sought to expose and which, upon exposure, ought to cast doubt upon rigid opinions held about life or any rigid rule formulated to regulate living.

At the beginning of the story, one sees how the news by parson Tringham about John Durbeyfield's noble heritage fills Durbeyfield with a sense of pride. He goes about telling whoever cares to know about his noble heritage and even demands of some young man the supposed respect due his person:

[S]ir John d'Urbervilles – that's who I am,' continued the prostrate man. 'Tis recorded in history all about me. Dost know of such a

place, lad, as Kingsberesub-greenhill?

[...]

Now take up that basket, and goo on to Marlott, and when you've come to The Pure Drop Inn, tell 'em to send a horse and carriage to me immed'ately, to carry me hwome. And in the bottom o' the carriage they be put a noggin o' rum in small bottle, and chalk it up to my account. And when you've done that goo on to my house with the basket, and tell my wife to put away that washing, because she needn't finish it, and wait till I come hwome, as I've news to tell her (TD'U, 7-8).

Ever thereafter, the Durbeyfield family never hid their intentions to get back the lost glory of the family by planning a reunion with a wealthy family, the D'Urbervilles, who they thought were their relations.

Tess goes to Trantridge to make acquaintance of her own family with the D'Urbervilles at the behest of her own family. She never gets to relay her mission to the rich Mrs D'urbervilles, who only adopted the name of the ancient D'urbervilles because of their gallantry. Tess meets only Alec D'urbervilles, the depraved son of the rich lady, who makes it possible for Tess to live with them and work as a poultry-girl. He had hoped to take advantage of Tess which he did by putting Tess in the family way. She gives birth to a baby, which dies after all. She leaves for Talbothay to start a new life and begin work as a diary-woman. She meets and falls in love with Angela Clare, who also proposes marriage to her. She refuses; but careful persuasion by Angela Clare brings her to accept to marry him. Angela's family does not support the marriage because they believe that Tess is of a lowly background and is not educated. Tess confesses to her husband of the event of her past life. He is devastated

by the news of Tess having had a child by another man. He leaves Tess and moves to Brazil to start a new life, having taken her home to her parents. Tess leaves home to avoid shame and starts a new life in Flintcomb-Ash farm. She meets, to her greatest surprise, Alec D'urbervilles, now Pastor, preaching to a congregation in Emminster. Alec sees her and thereafter he begins to see if he could convince her to become his lawfully wedded wife. He even abandons the church to try to woo Tess back. Ill-health, poverty and finally the death of John Durbeyfield exposes Tess to Alec, who uses his wealth to impress Tess's family. He tries to convince Tess that her husband has left her for good. Moreover, all the letters written to Angel by Tess were never replied. Therefore Tess opts for Alec, believing that Angel will never again come to her.

Angel confides in a friend he meets in Brazil about his marital problems. The friend advises him to get back to his wife. He thus decides to find Tess, who now lives with Alec. He locates them and Tess is saddened by the fact that she feels that Alec has taken advantage of her the second time. She kills Alec with a knife and gets arrested.

Therefore, the narrator's protest against the old Christian morality were expressed in the Hellenistic pagan rebelliousness of Angel Clare, who against the wishes of his family went ahead to marry a supposedly lowly dairy-girl. He had been attracted to her because of the fact that

she was true to her own nature. She did not believe in ghosts, but she knew that human souls could be made to go outside their bodies in astral projection. (TD'U, 154) This is one of the beliefs considered by Christians as pagan.

On the other hand, the narrator shows also his disapproval of the Hellenistic paganism, which has displaced Christian morality only to become also a clog in the wheel of human development, in the character which Angel Clare met in Brazil, for:

[W]ithin the remote depths of Angel Clare's constitution, so gentle and affectionate as he was in general, there lay hidden a hard logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam, which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it. (308)

However as the narrator writes:

[T]he stranger had sojourned in many more lands and among many more peoples than Angel; to his cosmopolitan mind such deviations from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than the irregularities of vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve. He viewed the matter in quite a different light from Angel; thought that what Tess had been was of no importance beside what she would be, and plainly told Clare that he was wrong in coming away from her. (434)

Even as a twenty-first century reader, one is able to really understand the way society functioned in the eighteenth and nineteenth century England: that is, that nobility was viewed with a strong sense of pride, admiration and respect; that Christian morality and Hellenistic paganism struggled for supremacy and hindered the unfolding of the human mind; but that there were also people who were intelligent,

insightful, sensitive and knowledgeable enough to see beyond the shade of doctrinaire philosophies.

In Conrad's *Secret Agent* (1907), the "ideal" value of things, events and people were sought by him by protesting against the appearance and way of life of Verloc, who is supposed to be an anarchist or a revolutionist, but whose outward appearance betrays no sign of physical discipline required of a revolutionist: he is fat; and his social standing is a far-cry from that commitment needed of an anarchist: he is married. Verloc believes his duty is to protect the social mechanism, not to perfect it or even to criticise it. (54) He is a check on revolutionary fanaticism. He seems to have nothing against the reformation of society, as long as reformers don't have anything against society. The narrator uses his characters against themselves, creating disorder so that at the end order may prevail, for:

[M] r Verloc, temperamentally identical with his associates drew fine distinctions in his mind on the strength of insignificant differences. He drew them with a certain complacency, because the instinct of conventional respectability was strong within him, being only overcome by his dislike of all kind of recognised labour – a temperamental defect which he shared with a large proportion of revolutionary reformers of a given social state. For obviously one does not revolt against the advantages and opportunities of that state, but against the price which must be paid for the same in the coin of accepted morality, self-restraint, and toil. The majority of revolutionist are the enemies of discipline and fatigue mostly; there are natures, too, to whose sense of justice the price exacted looms up monstrously enormous, odious, oppressive, warring, humiliating, extortionate, intolerable. Those are the fanatics. The remaining portion of social rebels is accounted for by vanity, the mother of all noble and vile illusions, the companions of poets, reformers, charlatans, prophets, and incendiaries. (83)

The narrator seeks the “ideal” value of things in what seems to be a reformatory disorder that bears upon an orderly society; and through the character, Verloc, he seeks that ideal also in the battered state of the environment and its infrastructure:

[T]hen after slipping his braces off his shoulders, he pulled up violently the Venetian blind, and leaned his forehead against the cold window-pane-- a fragile film of glass stretched between him and the enormity of cold, wet, muddy, inhospitable accumulation of bricks, slates, and stones, things in themselves unlovely and unfriendly to man. (84)

The narrator expresses himself in these so-called revolutionists in a very remarkable way: Michaelis, the ticket-of-leave-apostle, once in jail, self-acclaimed revolutionist, does not believe in capitalism, any more than he believes in socialism. He is an anarchist who does not believe in an abrupt destruction of society; he believes, rather, in revolutionary propaganda as a means of educating the masses, creating gradually that awareness necessary for a revolutionary upheaval, for to him:

[H]istory is dominated and determined by the tool and the production-- by the force of economic conditions. Capitalism has made socialism and the laws made by the capitalists for the protection of property are responsible for anarchism. (73)

Karl Yundt and Comrade Ossipon seem not to agree with Michaelis: the former dreams of “a band of men absolute in their resolve to discard all scruples in the choice of means, strong enough to give themselves frankly the name of destroyers and free from that taint of resigned pessimism which rots the world. No pity for anything on earth,

including themselves, and death enlisted for good and all in the service of humanity.”(74)

Ossipon passively disagrees with the idea of a total destruction of society, but “he takes the part of an insolent and venomous evoker of sinister impulses which lurk in the blind envy and exasperated vanity of ignorance in the suffering and misery of poverty in the hopeful and noble illusions of righteous anger, pity and revolt.” (78)

The ambivalent nature of their ideas characterises an effort at attaining the ideal: when the comrades leave Verloc's house, Verloc falls into melancholic and reflective mood: he finds them all alike, not men enough to carry out a bomb outrage. He in turn sees Mr Vladimir as the most dangerous of the three of his fellow revolutionists. The irony of this is that Mr Vladimir is no self-acclaimed anarchist; rather an employee of the embassy, which is a societal institution and Vladimir as well as other employees of the embassy are members of the society-- in other words, they partake of the social engineering, and being as well high-ranking members of the society, their ideas influence public opinion. Sometimes their ideas could be anarchical or radical, liberal or conservative--- whichever it is, it weighs upon public opinion.

Listen to Vladimir:

A bomb outrage to have influence on public opinion now must go beyond the intention of vengeance or terrorism. It must be purely destructive [...]. You anarchists should make it clear that you are perfectly determined to make a clean

sweep of the whole social creation. (66)

In seeking the “ideal” value of things, events and people, the narrator critiques the social framework of society as well as the mechanics of that framework. He shows, though, subtly how social anarchy begins, who the real players in the game are: Vladmir instructs Verloc on anarchism, pretending not to be one.

As such, *The S Ag* is not merely an anticipation of the irrationalism of subversive activity in modern times, but a prophecy of the erection of madness into governmental system. (195)

Reformers and Revolutionists always claim that the betterment of the conditions of the common man remains a priority. The reverse becomes the case in *The S Ag* with regard to the professor: The common man means little or nothing to him; in fact, they should be part of the destruction if anything new is to be established. He insists:

[T]hey are our sinister masters-- the weak, the flabby, the silly, the cowardly, the faint of heart, and the slavish of mind. They have power. They are the multitude. Theirs is the kingdom of the earth. exterminate, exterminate! That is the only way of progress. First the great multitude of the weak must go, then the only relatively strong. You see? First, the blind; then the deaf and the dumb; then the halt and the lame--and so on. Every taint, every vice, every prejudice, every convention must meet its doom. (263)

The narrator's complex nature, of course, found expression in Verloc, Ossipon, Michaelis, as well as it did in the professor. For what he hates in the senseless anarchism of the revolutionists, he criticises through the

Professor; and what he finds repelling in the Professor he criticises by exposing the character, in his fixated idea of his abilities, to the reader's judgement. Apparently, the Professor, as a character, seems to represent the mind-frame of Supremacists sustained by the misrepresented Nietzschean idea of the superman, fed by the Darwinian principle of natural selection in which only the fittest or the strongest survive.

And just as every person appears to be a revolutionist in the book, every action symbolises an effort at attaining the ideal: Love brings people together; and in the case of a man and woman, it may also lead to marriage. But when a mother implicitly or explicitly persuades the daughter to marry a man to escape poverty rather than out of an innate conviction of love for each other, does it not then imply a state of degeneracy? And is the spirit of camaraderie not about faith and trust in one another? Yet one sees a lack of moral sense in Ossipon when he tries to woo Winnie Verloc after her husband's death by even castigating the deceased, "he never did seem to me to be quite worthy of you." (243)

The ideological ambivalence of the discourses in the book is geared towards attaining the ideal: Stevie is made to be seen as a weak-minded fellow; however, ironically, he seems to be the character on which the cognisance of the wretched situation of the poor is exhibited by the narrator. His lack of knowledge is portrayed to be evidence of his foolishness; on the other hand, the ones possessed of great knowledge,

instead of becoming a source of succour to the people, become rather source of destruction in the society. Knowledge, which, normally, ought to bring people together in this world, leads them to destroy one another when they learn of evils formerly veiled.

The ironic nature of *The S Ag* lies in the fact "that it not only posits the value of the enemy - secrecy, but also shows the curse on the protagonist -knowledge. In the absence of full knowledge or firm belief, knowing becomes an equivocal good."⁴²⁹

The role of the Assistant commissioner is also idealist in the sense that he decides to take up the investigation himself, suspecting that inspector Heat has some secret relationship with Verloc. He thus does not want a biased investigation so as to get to the truth:

[T]he Assistant commissioner, on the other hand, by his willingness to act against all disturbances of social order, counter-revolutionary as well as revolutionary, is the exception in the continuum of secrecy, fragmentation, and absurdity which constitutes modern political life.⁴³⁰

The intended revolution by the anarchists failed, just as almost all the characters involved failed, excepting the Assistant Commissioner. However, it is in their failure that the narrator or rather the book, *The S Ag* succeeded: each character, believing the plausibility of his beliefs or

⁴²⁹ Avrom Fleishman, *Conrad's Politics* (London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 194.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 213.

ideologies, met criticisms in other characters, initiating thus a vicious circle. However, *The S Ag*, in the opinion of Fleischmann:

[I]s not as much a novel about political anarchism as it is a novel of social anarchy. It is a dramatic portrayal of the sociological concept of "anomie"-- radical disorder in the social structure and consequential personal dislocation. It does not amount to a political program to be sure, any more than it amounts to a moral code, but it suggests an ideal of social order by its very representation of a world without order [...]. Within this view of the novel's concern with social community and social fragmentation, it is possible to make a balance estimate of its political implications. Not the irrational caricature of revolutionists it has occasionally been taken to be, the novel makes an implicit appeal for restraint in public policy toward them.⁴³¹

At the end of the book, it seems though as if the multitude had won the battle: they carried on their normal life orderly in spite of the previous social disorder typified in the Professor and the Revolutionists, who seem to be the pests in the society.

As has been demonstrated from the literary works above, it is logical to believe that out of the writer's commitment arises literature's practical implications; as such, for Edward Said, however, all the textual postures toward literature, while they, no doubt, are intellectually interesting and worth studying and possessing the capacity to make all the domains of human activity to be seen, and lived, as a unity, they nevertheless have only succeeded in making literature impractical, uninvolved and a seemingly frustrating endeavour that borders on nihilism. In other words, according to Edward Said, these textual

⁴³¹ Fleischman, 212.

postures disable and dis-empower what was empowering and interesting about the original insights.⁴³²

What is the use of the higher pleasure derived from studying the text when the pleasure is already extra-textual? However Rene Wellek strongly believes:

[W]hen a work of literature functions successfully, the two “note” of pleasure and utility should not merely coexist but coalesce. The pleasure of literature, we need to maintain, is not one preference among a long lists of possible pleasures but is a “higher pleasure” because pleasure is a higher kind of activity, i.e. non-acquisitive contemplation. And the utility – the seriousness, the instructiveness – of literature is a pleasurable seriousness, that is, not the seriousness of a duty which must be done or of a lesson to be learned but an aesthetic seriousness, a seriousness of perception.⁴³³

The kind of Utility Rene Wellek was talking about was the utilitarian utility, where it becomes literature’s duty to depict not only the most beautiful of human condition, but also its most deplorable situation in a critically instructive way with the aim of ushering in the good through change and ensuring the greatest happiness of all peoples of the world.

For Marxist Criticism, another theoretical effort at practically re-engaging literature, the intent of the writer is always a code for a particular set of ideologies in the writer’s own day. For Marxists Realists authorial intent is inherently present in the text and must be placed in a context of liberation and materialist dialectic. Marxist Critics believe that

⁴³² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd, 1993), 387.

⁴³³ Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *The Theory of literature* (England: Penguin Group, 1993), 31.

the writer cannot be separated from their works, just as their works cannot be separated from their informing society. For them writers are the critical purveyors of the imperatives of our human condition.

Marxist Criticism as a form of literary criticism originated in the former Soviet Union. According to Dominic Thomas:

[O]n April 23, 1932, all Soviet literary and artistic organisations including the Association of Proletarian Writers, were dismantled and merged into the new Union of Soviet Writers. The term *Socialist realism* first appeared in print on May 23, 1932, when the *Literaturnaia gazeta* published a statement I. Gronskii had made on May 23, 1932, declaring Socialist Realism the only acceptable literary form. By August 1934, Socialist Realism had been inaugurated as the official mode for literature.⁴³⁴

It is very obvious that the writer is expected, in the context above, to be an instrument of the state, for, in the opinion of Thomas, “the fundamental tenets of Stalinist Socialist Realism included popular appeal, class-consciousness, ideology orthodoxy, partisanship or adherence to party line and typicality.”⁴³⁵ Furthermore, Thomas believes:

[S]ocialist Realism, as the basic starting point of Soviet literature and literary criticism, requires that the sincere writer offer a historical concrete presentation of reality in its revolutionary development. In this manner, veracity and the historically concrete dimension of the artistic representation of reality should combine with the task of achieving ideological change and educating workers according to the principles of Socialism.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Dominic Thomas, *Nation-Building, Propaganda, And Literature in Francophone Africa* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002), 20.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶ Regine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Aesthetic Impossibility { Le réalisme socialiste: Une esthétique impossible}* (Paris: Payot, 1986), 40.

This, however, differs from Social Realism, a reactionary development against idealism, and the exaggerated ego encouraged by Romanticism. During the romantic period, the consequences of the industrial Revolution had become apparent; urban centres had sprung up, slums had proliferated *ad nauseam*. Such poverty was a massive contrast to the affluence of the upper classes. With a new sense of political consciousness, the Social Realists dedicated themselves to fighting this over-indulgence on wealth and beautiful art as well as any style that appealed to the eye or emotions. They focused on the ugly realities of contemporary life and sympathised with working-class people, particularly the poor. They recorded what they saw in an objective manner. Social Realism shocked the public, somehow, because they could not face its graphic portrayal of the realities contemporary life.⁴³⁷

While Socialist Realism encouraged propaganda in literature because of the fact that literature had become an instrument of state, Social Realism depicted the whole of life as it was experienced. In all, it was about literature being transformative, using the social context as raw material. This is unlike the liberal humanist's formalist approach to literature and abstract concept of the ability of literature to make us 'better persons' isolating the social contexts of life. That is why Terry

⁴³⁷ See Thomas, 2002.

Eagleton writes that what it means to be a better person, then, should be concrete and practical – concerned with people’s political situations as a whole. In other words, being a better person should no longer be about the immediate interpersonal relations among people; it should be a question of political and moral argument.⁴³⁸

5.2 The Post-colonial Dimension

The practical implication of literature in the post-colonial world is traceable up to the period of independence of many of the post-colonial countries. This excludes from the start the pre-colonial period when each of these nations employed its indigenous literary genre to explore the totality of life and living: In Sub-Saharan Africa, of course, oral literature had its practical social implication, which is also generic to the contemporary social implication of literature in its post-colonial period. All this and more constitute what is today known as post-colonial studies.

At present, post-colonial studies is a very popular discipline in contemporary literary studies; and because of its insistence on the connectedness of literature to the real world, a feature it shares with Marxism, it could be of practical purpose, especially in the use of literature in conflict resolutions.

⁴³⁸ Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 208.

Charles Nnolim, in his essay, insists “literature is judged always in relation to its social function; the better the function is fulfilled, the better the literature.”⁴³⁹

For Tanure and Obi (2002), however, social issues and the way people relate are major subjects of literature, whether in drama, fiction, or poetry. They are of the opinion that literature shows us the nature of human interactions –be it man and woman in love, or people involved in friendship: the individual and the larger society; in other words, human relations are the major preoccupation of literature. They argue that in the course of human interaction, ethics and moral values develop; group and individual comparisons occur, making people to be struggling among themselves for control; in other words, human beings are engaged in politics and politics involves power and authority – the struggle of a person or group to wield power over others. It also involves forcing or exercising one’s view of how people and authority should relate over others. They believe that literature makes us to know how these things happen, why they happen and even how power politics is being employed persuasively or coercively in the real world, which literature depicts. They argue that human life and activities constitute literature and, therefore, through literature, one could see

⁴³⁹ See Charles Nnolim, “African Literature in the 21st Century: Challenges for Writers & Critics’ in *New Directions in African Literature* edited by Ernest N. Emenyonu (London: James Currey Ltd, 2006), 2.

how people take advantage of power or authority to advance personal or group interests and how everybody in one way or the other is political and affected by politics.⁴⁴⁰ Furthermore, Tanure and Obi argue:

[P]olitics is usually integrated into group's[sic] culture, as the ancient Greeks did with democracy. Social practices and values are contested in politics. Family values and prayers in schools and public places are currently political issues in the United States. There are "cultural wars" as happen between conservatives and liberals. Political practices and institutions are parts of a people's culture. Politics also has its socialising ways. Thus, culture, society, and politics are inter-related in a people's existential experience.⁴⁴¹

For Ngugi (1997), literature is as much about human beings as politics is. In other words literature reflects "actual men and women and children, breathing, eating, crying laughing, creating, dying, growing, struggling, organising, people in history of which they are its products, its producers and analysts."⁴⁴²

Ngugi, being a Marxist, is of the opinion that there is no aspect of human life, including the boundaries of imagination that is not affected by the way that society is organised through the whole paraphernalia of power; that is, how and by whom that power has been achieved; which class controls and maintains it; and the ends to which power is put.

⁴⁴⁰ Tanure Ojaide and Joseph Obi, *Culture, Society, and Politics in Modern African Literature: Texts and Contexts* (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 5.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² See Ngugi wa Thion g'O, *Writers in Politics A re-engagement with issues of Literature and Society* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1997), 67.

Marxists, according to Ngugi, believe that society is structured according to class; therefore, the class in power controls not only the forces of production in the society, but also the cultural forces. And because the society is an interaction of so many forces –production, exchange, distribution and so on, the quality of life of the individual in society is therefore affected in so many ways: the forces affect their way of consumption of good and services, their private and social lives.⁴⁴³ These activities in both the social, political and cultural life of the individual, as he believes:

[C]onstitute a universe of moral significance, of values and determine the quality of human life and are what imaginative literature is about. The universe is itself simultaneously a product of a reflection on the material process of living. Its method may entail a refraction of the material process in order to reveal its inner vitality.⁴⁴⁴

Another theorist and critic of African literature, Irele Abiola tries for his part to capture the role of literature in society by quoting Chinua Achebe. He wrote, “[A]ll art is propaganda, though not all propaganda is art.”⁴⁴⁵ Irele believes that this terse and cogent statement by Achebe sets before us the truth about literature which is, more often than not, made hazy by theories, which fail to recognize the fact that all forms of artistic expression especially literature ought to refer to human life and consciousness if they have to assume any significance at all. In other

⁴⁴³ Ngugi, 1997, 67.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ See Abiola Irele, *The African Experience In Literature and Ideology*, (London: Heinemann, 1981), 1. He was quoting Achebe.

words, the literary work of a writer ought to bring to our consciousness the whole range of processes and forces that determine our experience in the modern age.⁴⁴⁶ Irele argues that the individual and collective experiences of human beings through literature are their own way of partaking in the drama of existence. Furthermore, he sees this drama of existence as originating from the relationship between Africa and the western world: The West's encroachment on the African psyche has made the experience part and parcel of the African reality and modified thus the general outlook of the average African as well as his view of the world. It is thus Literature's responsibility to represent directly the concrete facts of collective existence of peoples as well as reconstruct with imagery their state of consciousness which is a direct effect of their experiences.

The practical implication of the literature will then be, as this research has always emphasised, the effect of what the writer is doing in his or her work on the conscious reader, that is, the reader, who does not only read for entertainment but also for the fact that reading the text professionally is a demand on him or her, as well as the extent to which the conscious reader sees the text as telling him or her something⁴⁴⁷ and how this conscious reader applies the knowledge gained from the work read. Again, Abiola Irele insists "the question of universal relevance of

⁴⁴⁶ Irele, 1.

⁴⁴⁷ Ashcroft, *Postcolonial Transformations*, 2001, 73

literary expression, which is involved in the judgement of the contemporary African literature, can indeed be viewed from an African perspective."⁴⁴⁸ For, there is an obvious sense in which Achebe's *Arrow of God* means more to the African reader than, say, Balzac's *Le Pere Goriot*, or Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* than Racine's *Phedre*. The African works are closer to a reality (the reality of embodying the representations of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial conditions) and to an experience of which an African feels a part and therefore engages his responses in a way that is both direct and immediately real. For example, a Nigerian, especially if he or she is Igbo, reading Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* cannot but engage his or her responses to the representation of pre-colonial life and colonial encounters in a way that is both direct and immediately real. To say this, however, is not to deny the fact that foreign literatures, especially the two French works mentioned above, have meaning for the African – the same meaning an African work will have for a European – at a different level of his or her total "structure of feeling", a meaning which has less to do with his or her capacity to participate directly in the worlds the works evoke and the social values they embody than with the intense quality of the

⁴⁴⁸ Irele, 3.

works' imaginative engagement with the issues of the social and moral life.⁴⁴⁹ Abiola Irele argues further:

[T]he force of their insights into the complexities of the human spirit gives a depth to their works through which they come to express a general human condition. Thus, if **Balzac** and **Racine** are to be proposed to an African for his admiration, it is precisely because, in all great literature, value and meaning derive from the two complementary levels of the local and the universal reference. The point then is that literary work need not be dissociated from its reference to a particular context of life and experience, of existential awareness, to have a general human relevance and application.⁴⁵⁰

Abiola Irele insists that African literature will be of no significance if one fails to refer to its human implication, both traditional and modern. He, however, maintains:

[T]he term 'African' appears to correspond to a geographical notion but we know that, in practical terms, it also takes in those other areas of collective awareness that have been determined by ethnic, historical and sociological factors, all these factors, as they affect and express themselves in our literature, marking off for it a broad area of reference. Within this area of reference then, and related to certain aspects that are intrinsic to the literature, the problem of definition involves as well a consideration of aesthetic modes in their intimate correlation to the cultural and social structures which determine and define the expressive schemes of African peoples and societies.⁴⁵¹

He believes that African literature, like any other literature, is adaptable to structuralism, post-structuralism as well as New criticisms. Furthermore, Abiola Irele advocated content analysis of literary works in a sociological perspective, referring thereby to Emmanuel Obiechina's

⁴⁴⁹ See Irele, 1981, 3.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel (1975). Another important approach for him to literary criticism of African literature is that of sociology of literature, “which attempts to correlate forms and themes with moments of social production and consciousness.”⁴⁵²

Finally, Abiola Irele does not believe in the strong social implication of literature, which substitutes literary criticism, according to him, “for social theory and which indeed is based on a strongly articulated social theory – of an elite in touch through the best literature with a vital current of feeling and values, and having responsibility for maintaining, in the practice of criticism, the moral health of society.”⁴⁵³ He does not seem to be comfortable with this idea of the social implication of literature. As such he believes such positions have the capacity to make one take literature seriously enough to commit one’s total intelligence to making explicit what in literature takes the form of nuance and symbol, in other words, of applying its insights to the actual business of living⁴⁵⁴

That is where this research tends to disagree with Abiola Irele, who on the one hand talks about the human implication of African literature, while on other hand he disagrees with the strong social implication of literature, which substitutes literary criticism, according to him, “for social theory and which indeed is based on a strongly articulated social

⁴⁵² Irele, 23.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

theory – of an elite in touch through the best literature with a vital current of feeling and values, and having responsibility for maintaining, in the practice of criticism, the moral health of society.”⁴⁵⁵

While one understands Abiola’s fears, which is, in the main, of literature being overrun by sociology once sociologists begin to want to derive social theories from literature, one believes, however, that there should be no cause for this fear, since literary theory, a part of literary studies, is an interdisciplinary branch of scholarship in the humanities that includes sociology. And if social or political theories are derivable from literature, it should only make scholars of literature proud of the place of literature in the modern world. Again, if one does not apply the insights of literature to the actual business of living, one wonders where one has to apply them. After all one of the things literary scholarship does to one in the field is to equip one with the ability to transform information into knowledge and knowledge into judgement and action.

Furthermore, if Abiola Irele sees literature as “involving the deepest responses of the “facts” of human existence and intervenes in areas of experience where we assume consciousness of our situation with regard to others and the world”⁴⁵⁶, then he must accept the fact that such consciousness entails conscious knowledge of one’s situation,

⁴⁵⁵ Irele, 23-4.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

through experiences and insights. If the situation in question is negative, change becomes inevitable; but if it is positive, it calls for celebration.

Emmanuel Ngara, for his part, sets out to marry content and form in his bid to find an alternative way of practically engaging African literature. Content for him represented Marxist Criticism, while form is what he called Stylistic Criticism. This was a conscious effort on his part to identify the role of the writer and his work in literary production. For him, the form is as good as the content. He believes that African writers are in constant search of a new social vision as well as new aesthetic standards; that they occupy themselves not only with artistic forms, but also with ideological problems facing their societies; that they are very committed and extremely sensitive to the various social problems of their day and time and that they are constantly preoccupied with the role of art in society and are endeavouring to develop literary forms that match their social vision.⁴⁵⁷

Aside of his belief that Marxist Criticism should be married with Stylistic Criticism, Ngara believes that at present the philosophy that has most adequately engaged itself with the difficult problem of ideology is Marxist philosophy and it is his conviction that Marxist aesthetic offers a

⁴⁵⁷ Emmanuel Ngara, *Art and Ideology in the African Novel* (London: Heinemann, 1985), 1.

deeper understanding of the relationship between art and ideology than any other aesthetic in vogue today.⁴⁵⁸

Ngara believes that the critic of African literature ought to work hand-in-hand with the politician, the philosopher, theologian or educator to find solutions to the numerous African problems. The literary scholar has to bear in mind, therefore, that literary studies is both a critical as well as a hermeneutic practice which demands of its practitioners an ability for critical thinking; and that the literary text itself is criticism as much as it is the object of Criticism. Eagleton adds to that:

[C]riticism is not an innocent discipline: it is a branch of Marxist criticism to enquire into the history of criticism itself: to pose the question of under what conditions, and for what ends, a literary criticism comes about; for criticism has a history, which is more than a random collocation of critical acts. If literature is its object, it is not its sole point of genesis; criticism does not arise as a spontaneous riposte to the existential fact of the text, organically coupled with the object it illuminates. It has its own relatively autonomous life, its own laws and structures: it forms an internally complex system articulated with the literary system rather than merely reflexive of it.⁴⁵⁹

Furthermore, Emmanuel Ngara spelt out what he called the goals of Stylistic Criticism by differentiating general linguistics from Stylistic criticism. While general linguistic is about the analysis of the various levels of language, like the phonetic, the grammatical, the lexical as well as the semantic levels, Stylistics uses these general linguistic principles

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁹ Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London: NLB, 1976), 17.

to isolate the distinctive features of a variety of the idiosyncrasies of an author.⁴⁶⁰ Ngara argues that the stylistician makes use of the principles of general linguistic to identify the features of language which are restricted to a particular social context. The stylistician also accounts for the reasons why such features are used and when and where they are used. He also quantifies stylistic features in order to determine frequencies of occurrence. Furthermore, Ngara maintains that the literary stylistician can apply the methods of stylistics to the language of literature, while the sociolinguist's domain is that of the relationship between language and society, that is, the question of national languages, standard languages, dialects, orthographies, language contact, bilingualism, language and social class, and so on.⁴⁶¹ Ngara argues further:

[T]he distinction between the stylistician and the sociolinguist is not clear-cut, as the sociolinguist is frequently called upon to use the methods of the stylistician – who is in turn called upon to make use of the techniques and principles of general linguistics. Thus general linguistics becomes the basis of other branches of linguistics which overlap with one another [...].⁴⁶²

The Stylistic critic uses the analytic tools of the linguist and stylistician; he concerns himself with minute details of grammar, lexis, phonology, prosody, meaning, as well as with the wider issues of deviation from the

⁴⁶⁰ See Emmanuel Ngara *Stylistic Criticism and The African Novel* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 11-2.

⁴⁶¹ Ngara, 1982, 12.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

norm, the relationship between language and character, the relationship between the author and his audience. But, more than that, he relates his analysis of linguistic features to considerations of content value and aesthetic quality in art.⁴⁶³

While the stylistician, according to Lodge, “seems obliged to rely upon an implied or accepted scale of values, or to put aside questions of value altogether, the literary critic undertakes to combine analysis with evaluation.”⁴⁶⁴ The stylistic critic is, therefore, interested in theme, plot and character except that his interest is always related to the role that language plays in the delineation of these features of the novel.⁴⁶⁵

Stylistically, Ngara analyses fiction in the post-colonial African literary formalistic concept of literary appreciation and engagement into four constituents – that is, content, narrative structure, character and linguistic format. The subject-matter, the theme, the views and attitudes expressed by the writer as well as the message of the work constitute the content for him, while the linguistic format comprises the linguistic features proper and the para-linguistic affective devices. The linguistic feature, Ngara insists:

[C] onstitutes (a) the grammatical level, where questions of syntax, sentence type and the relationship between meaning and form are considered; (b) the phonological level, which does not exclude rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration, etc.; (c) the lexical level, which involves the

⁴⁶³ Ngara, 12.

⁴⁶⁴ D. Lodge, *Language of Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 56.

⁴⁶⁵ Ngara, 12.

writer's choice of words, the combination of words, metaphors, similes, their effects and meanings; (d) the level of tenor discourse which is about tone as well as the degree of formality and informality between the participants in the drama of the novel and between the author and the reader and (e) the graphological level at which one considers how the print, the colour and shape of the printed marks, punctuation and paragraphing contribute to the aesthetic appeal and readability of a work of art. And the para-linguistic affective devices refer to symbolism, myth, allusion, allegory, which cannot be analysed in terms of normal linguistic description.⁴⁶⁶

He argued further that linguistic format could be determined by medium: that is, the method used to communicate language; by mode: that is, the genre of the work under discussion and by language, context, and field of discourse, participants, and audience as well as personal factors.⁴⁶⁷

However, the method employed in this research cannot by any means be termed stylistic anymore than the researcher can be termed stylistician. While the beauty and evocativeness of language may matter in the process of trying to use a literary work as a case study in the understanding and resolution of ethnic conflicts, the details of grammar, lexis, phonology, prosody as in stylistic criticism, may be of no relevance. However, the relationship between the author and his audience or the reader is of utmost importance in the process of trying to involve literature practically.

⁴⁶⁶ Ngara, 17-22.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

In effect, Ngara was only arguing that the criticism of African literature could be as structural as it could be socially engaging. The writer, of course, - and the African writer in particular, engages, therefore, in critical realism in the course of the production of his or her work, that is, the writer's work is, according to Onoge, "engaged with the contemporary reality in a critical way"⁴⁶⁸, giving voices to silence; and the Marxists amongst them, like Ngugi, preoccupy themselves largely with the aims of the working class and the socialist world.

In some African countries, like it was in the former Soviet republic, literature has been engaged practically in the promotion of state and party ideologies and policies. What this would mean, in effect, is that the writers committed to this purpose would have become official writers. This was common in socialist countries like Guinea and the Congo, where writers were also leading political players and were committed to a common revolutionary cause. Therefore Sekou Toure, the leader of the Guinean people, who him-self was a revolutionary poet, wrote in the preface of the *Anthology of Official Writers* by Sikhe Camara:

[L]iterature requires a spirit of synthesis and a capacity for research and analysis that calls for the continent's intellectual elite to show greater interest and better devote themselves to specific activities. The immediate advantage comes from being able each time to take stock of the situation, of always and consciously

⁴⁶⁸ Omafume F. Onoge, "The Crisis of Consciousness in Modern African Literature." *In Marxism and African Literature*, edited by Georg M. Gugelberger (London: James Currey, 1985), 35.

enlisting emerging generations in literary production appropriate for the continent, to offer the outside world the possibility of getting a precise idea of intellectual and moral values, ideological and political principles, as well as of artistic forms of expression that indicate both the ethical and aesthetic level and essence governing African society.⁴⁶⁹

Basically, literature could be put to practical use whether the writer is writing officially or independently. Ben Okri, the British born Nigerian writer had once said that the writer is the barometer of his age. Probably that statement shows the use of literature and the role of the producer of literature, which is the writer in conjunction with the publisher. Okri, in his author's note to his classical novel *Dangerous Love* (1996), had remarked that in 1981, he published a novel called *The Landscapes Within* and that *Dangerous Love* had its origin in that Novel. He said that the characters, themes and story that early work depicted were all about the Nigeria close to his heart. He said that the story had continued to haunt and trouble him because in the work's spirit and essence, he sensed that it was incomplete. He said he was twenty-one when the novel was finished and that he poured his heart into the book, but that the heart alone was not enough in art as well as in life. Therefore he had always craved to write a novel which would celebrate the small details of life as well as the great, the inner as well as the outer. He said he had wanted to be faithful to life as lived in the round, and yet to tell a worthwhile

⁴⁶⁹ This is a translated piece quoted in Dominic Thomas's *Nation Building, Propaganda, And Literature in Francophone Africa*, 2002.

story. He said that the many things he wanted to accomplish were too ambitious for his craft at the time. However, that he had come to see that novel as the key to much of his past work, and perhaps also to his future, and became sure that it would not let him go until he had at least tried to redeem it. Therefore, many years passed before he took up the raw material again and from that grew this new work. In other words *Dangerous Love* was the fruit of much restlessness. He hoped, that he has, at last, managed to free the spirit of the work that he always wanted to write.(401) As such *Dangerous Love* is for Ben Okri a celebration of those small details of life as well as those great details; the inner as well as the outer life.

The protagonist of the Novel is Omovo; yet the story is woven around other great characters that represent human experiences: Ifeyiwa, her relatively older husband Takpo, Dr Okocha the master artist, Omovo's father, his wife Blackie, his run-away sons Umeh and Okur, Tuwo the woman seducer and returnee from England, Keme the journalist, Okoro and Dele, who are both Omovo's good friends and a host of others who represent ordinary people in complex societies.

Omovo is the life-force of the novel, because through his experiences, the writer was able to give us insight into the complex human nature as well as the nature of things in the Nigerian Society from which the setting was derived. Omovo lives with his father and his stepmother. He

falls in love with a young girl of his age, Ifeyiwa, who unfortunately is Takpo's wife. Ifeyiwa represents for us a repressive cultural practice among the Nigerian ethnic groups, where young girls are forced into marriages they would, under normal circumstances, not contract, by their parents, who have their own selfish interests at heart in contracting the marriages.

Ifeyiwa and Takpo her husband are a mismatch. While the former is young and has formal education, the latter is old, relatively rich, but illiterate.

Since Omovo's father lost his first wife, who was Omovo's mother, he relapsed into drinking; and having no good job, he is unable to provide for his sons, especially Umeh and Okur, whose results are good enough to take them to the university, but who could not because their father is not able to sponsor their education. They lose all respect for him and he frustrates them into leaving home. Their departure, which sobers Omovo, however, becomes a way for him "to explore the hidden meanings of his life and to come to terms with the miasmic landscapes about him. Painting became for him a part of his response to life: a personal and public prism." (84)

The narrator uses Omovo's painting to tell his readers how the writer creates his or her work: When Omovo encounters a couple of kids who

ask some money of him, Omovo gives them twenty-kobo - a denomination in Nigerian currency - thereafter:

[H] e turns his gaze upwards at the sky. With his eyes wide open he tried to imagine objects. He tried to imagine darkness. He couldn't. Then, shutting his eyes he tried to imagine trees, but he could not see them in all their solidity. He found that, as always, he had to create the image within him, he had to bring it into being as if he were painting it internally [...]. He began to think about the concrete basis of ideas, and about the long silent phases it had taken him to trap the scumscape on canvas, when his mind clouded. (86)

Furthermore, according to the narrator:

[O] movo did a quiet stocktaking. He had lost his mother. His brothers had gone out into the world and were destroying themselves. He loved Ifeyiwa, but she was married. He is alienated from his father. He had a bad school certificate result. He had a mindless job in a hostile office. (92)

In his moodiness, with a head inundated with thoughts, he remembers the body of the mutilated girl, a victim of ritual killing, he and his friend Keme, the journalist, had seen in the course of their sauntering in the night. Then:

[H] e wondered if the police, notoriously slow in their duties, had begun to investigate the horrible crime. As he thought about the girl, he felt guilty. He felt he should do something about it. But he was powerless. He felt in curious need of redemption. He felt that his powerlessness, and the powerlessness of all the people without voices, needed to be redeemed, to be transformed. With this feeling his urge to do the painting reached fever pitch. (93)

Could one therefore say that the narrator wishes his works to redeem both his powerlessness and the powerlessness of people without voices - will his works speak for them? Will they transform the powerlessness of those people without voices into an active weapon of engagement?

Yes, they could. How this is done has been explained in the practical implications of the primary literary texts that have already been used as conflict stories: *Season of Anomy, Iska and Destination Biafra*.

In one of those of their encounters, Ifeyiwa meets Omovo where he is reading Ngugi's *Weep Not Child*, a novel she had just read. They begin to discuss the novel:

"I cried when I finished it," she said.
"I didn't like the idea of the hero wanting to commit suicide."
"The world should not make people want to do that."
"Thee was young, and too much of a visionary, and people of
" the world are trapped in social roles."
"I like the title."
"It's from Walt Whitman."
"Weep not, child."
"let none of us weep." (102)

Consciously or unconsciously, the narrator shows how literature could be put to practical use in the discussion between Ifeyiwa and Omovo: the need to discuss ideas and the cognitive opportunities such discussions will avail the reader, for, as human beings, we are constantly attending to objects and events, interpreting them, comparing them with past experiences, placing them into categories and encoding them into memory, a cognitive process involved in perception, organisation, interpretation and comparing of information derived from observing the physical world and the happenings therein as well as the inner world which we carry in us. And because cognition is part and parcel of memory which involves the storage and retrieval of the pieces

of information so far gathered, it allows for reason, which is the ability to make references and draw conclusion using the knowledge gained from perception, having stored them for eventual retrieval. Through reflection, which is symbiotic to memory, cognition and reason, the quality of the stored information is evaluated and prescribed to the resolution of problems. And through the depth of insight the new relationships between the various segments of knowledge are recognised as the writer takes the reader back to Ifeyiwa's village in his typical flashback style in a bid to capture some of those small and great details of life he seeks to reveal, thereby exposing one of the ills in the society:

[H]er village was still in a state of aggression with the neighbouring village of Ugbofia [...] The two villages were about a mile from one another. The stream that flowed past both villages connected them in many ways. In the past they had intermarried. Then a boundary dispute grew and acquired serious dimensions. They now regarded one another with deep mutual suspicion. The things that connected also provided elements for discord. Histories were dredged up. One village called the other the descendants of slaves. The other village replied in words just as strong. The forest that separated them, the stream that connected them, the air that they both breathed, became permeated with violence. Ifeyiwa wondered bitterly why there should be any fighting at all. (108)

When again Omovo, the artist, meets his friend and colleague, Dr Okocha, the master artist, they discuss about their works. Omovo tells him of how his work was confiscated by government agents because they felt he was mocking the country through his work:

[A]nd so they mock our freedom, says Dr Okocha.
I wasn't mocking anything, Omovo says.
I know. But what can we do? If you tell the truth you

are in Trouble.
But if you see the truth and you keep quiet your spirit
begins to die. The position of the artist is a terrible one. (118)

Omovo is a thinking young man. In his quiet moments he sought meaning in life; and to escape the confusion of his feelings he spent some part of the evening in serene contemplation of the works of masters – Da Vinci, Cezanne, Van Gogh, Brueghel, Picasso and host of other works by great African artists. (247) He believes that human beings must create, each in their own way; and that it was only by the application of vision; only by making things that human beings could transform the negative “nothing”. (249) He wondered whether it was this “nothing” that murdered the girl in the park, whether it was the “nothing” that was responsible for his mother’s death, his father’s isolation; whether this “nothing” was powerlessness, impotence, failure, failure of vision, the victim’s heritage or whether it was the “nothing” that was casting the nation continually into darkness. (249)

This in effect is a wake-up call to create something before the dangerous “nothing” swallows one up; therefore, burning with the desire to create something, Omovo decided:

[I]n his paintings he wanted to create a simple vision, he wanted to start with what he knew, and what had hurt him, what had hurt all the people he identified with the most. He wanted his work to awaken the emotions and inexpressible states that he felt, the states that fed into streams, the streams that fed into great seas. He wanted the simple to contain the complex, and the complex to embody the simple. Above all, with his increasing awareness that the artist is nothing but a higher servant, a labourer, a mediator, a carpenter of

visions, a channel – above all, he wanted to be master of as many secrets of art as he was able. For he instinctively believed, and seldom questioned, that the highest function of art was to make people feel more, see more, feel more fully, see more fully. (250-1)

This quoted passage from Okri's work is a great insight into what the writer thinks his or her role is in a given society, into what he or she thinks his or her work ought to be doing; that is, the writer is a mediator.

Towards the end of the book, Omovo and Ifeyiwa finally have sex as culmination of their strong attraction to each other. Ifeyiwa's husband, Takpo, had seen his wife and Omovo enter a neighbour's room. He suspects some mischief and goes to knock at the door of the room disrupting his wife and Omovo in the act. Ifeyiwa insists that nothing happened between her and Omovo upon interrogation by her husband. Her husband continually solicits her love. But it is obvious that she does not love him: she only pities him; still she is not willing to be under his roof. She packs her things and absconds to her village. She eventually commits suicide. Her death and many other things about life bring upon Omovo, who is recuperating from the beating he sustained from the men hired by Takpo to terrorise him, a moment of illumination, which also is the highpoint of the narrator's critical engagement with social realities in contemporary Nigeria: Omovo had given himself over to the wonder that had awoken in him. The illumination that he received

became a tumble of words turning in him, exploding into thoughts and speeches, in being and words, in visions and emotions deeper than the urge that made him paint. Exploding in this state, he saw time break up into every moment, into endless possibilities of life. Time was the sea for him – a million lights revolved on every crest – past met present, present met future. Shaking with excessive love, he saw the vision of terrifying and unfinished portrait of Humanity in its helplessness, where hope was subverted and where corruption reigned. He felt burdened by desperate but unheard prayers of slaves and ancestors. He felt the treachery of leaders, the lies and corruption of the old generation, their destruction of future dreams, their rape of the past of their country and how they collectively rape their future. He wondered why Nigerians never learn their lessons. And since they refuse to learn from history, their existence becomes a vicious circle of squalor, which keeps producing mad and angry youths. Omovo wondered why there were traitors and disunity everywhere; he felt that if Nigerians remained deaf to history, then they would be enslaved not only by history, but also by themselves, their attitudes and their tribal madness and so each person would be for himself and the smiles of the rich would grow more predatory while children would weep their lives away burning in infernos of hunger and disease. Omovo reasoned that if Nigerian history had hurt Nigerians enough, they would stop betraying themselves and

instead transform themselves. He believed what Nigerians needed was vision, a clear and positive vision combined with action. He believed there was need for Nigerian people to have dreams, because in dreams begin responsibility. He thought that unless Africa was transformed, the continent would dwindle and be swallowed by predators. (362)

Furthermore, Omovo thought:

[...]. In vision begins responsibility - and even as we die, and shrink, and are taken over, reduced, seen as animals, as invisible, even as the streets spill over with the poor, even as we dance our lives away, and celebrate the powerful, worship like servants at their vulturous shrines, we can utter psychic decisions and set forces into motion that could change our lives forever -in vision begins action -in action begins our destiny -for the things that you do change you -and the changes affect other things you do - to him that hath shall be given -seek and ye shall find -to him that hath not shall be taken from, even that which they haveth - you either become, or you die -. (362)

Again, during the moment of illumination, a word kept repeating itself to Omovo. The narrator tries therewith to hypnotise his audience into action. He guides them on how to begin the action:

[T]ransfiguration - transfigure the deception of education - all education is bad until you educate yourself - from scratch - start from the beginning, from the simplest things - assume nothing -question everything - begin again the journey from the legends of creation - look again at everything - keep looking - be vigilant - understand things slowly -digest thoroughly - act swiftly -re-dream the world - restructure self - all the building blocks are there in there chaos - USE EVERYTHING - USE EVERYTHING WISELY - EVERYTHING HAS SIGNIFICANCE - . (363)

In *Dangerous Love* one sees what the post-colonial Nigerian writer sees as his or her duty in relation to his or her society. One sees also

what writing means for the writers: they see themselves as the barometers of their age and watchdogs of their societies. In examining the life of society, they do not exclude theirs because they too are members of society: like the God of creation, they remain within or behind or beyond or above their handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring their fingernails.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁷⁰ See Joyce, *The Portrait of the Artist as a young Man*, 245.

CONCLUSION

Right from the outset, this research has always focused on the need to portray the nature of post-colonial Nigerian ethnic conflicts as expressed in some literary texts and thereby see the possibility of using literature to initiate social change in tangible ways; for instance, the resolution of these conflicts. To achieve this, the scope of postcolonial studies as well as the direction the new trends in the humanities is taking, had to be highlighted; that is, that all ideas -economic, political, cultural, literary, social and scientific - are generally adaptable to real situations; but the extent to which they are adaptable is relative to the ability to make them concrete, tangible or graspable.

Colonialism of course was a halt on an evolution on its own natural path as well as an imposition of another evolution, which also was on its own natural path, on this other. As such the native was dominated culturally. English colonial masters had formulated a system, and in the opinion of Perkins:

[H]ad managed to convince most people of a lie - that it was the best system mankind could offer, that the prospects for a better world depended on channelling resources through the king of England, that an imperial approach to commerce and politics was the most efficient and humane means of helping the majority of the people - when in fact the truth was that the system enriched only a very few at the expense of many. This lie, and the resulting exploitation, endured and expanded for decades, until a handful of philosophers, businessmen, farmers, fishermen, frontiersmen, writers, and orators began to speak the truth.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷¹Perkins, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, 218.

That which the native stood to gain from those prospects for a better world, which depended on channelling resources through the Queen of England, was formal education. Therefore, most colonial natives became educated in line with the culture that was a contemporary phenomenon at the time. Their education was going to be a tool for self-rediscovery and eventual fight against colonial domination.

The beginning of the process of re-discovery was marked by efforts at critical self-examination and retrospective nostalgia of a distant but beautiful and pastoral past. Leading intellectuals like Nnamdi Azikiwe, the father of the Nigerian nation, started the intellectual fight for the retrieval of the remnants of the beauties of the African past through the struggle for independence. They had to prove that Africa and Nigeria particularly was capable of ruling itself. He founded the West African Pilot to that effect.

Chinua Achebe chose to retell the Nigerian story, that is, that the African past was not one long night of savagery redeemed by the colonising Europeans. His *Things Fall Apart* portrayed the African past through the paradigm of the ethnic Igbo nation of Nigeria.

The Franco-phone intellectuals and theorists, Fanon, Cesaire and Senghor, also tried to break the monologue that Europe has held for centuries which hammered on reason and observable realities. They

propounded the theory of Negritude, which hammered on the human-centeredness of the African world. However, some Anglo-phone intellectuals, like Wole Soyinka, the celebrated Nigerian writer, did not believe the tiger needed to pronounce its *tigritude* to prove its point; as such, that which the Franco-phone intellectuals were trying to prove in Negritude was exactly what Europeans set out to prove in all their theories that justified colonisation; that is, they compartmentalised life. And Negritude is also a compartmentalisation of life in that it is trying to prove that the African essence is uniquely African, instead of being uniquely human.

Furthermore, as literary production in Africa increased and became serious, the intellectual England, in their quest to remain in control, saw the need to redefine English literature. This definition had to include African literature, but just as a mere extension of English literature or put in their own very words: an overseas department of European literature; in effect it has no tradition of its own on which it could build upon, nor does it have models of its own, which it could imitate. No audience or constituency separate and apart from the European and no norm on which to judge its beauty and relevance.⁴⁷² The troika of Chinweizu, Madubuike and Onwuchekwa, in their monumental work,

⁴⁷² See Chinweizu, et al, *Toward The Decolonization of African Literature*, 3.

Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature (1980) went ahead to prove otherwise.

With Independence, African countries entered a new era of post-colonialism, which in itself became another epoch of redefining and understanding post-colonial societies. Nigeria, being a post-colonial society inherited a lot of problems that were the consequences of colonialism. The need to bring the different ethnic groups inhabiting the geographical entity together for the purpose of solely harnessing their resources for the development of the imperial centre became very necessary for colonial England, even when they truly knew the implications. One of the implications of that amalgamation is ethnicity.

Studies in Nigerian literature have not really focused on the nature of ethnic conflict in the society. Scholars have occupied themselves mostly with the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised. The implied nature of ethnic conflicts in the works that these scholars occupied themselves with have been greatly neglected; therefore, the burden of this research was to expose the nature of ethnic conflicts in the selected Nigerian literature and examine the possibility of using them in resolving these conflicts.

To achieve this, a method had to be developed in which the selected Nigerian literary works were studied as social practice, exposing the embedded values the characters, the authors and even the society

represent. The research insisted that the social circumstances of the society about which the works discourse influenced their production. As such, the writings of the writer are full of various dynamics and that the writers wanted to socially engineer or re-engineer their society.

Having surfaced the values embedded in the works in question, the research argued that any meaningful national orientation and development could only be possible with the practical involvement of literature, which must include theoretical works.

Furthermore, it argued by implication that literary works that dealt with ethnic conflict situations have to be studied as embodying the values of the society. As such, the characters represent real players in the society, or at least concrete or abstract human experiences. How the groups in the works in question view themselves can be understood by taking into cognisance the historical time in which the works were written and the social circumstances they tried to recast. And for the works to be relevant in ethnic conflict resolutions, the research had to cast them in the mould already made by Gary Furlong, a conflict resolution expert, by presenting the individual literary works as conflict stories showing the values held in the society, the nature of the relationship that exists among the ethnic groups represented in the works in question, the external factors that contribute to the conflicts, the mass of received information, whose impact could be both negative

or positive depending on the motive for impacting such information and the type of structure under which the groups live as well as the influence of that structure on the fuelling of ethnic conflict.

The research in the course of analysing the texts exposed the ideas embedded in them, systemised them and proffered them for practical involvement in conflict resolution, making explicit the role of the humanists in all this as well as what it considers to be the expectations from humanistic scholarship, to which literary studies is a subfield.

Finally, it is hoped that this research would make students of literature to really appreciate the fact that the ability of literary studies to make them better persons ought to be such that would make that state of being a better person really practical and concrete; that is to say, literary studies ought to be enough preparation for them to face the challenges of life and to be useful to the entire humanity and particularly their various societies in a positive and impacting way, so that literature or the cultural realm and its expertise will never again be institutionally divorced from their real connections with power – a case which was wonderfully illustrated for Edward Said by an exchange with an old college friend of his who worked in the department of defence for a period during the Vietnam war.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷³ Said, *Orientalism*, 2003, 2-3

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