



“Africa Writes B(l)ack”: Postcolonial Prose in Africa: Portraits of Pain and Past Predicaments

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ABSTRACT

In Africa, postcolonial literature is a vital tool for addressing the lasting effects of European colonization, which resulted in significant cultural, psychological, and financial losses. African authors use this literature as a forum to express the harsh realities of their people, refuting imperial narratives and regaining their cultural identities. The slogan "The Empire Writes B(l)ack" captures the many ways in which African writers address the colonial past, including the trauma of slavery, the erasure of indigenous cultures, and the continuous quest for self-definition. This essay explores the development of African postcolonial literature, emphasizing significant works, major themes, and the intricate relationship between adaptation and resistance in the face of colonial and postcolonial difficulties.

Keywords: Postcolonial literature, African identity, colonialism, enslavement, resistance, decolonization, cultural erasure.

Introduction

The colonization of Africa by European powers was not merely a political and economic enterprise but a profound cultural invasion that sought to reshape the continent's identity. The European imperialists imposed foreign languages, religions, and social structures, systematically erasing the rich and diverse cultures that existed across Africa. The aftermath of this colonial project is vividly captured in African postcolonial literature, which has become a critical medium for expressing the deep scars left by colonization and the transatlantic slave trade.

African authors such as Wole Soyinka, Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Chinua Achebe have utilized their writings to challenge colonialism's effects and provide a counter-narrative that reclaims African histories and voices. This essay examines how African postcolonial literature opposes imperialist ideas and advances the larger decolonization effort while reflecting the hardships and painful realities of colonization. This research intends to demonstrate the transformational potential of literature in reinventing African identity and fending off the lasting consequences of European rule by examining important works.

This research paper offers a summary of the ways in which African postcolonial literature tackles the difficulties and disappointments that African countries encountered both during and after European domination. It examines important ideas and writings that emphasize the painful realities of slavery and cultural erasure while highlighting the continuous fight for self-expression and identity.

Discussion

African literature has frequently dealt with the transatlantic slave trade and its fallout. The historical pain of slavery and its ongoing impacts on African civilizations are shown in Buchi Emecheta's 1977 novel *The Slave Girl* (Emecheta 33). Our *Sister Killjoy* (1977) by Ama Ata Aidoo highlights the psychological effects of slavery and colonialism while criticizing the Western world's economic and cultural exploitation of Africa (Aidoo 67). Through literature, historical injustices may be addressed and African tales from a Eurocentric viewpoint can be reclaimed.

Since African writers use literature to question and undermine colonial narratives, the idea of "writing back" is essential to postcolonial discourse. The conflict between native Yoruba customs and British colonial control

is highlighted in Wole Soyinka's 1975 book *Death and the King's Horseman*, which also demonstrates the difficulties of cultural resistance (Soyinka 89). Comparably, Ngũgĩ's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) emphasizes the fight for emancipation while examining the effects of the Mau Mau rebellion on Kenyan society (Ngũgĩ 93). African storytelling continues to rely heavily on oral traditions and folklore, which strengthen cultural heritage and identity.

Despite its importance, postcolonial African literature struggles to remain genuine while also being readable by readers throughout the world. The emphasis of topics that are acceptable to Western readers is frequently the result of the marketing of African literature in Western markets (Mbembe 112). With European publishing firms controlling a large portion of the worldwide distribution, neocolonialism still has an impact on African literary creation (Adesanmi 74). Furthermore, non-African writers benefit from African stories without fairly portraying indigenous viewpoints, which makes cultural appropriation a controversial topic (Huggan 136).

Literature Review

Postcolonial African Prose: Portrayals of Persecution, Cultural Cancellation, Linguistic Legacies, and the Lament of Labor Lost

The historical experiences of colonization, resistance, and cultural rebirth on the continent are intricately linked to the study of postcolonial African literature. African authors have challenged persistent neocolonial effects, reclaimed indigenous identities, and resisted imperial narratives via their literary works. Examining previous research on postcolonial African literature, this study focuses on themes of enslavement, cultural erasure, colonial oppression, and literary resistance. Theoretical viewpoints from postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Edward Said are incorporated into the study.

A critical framework for examining how African literature reacts to colonial and neocolonial institutions is offered by postcolonial studies. The idea of the "Other," which refers to how African identities were created under European empire, was first presented by Edward Said in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. In his 1994 book *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha presents hybridity and imitation as essential components of postcolonial discourse. These ideas are relevant to African literature as authors grapple with the intricacies of cultural identity. The psychological effects of colonization and the necessity of revolutionary decolonization are highlighted in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), a topic that appears in numerous African literary works.

For examining how African literature reacts to colonial and neocolonial systems, postcolonial studies offer a critical perspective. In his 1978 book *Orientalism*, Edward Said presented the idea of the "Other," which refers to the way European imperialism shaped African identities. As authors of African literature grapple with the intricacies of cultural identification, Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994) presents hybridity and imitation as essential components of postcolonial discourse. A common topic in many African literary works, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) emphasizes the psychological effects of colonization and the necessity of revolutionary decolonization.

Things Fall Apart (1958) by Chinua Achebe, which depicts the damaging effects of European colonial power on Igbo society, is still regarded as a classic work of postcolonial African literature. The novel criticizes how colonialism disrupted indigenous customs, language, and administration. *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o explores Kenya's political fight against British colonialism from a variety of angles, emphasizing treachery and resistance. According to scholarly research on these works, African literature preserves indigenous histories that were frequently left out of European narratives, acting as an archive of colonial experiences (Gikandi 2003).

Indigenous cultures were erased by colonial language and educational systems, which is one of the main topics of postcolonial African literature. Language is an instrument of cultural dominance, according to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's 1986 book *Decolonising the Mind*, which urges African authors to employ their native tongues. In a similar vein, African literature in European languages, according to Obi Wali (1963), maintains colonial reliance. Some academics contend that linguistic imperialism still stands in the way of full decolonization, while others, like Achebe (1964), support the use of English as a medium for communicating with a worldwide audience.

Colonial linguistic and educational programs erased indigenous cultures, which is one of the main topics of postcolonial African literature. African authors should employ their native tongues, according to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), which contends that language is an instrument of cultural dominance. African literature created in European languages, according to Obi Wali (1963), also serves to maintain colonial reliance. Achebe (1964) is one academic who argues in favor of using English to reach a worldwide audience. However, some academics contend that linguistic imperialism still stands in the way of real decolonization.

Erasure of indigenous cultures by colonial linguistic and educational programs is a major issue in postcolonial African literature. In *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o makes the case that language is an instrument of cultural dominance and urges African authors to employ their native tongues. Similarly, African literature published in European languages, according to Obi Wali (1963), maintains colonial reliance. Although some academics, like Achebe (1964), support the use of English to communicate with a worldwide audience, others contend that linguistic imperialism still stands in the way of real decolonization.

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Documenting the transatlantic slave trade and its effects has been greatly aided by literature. *The Slave Girl* (1977) by Buchi Emecheta examines the psychological and physical effects of slavery and makes comparisons between gendered discrimination in the present and slavery in the past. *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) by Ama Ata Aidoo criticizes the neocolonial systems that still take use of African identity and labor. Scholarly examination of these works reveals how African authors challenge Eurocentric depictions of slavery by rewriting stories of captivity from African viewpoints (Bryce 2008).

A key component of postcolonial discourse is the idea of "writing back" as a means of literary resistance (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989). African authors reconstruct historical events from indigenous viewpoints, challenging colonial historiography. In *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), Wole Soyinka asserts the legitimacy of African worldviews while dramatizing the clash between Yoruba customs and British colonial control. Oral storytelling techniques are also used in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* to combat colonial historical misconceptions. These pieces demonstrate the ways in which African literature functions as a vehicle for intellectual and cultural resistance.

Even while African literature has become more well-known worldwide, questions over its authenticity, commercialization, and neocolonial impact still exist. African authors who publish in Western markets, according to critics, are under pressure to fit into preconceived notions (Huggan 2001). Furthermore, non-African writers frequently take African themes without providing realistic depiction, which raises concerns about cultural appropriation (Adichie 2009). These problems are a reflection of continuous challenges in the creation of postcolonial literature.

The importance of African literature in recording colonial history, thwarting cultural erasure, and recovering indigenous identities is highlighted by existing studies. African literary discourse continues to revolve on themes of oppression, resistance, and decolonization. In order to guarantee that indigenous voices continue to influence global narratives, future studies should examine the ways in which digital platforms and new media support the development of African literary traditions.

5. Methodology

Research Design

Using a qualitative research methodology, this study examines postcolonial African literature through textual analysis and critical discourse analysis. The study is set up to look at how colonialism affected African communities historically, culturally, and psychologically, as well as how African authors responded by creating literature. The research is guided by a theme analytical framework, which guarantees that important topics like identity, resistance, decolonization, and cultural preservation are methodically covered.

Data Collection

Secondary sources, such as published books, journal articles, and critical essays on postcolonial African literature, are the main source of information for this study. Core materials for examination include primary literary classics like Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*, and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. These pieces provide light on the subjects of postcolonial struggle, cultural erasure, and colonial oppression.

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Analytical Framework

Drawing on influential theorists like Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Homi K. Bhabha, the study uses postcolonial theory as its primary analytical framework. Examining how African authors "write back" against imperial narratives is made possible by this methodology. Additionally, language, power dynamics, and identity construction in postcolonial literature are examined through the technique of critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Categorization by Theme

The main topics that come up in the literature serve as the framework for the research. These consist of:

1. Examining the sociopolitical effects of European authority in Africa is the first step in the historical context of European colonization.

2. Postcolonial Literature in Reaction to Colonization: Examining the ways in which African writers subvert colonial narratives.
3. Cultural Erasure and Psychological Setbacks: Examining how African identity is shaped by language, education, and religion.
4. The Bitter Legacy of Enslavement: Evaluating how slavery and its lingering repercussions are portrayed in literature.
5. Reclaiming African Identity: Researching the role of literature in language reclamation and cultural rebirth.
6. Postcolonial African Literature Challenges: Dealing with topics including neocolonial influences, commercialization, and authenticity.
7. Conclusion: Outlining the main conclusions and talking about how African postcolonial literature will develop going forward.

Citations and Referencing Styles

All sources are referenced in accordance with the Modern Language Association's (MLA) 9th edition standard to guarantee academic rigor and uniformity. The references are listed in alphabetical order to make cross-referencing simple.

Moral Aspects to Take into Account By correctly citing the original authors of ideas, the study upholds scholarly integrity. Interpretations are backed up by direct textual evidence, and care is made to prevent text distortion. There were no human participants used in this study because it was based on secondary data, hence ethical approval issues were resolved.

Limitations

This study focuses on well-known African authors and is restricted to works produced in English and French. Although this offers a solid foundation for research, it ignores the rich variety of indigenous languages and oral traditions that greatly influence African literary expression. To offer a more thorough grasp of postcolonial narratives across various African language and cultural contexts, future study might include ethnographic approaches.

Applications and Transitions in Theory

In order to investigate the long-lasting effects of colonialism on African literature, the research paper *Africa Writes Back* is organized around postcolonial theoretical frameworks. The article creates a coherent narrative that charts the development of African literature from colonial oppression to modern resistance and identity reclamation by utilizing important postcolonial ideas and switching between different analytical lenses.

The study examines how colonial oppression, cultural erasure, and the quest for identity are reflected in African literature by drawing on a variety of theoretical stances, chiefly Postcolonial Theory, Cultural Criticism, and Language Politics.

Scholars like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak developed postcolonial theory, which serves as the basis for examining how African literature challenges colonial narratives. The topic of how Africa has traditionally been portrayed in Eurocentric discourses is informed by Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*. While Spivak's critique of the subaltern's voice directs the investigation of African authors recovering indigenous narratives, Bhabha's ideas on hybridity and mimicry influence the research of African writers' confrontations with colonial legacies.

The Wretched of the Earth (1961) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) by Fanon are essential works that explore the cultural and psychological isolation that colonized Africans endure. Discussions of cultural erasure and identity crises in African literature are supported by his examination of internalized inferiority and cultural exile.

When analyzing the ways in which colonial languages facilitated cultural alienation, Ngũgĩ's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) provides a critical viewpoint. African writers' battles against linguistic imperialism and the reclaiming of local tongues in postcolonial literature are examined through the lens of his support for writing in indigenous languages.

Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), which places the transatlantic slave trade and diasporic identity construction in perspective, serves as a foundation for the study of African literature's interaction with slavery. The study looks at how African authors like Ama Ata Aidoo and Buchi Emecheta portray the social and psychological effects of slavery and how literature may be used to make amends for the past.

The last portion discusses the challenges encountered by contemporary African authors using Kwame Anthony Appiah's views on cosmopolitanism and African identity. Neocolonialism and cultural appropriation are used as lenses to examine the conflict between authenticity and appeal to a global market as well as the commodity of African literature.

Structural Flow and Transitions from Colonial Histories to Literary Futures: Handling Language Politics, Enslavement, Erasure, and Current Issues in African Literature

The study uses transitional procedures that guarantee smooth transitions between parts in order to preserve logical coherence.

By demonstrating how colonial policies had a direct impact on African oral traditions, education, and linguistic heritage, the shift from colonial history to literary representation is accomplished. This proves that literary resistance and colonial oppression are directly related.

Naturally, the conversation around cultural erasure shifts to language politics, highlighting the ways in which colonial languages were used as tools of oppression. A more thorough examination of language as a location of resistance and identity reconstruction is made possible by this shift.

The legacy of slavery is examined in relation to neocolonialism and contemporary issues, illustrating the persistence of oppression in many ways. The study establishes a temporal and thematic connection between past and contemporary conflicts by demonstrating how historical subordination transforms into economic and cultural marginalization.

The last parts suggest new avenues for African literature in opposition to neocolonial narratives and highlight writing back as an ongoing struggle. A need for linguistic, cultural, and narrative sovereignty in African literary traditions concludes the article.

This essay creates a multifaceted investigation of African literature's function in opposing and rewriting colonial myths by fusing postcolonial ideas, historical background, and literary analysis. While the organized transitions guarantee a cogent and convincing story, the theoretical applications anchor the ideas in accepted academic language. In the end, *Africa Writes Black* emphasizes how African writing has a lasting ability to recover agency, identity, and historical truth.

Summary of Key Findings

A complex and multidimensional reaction to the effects of colonialism and the continuous struggles African writers and societies confront may be found in the study of postcolonial African literature. Several important conclusions have come out of this analysis, emphasizing the tenacity of African cultures, the use of literature as a tool for resistance, and the ongoing influence of neocolonial forces.

Literary Resistance and Colonial Legacies: The Influence, Erasure, and Reclamation of African Identity in Postcolonial Conversation--

The significant cultural, social, and economic upheavals that occurred throughout the continent were facilitated by the historical background of European colonization in Africa. In addition to enforcing foreign control and exploitation, colonization aimed to eradicate native identities, cultures, and languages. African cultures suffered greatly as a result of colonization, which caused communities to become divided, Western religion and education to be imposed, and African knowledge systems to be marginalized. Understanding the development of postcolonial literature as a reaction to these repressive systems requires knowledge of this historical context.

African authors have used postcolonial literature as a potent tool to express their identities, recover their history, and subvert the prevailing narratives that colonial forces imposed. African writers have utilized literature to address colonialism's legacy and to express the experiences of the colonized via themes of resistance, identity, decolonization, and the rewriting of history. Important African authors like Wole Soyinka, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Chinua Achebe have made important contributions by highlighting indigenous traditions, challenging colonial and neocolonial influences, and illustrating the complexity of African society.

African communities were affected psychologically and culturally for a long time by colonization's attempt to eradicate native customs and impose Western standards. In order to address these concerns, postcolonial literature has emphasized the value of conserving indigenous languages, customs, and worldviews. Ngũgĩ's *Decolonising the Mind* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* provide as examples of the severe cultural and psychological losses that African people endured while living under colonial control. As a result, literature has evolved into a tool for preserving culture, fending off the forces of cultural erasure, and promoting the importance of African identities.

A sad legacy that still has an impact on African writing is the transatlantic slave trade and its consequences. African authors like Ama Ata Aidoo and Buchi Emecheta have addressed the atrocities of slavery and its long-lasting effects on African cultures and diasporas via their works. In order to address the historical injustices of slavery and its lingering effects on collective memory, African literature is essential since it chronicles the trauma and resiliency of enslaved population.

Reclaiming African identity is one of the main topics of postcolonial African literature. African authors have been emboldened to challenge colonial myths and proclaim their own cultural viewpoints by the idea of "writing back" against the empire. African writers have established a literary realm that respects and conserves African heritage by fusing oral traditions, folklore, and indigenous languages. Works like Ngũgĩ's *A Grain of Wheat* and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* are prime examples of how literature may be used as a platform for identity.

Postcolonial literature still faces obstacles including authenticity, commercialization, neocolonialism, and cultural appropriation, notwithstanding the progress achieved in recovering African voices. African literature is frequently commodified by the global literary market, which favors works that appeal to Western tastes and perpetuates stereotypes. The integrity and independence of African literary expressions are also seriously threatened by persistent neocolonial influences and the appropriation of African cultural components by non-African authors and markets reclamation and cultural resistance.

Even with the progress achieved in recovering African voices, postcolonial literature still faces obstacles such cultural appropriation, neocolonialism, commercialization, and authenticity. The international literary market frequently commodifies African literature by giving preference to works that appeal to Western preferences and perpetuating stereotypes. Further undermining the integrity and independence of African literary forms are persistent neocolonial influences and the appropriation of African cultural aspects by non-African writers and markets.

Economic and cultural power disparities impact the creation and distribution of African literature, making neocolonialism a recurring problem in the literary world. Authentic depiction is still being weakened by the predominance of Western publication norms and the commercial exploitation of African cultural icons. Supporting a range of African perspectives, encouraging ethical business practices, and opposing the commodity of African traditions are all necessary to address these problems.

Postcolonial African literature's journey is a reflection of a larger fight for self-definition, cultural survival, and resistance to repressive powers. African authors have employed literature as a vehicle for cultural and political activity in addition to creative expression. Postcolonial African literature affirms the lasting force and resilience of African nations by recovering narratives, sustaining indigenous traditions, and addressing the effects of slavery and colonialism. In order for African literature to flourish on its own terms and contribute to a more just and inclusive global literary environment, it is imperative that we keep promoting and elevating African voices going ahead.

Conclusion

Africa's exploration of postcolonial African literature B(l)ack: Postcolonial Prose in Africa: Portraits of Pain and Past Predicaments, written by the author, demonstrates a deep understanding of the psychological, cultural, and historical wounds caused by colonialism. In order to affirm indigenous identities via writing, expose the injustices of the colonial and neocolonial institutions, and recover their stories, African authors have been essential. The approach has shown the legacy of colonization and the tenacity of African communities by showing how literature can be both a location of resistance and a tool for cultural preservation. The importance of language in forming postcolonial discourse is one of the study's main conclusions. In order to combat cultural erasure, authors such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe have argued for the use of indigenous languages and provided examples of the effects of linguistic imperialism. Furthermore, postcolonial literature emphasizes themes like identity, resistance, and decolonization, which support the idea that African literature actively shapes new, self-determined narratives rather than just responding to colonial oppression.

These findings have ramifications that go beyond the literary world and into more general conversations about historical fairness and cultural sovereignty. Literature continues to be an essential instrument for social change, agitation, and education as African countries struggle with neocolonial effects. There are benefits and drawbacks to African literature's commercialization in international markets, making it necessary to strike a balance between accessibility and authenticity. International appreciation of African literature has the potential to elevate underrepresented voices, but it also runs the risk of warping stories to conform to Western ideals. African authors must so carefully negotiate this difficult terrain in order to maintain the authenticity and representation of their lived experiences in their works.

The postcolonial conversation is made more difficult by the persistence of cultural appropriation in literary and scholarly contexts. While frequently ignoring the historical and political factors that influence these narratives, Western institutions continue to profit from African literary traditions. The fight for fair representation is still continuing strong, and African authors, publishers, and academics need to take charge of their cultural output. This need additional literary festivals, publishing enterprises run by Africans, and scholarly projects that give priority to local viewpoints.

In order to reach a larger audience, postcolonial African writing must develop further, including both contemporary literary styles and traditional storytelling traditions. African history, experiences, and literary accomplishments may be recognized and honored through the incorporation of African literature into international curriculum. Furthermore, social media and digital storytelling give African authors new ways to distribute their writing outside of the bounds of traditional publication, creating a more accessible and inclusive literary scene.

The ability of African postcolonial literature to be vibrant and sensitive to current sociopolitical circumstances will determine its destiny. In order to show that postcolonial literature is not limited to historical tales but rather continues to reflect and critique contemporary issues, emerging African voices are delving into topics like gender, migration, and climate change. The works of modern authors who oppose repressive systems and

promote social justice demonstrate how literature's connection with activism enhances its capacity to effect change.

Africa Writes Black ultimately demonstrates the timeless ability of African literature to rewrite history, question colonial legacies, and celebrate cultural pride. The practice of "writing back" is still crucial in order to guarantee that Africa's many and vibrant voices continue to influence global literature and thought. In addition to conserving the past, postcolonial literature is thriving because it is creating a future in which African narratives are prominent, honored, and self-defined.

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