

Postcolonial  
Representation  
of the African Woman  
in the Selected Works  
of Ngugi and Adichie



# Postcolonial Representation of the African Woman in the Selected Works of Ngugi and Adichie

By

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To My Mom



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

*“They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented”.*

—Karl MARX

The last fifty years have seen a huge shift in the role of women, the way they represent themselves and even the way they are represented regardless of their ethnicity, race, nation and skin color, and African woman is no exception. While there are variations in the position of women in all regions, the fact that women are subjected to different types of oppression and dominance is an indisputable fact. Women of all nations have been exposed to various types of injustice and persecution in every corner of the world, but with the rise of feminist movements, the oppression and neglect of western women have declined to a certain degree. On the other hand, the situation is the reverse for the African women since indigenous women with a certain standard of life during the pre-colonial period lost their current status after colonization. They have been incarcerated into their houses where they lose their freedom, individuality and speech. Especially the transformation of African women into silenced figures is one of the greatest characteristics of patriarchal structure because, in male-dominant societies, silencing can be used as a kind of vehicle to control the women. “Silence presents the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create women an inferior status” (Almeida, 1995, p. 1). American feminist author bell hooks, who advocates the idea that patriarchy gives men the feeling of superiority in silencing women, asserts that “patriarchal masculinity teaches men that their sense of self and identity, their reason for being, resides in their capacity to dominate others” (hooks, 2000, p. 70). Men’s power of domination and constructed feeling of superiority induce the suppression and oppression of women accompanied by several problems. One of these problems is the African women’s exposure to colonial and patriarchal repression. During and after the colonization process, the oppression felt by postcolonial African women has doubled.

Upon their double colonization by colonialism and patriarchy, they are densely repressed and alienated from their history although they have been essential fabrics in economic and social areas in their land for centuries.

Colonialism is the most important factor in changing roles of African women in their own lands. It can also be said that in pre-colonial times, contrary to the literary misrepresentations, African women had a better status than their current position. According to the American researcher and scholar Niara Sudarkasa, African women were “queen-mothers; queen-sisters; princesses, chiefs, and holders of other of-fices in towns and villages; occasional warriors during precolonial period” (1986, p. 91). Moreover, in various fields of work, such as agriculture, trade and crafts, African women had a prominent position, which made them indispensable dynamics in the economy. However, since they lost their social and political power in the new atmosphere created by colonialism, they could not prevent themselves from being exposed to various difficulties. As a consequence, they have turned into silenced figures whose economic, social and educational rights were taken away from them. Upon losing their former position and status in their own lands, African women have been muted and could not voice their sufferings. Thus, they also could not have the chance to represent themselves, particularly because of colonial pressure. The loss of power and authority that African women formerly possessed is a fundamental component in their failure to represent and justify themselves. So, it can be said that the politics of representation is directly related to power and control, which means that the western colonizers having power and control over African women have not only taken over the lands of these people, but have also gained the right to represent them. The colonialists, who held power and control, thus began the process of constructing ‘the other’, who are regarded exotic and inferior. Iconoclast intellectual Edward Said, who has an essential place in postcolonial studies, touches on this orientalist perception in his epochal work *Orientalism* and claims that “Orientalism is—and does 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” (1978, p.12). Said actually draws attention to how the representations of orientalism spread to literary works and the western perspective. He believes that orientalists create the ‘Orient’ through their writings by means of their power in the literary world. “For Said, Western representations of the Orient, no matter how well-intentioned, have always been part of this damaging discourse. Wittingly or unwittingly, they have always been complicit with the workings of Western power” (Bertens, 2001, p. 204). In his work, Said shows the skewed portrayal of the Orient and particularly of the Oriental woman, with Flaubert’s thoughts

after sleeping with an Egyptian woman. The woman Flaubert mentions “never spoke of herself, never represented her emotions, presence or history because Flaubert spoke for and represented her” (Said, 1978, p. 6). Not only does Flaubert possess Kuchuk Hanım’s body, but he also sees the right to represent and talk for her, giving readers the impression that Kuchuk Hanım is a typical Oriental woman. With his reference to Flaubert, Said shows that oriental women are presented in a stereotypical way. Likewise Said, Indian English scholar Homi Bhabha also states that colonized people are constantly associated with “terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust, and anarchy” (2012, p. 104).

African women have also faced a similar situation along with colonial and patriarchal pressure on them. As in the orientalist perception, African women have been depicted with cliché roles and positions. As a natural outcome, such a representation is rendered normal. African women’s stereotypical representations and silencing often hindered them from expressing the problems they had faced. In the literary world, the condition of African women and their sufferings started to take place when postcolonial authors began to discuss these issues in the 1950s.

A new way of thinking, called postcolonial theory, has arisen with the focus of the postcolonial writers that colonialism and imperialism should be analyzed together in the historical process to fully understand the condition of African people. Postcolonial theory has moderately dealt with the problems of colored women; however, it was not enough to show the real and exact condition of African women in the postcolonial world. Although postcolonial authors have referred to the condition of African women relatively, it could not fully reflect the problems faced by native African women, as it is a male-centered theory. The snags and sufferings of people in the postcolonial world have appeared in postcolonial works, unfortunately, the male dominant perception in the theory did not let African women be at the center of the theory. The principal focus was on the colonization; however, women of color have also been suppressed by patriarchy and their own societies. In other words, this idea of ‘double colonization’ was hardly noticeable or studied in early postcolonial works. Gayatri Spivak, one of the prolific scholars of the postcolonial theory, points out the double colonization of colonized women with her notable observation. With specific vehemence on the subaltern, Spivak utters that “the effect of biological difference on women is denser than men” (1988, pp. 83-85). This problem, however, is not because women are not involved in their resistance to the colonial powers or they have preferred to stay at home instead of working. The key explanation for this issue is the male-dominated influence on the construction

of gender roles in the historical colonial phase and the resistance of the colonized. Furthermore, if we take this issue in the context of colonialism, the “subaltern does not have a history and cannot speak at all regardless of the male or female, and the subaltern women are overshadowed deeper than men, and their colonization is doubly” (1988, p. 83).

Women of color, who were overshadowed and not allowed to express themselves despite being a crucial element of their society, were represented to a certain extent by postcolonial writers, however, they could not have their voices completely heard due to the male-dominated system inherent in postcolonial theory. Women of color could not find a place for themselves in feminist theory, too. Due to the limitations and narrow spectrum of postcolonial and feminist theories, a new theory was needed that would clearly illustrate the troubles and plight of colored women and give them a chance to represent themselves. Therefore, postcolonial feminist theory has started to gain eminence in the 1980s as a voice for the non-white women’s problems. This new theory is a synthesis of postcolonial and feminist theories, focusing on the condition of women in the postcolonial world. In some ways, it completes the lack of feminist theory, which ignored the colored woman. Postcolonial feminist theory has touched upon the problems and conditions of colored women with regards to race, gender, and other individual differences. This is the main distinction of postcolonial feminist theory from the earlier feminist movements. With the rise of postcolonial and postcolonial feminist theories, the problems and sufferings of colonized women have been told; however, it does not mean their sufferings have ended. It is still difficult for women of color to receive adequate medical service, education, and to find opportunities in business life. They are still seen at the base of the social order. “The majority of the group living in poverty is composed of women. This rate has increased to 70 percent in most African countries. It has become quite stiff for a woman to manifest herself in social life and continue her life in better conditions” (Mutume, 2005). The problems of nonwhite women increase even more after they cross the border of their own land. When a black woman is outside her land and borders, her race matters every time. Although most people think that race is directly related to our biological condition, literary scholar Ania Loomba vindicates the contrary. She claims, “it is not a biological phenomenon; on the contrary races are socially imagined rather than biological identities” (1998, p. 121). That means, contrary to popular belief; individuals and societies create race regarding people’s ethnic, financial, social, and national status. However, if you are a woman, racial discrimination you have to bear is more serious in comparison with the men. Since nonwhite women have been the outcasts both in their own lands and

within the borders of other countries, it is more challenging for them to find a place in society pushing them to the margin.

The reason native African women experience hassle in finding a place, especially in their countries, is their alienation from their own land. Once African women lost their access to the land, they also lost their economic independence and became dependent on men. Apart from losing their economic freedom, their burdens have increased further owing to the dominant and keenly felt gender roles in their own society. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, one of the two writers I have studied in my book, claims that “the problem with gender is that it prescribes how women should be rather than recognizing how they are. Imagine how much happier they would be, how much freer to be their true individual selves, if they didn’t have the weight of gender expectations” (2015, p. 16). Not only society but also television, magazines, and books prescribe how women should behave and what they should do to attract men. The underlying reason for this condition is the social pressure on women. The assumption that a woman should marry when she reaches a specific age is the most noxious societal pressure on women. If she does not marry in the age range deemed appropriate for her, the society regards and inclines it as a failure. To overcome this, Adichie utters that “what should be taught to young girls and women is that this pressure on them is not really crucial at all, that nobody can inculcate what they should or should not do, and most importantly, being a girl is not a handicap for them” (2015, p. 9). The words of Adichie are ideal on a discursive basis, however, it cannot be assumed that in real life her advices are completely matched. Since gender roles are like solid iron cages, it is not easy to break the lines to go outside of this invisible cage. While the society determines the rules, we see the male-dominated attitude in the formation of these rules. For example, in the way boys and girls are raised, we can see this discrimination very incontestably. While providing great comfort to men in clothing and every stage of their lives, girls are told to “close their legs, cover their bodies”. Due to our attitude towards girls, we prevent them from somehow becoming themselves and realizing their potential, causing them to shrink. Even when we behave as if we are giving girls absolute freedom, we restrict them. For example, we may allow girls to have ambition and target, but not in the same way that we let boys. They may be successful, but their success should not be too much. They cannot be more successful than boys since boys perceive girls’ success as a kind of threat to themselves.

One of the main issues Adichie draws attention to is the inculcation and upbringing of girls for the idea of marriage. A girl has to always keep in

mind the idea that she will get married, and it is the most pivotal thing for her when she is making decisions or choices. While the families have raised girls in the notion that marriage is a crucial and vital thing for their future lives, they do not impose this idea on their boys. On the other hand, they teach girls to compete with each other in order to attract the attention of a man; however, the thing that should be done is to teach them to compete and struggle for their own careers and achievements, not for the purpose of attracting men's attention. Owing to the coercion against girls starting from childhood, these girls become women who cannot express their desires, emotions, and hurdles. They feel forced to be silent and cannot opine precisely what they think. Moreover, they are becoming women who will have to exist in the same way until the end of their lives, which is the worst for them.

The silenced and suppressed postcolonial African women, having suffered from the iniquitous dominance of colonizers and patriarchy, unavoidably put up with the affliction and everlasting consequences of double enslavement. Although their sufferings and cries for help have been delivered through various newspapers and mass media, nothing has developed emphatic ties as the postcolonial authors' literary works have. They have witnessed/experienced them firsthand in those once colonized territories. Unlike other broadcasting sources, their works have touched the hearts of the millions by employing the local lively details of the brutal events which have eventually aroused pity, fear, and anger in the reading public. They have portrayed the events at micro and macro levels, thus showing the direct consequences the colonized people suffered. In their novels, they have particularly highlighted that one of the most profound impact of colonialism on the colonized people is the loss of identity. After having lived many years under colonial dominance, the huge conundrum that native people have faced is the identity confusion. Although the loss of identity carries an immediate threat to all individuals stuck "in-between" communities, the postcolonial authors are inclined to employ this crucial conflict particularly via the colonized women since they are typically found lower in the social atmosphere because of either imperialism or their very own conventional lifestyles. After colonialism, the colonized woman, falling into a passive position in her own land where she was once active, and comparing herself to white women, lived identity confusion and lost her identity after a certain period. Upon losing her identity, she has also lost her position in society and has had to embrace the lifestyle determined by the others. Even some women attempt to act and wear in the same way as other white women do. However, no matter how they imitate the whites, they cannot be one of them. Caribbean woman in Angelita Reyes's work states, "No matter how

much of this country [England] is in us, they will never allow us to be English” (Reyes, 2002, p. 6). This motivation to mimic and the feeling of exclusion eventuate in ambivalence and all “cultural statements and systems are constructed in the contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation” (Bhabha, 2012, pp. 54-55). Furthermore, identity problem arises in “mimic” colonized people, and it continues for the rest of their lives. For Bhabha, “identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality” (2012, p. 51). Having witnessed these kinds of substantial unaddressed issues, postcolonial (feminist) authors attempt to show the unstable space in the postcolonial territory through the chaotic female characters, with Bhabha terms, stuck in the interstice between the clashing cultures.

The sufferings of colonized women are not only limited to loss of identity; they are also deprived of freedom. They have suffered from sexual abuse and even traumatic psychological outcomes of rape. Rachel Jones highlights this issue by asserting that “the circumstances and new situation in which colonized women lived after the Western powers founded their colonies varied depending on the geography to which they belonged, but the tasks assigned to the oppressed women were that they were sexual objects for their masters or housework assistants.” (2011, p. 11). Postcolonial women were generally viewed as subordinate, disfranchised, and weak, which also led to their double colonization owing to patriarchal society. Jones further argues, “for some women, colonization meant the combined force of native and colonial patriarchy that confined their behavior and roles to limited spheres” (p. 11). The torment felt by African women outweighed that of African men because of the double colonization they have undergone. “Europeans colonized African females as Africans and as African women. Together with African men they were dominated, oppressed and inferiorized as Africans and then separately inferiorized and abused as African women” (Oyewumi, 1997, p. 122). That kind of classifications and restrictions precipitated African women to oppugn their position determined by the others. After the severe colonization process they had endured, they started losing their past and could not build their future. They also could not adapt to the western lifestyle brought by the colonists, therefore, they remained in limbo. This caused them to lose their future as they led a life without antecedents. They never represented themselves and had a voice on their own; however, were consistently represented and spoken about. To some degree, this idea stretches out to African women as a new-created race, who are subaltern and silenced. Howbeit, at the very end, postcolonial and postcolonial feminist writers have begun to represent these lacerated outcast women in their literary works.

The portrayal of African women has been a specific focal point of postcolonial and postcolonial feminist writers. They have created a new atmosphere in the literature with their works, unlike the works of white (western-oriented) writers. They mainly portrayed the colonized people from a black point of view. One of these writers is Ngugi wa Thiongo, whose works depict black people's lives in a realistic and drastic style. In his works, Ngugi also gives place to female characters; that means he writes his works by including the African women and their position in the postcolonial world. He sees colonialism as the primary oppressor of African women. He utters that the English colonial dominance was in charge of obliterating the communal, financial, and indigenous nature of the African nations. By means of his works, he also unambiguously demonstrates the influence of patriarchal society on African women during the pre-colonial and postcolonial periods of Kenya. He depicts an African woman image who tries to overcome the effects of colonialism and male domination. In his works, we see female characters as mothers, daughters, workers, and freedom fighters. Contrary to the orientalist notion for African women as weak and subordinate, he creates strong female characters who fight against all oppressive factors in their societies. He says, "the condition of women in a nation is the real measure of its progress" (Thiongo, 2007, p. 153) pointing out that black women were oppressed the most. He also asserts that there are many kinds of exposure in almost all parts of society; for instance, "black has been oppressed by white; female by male; peasant by landlord; and worker by lord of capital" (2007, p. 428). While Ngugi is aware that a definite group of people is subjected to oppression, he emphasizes that the real oppressed and exploited ones are again black female peasants and workers. Black women are oppressed and marginalized, as in most parts of the world, first because of their color, and then because of their gender, and finally because of the class they belong to. To put it more explicitly, "the oppression and problems of a black woman are unbearable and hard when compared to a black man" (2007, p. 428).

For this reason, I have chosen his two novels to study: *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between*. *Weep Not, Child* is separated into two parts and includes eighteen chapters. In the first part, the main character of the novel, Njoroge, is mostly represented and dominates the narrative. In the second part, we witness the revolutionary and anti-colonialist upheaval in colonized Kenya. The dominant women characters are Nyokabi, Njorege's mother, and Mwhaki, for whom Njorege has a deep feeling. In *The River Between*, Ngugi tells the story of traditional African people with his main character Waiyaki. Nyambura is another main character on whom I shall concentrate in this book. In the novel, we see the clash between native people and

Christian missionaries. Ngugi reflects the struggle of indigenous people against the colonizers. In addition, as he did in his other novels, Mau Mau movement<sup>1</sup> has been centered in the novel. In consideration of these plots, I will examine the women characters and their lives in a once colonized country.

Like Ngugi, Nigerian feminist writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie also sheds light on the postcolonial world and colonized people in her works. However, contrary to Ngugi, her main characters are predominantly women, and the novels are told through the lenses of these characters. Thus, these female characters form the basic plot of the novel. In *Purple Hibiscus*, we see a fifteen years old main character, Kambili Achike, who narrates the story. Throughout the novel, we witness the oppression all family members experience. Adichie shows how it is grueling to be a woman in a postcolonial world and how patriarchy affects their lives. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, we see two strong female characters, Olanna and Kainene. In contradistinction to other postcolonial women characters, Adichie creates two strong and well-educated women characters, who are distinct, in terms of lifestyle, from the other women living in their society. Adichie places her plot onto the Biafran War in Nigeria. In her works, she profoundly touches upon the condition of postcolonial women and wants to create awareness about why women are positioned in a framed figure.

Based on the information and thoughts I remarked above, this book consists of five main chapters. The first one is the introduction part, which constitutes the general framework of the subject I have studied in the work. The first chapter, including the introduction part, also comprises subchapters such as the research methods I followed while writing the book, the overall objective, and the importance of the study. The second part commences with the theories forming the background of the work. Although I have mainly studied the selected works in the context of postcolonial feminism, I will also include the fundamental theories such as colonialism, postcolonialism, and feminism, which are directly related to this theory. Thus, I will have completed the most crucial part that will form the skeleton of the study. The first two chapters include general information and theories. The third chapter traces the first author, Ngugi wa Thiongo and his two novels. The third part deals with how the African women are represented in Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child* and *The River Between*. This chapter attempts to give a piece of brief information about the author and then concise summaries of the works. The fourth chapter includes the second author in my book,

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<sup>1</sup> The war between patriot Kenyan people and British authorities.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and her two novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Subsequent to general information about the author and the works, as I have done in the third part, the fourth chapter is grounded on how the female characters in both novels are represented. While focusing on female characters in the novel, I have made my research especially considering the society, culture, and dynamics of the period the characters live in. The last part will concede to give finishing up remarks and comment on findings of the four novels by comparing and contrasting. How both authors portray African women in their works, similarities, and differences in these narratives, what roles they give women in their works will be explained in the conclusion part.

In a nutshell, this book is primarily intended to represent the lives and conditions of African women in the postcolonial world with a postcolonial notion. Consequently, the novels of Ngugi and Adichie have been chosen, and they will be studied in terms of postcolonial feminist theory, focusing on the postcolonial portrayal of African women and their positions. In this work, I have specifically chosen a male and a female writer. My intent is to illustrate how the African woman is portrayed both from a female and male perspective. Thus, we can see how a male and female author represent the inequalities between men and women in postcolonial society, how men dominate women in their social lives, and how they constrain them together with colonization. Particularly, what kind of life African women have in their once colonized lands will be focused on, and their current status in the postcolonial and neocolonial periods will be elaborated.

## **1.1. Overall Objectives**

The lives and conditions of third world women have not been stressed out markedly in the world of literature until postcolonial and postcolonial feminist theories gain popularity and importance. It can also be said that women living in colonized regions have been underestimated, and their lives, thoughts, sufferings, and position in their societies have not been portrayed in most of the works written by occidental writers. So, a new kind of theory was needed to touch upon all these issues, and it was postcolonial feminist theory, deriving from postcolonial and feminist theories.

The inspiration for this book radiates from the unsatisfying perception of colored women, misconceptions, and partiality encompassing literary depiction of African women's condition after the colonial period, primarily focusing on their position, statuses, accomplishments, plight, and their resistance against all oppression they have suffered.

The overall objective of this book is to make an analysis on the postcolonial representation of female characters in Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child*, *The River Between* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* in terms of postcolonial and postcolonial feminist theories. I have chosen these works because the lives of colored women in the postcolonial world have been rendered in a vivid way. By choosing this topic, I aim to show how African women are represented in these four novels. Another motivation behind this book is to scrutinize the fictional representation of African women's relationships with other women, their partners and kids, and other men. That means the foremost goal of this book is to attract attention to colored women's lives in the colonized regions. I have set sight on showing how indigenous African women are affected by colonization, how their lives changed, and whether women characters are portrayed as weak or strong figures. The elements taking place on the basis of this woeful condition of women's oppression are diverse. All four novels have been studied deeply to understand how these factors- such as patriarchy, tradition, religion, and education- affect colored women.

## 1.2. Research Methods

The novels that will be studied in this book belong to two African origin writers. So, the general outline and structure of my work base on the Afrocentric perception, particularly focusing on African women. A textual analysis of the primary sources will take place on the basis of my research methods; besides this, I will advance my findings with many critical books about the novels I have chosen to analyze in my book. While applying textual analysis to the selected works, the study will also include comparing/contrasting and interpreting of the primary sources. By doing so, I will also benefit from the various social theories such as colonialism, postcolonialism, feminism, and postcolonial feminism.

## 1.3. Significance

The uniqueness of this work lies in the comparative study of two outstanding male and female postcolonial writers. To the best of my knowledge, no academic comparative study has been done on these chosen writers and their novels. Thus, this makes this book different from the other works related to postcolonial feminist theory. Apart from Turkey, I could not find any comparative study on Adichie and Ngugi's novels in an open-access database.

Choosing postcolonial feminism also makes this work distinctive since it focuses on less addressed focal points in the postcolonial world. By applying postcolonial feminist theory, I want to remark the colored women who are ignored in the works of most western authors. Besides this, we can characterize postcolonial feminism as a novel trend that aims to address the imbrolios experienced by women in regions called third world countries. Inspired by postcolonial thought, postcolonial feminist theory differs from other feminist movements in its perception of patriarchy, double colonization, domestic violence, oppression, sexual exploitation, and gendered inequality experienced by postcolonial women. Dealing with these kinds of issues swept under the carpet, this trend of feminism, which includes postcolonial forms, has begun to say something by centering the ordinary postcolonial woman, associating her condition and problems within a broader perspective.

By employing postcolonial feminist theory, it will be accurate to study all these four novels from various aspects. The importance of this book lies in its scholarly showing of the notable troubles and conditions of African women. My humble expectation is that this will make my book a notable work in the field of literature.

#### **1.4. Background**

The representation of woman has changed over time, but stereotypical women profiles also persist. Generally, all women are represented in the way that men see them; however, African woman is portrayed by both colonial and patriarchal male perceptions. The image of African woman under the control of male gaze is generally shaped by her behavior and the roles assigned to her by the society. When we observe various depictions of African woman, the most common representation is based on her sexuality and weakness (emotionally and physically) in comparison with the man. However, this perception started to collapse over time, especially with the leadership of postcolonial women writers, as many authors deconstructed predetermined patterns against women. Depictions of African women, who are generally represented as powerless, speechless, and victims with a negative manner compared to Western white women, have also left their place to more diverse and realistic female representations focusing on the postcolonial women who can stand on their own feet, survive without being tied to a man, and sometimes become heroines. In the academic field, various studies have been carried out on the depiction of African women, including the aforementioned women images until today. Especially after the 1950s, with the formation of postcolonial literature and inclusion of

female writers in the literary sense, the participation of colonized women in the literary world, in scientific studies and especially in mass media has increased in comparison with the colonial period. Many academic studies have also been carried on the novels of Ngugi and Adichie.

The doctoral thesis, *Rebellious, Resistant, Revolutionary and Resourceful Women in the Select Novels of Ngugi wa Thiongo*, prepared by N. Bhuvana is one of the all-inclusive studies on African women in Ngugi's novels. Bhuvana creates her work by examining each female character in depth, especially in the axis of the strong characters created in Ngugi's novels. Bhuvana deals with the characters - Muthoni, Wanja, Wariinga and Nyawira - with their strengths rather than the stereotypical African woman representation, emphasizing that these women have admirable characteristics and their contribution to their society are unimaginable. In this respect, Bhuvana's analysis of the female characters in Ngugi's novels is parallel to my point of view. However, in my own work, I aimed to examine not only major female characters, but also all female characters in the novel.

Linda McNeely Strong- Leek in her *An Analysis of Female Circumcision in the Works of Flora Nwapa, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Alice Walker* picks up on female circumcision. Instead of convincing the reader about female circumcision, she wants to make the reader understand the complexity of this ritual. Belnap in his doctoral thesis *The post-colonial State and the 'Hybrid' Intellect: Carpentier, Ngugi and Spivak* touches upon the outcomes of cultural clash among native people during postcolonial era. Rutere draws attention to the reaction of African women in Ngugi's selected works in his *Women and Patriarchal Power in the Selected Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o*. In comparison with the mere discussion of particular issues in the aforementioned studies or books, this book would seek to make this discussion through the protagonists and major female characters in the selected novels.

One of the noteworthy studies I have come across while doing my search is Charu Verma's doctoral thesis *Feminism in Third World Contemporary Fiction a Comparative Study of Selected Works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Bhisham Sahni*. In her thesis, Verma examines the conditions of third world women in the works of three separate male authors from different continents in the context of feminism. What makes my book different from Verma's is that I have investigated how a male and female author from different countries of the same continent represent postcolonial African women.

I also found some related studies on postcolonial African woman, one of them is Hama Salih's *A Study Of The Selected Novels Of Chinua Achebe And Ngugi Wa Thiongo A Feminist Perspective*. In his work, he surveys the plight of African woman in terms of social, economic and cultural spheres. His inclusion of four novels of Ngugi and Achebe, in total eight novels, makes his work sweeping in terms of details. Furthermore, his preference of two male writers attenuates the multifaceted representations of women. In my book, since I have limited my selected novels it has given me the chance to show diverse presentations of all female characters. In addition, my choice of a female writer together with a male one makes me comprehend how an African origin female author conveys her perception of native African woman.

Another comparative study on Ngugi is *Women in the Novels of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiongo: A Comparative Study*, prepared by Amna Shamim. In her study, after examining the African woman separately in the novels of androtext writers Achebe and Ngugi, she makes a comparison about both authors and their works in the fourth chapter. Drawing attention to the similar and different aspects of both authors, Shamim emphasizes that African women are under the pressure of the patriarchal structure. In addition, for Shamim, the key difference between the two authors is that Ngugi's female characters are combative, defiant, decision-maker, rebellious, and fearless, unlike Achebe's submissive female characters. This perception of Shamim overlaps with my analysis of Ngugi's female characters in my book.

As I did in my work, Heenaba Zala, whose work also includes an African male and female author, bases her work- *Speaking Subaltern: A Study of Select Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Buchi Emecheta*- on Gayatri Spivak's subaltern theory and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. Zala, heavily focusing on female characters in her work, puts postcolonial African people, who are seen as subaltern, in the center and studies them as speaking subjects. Zala states that while a nationalist discourse prevails in Ngugi's works, Emecheta's novels mostly include the plight of African women. Although Ngugi uses female characters in his works and expresses the difficulties they have experienced, Emecheta's woman-centered discourse is the main difference between the two authors. From Zala's narrative, it can be felt that such a difference between the two authors is due to the fact that the selected authors are androtext and gynotext writers. However, in my book, I have the idea that Ngugi is a hermaphrodite writer and Zala's point of view differs from mine in this respect.

We also see studies focusing solely on Ngugi and female characters in his novels, as well as many researchers having comparative studies. One of these studies is Nivedita Ray's doctoral study *Women's Struggle for Liberation in Kenya a Study of Ngugi Wa Thiongo's Fictions*. After mentioning the African woman in general, Ray specifically deals with the Kenyan woman. She focuses on the socio-economic, political and cultural roles of postcolonial women in Kenya. After mentioning the roles of Kenyan women from various angles, Ray stresses that Kenyan women have a crucial role in the independence of Kenya and Ngugi clearly expresses this situation in his works. Drawing attention to the important role played by African women in the struggle of resistance and in the process of gaining freedom in Kenya, Ray actually sheds light on the shadowed success of postcolonial African women through Ngugi's novels.

There are also many secondary sources on Ngugi's novels. When we examine the studies on Ngugi's novels, we see that the researchers mainly focus on topics such as colonialism, resistance, and identity. Apart from these, of course, there are also studies on women in Ngugi's novels. In her work named *Female characters in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 'A Grain of Wheat' and Tsitsi Dangarembga's 'Nervous Conditions'*, Stefanie Dalvai analyzes individual female characters. The fact that she only included two female characters in her work and that she approached both characters separately caused the women not to take place in their relations with each other. Likewise, Semwal in her article, *The Delineation of Women Characters in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's Fiction*, aimed to depict the female characters in Ngugi's novels in general terms. On the other hand, in my book, I will attempt to examine all the female characters separately in Ngugi's selected novels, considering their relationships with each other. Boehmer's approach to Ngugi's novel in his *The Master's Dance to The Master's Voice': Revolutionary Nationalism and Women's Representation in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o* is similar to my study in terms of its diverse representations. However, his work differs from my book in terms of his focus on nationalism. I shall trace the female characters without concentrating on one single idea.

In the second phase of my project, I will investigate the representation of African woman in Adichie's selected novels. *A Companion to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*, edited by Ernest N. Emenyonu, is the most extensive review of Adichie's works. Addressing the details by taking into account various aspects of her works, this book illustrates how Adichie reflects her perception of art and philosophy in her works. There are also several different projects being carried out on both novels. For instance, Nwokocho

draws attention to female sexuality in her *Rethinking Female Sexuality in Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun*. Instead of a diversified perception, Nwokocha highlights the necessity of freedom for female characters, without touching the destructive effect of the Biafran war. With an alternative to the feminist perception of Adichie, David draws attention to the satirized feminism in *Satirized Feminism in Chimamanda Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun and Americanah*. He argues that Adichie employs ironic characters in her works about which I think the opposite. David gives the example of Odenigbo's sleep with Amala after his mother made him drunk in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. He differs in this perspective from my interpretation because the point I draw attention is not Odenigbo's ebriosity, but the fact that a silenced girl named Amala, who has no identity of her own, accepts it without questioning. In the whole of my work, I aim to approach events in terms of female characters rather than male ones. I will try to include the male characters in the novels only in the context of their relationship with the female characters.

In her doctoral thesis under the title of *Portrayal of Nigerian Women in the Selected Works of Ngozi*, Jadeja focuses on female characters in three novels of Adichie. Defending that Adichie created her characters with a pluralist woman perception, Jadeja emphasizes that Adichie's female characters are strong enough to win against men. Sandhu in his Ph.D. thesis, *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, A Critical Study of Her Fiction*, studies the cultural and social conflicts existing especially during the civil war. Begum, in her paper *Women Empowerment in Purple Hibiscus*, touches upon Adichie's unique approach in the representation of women. She emphasizes that Adichie's characters struggle against male supremacy and continue their lives with a new social awareness. In his article, *Solidarity Between Women in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*, Oshindoro peculiarly remarks the relation between female characters, which I also will mention in my work, especially the positive effect of Ifeoma on Beatrice and Kambili.

Deler Singh, with her comparative study on Adichie and Khaleid Hosseini, named *Revisiting the Trauma of War Across Continents: A Study of the Fiction of Khaled Hosseini and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*, focuses on the trauma caused by the wars on people. In doing so, he draws attention to the resilience and struggle of the female characters. As in my work, Singh also includes the novels of a male and female author in his work. While Singh takes his work to the intercontinental dimension and examines the novels in the context of war, I draw attention to the stance of African women in different parts of the same continent under normal conditions and during the war.

Nilima Meher's doctoral thesis entitled *Narrative Structure and Cultural Identity: A Study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Fiction* is one of the extensive studies on Adichie's works. In her work, Meher calls attention to Adichie's ability in storytelling, and discusses characters and events in the context of cultural identity in *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Americanah*. In her full length research paper, *(Re) writing Postcolonial Bildungsroman in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*, Meher also focuses on how Adichie uses the genre bildungsroman in her *Purple Hibiscus*. Meher touches upon the physical and spiritual growth of the main character Kambili rather than all the female characters in the novel with respect to the novel as a bildungsroman.

In my literature review, I see that the researchers who made comparative studies mostly worked on African writers Ngugi and Achebe. Wole Soyinka can also be added to these two names. These types of studies are generally focused on the male author's point of view, however, apart from these types of studies, I have also seen that many researchers include male and female authors in their works. Some of these researchers have even worked on male and female writers from different continents. Thus, they had the opportunity to see how the subjects they dealt with were handled by different female and male authors in different continents. In my work, I also studied how an African male and female author, born and raised in different countries (with certain common points) despite being on the same continent, make a postcolonial representation of African women in their works. With these numerous investigations into the portrayal of African women as described above, I hope that this book will contribute to the current academic studies by examining the postcolonial female characters in the selected novels. I hope to illuminate a postcolonial African woman's understanding through the lenses of two writers of African origin. Humbly, this work aspires to do that.

## CHAPTER II

# THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: FROM COLONIALISM TO POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM

### 2.1. Introduction

I have hitherto set out the fundamental perceptions of women and peculiarly women of color, which this book intends to investigate and comprehend in the selected novels as a mirror up to this notion. The significant contention of this book is that African women are portrayed in various profiles in the selected works, and the plight of the postcolonial women is an incontestable fact. No matter how hard conditions they have to face up, no matter how they are silenced and oppressed, we see the resurrection of African women like the petals of suffering. In line with this idea, the introduction part has given some general explanations about the perception of African women in different periods and regions. In light of this information, more profound research will be done, including the theories that will form the basic part of the book. By following the theoretical background, I also try to make an analysis on how women of all colors are perceived, oppressed, classified, and how they have struggled against the problems. While making these evaluations, how African woman is perceived and positioned in time by the society and the world outside her region will be taken into consideration. For a fuller understanding of African woman's oppression and her representation, the terms "colonialism" and "postcolonialism" must be fathomed first. The effect of colonialism on African woman and the damage it has caused to her are incredibly terrifying. After colonialism, African woman has suffered all kinds of sorrows. She could not establish a future of herself since she became estranged to her past after colonization. Therefore, when the pressure of patriarchal power and the destructive face of colonialism combined, the problems experienced by African women have doubled, however, as I will show in the novels I have chosen, female characters will prove how they struggle to hold on to life and show reflexes against all sorts of challenges. Although they are subjected to oppression and vicissitudes, we will see female characters who are not cruel despite

being strong, humble despite being educated, rational despite being passionate and trying to be free despite all the walls around them.

## 2.2. Colonialism in Historical Context

The origin of colony derives from the Latin word “colere” which means cultivate and inhabit. The transformation of the term goes on as follows: “colonus (farmer, settler in a new land), colonia (farm, the land where people settle down), and colony (settlement into another country)” (Merriam-Webster, 2020). In parallel with this transformation, the meaning of colonialism has also changed throughout the ages. In her *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Ania Loomba gives a broad definition of colonialism. It is “a settlement in a new country... a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants” (qtd. in Loomba, 1998, p. 1). In its strictest sense, colonialism can be defined as the “conquest and control of other people’s lands and goods” (1998, p. 2). Colonialism refers to the fact that an indomitable country has taken over a distant land and made it its own colony. There is an obvious state of domination and exploitation in the process of colonization. In addition to possessing wealth through seizure, there are also situations such as controlling the economy of the lands, the use of native people as the labor force, utilization of natural sources, and the establishment of profitable relations between the homeland and the land that is founded on the power of a dominating country.

Victimizing and oppressing the powerless/weak by the powerful for the benefit is not a new emergent phenomenon. It has taken place since hundreds of years. Mankind’s history has been formed by the effort to capture and take the possessions of other people. Ania Loomba gives examples of colonization and exploitation with vivid examples of human history. Loomba states that colonialism is a recurring and widespread event in human history, and she continues her words as follows: “The Roman Empire extended from Armenia to the Atlantic, at its height in the second century A.D. The Mongols invaded the Middle East as well as China under Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century” (1998, p. 8). Loomba proceeds her examples of the history of colonialism with the Aztec empire. She says that the Aztecs of multifarious ethnic people came to the valley of Mexico between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries to dominate the people there and conquer their lands (p. 8). One of the facts Loomba provides in her book

on the history of colonialism is that “the Aztecs paid tribute to the services they conquered in order to reinforce their colonies” (p. 8).

The above-mentioned nations can be associated with colonialism, however, there is no certain date when colonialism has begun. In its general sense, although colonialism is ubiquitous all over the world since ancient times, the age of discoveries during the 15<sup>th</sup> century is accepted as the beginning of colonialism regarding it as a Eurocentric movement. European countries aimed to use the places, which they easily captured thanks to their military power and facilities, for their own interests. All their powers caused the disproportionate force against the native lands and people living on them. Fundamentally, the first countries to systematically carry out colonialism in the European sense were Spain and Portugal, who wanted to seize these places for economic purposes. The colonial process initiated by these countries reached its peak point especially with the inclusion of Britain and France. The basis behind the orientation of these powerful countries to these virgin lands, which were rich in natural resources, was the need for raw materials and labor that emerged after the industrial revolution. After a certain period of time, colonialism, which is a convenient tool for gaining a strong place in the world and getting rich, has caused other powerful European states such as Germany and Italy to take part in this colonial race. Although these countries may have taken a step towards colonialism, France was the supreme power in the colonization of the African continent, which was the first target of the western powers.

The process of colonization has given a source of pride and spiritual pleasure to the colonizers while it causes a deep inferiority feeling in the lives of oppressed people. Colonization has turned into a powerful weapon in the hands of omnipotent countries to identify the third world, which is perceived as subaltern and inferior in terms of social, economic, cultural, and political features. Thanks to colonization, western and imperial powers have achieved to invade third world countries and reshape them as they wish in order to manipulate them for their own interests for many respects. In this sense, colonialism can be regarded as the relationship between a domestic or oppressed majority and a foreigner and an unauthorized minority. The relationship between these two groups is carried out when the powerful can make all decisions about the other. Furthermore, the colonialists, who rejected a cultural agreement with the colonized people, were convinced of their own advantages and authority to lead the native people and their lands.

Tunisian born French writer Albert Memmi argues that “the colonists vindicate their methods and situations when they settle to the colonized

lands. The colonialists line up with the correctness of their actions, claiming that they have brought both technological and religious enlightenment for the benefit of colonized people” (1967, p. 35). Like Memmi, the French thinker and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, known for his critical and revolutionary attitude towards the colonialists, utters that “for colonialism, this vast continent was a den of savages, infested with superstitions and fanaticism, destined to be despised, cursed by God, a land of cannibals, a land of ‘niggers’” (2004, p. 150). The colonialist mentality postulate that the people in colonized regions live in the darkness and become enlightened with their arrival - or in other words, until they have invaded the regions they are thirsty. “The only factor the colonists considered was the balance of exchange, and it certainly disregarded a moral understanding” (Memmi, 1967, p. 35). Fanon also claims that “the colonists have always found a reason for their actions to justify themselves” (2004, p. 150). Western powers do not consider colonialism as an evil and destructive thing, on the contrary, they try to justify themselves by continuing their disguised plans in different forms and ways.

Postcolonial theorist Robert Young draws attention to another side of colonialism and claims that “colonialism manifests itself in many different cultures for centuries not only in the form of taking control of certain places but also in many different forms in various cultures” (2003, p. 116). Young supports his argument with the example of the British occupation of Australia and India, and the French occupation of Algeria. As it can be understood from Young’s determination, the colonists did not put any restrictions on the places they would occupy, and they dominated many nations that were geographically distant kilometers away from them and had no commonalities in cultural or social terms. Ronald Horvath, who has done remarkable studies on colonialism, also thinks that colonialism has become a form of oppression and asserts that “it seems generally, if not universally, agreed that colonialism is a form of domination – the control by individuals or groups over the territory and/or behavior of other individuals or groups” (1972, p. 47). The colonists took control of the regions they went to and became the dominant power. Thus, “colonialism has started fighting to strengthen its domination and human and economic exploitation” (Fanon, 2004, p. 30). In order not to lose their dominance and control over the indigenous peoples, the colonists approach the condition of the colonized from only a western perspective and close their eyes to the realities of the colonized. So, it can be said that the white man had enjoyed “for three thousand years the privilege of seeing without being seen” (Sartre, 1963, p. 7). With the power of not being seen and taking control, “colonialism presented capitalism in naked form, stripped of the decorous clothing of

European bourgeois society” (qtd. in Sartre, 1963, p. V). In other words, the colonizer minority group has procured superiority over people who belong to another nation, thus, has control over the lands and people living there. Accordingly, almost millions of people have fear, and they are engrained in the feeling of inferiority and hopelessness.

The International Declaration of Human Rights, on 10 December 1948, somewhat shattered the feeling of helplessness and desperation that the colonists had generated for the colonized and marginalized people. It has been one of the most critical steps taken against oppression and exploitation around the world. One of the most critical decisions taken in the session was about slavery. “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms” (UDOHR). This decision on slavery also explained that no individual would be subjected to torture or cruelty due to their weakness. Most remarkably, people, who have been colonized or migrated, do not have to change their nationality. “No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality” (UDOHR). Of course, those principal decisions taken in the theoretical context and concerned all people could not prevent colonialism and their pretexts.

The colonial system has ended its physical invasion after the 1950s; however, it has never lost its dominance in colonized lands thanks to imperialism. Correspondingly, for a fuller understanding of colonialism, the relation and difference between colonialism and imperialism should be taken into consideration. It is a crystal-clear fact that the notion of colonialism and the idea of imperialism are directly related. After colonizing many countries to strengthen their power and having reached their purpose, the colonists began to use imperialism as a new controlling mechanism instead of colonization. Although both systems serve the same purpose, the concepts of colonialism and imperialism are very different in terms of how they are applied. Majoring in Postcolonial and Diaspora Literatures, John McLeod distinguishes colonialism from imperialism saliently. McLeod emphasizes that although the concept of colonialism is used in the same sense as imperialism; both concepts are different. He defines imperialism as “an ideological concept in which a nation is controlled economically and militarily” (2000, p. 8); however, colonialism, which emerges from the idea of imperialism, contrary to imperialism, precisely related to the settlement of people belonging to a nation on a new region and take control of it in various ways. Imperialism does not see settlement as a necessity in order to take control of a place. From this aspect, it diverges from colonialism. It is necessary to steer for that region and settle in order to talk about a full