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Negotiating Identity and Home: A Postcolonial Study of Contemporary Selected African Narratives

(Extracted from MA Thesis)

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Abstract:

This paper examines the problem of identity and the concept of home in the two novels: Aminata Forna's *Ancestor Stones* (2006) and Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* (2009). Using a descriptive analytical method, it analyzes both texts through a postcolonial lens by applying Homi K. Bhabha and Frantz Fanon's theories. The article describes how colonized people's lives are shaped by the idea of mimicry, hybridity and displacement in both native and diasporic contexts. Furthermore, it tries to disclose the protagonists' experiences of exile, migration, alienation and how the colonial heritage creates a profound psychological conflict in the characters' psyches, which leads, in effect, to a split identity for the characters that forces them to struggle for belonging in new circumstances. Additionally, it shows the changing roles of women in both texts and how they navigate their lives during and after colonialism. It presents a critical perspective on the complexities of cultural negotiation in contemporary African societies. With the support of a good number of up-to-date critical sources, the study reached some conclusions like: identity is not a fixed thing, but it is a dynamic process which is affected by different external aspects.

1. Introduction

Postcolonialism refers to the era that follows the decline of colonization in less developed countries, which is the demise of the force of such countries by the powerful and well-developed nations. So, it is a particularly postmodern intellectual discourse that responds to and examines the cultural impact left behind by colonialism and imperialism (Das:ll). The 1960s witnessed the appearance of postcolonial theories as intellectuals from the former colonies began to establish their modes of knowledge and their discourses to oppose the colonial ideologies. By presenting the experience of the colonized rather than the colonizer, these postcolonial narratives gave a voice to the subaltern, non-Western, non-white subject of colonial rule. Generally, postcolonialism describes the representation of race, ethnicity, culture and human identity in the modern era, especially after the independence of many colonized countries. It explains the dynamics between the "colonizer" and the "colonized" (Habeeb: 736). The words "Postcolonial" and "Postcolonialism" are often used when we talk about the nations and states that endured the harsh legacy of colonialism and imperialism. Postcolonialism is a term that widely means different things in different contexts. The difficulty emerges even in its spelling that describes several alternative meanings of post-colonial, postcolonial and post/colonial (Ukaegbu:18). Bill Ashcroft and et al in *The Empire Writes Back* assert that "more than three quarters of the people living of the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism" (qtd. in Hussein: 999). Postcolonial literature includes writings and texts that explore the dynamics between the colonizers and the people that they colonized. It was previously labeled as "Third World" or "Commonwealth" literature. It includes those writers whose works stand against and are produced after colonialism. For instance, a writer who lived and experienced different types of oppression and enforcement in his home country after gaining his freedom, by the colonial power, has the opportunity to write about these experiences in their most authentic presentation, without changing any historical facts (Mohammed:19).

Many theorists, such as Homi K. Bhabha and Frantz Fanon, proposed different concepts to postcolonial studies, depending on the experiences they faced during and after colonialism. Homi K. Bhabha (1909-1966), an Indian writer, physicist and professor of humanities at Harvard University. He employed poststructuralist concepts of identity to analyze politics, ethnicity, and nationality within the framework of his postcolonial theory. His works depict the effect of colonial power on both the native and the colonized and have been prominent in challenging traditional notions of identity, power, and representation in postcolonial communities (Mohammed:33). According to Bhabha, identity is not a fixed concept, but rather a fluid and evolving process impacted by various historical circumstances and cultural interactions (55). Moreover, it is a dynamic process that affects people's choices, behavior and judgments, which responds to external changes such as place and time. Humans need identity. They must be identified to feel that they belong to a particular group, race, culture, location and nationality. After all, identity is formed socially (Al Deek:67). Furthermore, Bhabha viewed home to be an area of stable identity where one has been and is understood. Home is associated with a positive version of the past in nations and cultures that are experiencing oppression. In other words, home is linked to freedom and it indicates a life before oppression. (Rostami:157).

This paper is going to deal with two selected African contemporary novels. *Harare North* (2009) by Brian Chikwava, who is a Zimbabwean writer and journalist and was born in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in 1972. As an immigrant author, he is going to depict the struggles of Zimbabwean immigrants in the UK, many of whom experienced marginalization, homelessness, and legal issues in a nation that was not accepting them as they had hoped. *Ancestor Stones* (2006) by Aminata Forna, who is a Scottish and Sierra Leonean writer and is regarded as an important literary voice. Her experiences provided her with a unique perspective on

cultural interaction and identity. she also emphasizes the customs and traditions that have been believed in and maintained for many centuries.

The research follows a textual analysis approach, integrating a postcolonial perspective and how the writers depict identity transformation and the impact of colonial legacies on immigrants. Therefore, the study employs a qualitative, interpretive method, which uses close reading of the selected novels as a central methodological tool, which allows for detailed engagement with characterization, point of view, imagery, symbolism, setting and structure.

2. The New Home and Psychological Tensions

In the postcolonial era, the concept of "new home" can be analyzed both physically and literally. Many people were displaced after colonialism, due to migration, poverty and decolonization. They moved from their native countries to the Western world. For example, African people were moving to the United Kingdom or Europe. Many people stay in their native lands, but they live in a new political and economic system imposed by colonial rule. The new home does not mean a new space; it means a new reality of language, values, identity and power. Colonized people mostly experience intense psychological conflict; they feel "in between", not fully belonging to the native culture nor being accepted in the host community.

The concept of "home" becomes profoundly destabilized for migrant subjects who must navigate between memory and present reality, between inherited cultural frameworks and adaptive survival strategies (Ahmed: 89, Brah: 147). The characters' encounters with new geographic and cultural spaces generate complex psychological tensions that illustrate the interior dimensions of postcolonial subjectivity. The "new home" functions not merely as a physical location, but as a contested psychic space where identity reformation occurs through processes of negotiation, resistance and transformation. The narrator's psychological fragmentation manifests through his relationship with language; his sentences are ungrammatical, fractured and many readers explain as broken English. His struggle to maintain coherent self-expression in English while thinking in patterns influenced by Shona linguistic structures(Zimbabwe's native language) reveals the deep psychological violence of colonial education. His internal monologue often breaks into incomplete sentences and fragmented thoughts, as the following quote clarifies:

> The words... they don't come out right when I try to explαin. Is like they get stuck in my throat or change shape before they reach outside. Inside me I know what I mean, but when I talk, it sound like nonsense, or like I not even speaking the same language as them. Sometimes I think the problem is me, maybe too many voice inside, from back home, from now, from what I done. Some days I just keep quiet because the words them feel dangerous, like they go betray me. So I smile and nod, like I understand, like I belong, but really I far, far away(Chikwava:156-157).

The quote explores the speaker's internal disintegration and fractured identity, as he was a member of the "green bombers"(Green Bombers referred to Mugabe's youth militia, established in early 2000 in Zimbabwe. The recruits aged between 18 and 30 years and they wore green military style and thus they were nicknamed as green bombers) and now he is living in London. He is unable to present himself properly to society and he carries with him the trauma of war, exile and violence. His broken language reflects his alienation and psychological breakdown. So, language becomes like a battlefield in many postcolonial contexts like this one. The language of the colonizer is imposed on the colonized people as a standard, yet it fails to carry the emotional and cultural truth of the indigenous people. So, the colonial rules disconnected people from their roots. The narrator's speech becomes a site of fragmentation; he feels like he is speaking without sense because he is caught between two tongues and two worlds. The speaker is haunted by his past in Zimbabwe and his presence in London; he isn't connected to the new society, no longer accepted in the old one and this shows the splitting of identity. The linguistic

displacement demonstrates Fanon's argument that colonial languages become an instrument of psychological alienation, severing the colonized subject from their cultural roots while failing to provide genuine access to the colonizer's world. The narrator exists in what Bhabha called the "third space" of enunciation, where meaning is neither fully African nor fully European but emerges from the productive tension between these positions.

The events of the novel demonstrate how the psychological tensions of cultural displacement manifest through the body as well as the mind. In *Hαrαre North*, the narrator's physical deterioraion mirrors his psychological fragmentation, as he says that: "My body feels foreign to me now, like I'm wearing someone else's skin" (Chikwava:267). The quote explores the speaker's psychological dislocation; he is not just displaced geographically, but he is also alienated from his identity and body. The narrator feels that his body doesn't belong to him. Western people see him as a refugee, a criminal and a black man. He becomes like an object under the control of British society and an immigration officer.

The narrator's employment experiences reveal how economic survival requires continuous psychological adaptation and cultural performαnce. His work in a chicken processing plant exposes him to exploitative labor conditions while forcing him to interact with other migrants from various national backgrounds (Anderson:134). His observation about workplace dynamics illuminates the complex hierarchies among migrant workers, as it shows in this quote: "The Poles think they're better than us Africans, but we're all just meat for the machine" (Chikwava: 223). The study highlights how the narrator is negotiating life broadly through illegal jobs and deception and he considers how capitalism exploits the immigrants from Africa and Eastern Europe. The machine in this quote represents the Western capitalist system and the colonial institutions still exist and divide even the marginalized people by classism, racism and xenophobia.

The psychological dimension of "home-making" in diaspora requires to create familiarity in unfamiliar spaces. The narrator's attempts to recreate the aspects of Zimbabwean culture in London reveal both the impossibility and necessity of such efforts, as the unnamed narrator explores in this quote: "I play Chimurenga music on my phone, but it sounds different here, like it's lost something in translation" (Chikwava: 189). The quotation reflects the emotional and psychological dislocation that many colonized people experience when cultural norms no longer work in a foreign country. The quote manifests Bahaba's concept of "third space". The speaker listens to music from his country, this music is connected to revolution, liberation and national identity. When he hears this music in London, he feels like the music has lost its meaning or spirit. This acoustic displacement illuminates how cultural practices cannot be simply transported across geographic boundaries but must be continually renegotiated in new contexts.

Chikwava's unnamed narrator in *Hαrαre North* occupies what Homi K. Bhabha conceptualizes as a the "third space", an in-between zone where cultural boundaries blur and new hybrid identities emerge (Bhabha: 37), as the narrator reflects on in the following quotation:

> I always make sure I speak proper and I don't want them to know I'm from Zim. I tell them I'm from Carribbean if they ask and I even put on the accent. You see, if you say you are from Zim, they start asking you all sort of questions, like if you support Mugabe or if you were one of the war vets. They don't know the difference between people like us who just trying to survive and the ones who cause all the mess. So I just say I'm from Grenada or Jamaica, in that way they leave me alone. At least then I'm just black, not black and political(Chikwava:50).

The quotation shows that the narrator is a migrant living in London; he flees from the political violence in his country and he is an undocumented and illegal refugee in Britain. He hides his Zimbabwean identity and pretends to be a citizen of the Caribbean and his act stems from fear. He is worried about discovering his original nationality, which will lead to judgment or questioning about his involvement in Zimbabwe's

political instability. The quote powerfully explores the idea of mimicry and identity crisis. By performing Caribbean identity, the speaker emerges with a new and hybrid identity through cultural negotiation, enabling him to survive in Western lands. According to Bahabah, identity is not stable, but it is adaptive and performative. His speech becomes like a mask, allowing him to escape from investigation. The black people are already marginalized, but being African, Zimbabwean and involved with Mugabe's regime, this makes him more suspicious and even dangerous.

Upon the arrival to London, the narrator's first observations reveal the disorienting effects of cultural displacement, he declares that: "Everything here moves too fαst, like α film plαyed αt the wrong speed" (Chikwava: 12). This temporal dislocation illustrates Bhabha's concept of hybridity, where the migrant subject cannot fully inhabit either the culture of origin or the host culture, instead creating new forms of cultural expression that challenge fixed identity categories (Bhabha: 112 & Rutherford: 207). One can suggest that the quotation describes the narrator's viewpoints about life in London, and he escapes from his homeland for the sake of a better life. But what he finds is not a comfortable space or a place full of opportunities; it is a life full of dislocation, psychological fragmentation and alienation. The quote captures the narrator's impression of the lifestyle in London and everything seems unnatural to him. He is not connected with his surroundings, both mentally and culturally and this explores the rapid transition from postcolonial nations in crisis to developed Western metropolis. The quote reflects a sense of not belonging anywhere and London is not a site of safety, but a site of anxiety and cultural displacement. The speaker is experiencing cultural shock, trauma and many postcolonial refugees see that urban life in Europe creates a fractured sense of self. They have to reconcile with cultural conflict and the history of the colonizers.

In *Ancestor Stones*, Forna explores how women's experiences of cultural displacement occur within patriarchal structures that compound their subaltern status. The struggles of Serah with Western education creates psychological divisions that mirror the broader tensions of cultural hybridity, as it is clear in this quote: "The books opened new worlds to me, but they also closed the door to the old ones" (Forna: 67). In this quote, the character reflects on how the colonial education introduced them to a new world and opportunities, but it distanced them from their tradition, values and language. This observation illuminates Bhabha's concept of hybridity(which he describes as the ambiguous zone) as a site of both opportunity and loss, where new cultural formations emerge through the partial abandonment of traditional practices (Bhabha: 112 &Young: 234). Serah's position demonstrates how colonial education functions as what Fanon called "cultural alienation," severing subjects from their indigenous knowledge systems while providing only limited access to colonial culture (Fanon, 1963: 148& Gibson: 167).

Asana's memories of her mother's struggles reveal how colonial psychological violence reproduces itself across generations, as she explains in this quote: "Mama carried sadness like other women carried children, always with her, growing heavier over time" (Forna: 134). This quote explores the mother's emotional and psychological tension, which builds up silently over the years and sets against the backdrop of the West African community. The use of metaphorical sadness in this quote alludes to how emotional and psychological trauma becomes embodied and this sadness is generational and inherited. It has become a part of women's spiritual and physical identity. The mother's suffering and sadness are always silent, but visible and this shows how the trauma shapes the identity, behaviour and the relationships of the colonized individual. This silence can be regarded as a form of resistance and survival because it at least shows the characters' rejection of the existing lifestyle.

The novel's treatment of traditional healing practices versus Western medicine demonstrate how colonial systems create what Fanon identifies as "cultural alienation" by devaluing indigenous knowledge systems (Fanon, *1963:* 212 & Bulhan: 156). The character of Asana embodies this conflict between indigenous and colonial epistemologies, the following quotation illuminates this:

> The white doctor came to our village with his bag of pills and bottles, and he said our medicines were superstition, but his pills couldn't heal the wounds that lived in our hearts and bones. The grief that grew in our ballies, the silence that settled in our hearts like ash and the doctor's pills numbed the body. But they could not catch the sorrow passed down from our mothers (Forna: 189).

The quote explains the differences between traditional values and Western knowledge. The white doctor symbolizes colonial authority, and his arrival in the village represents science, progress and modernity. He asserts the domination not only on the colonized's body, but also over the medicine, disregarding the importance of indigenous health. The speaker explains that the wounds and the sorrows are caused by war, loss and history and therefore, they cannot be recovered by European medicine.

Forna's portrayal of women's psychological responses to polygamous marriage reveals how patriarchal structures create internal conflicts that mirror the broader tensions of cultural transition. Ya Jeneba's reflections on sharing her husband illuminate the complex emotional negotiations required by traditional marriage practices, as she states that: "Some nights I wished I could divide my heart like we divided his time, but hearts don't work that way" (Forna: 256). The quote refers to the issue of polygamy, which is very common among men with wealth or traditional authority. The narrator's pain is internalized and shows how the emotional fragmentation reflects social disintegration under oppressive rules. Women in colonized societies are doubly marginalized; they wish and suffer silently.

The civil war's psychological aftermath appears throughout the novel as characters struggle to integrate traumatic memories into coherent personal narratives. Memuna's attempts to process her experiences of violence reveal the inadequacy of both traditional and modern therapeutic frameworks, as her following speech stresses that: "There are no words in any language for what I saw, no ceremonies that can wash away those memories" (Forna: 298). The quotation explores the narrator's observations of war crimes, brutality and misery that transcend the boundaries of language. The speaker is struggling with trauma; some experiences, especially those that have been brought on by violence and war, cannot be expressed by any language and cannot even be healed by any traditional ceremonies or prayers.

Both novels reveal how psychological adaptation to new cultural environments requires the ability to tolerate contradictions and ambiguity while maintaining psychological coherence. This adaptive capacity emerges as both a survival strategy and creative resource, allowing subjects to navigate complex cultural terrain without complete psychological dissolution. The temporal dimensions of psychological tension receive particular attention in both novels. The narrator in *Hαrαre North* experiences time as fractured and non-linear, as he says that: "Past and present blur together like watercolors in the rain" (Chikwava: 234). The protagonist is psychologically fragmented and he is haunted by his past during Zimbabwe's political crisis and his alienated present in London. The quote encapsulates that the traumatized and exiled individual can not escape from the harsh reality of his past and the postcolonial violence leaves not only physical wounds, but also ambiguity, identity erosion and confusion.

3. Resistance to Status Quo

The manifestation of resistance within postcolonial narratives operates through complex networks of defiance that extend far beyond overt political rebellion, encompassing subtle forms of cultural preservation and psychological autonomy that challenge established power structures. Both Brian Chikwava's *Hαrαre North* and Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones* demonstrate how resistance operates as a multifaceted phenomenon that functions simultaneously across individual, communal and systemic levels. Through their sophisticated narrative architectures, these novels demonstrate how resistance to colonial rules and systems emerges not merely as reactive opposition but as a generative force that creates alternative spaces for cultural expression and identity formation.

In the context of postcolonial theory, resistance describes the different ways in which colonized people and their descendants oppose and subvert the power structures, prevailing narratives and cultural norms that were imposed upon them by their colonizers. Comprehending resistance is crucial to grasping the intricate dynamics of postcolonial societies and the continuing impact of colonialism on modern cultures and identities. Resistance can take many different forms of actions, which include obvious political movements to subtle cultural practices(Lee:2025).

In *Ancestor Stones*, Forna constructs a narrative framework that spans multiple generations, revealing how resistance evolves and adapts to changing historical circumstances while maintaining core commitments to cultural preservation and community survival. The novel's structure itself constitutes a form of resistance to linear, Western narrative conventions, employing circular storytelling patterns that reflect African oral traditions and challenge colonial literary forms.The character of Abie embodies intellectual resistance through her strategic engagement with colonial education systems. She selects certain features of colonial education that are important and useful to her, and rejects or refuses those that contradict her beliefs, values, and indigenous knowledge. Abie asserts that: "They can teach me their letters, but they cannot make me forget the language of my ancestors" (Forna: 127). The speaker articulates a form of epistemological resistance that refuses the colonial binary between Western and African knowledge. Her statement reveals how education becomes a contested terrain where colonial and indigenous worldviews struggle for dominance within individual consciousness. The quote explains the dual identity that has been experienced by many colonized individuals and it explores the effects of colonial language, education and system on the indigenous identity. Language exemplifies not only as a tool for communication, but also it stands for identity, memory and culture.

Homi K. Bhabha states that the colonized nations mostly live in a third space, they are neither fully European nor fully African, but emerge with a hybrid identity. The speaker learns the language and behavior of the colonizers, but maintains a deep connection to his native culture(Bhabha:120). Although the speaker is learning the language of the colonizers, the narrator refuses to abandon their original identity. Frantz Fanon argued in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*, that learning and adopting the language of the colonisers causes the black people to internalize inferiority and whiteness. The intellectual resistance aligns with Fanon's concept of "critical consciousness" where colonized subjects develop analytical frameworks that expose the contradictions and limitations of colonial discourse(Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth*:15). Abie's educational journey illustrates how resistance can emerge through the very processes designed to assimilate colonized subjects, as she uses colonial education to develop critical perspectives on colonialism itself. Her resistance operates through what Bhabha theorizes as "colonial mimicry" where the colonized subject's imperfect imitation of colonial culture reveals the instability and artificiality of colonial authority.

Hawa's narrative demonstrates awareness of resistance, despite being caught in some traditional restrictions like polygyny. She is the voice of defiance, particularly when it comes to resisting colonial power. As a narrator, she explores her experiences with colonialism, the rural life of indigenous people and women's resistance. Hawa stresses this issue in the following quotation:

> The British may control the ports, with their ships and soldiers and their rules are applied in the cities, but they cannot control the paths between villages. Those narrow trails worn into the earth by generations of people. Alongside those paths, the traditions survive and our spirits walk freely and what they colonize with metal and paper, we resist with soil and silence(Forna: 196).

This quote reflects on the time when Britain controlled the main infrastructure, especially the ports, which are very important for communication, trade and military movement with other countries. When the colonial power dominated the most crucial sector in the country, resistance often came from unofficial arrangements, especially through rural areas that the British could not fully supervise. This quote illustrates Fanon's idea that the revolution and decolonization usually start in rural spaces, where the traditional structures are stronger and the colonial monitoring is the weakest(Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*:47). Throughout this speech, Hawa presents how the subaltern voices, especially women, reveal a way to resist the colonial domination either indirectly or silently.

Serah's involvement in traditional healing practices represents spiritual and cultural resistance that maintains indigenous knowledge systems despite colonial attempts at suppression and marginalization. Her healing work preserves traditional medical knowledge while adapting to contemporary health challenges, creating what might be understood as "adaptive resistance" that maintains cultural authenticity while responding to changing circumstances. She hints at this When she states, "The white man's medicine treats the body, but our medicine heals the whole person" (Forna: 267). This quote shows how colonialism tries to disgrace the African knowledge structures, especially medicine and considers it backward while enhancing Western science as superior. Serah, through her story, is trying to show that healing in African communities is not only physical, but it also includes spiritual and emotional aspects. The speaker attempts to reclaim the authority and validity of African culture.

According to Mariama's narrative, her life in exile is regarded as an act of resistance against the colonial displacement, gender oppression, poverty and neglect. She negotiates between tradition and change; she refuses to accept the norms and customs that oppress her agency. Living in hostile or foreign societies, one may face racism and xenophobia, which are common among African immigrants. Despite all the obstacles, she challenges and maintains her strength and dignity. She explores her life in a diasporic society as an immigrant woman in the following quotation:

> London was cold in a way I had never experienced before, and the people were colder, but I worked; I cleaned offices at night and cared for people in the morning. I sold vegetables and sent money to the home and some days I cried from tiredness, but I didn't bend(Forna:235).

The quote reflects emotional and diasporic resistance. She explains the psychological and physical hardships that she endures in the foreign land. The use of the word (cold) refers not only to the weather, but is a metaphor for loneliness, racism and alienation that the narrator experiences in London. Her navigation between two worlds represents a hybrid identity, her African tradition and British context. She neither rejects nor assimilates into the new environment completely. Furthermore, Fanon argued that the colonized individuals suffer from alienation in both worlds, the colonized areas and the colonial centers. The quote explores the alienation that black immigrants face in the Western world and are treated as second-class citizens and strangers. Her tiredness becomes a part of dehumanizing the experiences of postcolonial subjects in diaspora.

In *Hαrαre North*, Chikwava presents resistance through the fragmented consciousness of an unnamed narrator whose psychological and linguistic strategies challenge conventional narrative expectations while revealing the ongoing effects of colonial and postcolonial trauma. The narrator's resistance operates primarily through his refusal to conform to the expected patterns of thought, speech and behavior that would facilitate his integration into British society. His linguistic experimentation and stream-of-consciousness narrative style constitute forms of aesthetic resistance that maintain cultural distinctiveness while engaging with Western literary forms(Magosvongwe:15). The stream of consciousness style is clear in this quote, when the unnamed narrator states that: "I disappoint them immigration people when I step

forward, I say the magic word 'asylum', I flash a toothy grin of a friendly African native and they detain me,"(Chikwava:5). The quote clarifies how the narrator jumps between action and thought without any stop. The narrator's external action and internal voice are presented with each other as a flowing thought. His internal awareness of performance stresses on how his identity is divided between who he is and the person that he must adopt.

The narrator's relationship with other Zimbabwean immigrants reveals complex dynamics of community resistance and internal colonization. His observations about "lapsed Africans" who have adopted British cultural practices reveal his commitment to maintaining cultural authenticity despite the practical advantages of assimilation. When he notes, "These ones here, they have forgotten the taste of sadza and now their tongues speak only English sweetness"(Chikwava: 89), the unnamed narrator is criticizing the Zimbabwean immigrants because they have been assimilated into the British lifestyle. The use of sadza in this quote refers to identity and cultural roots. It indicates that the Zimbabweans have forgotten the taste of this traditional meal and assimilated into Western culture and have dismissed their origin. This critique reveals how resistance can involve maintaining cultural practices and preferences even when they provide no material advantage. This quote represents psychological colonization for those who choose the language of the oppressor in navigating their life.

Homi Bhabha explains that postcolonial subjects often adopt the features of the colonizer's language and behavior, resulting in hybridity and the blending of cultures. The colonized nations begin to imitate the colonizer's way of life, but this imitation is never accepted by white societies and is never treated equally. According to him, hybridity doesn't mean weakness, but it is a space of resistance. The speaker himself speaks a hybridized language, his accent full of Zimbabwean words and British street language and this context reveals his hybrid identity.

The character of Shingi represents a form of resistance throughout his French passport and he is the only one who has a permit to do legal jobs. This passport is a symbol of resistance and survival. He lends his passport to other Zimbabweans. In the meantime, Shingi dreams of a better future with a French passport, so that he could seduce English girls by pretending to be a Frenchman. The white people call him Mr. Chirac, this quote shows that: "I…I am not original n-native now, Chirac tells us […]. W…we is not the same anymore, Aleck. While yo …you graft hard in Harare North, I will soon be hitting French wine…." (Chikwava qtd. inPucherová:164). Asylum seekers remake themselves in London not only to survive materially, as illegal migrants, but also for psychological survival and to maintain an image of success that obtains social status when they back home (Pucherová:164).

The matters of all Zimbabwean immigrants in London are to make the best illusion of what they have made in exile and to have a good story to tell when they return to their native lands, as Shingi claims in the following quote:

> Maybe when you get home you can tell big story about life in Harare North; big story about how you can become labourer, sewage drain cleaner and then French president; being many people in one person (Chikwava: 54).

Shingi's assuming a false identity and adopting a French name is to escape from the British immigration administration, which treated African immigrants as criminals. His false French passport allows him to gain better chances for work, freedom and rights, which are all denied to him as a Zimbabwean individual. Shingi communicates with other people by using the names of colonizers because the colonial power will never hear his subaltern voice as an African immigrant.

The unnamed narrator hid his identity as a Mugabe supporter in front of both immigration officers and the Zimbabwean immigrant community because if they knew that he was a Green Bomber member, they would refuse his asylum request and they would accuse him of being involved in human rights abuse. The

protagonist lives in a double identity. He assumes Shingi's personality after stealing his passport, clothes, work permit and cell phone. He is adopting his identity. When Shingi becomes unconscious in street violence in Brixton, the main character steals Shingi's clothes, passport, work permit and cell phone. Furthermore, he is adopting his identity and he sends comical messages to Shingi's family under Shingi's name. He fabricates a story about his childhood friend to become a member of the British Parliament and creates a false narrative for Shingi. He uses his friend's identity to avoid detection by the British authorities, get work and survive in a violent and racist world (Pucherová: 166).

The character of Sekai in the novel, who is the narrator's relative and lives in London as a Zimbabwean immigrant, has completely adapted to British life but remains scared of the political violence back home. Her resistance is clear in that she refuses to let the narrator take advantage of her home and resources. Her resistance shows her refusal to let the narrator destroy her identity and the lifestyle that she has built in London. When she knows that the narrator has been involved as a member of the Green Bombers, she grows more suspicious and resists all his opinions about the Green Bombers and refuses to sit with her guests because of his political ideas and his behavior will ruin her personality in front of the British people since she has adapted fully to the norms and the expectations of the Western world. Furthermore, she resists the African traditions and practices that were imposed upon women at that time; she rejects the rules that women must bear a child and give birth to this child. Instead, she has decided to take care of a cat instead of a baby.

4. Changes in the Role of Women

The transformation of women's roles within postcolonial contexts represents one of the most complex and multilayered manifestations of cultural negotiation, where traditional patriarchal structures intersect with colonial impositions and modern aspirations. Both Brian Chikwava's *Harare North* and Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones* illuminate how women navigate these intersecting systems of power, revealing the intricate ways in which gender identity becomes a site of cultural contestation and reconstruction. In *Ancestor Stones*, Aminata Forna creates a narrative technique that covers several generations, enabling the readers to see the ongoing changes of women's positions within the Sierra Leonean community as a result of colonial impact. The four main protagonists, Asana, Hawa, Serah and Mariama, each one of them demonstrates a unique reaction to the colonial pressures imposed by British colonial administration while knowing the persistence of indigenous traditions. Through the women's interconnected stories, Forna illustrates how women's roles become laboratories for cultural exploration, where conventional expectations clash with new possibilities provided by social structures, colonial education and economic opportunities. The narrators give a historical background of how their mothers were involved in a polybymous institution. They portrayed their father, "Gibril," as a wealthy man who used his riches to dominate women.

The character of Abie represents the first generation of women to encounter formal colonial education and her story illuminates the profound contradictions inherent in this cultural encounter. When Abie reflects on her educational journey, she states that: "I had learned to read the white man's books, but I could no longer read the signs my grandmother left in the patterns of kola nuts" (Forna: 89). This statement captures the narrator's learning from Western education; she learns the colonizer's viewpoint, language and literature, but this learning has made her to lose connection with the traditional values of her culture. She cannot read the symbols with Kola nut, which old people use to anticipate fate or give blessings. This dislocation prevented an educated African woman from interpreting her grandmother's spiritual symbols. The quote creates what Homi Bhabha identified as a third space, where identity becomes fluid and hybrid ones are formed between colonizer and colonized cultures. Neither fully traditional nor completely assimilated into colonial culture.

The complexity of Abie's position becomes particularly evident in her relationship to marriage and motherhood. Traditional Sierra Leonean culture positioned women primarily through their relationships to men and their reproductive capacity, yet Abie's education opens alternative pathways for self-definition. However, these alternatives remain precarious and incomplete, as colonial society offers limited spaces for educated African women to exercise their capabilities fully. Forna's portrayal demonstrates how colonial education functioned as what Fanon describes as a "dual narcissistic wound," simultaneously elevating the colonized subject through proximity to colonial culture while ensuring their perpetual exclusion from full participation in that same culture (Fanon,1967: 12). Abie exists in a state of perpetual cultural limbo, too educted for traditional roles yet too African for the colonial society's acceptance.

Mariama's narrative demonstrates how women's roles transform in response to economic pressures generated by the colonial system. Her involvement in trade networks that span Sierra Leone, represents a fundamental shift from subsistence-based traditional roles towards market-oriented activities that require different skills and social positioning. Mariama, as an independent co-wife and a trader, moves between villages in order to earn her own incoming. She indicates a new kind of African woman who is the product of colonial influence. She believes in women's economic independence and challenges the traditional norms that were imposed upon women at that time. She asserts this belief in the following quotation:

> I will not wait for any man to feed my children. The market knows no gender, only strength and will. I will rise before the sun and carry my goods on my back. I have seen many women wait and strive and promises turn to dust. I will return with enough to fill my children's bowls. Women's hands, if they are willing, they can build a future just as strong as any man does (Forna: 156).

This quote is a declaration of dignity, survival and gender equality. Her statement reveals how economic necessity becomes a catalyst for challenging traditional gender hierarchies. Frantz Fanon argued that this act can be regarded as an economic decolonization and he believes that true liberation can be achieved not only through political independence, but also through individual empowerment. Through this quote, the narrator wants to say that African women are not the victims of history; they are builders, provers and self-determinant. She challenges the patriarchal values and refuses to depend on men for her life or the survival of her children.

The intersection of class, education and gender in Mariama's story illustrates how women's roles differ increasingly based on access to resources and opportunities. Her middle-class position provides advantages unavailable to women from different social backgrounds, yet it also creates new forms of isolation and cultural displacement. This stratification reflects on what Fanon identifies as the creation of new hierarchies within postcolonial societies, where "the colonized bourgeoisie" adopts the values and behaviors of former colonizers while remaining alienated from both traditional culture and authentic decolonized identity (Fanon, 1963: 175).

Depending on the experiences of the four women(Asana, Mariama, Hawa and Serah), they represent the generation of African women who are exposed to both traditional and modern worlds and they offer a critique on both worlds. However, Asana and Hawa decide to choose polygyny and they are aware of the life that their mothers have had in a polygynous family, even though it does not benefit them equally. They must adapt the polygyny system to the needs of the modern environment (Kpaka:282). Asana is a developed character; her life explores many conflicts that faced by women in both traditional and modern Sierra Leonean society. She is forced to marry an old man at a very young age. At the very beginning of her narrative, she seems to be an obedient wife and never discusses any issues with her husband and she becomes the third wife of Osman Iscandari. Then, she falls in love with another man who promises her a different life, but betrays her and marries another woman, leaving her emotionally destroyed.

In her narrative, Asana reflects vividly on the traditional norms that are imposed upon girls to marry in a young age, she describes her situation in the following quotation:

> I was twelve when I was married, and I didn't understand what it meant to be a wife. My body was still a child. I remember the wedding feast, the drums, dancing and the hot food served on great nothing. Not joy, not fear, only confusion. I threw myself away to become a man's third wife, and would you think that man came from a ruling family, or was rich or respected, or held an honorable position in men's society? But, no, it is true to say Osman Iscandari was none of those things (Forna: 23).

Asana's speech captures the moment that exemplifies the women's subjugation, loss of innocence and patriarchal domination. Her statement "threw myself away" is tragic and powerful at the same time; it expresses that Asana's desire, personality and emotion are devastated. In a polygamous society, being the third wife exposes the commodification of women, where a woman's worth frequently relies only on her suitability for marriage. She married off to a man not for his prestige, but to a man with no wealth or honor. This quote can be considered a form of psychological violence. She is not given the right or the opportunity to grow up as a person.

Hawa is another narrator in the novel who expresses a desire for her husband to be polygynous to get co-wives who might help her with domestic responsibilities. She decides to divorce the slaughterhouse worker for his unwillingness or inability to marry another woman. Through Hawa's tale, the novel identifies the institution of polygyny as a negotiation tool for gender roles in traditional African communities. In narrating the contrast between Gibril and the slaughterhouse worker, Hawa states that: "This man, the slaughterhouse worker, was so poor I became his only wife" (Forna: 179), because her husband lacks access to polygyny and Hawa was forced to live a married life and she has to hold all responsibilities without any assistance. Hawa is aware of some men's desire to marry as many women as possible because she grew up in a polygynous environment. In this regard, Hawa serves as a bridge between both the historical and present polygynous family rules and an attempt to reshape the contemporary polygyny and become a weapon to reduce the burden of gender roles that women bear. Hawa's disapproval of her husband is not just because he is so poor in taking other wives, but also, she is not prepared to be domesticated and work as a servant. She desires to be flexible in life by changing the duties or the roles of wife between her and her co-wife (Kapka:283).

Serah draws an interesting and beautiful comparison between the way that women are treated in both Africa and Europe. According to Serah, women in Western societies are treated like queens and this is vividly captured in the treatment of Ambrose to her. Furthermore, she states that in Africa, the man eats before the woman and women are expected to hold the responsibility and do hard jobs (Ng'umbi: 93). She reflects upon these issues in the following quotation:

> Well, Ambrose certainly treated me like a queen. When we went out he would hold doors open for me to walk through. If I was carrying a parcel, he would insist on taking it for me. He invited me to eat in restaurants where he called for the wine list and talked to the waiters without bordering to look at them. When the food came, those same waiters served me first, only coming to Ambrose second. And he behaved as though this was the way it should be, and I pretended I was used to it, although the opposite was true. The way I was raised, only after all the men had eaten did the women sit down to share what was left. And it was the women who fetched the water and carried the heavy loads (Forna:155).

The quote explores a reflection on class, culture, gender and hybridity. Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity is very important in understanding Serah's experiences. As a narrator, she has been caught

between two worlds: her African traditional values and Western behaviors, which are all uncommon in her native culture. The speech also explains the idea of mimicry, where the colonized people imitate the colonizer to navigate the new environment. Serah's performance indicates a sense of confusion; she is neither fully African nor Western. She is in between spaces. Frantz Fanon explains the psychological tension of the narrator's experiences. He discussed that the colonized individual feels alienated from their identity after being open to the colonial lifestyle and thinking (Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*: 91)

In the novel *Hαrαre North*, Brian Chikwava approaches women's changing roles from different angles, focusing on how economic collapse and political instability affect gender relationships within immigrant communities. The unnamed narrator's fragmented observations of women in London reveal how displacement disrupts traditional gender roles while creating new forms of vulnerability and opportunity. When the narrator notes that: "These women here, they have learned to make themselves hard like the city itself" (Chikwava: 67), his observation captures how immigration demands psychological adaptations that transform traditional feminine identities. The novel's fragmented narrative style mirrors the disorientation experienced by characters whose familiar social frameworks have been destabilized by migration and cultural dislocation. The unnamed narrator observes how immigrant women endured harsh conditions to survive in a capitalist, hostile, and alienating environment.

The women that the narrator encountered, from his cousin's girlfriend to the other sexual partners, exhibit different approaches to negotiating cultural displacement and economic uncertainty. Their stories highlight how immigration often intensifies gender-based vulnerabilities while also providing opportunities for women to escape from the restricted traditional norms. However, these opportunities remain constrained by racism, economic exploitation, and what Fanon describes as the "lived experience of blackness" in Western societies, where African immigrants face systematic devaluation and marginalization. It refers to the fact that being a black person in a world that is ruled by colonialism and racism, according to Fanon, is not a matter of political or social condition, but it is related to a deep psychological experience. In a colonial community, a black person is not recognized as a human being, but as a body identified by skin color (Fanon, *Blαck Skin:* 89).

Chikwava's depiction of women's survival strategies within diasporic societies illustrates how cultural negotiation includes both resistance and accommodation. The narrator states that: "women here move between worlds like they are changing clothes, one face for the white people, another for us" (Chikwava: 134). The quote explores how women adopt life in a diasporic society and they present a version of their personality to the white British community to appear respectable, employable and gain acceptance. They portray another personality to the black Zimbabwean society and they shift their behavior and identity depending on the context and the situation. Frantz Fanon argued that the colonized individuals wear a white mask to survive in the dominant society and this duality caused a psychological fragmentation. The code-switching behavior refers to what Bhabha identified as colonial mimicry, where colonized individuals imitate the language, culture and behavior of the dominant culture, not as genuine assimilation but as a tactical performance that both accommodates and challenges the colonial authority. Women's ability to navigate multiple cultural frameworks functions as a form of survival that enables them to access social and economic resources while preserving some degree of cultural identity (Bhabha:85).

Throughout the novel, women take all the duties upon their shoulders, such as taking care of the child, managing the domestic life and working. Women appear to be a symbol of resilience, adaptability and resistance. The speaker states that: " In Harare North, the women are the ones holding things together, while the men lose themselves" (Chikwava: 85). This quote reveals how Zimbabwean women adopt the characteristics of dominant culture and endure the hardship, while male characters like the unnamed narrator try to survive through crime, violence, alcohol and manipulation, and this causes a psychological

breakdown. Depending upon this quote, Frantz Fanon describes that the colonial violence damaged the psyche of the colonized man; those who are in their native country are fighters, but now hopeless and disempowered in the Western world. Homi Bhabha's idea of hybridity is quite clear here; immigrant women can combine and adopt both worlds, living between Zimbabwean practices and British modernity.

The women characters, such as Tsitsi and Shingi's girlfriend, reflect a transformative shift in women roles and navigation for survival in a diasporic society. Tsitsi, as a teenage mother, is clever despite suffering from financial and legal instability. She manipulates the immigration institution to gain social housing and provide income to herself and take care of her baby(Busby: 2009). The unnamed narrator asserts this fact in the following quotation:

> His housemate Tsitsi has a baby boy whom she rents out to other immigrant women to apply for the council flats as a single mother. She paid £ 50 for any woman could take Tsitsi's baby to the Lameth housing department and pretend to be a single mother. She fills out the forms and takes the baby back….(Chikwava: 96)

This quote reveals how the colonized women do everything for the sake of their lives and navigate the new environment. She demonstrates that the subaltern voices take control in everyday life by practicing domestic leadership despite a lack of vocalization. She declares her personality through her actions rather than political speech. She mixes the Zimbabwean roots with the British social system and this reflects Bhabha's concept of hybridity. She is living between two cultural norms and values to accommodate the diasporic society.

The psychological effects of these transformations align with Fanon's analysis of how colonialism and its aftermath create fractured identities and internalized conflicts. Women characters in *Hαrαre North* often exhibit symptoms of what might be understood as cultural trauma, struggling to maintain coherent self-concepts while adapting to radically different social environments. The narrator observes that: "the women's eyes hold too much history, you can see they are carrying the weight of everything they have left behind" (Chikwava: 211). This observation suggests how immigration can intensify the psychological fragmentations that Fanon identified as characteristic of postcolonial subjectivity.

5. Conclusion

Throughout the analysis of both novels, one can conclude that identity is not a fixed entity, but it is a dynamic process that is affected and reshaped by external factors, as the different cases in the novels showed. Both novels highlight the colonial violence and its aftermath and impact that create a fractured identity, which can lead to cultural displacement and alienation. Despite the political and economic instability, the characters experience their agency either by protecting the native practices and norms or by producing a hybrid identity and both choices are difficult and problematic. Moreover, women in both texts emerge as key figures of resilience, expressing the struggles between modernity and tradition and also challenging the patriarchal system and colonial rules. This dichotomy, which is clearly discerned through the speeches and acts of different characters in the novels, does not affect women alone; rather, it creates a physical and psychological conflict for both genders throughout the two novels.

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