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Saviour Bassey  
Phone: 08068160241  
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## Contemporary Quest for African and Cultural Nationalism: Analysis of *Things Fall Apart* and *Devil on the Cross*

Fatima Inuwa

### Abstract

*This paper examines the relationship between nationalism, nationhood and literature focusing on Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross* (1982). The essay attempts to investigate the fact that in Africa the dream of attaining nationhood has not been achieved even though the continent's prominent writers wrote to propagate nationalism, a firm belief in and promotion of an identified cause, and nationhood or the recognition and advocacy of a group-political formation. Achebe and Ngugi have tried to bridge this gap through their writings by expounding nationalism or attachment to culture, race and the African continent. The paper adopts textual analysis to interrogate how Achebe and Ngugi have propagated nationalistic issues in order to foster nationhood. They achieved this through the use of intellectual nationalism, cultural nationalism, and resistance to Eurocentric values. Even though both writers reflect African realities using the colonisers' language, they have been able to Africanize the English language to express their views on nationhood. A common feature that runs through their writings is their zest to question colonial structures since literature is a window unto reality.*

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Nationhood, African Literature, Colonialism, Language

### Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between nationalism or firm attachment to patriotism and African literature with a focus on two African authors: Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. The paper's main goal is to explore how far the various responses to racist writings and colonialism by African writers fostered nationhood in the contemporary society. Have African nations attained nationhood and as such produced national literatures? The paper seeks to examine Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* within the contemporary context of Africa's quest to attain nationhood. This argument is precipitated on the fact that in Africa, the dream of becoming a nation – a body of people bound together by a shared cultural heritage, such as a common language, religion, tradition, or historical and national consciousness (Heywood 97) – is yet to be achieved. The crisis for nationhood is predicated on Africa's complex, multi- ethnic and multi- religious nature of its states. As such, taking into cognizance the nature of these countries the writers come from, it would have been difficult for these writers to effectively have a nationalist literature.

Literature as Dul Johnson observes “should be used to bring the diverse ethnic nationalities together by blurring the sharp dividing lines” (2). However, Achebe and Ngugi have not been able to blur the dividing lines of statehood into nationhood. This is because nation-building is a continuous process that can never be



completed within a particular period. The sense of purpose which enveloped the pre-independence nationalists' struggle in Africa particularly in Nigeria and Kenya began to shift to how to solve the problems of deep ethnic rivalries and hostilities. This situation Ngugi describes thus "the economic and social forces that gave rise to various nations in pre-colonial Africa have collapsed. What is left is only a linguistic cultural superstructure into which Western education aided by the colonial spiritual police (i.e. the missionaries) have made many in roads" (xvii). Due to these common experiences, the new African states created out of territories under colonial administration successfully instilled the spirit of the nationalist movement to fight colonialism but failed to do the same in nation-building.

Prolific writers such as Achebe and Ngugi have used the power of the pen to write back at the forces of oppression which is still a contemporary issue, as they are both victims of a colonized continent. They realized as Frantz Fanon posits that "history points out a well-defined path" (254). This "well-defined path" was amplified by colonial writers such as Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. These works give a gory picture of the African continent described by Frantz Fanon as "riddled with superstitions and fanaticism; distinct for contempt, weighed down by the curse of God, a country of cannibals" (253). African writers like Ngugi and Achebe try to defend their nations legitimacies against the gory picture painted of Africa and Africans. The focus of most African writers during the colonial era such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nuruddeen Farah, Wole Soyinka was to inspire the African peoples to have pride in themselves and to inculcate in them those ideals that will lift them to "the unprejudiced company of races and nations" (Ngugi 36). African writers therefore "saw all mankind linked into a common fraternity of progress and achievement that will wipe out the odour of prejudice" (Garvey 127). Above all, Africa has begun to return the gaze. The emergence of a "post-colonial" African literature written by its indigenous *literati* signifies the coming into being of an African gaze and speech" (Tanimu 97). African writers attempted to depict Africa in a positive light as these intellectuals discovered "that there was nothing to be ashamed of in the past but rather dignity, glory and solemnity" (Fanon 253). As Ngugi argues in *Something Torn and New* that "this type of homage to the past became a necessary stage in the development of African writing, poetry, drama and fiction. A number of novelists also start with attempt at historical reconstruction" (40). This historical reconstruction did not form a nation in both Nigeria and Kenya since nations are a group of people who share common language, religion, history and traditions bond together by shared loyalties or allegiances.

To attain the status of nation is to make powerful political demand about the right to self-government, sovereign independence, and to share similar cultural ideals. One of the influential scholars on the concept of nation is Benedict Anderson.



Anderson in *"Imagined Communities"* states that nations are 'imagined communities' because in "both geographic and cultural terms citizens must desire and live together, and no citizen will know the majority of his or her compatriots" (10). Homi Bhabha consolidates Anderson's view, that "the nation, rather than representing a historical certainty, emerges as an ambivalent metaphor, more hybrid in the articulation of the cultural differences and identification-gender, race or class than can be represented" (292). As Andrew Heywood opines "to claim the status of a nation is to make powerful political demands notably about the right to self-government and ultimately sovereign independence" (48). In essence, most African countries have not attained the status of being independent from colonial residues or attaining self-governance thus resulting in the attainment of statehood and not nationhood.

### **Interrogating the Problematics of Nationalism in Nigeria**

According to Heywood, the process of colonialism "involved not only the establishment of political control and economic dominance, but also the importation of western ideas, including nationalism" (97). While it is true that the foundation that supported modern colonialism also encouraged the spread of these Western political concepts such as nationalism, the way it is operationalized in Africa varies slightly from European countries. This is evident in the case of nationalism where in Europe the doctrine is "reflected in the belief that, as far as possible, the boundaries of the nation and those of the state should coincide" (Heywood 97). In the case of Africa, this was not so. Mazrui and Tidy aver that Europe's transfer of its own state system to Africa was not accompanied by any pre-assessment of African conditions to make statehood coincide with nationhood. There was little desire "for cultural congruence between the unit of the state and the national unit or even cultural similarities among the different units being ruled by the same colonial government" (Mazrui and Tidy 374). A few of the newly independent African states could be described as nations in the classical European sense. However, the African political challenges differ in two significant ways: how to move from nationalism to modern nationhood and how to close the gap between statehood and nationhood.

A major issue in Nigeria was how to transform Nigeria's diversity into a nation. In 1900, the colonies of Southern Nigeria were already in existence and the colony/protectorate of Lagos and southern Nigeria were amalgamated in 1914. The amalgamation of the different regions in Nigeria is described by Kure as a "forced act" (215) because this created a state and not a nation. The Southern and Northern regions were amalgamated regardless of traditional ethnic boundaries and regards for principles of nationalism. Also, Saleh Abdu describes this amalgamation by Fedrick Lugard and Flora Shaw as an amalgamation "that baptized the new formation as Nigeria and subsequent counter regional patriotisms and acrimonies



were not immediately anticipated” (3). After examining the difficulty of attaining nationhood in a diverse country like Nigeria, there was an attempt by Macpherson in 1951 to unify the diverse regions in Nigeria. However, this western oriented constitution was aimed at maintaining colonial authority and did not take into cognizance the indigenous configuration of Nigeria where the sense of homogenous affiliations, loyalty or trust was absent. Indeed, it is possible to argue that Africans have lost their sense of history and belonging which is central to the attainment of nationhood. Anderson's concept of “imagined community,” which presupposes imagined connections or shared experience, might be at odd with Nigeria's experience because most Nigerians are yet to perceive themselves as part of the nation. Therefore, some people called Nigeria the “mistake of 1914” or “a mere geographical expression” (Adebanwi and Obadare 381). There is an absence of a collective consciousness where the citizen's first allegiance is to the entity Nigeria rather than to ethnic groups, religious affiliation or regional forces. Considering Nigeria's historical antecedence, the celebrated poet Niyi Osundare insisted that “Nigeria has no unity to negotiate or not to negotiate” (*Guardian*, August 1, 2016) since most ethnic groups are not part of Nigeria by any prior negotiation in the first instance but by colonial accident.

In other words, national cohesion remains elusive. The nationalists' collective consciousness that helped defeat colonialism is yet to end the multiple strata of internal divisions. Although, collective identity is a constant and never-ending process of negotiation, there is yet no clear path to a national culture that transcends ethnic, religious, and regional differences. In other words, Nigeria must work towards building a nation where what unites people matters more than what divides, a reflection of unity in diversity. Nigerian writers have made attempts at various stages in the country's existence to forge a national spirit among disparate ethnic nations, where loyalty will be first to the nation-state before and above loyalty to any other group. One of the recent novels that has attempted to blur the dividing lines of ethnicity is Zaynab Alkali's *The Invisible Borders*. While Zaynab Alkali in the novel *Invisible Borders* situates her novel to capture different regions in Nigeria with the view to propagate nationalism, Achebe situates his novel within the Igbo setting yet he has also tried to promote nationalism.

### **Interrogating the Problematics of Nationalism in Kenya**

Nationalism in Kenya can be said to begin with a struggle for independence which characterised most African countries. However, the most significant issue is the different kinds of struggles that the Kenyans embarked on to attain nationhood after independence. Carl Rosberg and John Nottingham state that British occupation in Kenya began as early as 1888. Even though, there were about twenty-seven groups in Kenya, there are four major ethnic groups – the Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, and Kamba



(2). These four major groups, particularly the Kikuyu, (who are the largest ethnic group) control the political machinery which has resulted in a surge of ethnic hostilities and rivalries. The most recent was in the aftermath of 2013 Presidential election, which reflects the glaring problem of ethnicity; this is an emblematic reflection of Kenyan society. Kenya's history is a history of struggle against colonialism, the ethnic problem is one of the major issues that have stampeded the attainment of nationhood.

Before independence, ethnic groups in Kenya had joined hands to fight the British colonizers through a unified patriotism but such struggles did not affect the people's strong affiliation to their ethnic groups. Ethnic loyalties were more important than loyalty to the nation, Kenya. Moreover, in Kenya, land played a very important role and it had an emblematic value. Kenyans didn't consider land as just a means of survival or livelihood, but it was given a spiritual importance. It is this land that the Europeans strove to deprive the Kenyans of. When the need arose, land was defended collectively. The issue of land was one major instrument that fostered a unity of the various communities in Kenya. However, the common binding force was the land which had been occupied by the Europeans and not the national spirit. Arthur Hazzlewood states in *Manifeste Nationaliste* that "nationalism is applied to the notion of land including both the moral and spiritual heritage" (5). The British government generated repressive machinery control which ultimately led to a protest. These struggles before independence should have evolved a sense of national consciousness but the reverse was the case. Thus, when one talks about nationalism in Kenya the best that has ever been achieved was "the protest movement against the toughness of British colonial rule" (Ghassoul 207).

Mau Mau struggle for independence did not have an ideological bloc because the "national struggle was tribal for some and religious for others" (Ghassoul 270). Kenya has ethnic, secular and religious consideration and while forging a nation in the European sense, there was an attempt to transform ethnic consciousness into national consciousness. However, this transformation only led to quest for *Uhuru* which means freedom. The Mau Mau struggle won outside victory from colonial power, they were as Mazrui argues "political triumphant in the sense that they both broke the white settlers' political will to continue ruling over an African majority and opened the doors for black majority rule" (287). Even with the advent of the black majority rule in Kenya, nationhood was not achieved.

### **Nationalism and the Language Question**

The issue of language represents perhaps the most salient and distressing impediment hindering the attainment of nationhood in Africa. Literature must represent the culture, socio-economic, and political life of a people. For example, Nigeria more than five decades after gaining its independence, is yet to adopt an



indigenous language that would function as a national language (even if side-by-side English) and thereby serve as a cultural symbol around which the country may be united while enhancing the national identity. Without this, the attainment of nationhood becomes difficult. As Jean-Paul Satre observes “blackman has no common language; they must necessary rely on the words of the oppressor's language” (301). And the words of the oppressors do not carry Africa's collective memory. African writers in trying to reconstruct history and in trying to present Africa's collective memory must do so in the colonizers language. This has hindered nationalism because as Irele observes “it is within language that our traditional societies elaborate their relationship to the world, and literature is the primary instrument of that process of collective self-situation” (20). Fanon states that the African writer “is using techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger and his country” (217). The African writer is held in the shackles of the postcolonial dilemma and to solve the language question some scholars (such as Abiola, Achebe, Nnolim) are of the view that the English language should be domesticated, this is what Charles Nnolim terms “Africanization” of the English language. In the literary essay *Morning Yet on Creation Day* Achebe emphasizes that “if the white people were not ashamed to colonize us, we should not be ashamed to colonize their language” (72). Achebe has adopted the English language to express African (Nigerian) ideas with an indigenous flavour. As Abiola Irele concurs that “Achebe's language is distinctive, original, often hieratic, derived from an Igbo vision of the world. But it is also one among other forms of adaptation of English to the Nigerian/African experience” (20). Literature after all is the exploitation of the possibilities of language (283). Has the domestication of the English language fostered nationalism in African literature in any way? It is my view, that this domestication of English language has not fostered nationalism because language is a vehicle of culture and as Ngugi rightly states “language carries culture and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world” (293). Hence, the failure of having an indigenous language as Nigeria's national language and its adaptation into African literature has affected the attainment of nationhood. Yet, Achebe for instance in *Things Fall Apart* has inculcated Oral traditions while using the English language likewise Ngugi in the *Devil on the Cross*.

In Kenya, the issue of language is different. Kenya has forty-two languages and many more dialects but unlike Nigeria, Kenya has been able to adopt Swahili as a national language, thus, creating an imagined community. Even with its diverse languages like kikuyu, Sabot, Pokot, Maragoli and Luo to take just a few. Swahili has been adopted to reflect the Kenya's peoples shared experiences of colonialism, imperialism and globalization. Immediately after independence, English was the official language in Kenya, “the Ominde report commissioned by the Kenyatta



government saw in English the possibility of promoting “national unity” (Sicherman, 28) which led to wide spread protests against the imposition of the English language. In 1974, Swahili replaced English as an official language in the wake of a process which have begun in 1969 when a constitutional amendment instituted the use of Swahili in the national assembly.

Ngugi reverted to writing his fictional and theoretical works in his tribal language Kikuyu. This single act buttressing Obi Wali's view in his essay “The Dead End of African Literature” “that any true African literature must be written in African languages” and “it is better for an African writer to think and feel in his own language.” (97). For these vital reasons Ngugi challenged both the use of the English language and Swahili thus reverting to his indigenous language Kikuyu in *The Devil on the Cross*. As Ngugi explains the novel was “received into the age-old tradition of storytelling around the fireside when groups of workers, families would gather together to read from it” (83). Thus, revealing the impact of using an indigenous language that the people can identify with. But, ironically Ngugi reverted to writing in English thus abandoning his heritage. Europeans through colonialism made sure power, prestige and premium was attached to the English language at the detriment of indigenous languages turning colonizers into perpetual servitude. The hegemony of the English language both in Nigeria and Kenya has hindered the attainment of nationalism.

## Textual Analysis

### *Things Fall Apart*

This section hinges on two novels namely; Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* to examine the relationship between nationhood and literature. *Things Fall Apart* was published in 1958. It is assumed that the story is based in the 1890's in an Igbo setting specifically, Umuofia before the invasion of Africa. Achebe examines the Igbo traditional culture. The novel depicts the effect of colonialism on the native people of Africa. It reflects the destructive effect of colonialism by using the central character Okonkwo, who is known for his boldness, wrestling abilities and who does not want to be like his lazy father, Unoka. Okonkwo's life goes downhill around the time the colonizers arrived into Nigeria.

The colonizers who came into Umuofia succeeded in destroying the traditional religion and the legal system. The sense of communalism was therefore replaced by individualism, thus, the thread that held the society together was destroyed. Generally, the novel centres on five distinct themes: colonialism, Christianity, tradition, masculinity and resistance.

Nationalism in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is not only about the Igbo society or just Nigeria, but it is about the use of the novel genre which was adopted from



Europe to return the gaze. Thus, the act of writing back and speaking by African writers against the hitherto presentation of Africans as primitive and barbaric is a form of nationalism, where Africans had to think, talk and write about their dissatisfaction with the colonial ideologies and regimes they oppose before organizing either for peaceful nationalist agitation or armed struggles against colonial domination. Thought always preceded action in anti-colonial nationalist struggle. *Things fall Apart* is a classic example of a novel that propagates nationalism. Where ideas are used to fight inimical and erroneous views about a nation, in this case, Nigeria. African literature has been used to negotiate according to Irele “the African problematics” (27) of vindication from the colonial gaze. *Things Fall Apart* is that kind of nationalism that fights wrong perception.

Another form of nationalism that is depicted in *Things Fall Apart* is encapsulated in the character of Okwonkwo. This type of nationalism is vested on the need to protect one's cultural heritage, against external influences. The need to fight colonialism and its attendant exploitation was vigorously supported by Okwonkwo. So, Okwonkwo's character was to stand against the way African traditional values were distorted by Europeans. Moreover, the hastily imposed Western forms of life on a diverse population brings forth conflict and crisis. The Umuofia society reflects and foretells the problematics of nationhood. Africans had to confront Western intrusion which distorted the unity and communality of Umuofia as Okeke states “now he has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act as one. He has put a knife into the things that held us together as we have fallen apart” (10). The reorganization of the society undermines once again the unity and stability of Umuofia and Africans in general – Okwonkwo's suicide which is metaphorical represents the current picture of African society. Africans can be said to have committed suicide in the sense that a national language has been imposed on it. Africa's religion, system of governance, and traditional judicial system have been eroded.

Achebe's style of writing depicts cultural nationalism. He has been able to establish that African writing did not lie in the simple imitation of European forms but in the fusion of such forms with the oral traditions. More so, Achebe re-interprets the concept of the novel by using the mode of storytelling which can be termed oral or communal. This approach or style of writing showcases the “Africanization” of the English language. As Innes argues that Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* “radically reforms the novel in such a way that the reader is provoked into thoughtful awareness of the problems his characters and the evaluation of the responses made to these problems” (29). Achebe uses a distinct style, language embedded with proverbs uttered by the characters at appropriate settings in a proper context. Thus, Okonkwo called Osoigbo, a woman during a meeting and the oldest man says, “those whose palm-kernels are cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble” (19). Other African proverbs include “the sun will shine on those who stand



before it shines on those who kneel under them” (60); “when the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk” (7). Cultural nationalism can be seen in the adaptation of words in Igbo such as *egwugwu*, *chi*, *kwenu*, *Mbata*, *ogbanje*, *uli*, *iyi-uwa* to give an African flavour to the narration.

Communalism can be a form of national consciousness. Communalism is one of the hallmarks of African values in the pre-colonial dispensation in Africa which is central in fostering a united society. After European invasion, the sense of communalism was replaced by individualism, thus, the thread that held the society together was destroyed. Okonkwo, even though, he was a fierce warrior, brave, prosperous was punished when he beat up his wife Ojiugo during the week of peace. This sacrilege is frowned at by the gods and Ezeani, the priest, the week of peace is a long-held tradition because “before we plant any crops in the earth, we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbor” (27). Apart from the issue of norms and laws that bind the society together, this reflects a society that is well organized, a society that upholds crime and punishment. In a larger picture, Achebe seems to be saying that nationhood can be fostered if one knows the value of his neighbours.

Moreover, Umuofia never went to war except on a just cause, the people never embarked in “a war of blame” (10). Thus, “in fairness to Umuofia, it should be recorded that it never went to war... unless it was clear and just (9). This epitomizes a society that threads on justice, fairness and brotherhood. This can be interpreted to be a sense of communal spirit at a larger level and a call for nationhood. The traditional religion that the people could identify with lost its efficacy because the “white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion” (126), as Okika utters: “all our gods are weeping. Idemili is weeping. Ogwugwu is weeping, and all the others” (143). Achebe in this excerpt suggests that African traditional religion is the bedrock of the African society and when that is affected, the sense of communalism is also destroyed.

Resistance is a form of nationalism in Achebe *Things Fall Apart*. The killing of the white man on the iron horse who seems to “talk through his nose” symbolizes a type of collective consciousness, a type of resistance by the African peoples to protect the consanguinity, peace and sacredness of their societies. The people of Umuofia saw the white man as an obstacle that would destroy the traditions, norms and values of their society thus, they joined hands to eliminate the “locust” (the Europeans are likened to “locusts” (97) agents of exploitation and destruction. This form of resistance gives the novel a nationalist appeal even when the novel is set in Umuofia and Mbaino, the novel pursues a national cause. Achebe in “The Role of the Writer in the New Nation”, states that “African societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and beauty” (9). This was the driving force of the people's resistance.



### *Devil on the Cross*

The novel published in 1980 in Kikuyu and translated into English language in 1982, examines the Kenyan society critically. It chronicles the life and the encounters of characters such as Wariinga, Gaturia, Mwaura, Muturu, Bahati used to depict various issues including exploitation, sexual harassment, education, independence, religious hypocrisy. Ngugi's message to the society especially about modern imperialism for the people is to be hopeful as Wariinga's struggles to overcome the challenges of life. Even after child birth, she made attempt to get educated by pursuing a course in Secretarial studies, but she ends up as a mechanic. *Devil on the Cross* is a challenge to African writers to voice out against forces of oppression bedeviling the African nation. It is also geared towards putting an end to corruption, exploitation and imperialism not through violence but through the power of the pen. The novel reveals current societal happenings that characterise most African states.

In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi seems to argue that Europeans are devils themselves, this is quite symbolic reflecting the various imperialistic tendencies that have been used by the Europeans to further exploit Kenya and Africa in general which has hindered Africa's development. The cross itself is however loaded with meaning, a symbol of Christianity, an "imperial Christianity", a Christianity which is nothing, but a façade used to propagate cultural imperialism and neoliberalism.

Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* is an invitation for the proletariat and the oppressed people to act. Wariinga takes the responsibility as community's spokeswoman and therefore sharpened her forces against forces of evil, she gathers means and skills, shows her concern for masses, peasants and students' welfare and satisfaction above her personal pleasure and satisfaction. As the novel ends Wariinga shoots Ngorika the old rich man who exploits the peasants.

*Devil on the Cross* depicts a revolutionary form of nationalism. According to Ngugi's Marxist ideology, the achievement of political and social liberation of Kenyan society lies therefore in the possibility of resistance and revolution by the masses. In *Devil on the Cross* Ngugi's idea of proletariat revolution rests on a "conflict and total liberation of the people relies completely on a socialist economy, collectively owned and controlled by the people" (13). Therefore, Ngugi argues for the need of the Kenyan people to cooperate to change the status. Thus, "a single finger cannot kill a louse: a single log cannot make a fire last through the night: a single man, however strong, cannot build a bridge across a river and many hands can lift a weight however heavy" (52). The above excerpt reinforces Ngugi's nationalist ideology which centres on unity and collective struggle by the masses to attain national consciousness. The common actions of the peasants and workers as they march to the devil feast reflect the social collectivism and struggle against



imperialism for “the voice of the people is the voice of God” (8).

The need for a revolution is anchored on cultural imperialism as the character Muriu utters “cultural imperialism is the mother to the slavery of the mind and the body. It is cultural imperialism that gives birth to the mental blindness and deafness that persuades people to allow foreigners to tell them what to do in their own country, to make foreigners the ears and mouth of their national affairs” (58). Notably, Mau Mau's aim which was to emancipate the Kenyan country was later destroyed by the devil “clad in silk suit...his skin was red like that of a pig” (13). Ngugi paints a picture of European imperialists who come into Africa to siphon its resources. This neocolonial strategy is made possible by the black elites who have betrayed their own people as such “independence is not tales about the past but the sound of money in one's pocket” (39).

Another form of nationalism captured by Ngugi centres on the pride in blackness. Ngugi also buttresses the need for Africans to be proud of their skin colour. Also, there is beauty in blackness and black is beautiful. Therefore, he argues that “that which is born black will never be white, but she could never appreciate the mere splendor of her body. “She yearned to change herself, in covetousness pursuit of the beauty of the other self” (11). The craze by women to bleach their skin, Ngugi argues will never change one's identity; the search to attain nationhood should begin from the self. Also, that African's must have pride in their identity in order to sustain their dignity.

In addition, Ngugi's nationalism centres on African socialism which is anchored on an equal distribution of wealth and resources. Ngugi debunks the exploitation of the people by imperial forces. Also, the character Mwaura in his ramshackled *Matutu* replies the old woman “these days the land rewards not those who clear it but those who come after it has been cleared” (37). Ngugi debunks a system that is grounded on the principle of self-interest rather than the common notion of collective good. Here, Ngugi reiterates a call for African socialism or what he calls “Ujamaa wa Asili Kiafrika” (86). Ngugi challenges the forces of neocolonialism “that have taught new songs, new hymns that celebrate the acquisition of money” (15) thereby destroying the principles, values and endless struggles for independence by the Mau Mau movement.

Ngugi advocates nationalism through the adoption of indigenous languages in African literature. Hence, Ngugi as a prolific writer stresses on the issue of language, that language is the carrier of people's culture. For “the slavery of language is the slavery of the mind and nothing to be proud of” (56). Since the slavery of language hinders the national spirit this in turn affects the literature of a nation, if the literature is written in the language of the colonizers. As the character Bahati says “literature is the honey of a nation's soul, preserved for her children to test forever, a little at a time; a nation that has cast away its literature is a nation that has sold its soul



and has been left a mere shell” (62). Ngugi is of the view that the choice of language used in literature and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed in relation to the entire universe. Thus, literatures written in the colonisers language is not a true reflection of the African ethos.

## Conclusion

Africa writers through literature strive to transcend ethnic and religious divides to have a common national culture. African literature has been preoccupied with the challenges of asserting its relevance in the sense of setting Africa free from the shackles of colonialism and imperialism. The two novels analyzed in this paper have depicted how the writers made concerted effort to articulate and re-articulate various issues relating to nationalism. Achebe focuses in *Things Fall Apart* on nationalism as an act of writing back, nationalism that is geared towards cultural heritage, reviving African cultures as a form of cultural nationalism, communalism and resistance to colonial intrusion. Ngugi's nationalism on the other hand stems from his revolutionary ideologies and an alignment to African socialism. In *Devil on the Cross* such stance is reflected in his articulation of nationalism. He presents nationalism through the adoption of indigenous languages in African literature and nationalism that propagates pride in blackness, Although, badly beaten and traumatized by the “kimeenderas” (colonisers). Africa still needs to find strength in its diversity both human and non-human by turning this diversity to establish vibrant social, economic and political visions especially through its literatures. Literatures are the expression of the writer's personal feelings. In this sense Achebe and Ngugi express their views on nationalism and nationhood. A common trait in their writing is

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**Fatima Inuwa** is a lecturer in the Department of English, Gombe State University. She is currently a PhD student at University of Jos. Her research interests are poetry, modern fiction, feminism critical discourse analysis and short story. Email: fatigara2@gmail.com