



**Complexities of Contemporary
Africa: A Postcolonial Reading
of Sarah Ladipo Manyika's
Independence (2008)**

By

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Abstract:

After being colonized for several decades, most African nations became politically independent in the 1960s and 1970s of the twentieth century. Therefore, the 1960s represented a great hope for the future of Africans. As a result, African literature has achieved great recognition, and many African writers achieved worldwide success. Of these writers, the Anglo-Nigerian novelist Sarah Ladipo Manyika has achieved international reputation by the debut of her first novel, *Independence* (2008). She was born to a Nigerian father and a British mother, and was raised up during post-Colonial Nigeria. The plot of the novel revolves around the mutual love between the Nigerian young man, Tayo, who meets Vanessa, the beautiful daughter of an ex-colonial officer during his scholarship at Oxford University. Besides this cross-cultural love-story, *Independence* is a story of the Africans in the Diaspora. This paper is based on the theoretical framework of the post-colonialism literary theory and the consequences on the lives of the colonized. Through this theory, the complexities of Contemporary Africa, in particular Nigeria, are raised. Such complexities include interracial relationships, colonialism, post-independence Nigeria, and apartheid in South Africa. Queries which are subject to the discussion will mainly deal with true independence after the country wins postcolonial period and other queries related to the personalities of the colonizers and colonized within the colonized country and abroad on the territories of the colonizer (i.e. Nigeria and England).

Keywords: independence – colonialism – Afropolitan – racism – interracial relations

ملخص :

حصلت معظم الدول الأفريقية علي استقلالها في الستينات والسبعينات من القرن العشرين، بعد استعمار دام لعدة قرون. بذلك، أصبحت فترة الستينات بمثابة أمل كبير لمستقبل الأفارقة. وحصل الأدب الإفريقي علي تقدير كبير، كما حقق العديد من الكتاب الأفارقة نجاحاً في جميع أنحاء العالم. ومن بين هؤلاء الكُتاب الكاتبة الروائية، سارة لاديبو مانিকা المولودة لأب نيجيري وأم بريطانية. ظهرت روايتها الأولى، بعنوان *الاستقلال*، في عام ٢٠٠٨. تتناول الرواية قصة حب بين تايو النيجيري أثناء منحه الدراسية التي قضاها في جامعة أكسفورد حيث وقع في حب فانيسا الابنة الجميلة لضابط انجليزي كان له خبرة استعمارية سابقة. يعتمد هذا البحث في شكل إطارا نظريا مستندا على نظرية أدب ما بعد الاستعمار وأثرها على حياة الشعوب التي كانت واقعة تحت الاستعمار. من خلال هذه النظرية، تثار قضايا مهمة خاصة بالتعقيدات المعاصرة للدول الأفريقية، ونيجيريا علي وجه الخصوص، ومنها: العلاقات بين الأعراق، والاستعمار، ونيجيريا بعد الاستقلال، والوحدة الأفريقية، والفصل العنصري في جنوب أفريقيا.

INTRODUCTION:

After being colonized for several years by the British, most African nations especially Nigeria became politically independent in the 1960s. Therefore, the 1960s propelled expectations of great hope and prosperous future for Africans. Accordingly, African literature achieved great recognition and many African writers gained unprecedented reputation and international success. Among those writers was the Anglo-Nigerian novelist, Sarah Ladipo Manyika (1968 –), daughter of a Nigerian father and a British mother. She was raised in post-colonial Nigeria. Manyika's *In Dependence*, was published in 2008, and has eventually become one of the most reputable African novels to appear in the first decade of the new millennium. "The Nigerian government adopts it as a book that all university students read and this book has now sold 3 million copies," Manyika announces (Thierry). It has received remarkable reading publicity and claim by critics and scholars due to the author narrative skill in capturing various dimensions not only of the lives of her characters, but also of intense outlooks of social, cultural, and political issues. Its explicit plot development hangs over the strong and complicated but true love story between a Nigerian man and an English young woman. The outcome of an overt reading leaves one with a jolt of annoyance and regret. What seems vague and inquiring is the sense of dissatisfaction that life, or rather destiny, does not grant the Nigerian protagonist any possible chance for happiness and success. Besides, its dense metaphorical references and compelling page-turner narrative make the novel worthy of further critical attention, more specifically, to investigate the

peculiar projections of the aftermath of colonialism. Therefore, this study aims at scrutinizing queries of juncture relating the post-colonial era and the impact and repercussions left on the lives of the characters.

POSTCOLONIALISM:

Robert J. C. Young defines the term 'Postcolonialism' as "a political philosophy [that] means first and foremost the right to autonomous self-government of those who still find themselves in a situation of being controlled politically and administratively by a foreign power" (113). Young asserts that postcolonialism is mainly about "a changing world" which is changed "by struggle and which its practitioners intend to change further." Young further explains why many people would be discontent with the term 'postcolonial,' as it "disturbs the order of the world. It threatens privilege and power. It refuses to acknowledge the superiority of western cultures. Its radical agenda is to demand equality and well-being for all human beings on this earth" (7).

Commenting on the meaning and embodiment of the term 'postcolonial,' Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin note that it refers to "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression" (2). The impact of European colonialism of many regions across the globe, as well as its effects on the lives of the colonized, are exemplified and manifested in the literature that is timely named and categorized as postcolonial literature. Therefore postcolonial

literature and its avowed critiques include all studies and literary works projecting and reflecting upon the colonizer-colonized relation and experience. In part, all African literature exposing such post-colonial experiences introduce characters who struggle with their identities in the wake of colonization or the establishment of colonies in another nation. Most African works deal with the economic, political, and emotional effects that the colonizers brought and left behind.

One of the finest examples of the genre proposing a variety of narrative dimensions and reflecting postcolonial legacy is Sarah Ladipo Manyika's *In Dependence*. In her conversation with Erik Gleibermann, the writer asserts that her novel is definitely 'postcolonial': "It takes place at the dawn of independence in Nigeria. The title of the book is a nod toward the era. Independence movements are discussed in the book and the legacy of colonialism" (49). In the outset of the novel, Manyika describes: "One could begin with the dust, the heat and the purple bougainvillea. One might even begin with the smell of rotting mangoes tossed by the side of the road where flies hummed and green-bellied lizards bobbed their orange heads while loitering in the sun" (7). This opening strikes a number of keynote recollections through the writer's minute narrative description which may divert the readers' perception to the Manyika's acknowledgement of the tropes and history. Soon afterwards, she shifts the kaleidoscope focusing on various issues and directions. With sensitivity and professional narrative mode, she links the personal with the public; the national with the international; the lurid with the dusky. By doing this, the writer seems to urge her readers into an awareness of her intent to find a

justification that solves the mystified juncture between the idea of independence after being colonized, and the failure to promote or develop a naturally healthy human relationship.

BACKGROUND TO THE NOVEL:

The Bookshy reviews the novel as “a story about Nigeria, its independence and the changes that occur in the country post-independence - the Biafran war, the first coup and the numerous countercoups, military dictatorships, the brief return to civilian rule, exile of Nigerians, and towards the end of the book the eventual return to democracy” (par.2). The characters are doomed to struggle with human and familial problems such as: lost love, regret, guilt, and difficult balance between responsibility towards others and responsibility towards oneself. Likewise, after Manyika’s nomination as a finalist in the Audie Award for her first novel, Toni Kan notes that it: “is a play on the spate of independence in Africa at the start of the book, on the one hand as well as a comment on how African nations claim independence while still remaining dependent on their former colonizers offers a fresh and stimulating perspective to the ever growing corpus of post-colonial literature” (par.4). The novel mainly deals with the difficult relationship between the young Nigerian Tayo Ajayi (the son of a civil servant) and the English young woman Vanessa Richardson (the daughter of an ex-British colonial officer who served part of his duty in Nigeria).

Tayo is full of hope as he is the first Nigerian to get a scholarship from Oxford in 1963. At Oxford, Tayo meets other young students from different cultures and makes friends with them, but because he cannot slough off his origin, he remains in

active connections with what happens in Nigeria. For example, he follows the activities and pursuits of Civil Rights Movements and Apartheid in South Africa and remains heartedly connected to his homeland through exchanging letters with his father, where the latter keeps informing him about what is going over there. Tayo meets Vanessa in Oxford, and they fall in love. Ironically, Tayo and Vanessa are drawn to each other's personalities and cultures. Tayo is drawn to Vanessa's independence. He finds her attractive and outgoing. Vanessa is attracted to his good looks, his charm, and his laughter. Behind this relationship, there is a profound symbolic significance. In the colonizer's country of origin, relationships are possible and true. Nevertheless, in the colonized country such relationships are impossible and unprecedented in almost all colonial or postcolonial literature.

Innocent as she is, Vanessa's dream is to be a journalist, marry Tayo, and start a new life with him in Nigeria. However, postcolonial politics imposed new circumstances which make her dream becomes unattainable. Many symbolic obstacles emerge and hinder any attempt to approximate the distance between them. The distance is not only geographic, but it is a complex psychological distance at least on Tayo side. Later in the novels, Tayo explains in a letter to Vanessa : "I have tried to write this letter so many times over the past few months but each time it seems as if the gods have conspired to stop me. First, it was the news of the coup, which by now you must know all about, and then of course the start of the civil war, but in between all of this came my father's second heart attack. (124) In reality, most postcolonial literary works do not reflect definite glimpses of hope that the political conditions of such African nations would

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be better. In the letter, Tayo assures that the moment he decides to propose to Vanessa, he has to return to Nigeria as he receives a telegram that his father is ill. Upon his return to England, the military coup prevents him from returning to England to complete his studies or his relationship with Vanessa.

Tayo and Vanessa meet after three decades where many events have happened which resulted in the separation/destruction of their families and a continent's promise of a golden independence is broken. Later, on another occasion, on his way to the airport to visit in England, he is arrested. Several years later, Tayo receives an honorary degree award from Oxford. At first, he does not believe that such an award would be given to a Nigerian: "They give these sorts of things to famous people with Nobel Laureates, or OBEs and MBEs, not ordinary people like me" (243). But then he thinks this means he, a Nigerian, is acknowledged by the British: "At last, he was receiving the recognition he deserved" (244). As for Vanessa, she ends up achieving one of her dreams: she becomes a world renowned journalist on African issues. Ironically, Tayo and Vanessa end up living their lives independent of each other.

Though it might seem like a love story, the novel can be read like a rather dim and gloomy story reflecting the gap that the colonizer left in a wounded Nigeria. Kinna Reads emphasizes, "I'm a child of 1970s Africa. My generation never had its golden moments. We were born in the long shadow cast by the events of the 1960s but came of age in an Africa gone horribly wrong." (par.3). The novel also pictures the corrupt leadership as well as the new stumbling steps towards

democracy. It also shows the demise of Nigeria's international reputation in the 1980s. It shows how the social and political conditions have never improved, and the conditions of the poor have become even worse than before. It shows the changes that occur in the country after independence (i.e. first coup – military dictatorship – eventual return to democracy at the end of the novel).

In exposing Tayo's life, the readers feel the effects of misrule on the country's universities. Symbolically too, the years of destruction and decay in Nigeria synchronize with the years of separation between Tayo and Vanessa. Thus, the developments in the relationship between Tayo and Vanessa parallel the events in the history of Nigeria, which are to be elaborated further in the following section.

Independence is the first of her two recognized novels dealing with African issues. the idea of a young African student who goes to study overseas. In an interview with Jennifer Malec, Manyika admits: "When I was writing this book there was nothing, maybe that's an exaggeration but there was not very much." In another interview with *Ovo Adagha*, Manyika states that she hoped "the novel might speak to the complexities of contemporary Africa, its Diaspora and its interdependence with the rest of the world." Notwithstanding, Manyika spans four decades to cover an era of agitation which she finds most impelling to write about. It is mainly set during the sixties and seventies of the past century. The events of the story start from the independence era (a time of immense hope for the future of

Nigeria) and moves into the period of post-independence. The novel takes place in several geographical locations: Nigeria, England, France, Senegal, and America. For Manyika, Nigeria is the most important setting: "Nigeria is the country that formed me and inspired the writing of this novel and so in a sense the novel is a love story to Nigeria" (*Adagha*). Manyika makes it clear that *Independence* is a love story on two levels: "It's a love story between two individuals but it's also something of a love story between Nigeria and the African continent" (Moosa). *Independence* is a story of individuals who are struggling to find their place during uncertain political times.

For Manyika, the period of the sixties and the seventies "seemed like such a turning point moment, with the independence movements, Pan-Africanism, civil rights ... ". The 1960s was an exciting period for much of the world. It was a time of independence movements in Africa, civil rights movements in America, and cross-cultural movements in Europe. Manyika thought the sixties was a period that "was very interesting, politically and culturally." It was a time of great optimism to people in Nigeria. They believed that Nigeria was going to lead the world. And that was exactly the moment Manyika wanted to capture. She adds, "though this book started out on an optimistic note, you then go through and see how things start to fall apart" (Malec). There was enormous hope, but it faded with time. However, it seems that Manyika wanted here to focus on something different; she continues to hold great hope for Nigeria.

PARALLELISM BETWEEN TAYO/VANESSA AND NIGERIA:

Both the story of Tayo/Vanessa and that of Nigeria pass through three stages: optimism, separation, and sense of hope. The first section of *In Dependence* is entitled "In the Beginning: September 1963- 1969." The early years of the 1960s represents a moment of high promise for Nigeria and its people, following its independence from British colonial authority in 1960. People are naively ecstatic, hoping for better future for their country. This optimism is arguably best expressed in a letter by Tayo's father's to Tayo:

Meanwhile, things in Nigeria are running splendidly. The independence celebrations (three years of independence now!) were quite fantastic. In short, there were many fireworks, dancing and eating, and general gaiety. We are proud and flow the government is working for increased Nigerian leadership. Indigenous responsibility is what we call it. rumour has it that a Nigerian will soon replace our Chief of Police, and we hope so. God willing. And yet some white men here are still thinking they own our land, not acknowledging that it is a new Nigeria. (16)

In fact, Tayo's father is a representative of the Nigerian people who believed then that they were going to lead the world.

This same sense of optimism is applied to the beginning of the relationship between Tayo and Vanessa. Once they meet each other, they immediately fall in love with each

other forgetting that they belong to two different cultures. They naively think that their love can overcome such an interracial challenge. However, three years later, they are separated. Their separation coincided with the 1966 Nigerian coup d'état which resulted in the end of the First Nigerian Republic. It marked the beginning of the shattering of the dreams of the Nigerian people. The third and last stage in the history of Nigeria's independence as well as in the story of Tayo and Vanessa occurs after about 25 years: "Obasano was back in power and Tayo looked forward to participating in a new Nigeria. He was in touch again with Vanessa and had even the taken to track down other old friends." (240) Tayo and Vanessa are re-united; the ending of their meeting is left opened to the reader. Perhaps Manyika wants to give her readers the sense of hope for the relationship of Tayo and Vanessa. The same applied to Nigeria during this period: The country now is ruled by a republican. Thus, once again, the Nigerians have this sense of hope that they are about to have their own leadership.

A RACIST UNDERSTANDING OF AFRICA:

The colonizer's outlook of colonized is manifest not only in African literature, but also in other literary works which present stereotypical views and images. For example, In E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, Ronny notices that Mrs. Moore, his mother, and Adela Quested, the young woman whom he intends to marry, deal politely and friendly with Indians. He soon outbursts out with a transcendental arrogant manner:

We are not here for the purpose of behaving pleasantly. . . . We're here to do justice and keep peace. . . . India isn't a drawing-room. . . . I am out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched country by force. I'm not a missionary or a Labour Member or a vague sentimental sympathetic literary man. I'm just a servant of the Government. . . . We're not pleasant in India, and we don't intend to be pleasant. We've something more important to do. (69)

This statement is an epitome of the colonizer/colonized relationship. Ronny views the Indians as inferior to the English. This is quite similar to the situation in Sarah Ladipo Manyika's *In Dependence*. The novel starts three years after Nigeria got its independence. Still, as an interracial couple in 1960s Britain, Tayo and Vanessa face racism from surrounding people, especially Vanessa's father. Richardson has a deeply racist understanding of Africa. Vanessa herself confesses to Tayo: "My father is a racist" (115).

Vanessa's father believes Tayo is not a suitable match for his daughter. He begins by telling him: "in many ways you and I are quite similar, aren't we? I was fond of a woman from a different class in the way that you seem fond of a woman of a different race. My wife, as you know, is from the upper-classes, and her family didn't approve of me" (112). He then continues, "Well, Mrs. Richardson and I married, but our families have never entirely accepted our marriage. Now with you and Vanessa, if you ever were to think of marriage, you

would face an even greater challenge. One that is, I fear, insurmountable” (112). Richardson then warns Tayo of the difficulties and challenges of such “a cross-cultural union”(112). By the word ‘challenges,’ Richardson meant “the challenges that mixed race couples faced, with half-caste children” (113).

Mr. Richardson’s behavior towards Tayo represents that of the colonizers. Once a colonial officer, Richardson feels the English still has the upper hand over the Africans. Though Nigeria has already obtained its independence from the British colonial rule, he still treats its people as if are inferior. He refuses to accept them as equals. In a conversation with his daughter, Vanessa, he still refers to Nigeria “our colonies” (73). He also considers the Nigerians to be uncivilized: “One feels rather obliged to show them the world. It’s very civilizing for them really.” Long before, Vanessa thought that her father meant nothing when he talked like this; she thought “this was just Father’s way of speaking, that he spoke condescendingly on most subjects without really meaning to do so.” But, now, she “no longer believed it.” In addition, a friend of Richardson refers to Tayo as ‘a coloured man’ when he asks if he was the one he met at the Christmas Party which was held at Richardson’s, to which Richardson replies, “Yes, that’s right,” Father replied. ‘They [Africans] must make special concessions for them to get into Oxford these days. They’re still bright for Africans mind you - future ministers and leaders of their countries” (74). All these remarks illustrate the feelings of superiority and racism of the colonizers towards the colonized.

Another example of racism is given when Tayo and Vanessa discuss the visit of Malcolm X to Oxford. Impressed by this visit, Vanessa is "eager to hear the story of how a member of the West Africa Society had been instrumental in organizing his visit." on his part, Tayo wants to "know what most English people (not just those at the university) thought about someone like Malcolm X." Vanessa finds this question to be quite "challenging," and she feels "torn between reality and her own idealism." However, she replies with skepticism: "I wish that England was less racist than America," she said, "but then, when you have politicians like Enoch Powell saying the things he does, it doesn't really inspire hope."

Tayo has a different point of view: "people do change, especially the younger generations, and I have hope in the British" (38). So, despite the discouraging view of the English regarding the Nigerians, Tayo (a spokesman of the Nigerians) still holds hope for the future of Nigeria. In a piece for *Brittle Paper* Manyika writes: 'Baldwin guides me towards being committed to the struggle against racism while trying to keep my heart free of hatred and despair.' Perhaps, this is her motive in the novel. She declares,

I do despair about the world, but I am able to write, a lot of people are not able to write. So exactly like Baldwin says, try and keep the heart free of despair. And I'm trying to bear witness, which is another thing Baldwin said, that he is not a spokesperson, he's bearing witness. And that's what I'm trying to do with my writing. (Malec)

TAYO AS AN AFROPOLITAN:

The term 'Afropolitan' was first coined in 2005 by Ghanaian-Nigerian writer Taiye Selasi to denote the new generation of young Africans studying, working, and living in cities across the globe, belonging to no single place, but feeling at home in many:

They (read: we) are Afropolitans – the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you. You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic or two, we understand some indigenous tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars. There is at least one place on The African Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or an auntie's kitchen. [. . .]. We are Afropolitans: not citizens, but Africans of the world.

Eze offers a similar definition of the Afropolitan as "one who, on the strength of birth or affinity, can call any place in Africa his or her place, while at the same time being open to the world" (114). Gikandi contends that, "[t]o be Afropolitan is to be connected to knowable African communities, nations, and traditions . . . to live a life divided across cultures, languages and states. It is to

embrace and celebrate a state of cultural hybridity—to be of Africa and of other worlds at the same time” (qtd. in Wawrzinek & Makokha 79)

Despite his psychologically complex character, Tayo may be fairly regarded as an Afropolitan, He is an African who goes to England and soon indulges himself amongst the mates with different cultures. He pretends to feel at home there but it seems that he would never be fully enclaved because he is still committed to his country. Tayo is viewed as “the embodiment of what Africa needs: a patriotic figure who does not run away from his challenges. Yet although the author very well portrays an individual’s dream to better his country, she also puts in the forces that hinder such positive thought.” (The Herald, par.14).

Tayo’s dedication to his homeland, Nigeria, is tested twice throughout the novel. The first occasion takes place when he is obliged to return to Nigeria after he learns of his father’s illness and is then faced with political incidents that keep him from returning to his college or to Vanessa. He writes to Vanessa, “I don’t know when I will be returning to Oxford but I am hoping that it will not be too long” (124). The second time is when he decides to stay in Nigeria near the end of the story even though his wife and daughter are going for exile. In both cases, Tayo feels obliged to his country. Nigeria is about to start a new era, and he feels he has to be there for his country, that he has to fight for it. This shows how he is deeply committed to his roots despite his success in the West. By and large, Tayo is portrayed with such an ambivalent behavior to retract his most vital resolution. Tayo displays the divided feeling of an Afropolitan: he decides to remain in Nigeria, but at the same time feels at home in England.

Therefore, though Tayo has the characteristics of Afropolitans, he feels lost, not-belonging to any group. He feels he is a misfit.

TAYO AND VANESSA AS MISFITS:

In an interview with Raphaël Thierry, Manikyia declares: “I have reached a point in my life where I never feel 100% anything. I am not 100% Nigerian, I am not 100% English, I am not 100% American, but that’s fine. ” This feeling of non-belonging to any place is clearly evident through her portrayal of Tayo and Vanessa as Misfits, who feel they belong to nowhere.

Though Tayo and Vanessa achieve their own independence, they are quite archetypes of cultural Misfits. In one of his letters to Vanessa, Tayo raises the profound issue of whether he does belong to a particular culture:

Where exactly do I fit? So often I feel out of place and, by this, I am not referring to my stance against government policies. I consider my political dissension to be a necessity rather than the actions of a misfit, given that the majority of us believe in the same thing. What I mean, when I speak of not fitting in, has to do with a cultural sense of non-belonging. (203-4)

He then continues, “*For example, I don’t always comply with the demands of the extended family and I am no longer certain about the existence of a god. These are both fundamental elements in our culture that one is not supposed to question*” (204). By using the phrase ‘our culture,’ Tayo is certain that he does not belong to any other culture but Nigeria’s. Tayo then ends his letter to

Vanessa wondering, "What then is my African personality?" (204).

On her part, Vanessa replies to Tayo's letter by sharing her thoughts on how she also feels that she is a misfit. She writes,

Perhaps I am also a misfit. I love here, yet don't feel particularly English. What then is my 'personality' – Africa, European, or Afro pean? Is this restlessness the price we have to pay for having lived in other countries and tasted other cultures? And yet there are people who have lived and travelled in various places who still seem most at home in their country of birth. I don't know what it is, Tayo. Do people like us just think about these things too much?

She even questions whether she is eligible to write about Africa:

I also wrestle with the question of who can write about Africa. Do I still have the 'right' to report on African affairs now that I no longer live on the continent? Did I earn the right when I was there? [. . .] To what extent does being an outsider allow a person unique insights into a culture? To what extent might the outside status blind rather than illuminate? And then at what point does one cease to be an outsider? (206)

Manyika plays with her ironic tools to describe Vanessa's perplexity as a misfit in her own country. Unlike Tayo, Vanessa is more trustworthy and straightforward. It seems that she has lost much more than Tayo. She feels she can no longer live in England, and that she belongs in Africa. Interchangeably, both

Vanessa and Tayo enact roles that seem paradoxical with natural feelings of belonging. The only solution for these complex attitudes is that both characters have had affected one another. Their true feelings develop gradually into complications; sincerity, underestimation, abandonment, and funnily inexplicable emotions.

HAS NIGERIA REALLY GOT ITS INDEPENDENCE?

*We are in fact never really
“free” and “independent.”*

In an interview, Manyika confesses, "one of the core themes of *In Dependence* is that we are in fact never really “free” and “independent” when it comes to some of the big choices in our lives – whom to marry, where to live, what causes to attach ourselves to. And yet and yet ..." (Adagha). Perhaps, she attributes the reason to the fact that, "In America and in Britain, we're living in somewhat polarized political times when there is a strong thread of the fear of the other. It's not just about race. It's a fear of something you don't understand" (Gleibermann 47) Writing this novel, Manyika would never have expected that the issues she was describing in the 1960s and the 1970s would still be left unresolved to the present day. "Nothing has changed," she realizes. Manyika has intentionally left the ending of her novel open: "I'm not trying to tell the reader what they should think. I leave it open and for the reader to use their imagination" (Moose). She wants her readers to actively participate in reading the text and decide for themselves how they would like the story of Tayo and Vanessa ends. Maybe another reason she did not

give a closure to her novel is that she holds hope for the future of Nigeria as a totally independent republic.

Going back to the novel's main characters, Tayo and Vanessa, one of the problems they face is that they are alienated from each other. Tayo sacrificed his relationship with Vanessa by getting involved in a casual relationship with a Nigerian young lady, Miriam, who later became his wife. Though he truly loved the English Vanessa, and considered her to be his confidante, he married the Nigerian Miriam, with whom he has nothing in common. Tayo and Vanessa are separated for a long period of time, but they cannot forget each other. Though each one of them seems now to be a totally independent person (Tayo a Professor of History and Vanessa an international journalist), they are dependent on each other. This is the epitome of the punning title of the novel. The title, *In Dependence*, hints at dependence and interdependence. The title is intended to be written in this way – separation of the prefix 'In' than the root 'Dependence' to prove that Nigeria is not wholly independent of Europe.

This idea that Nigeria is still a dependent country is also emphasized by the attitude of Vanessa's parents. Herald reviews that,

Characters like Mr. Richardson and his wife, Nancy, think that the emerging nations in Africa are simply cloud nine which will pass. To the sad disillusionment of the reader, their racist predictions seem proven right as Nigeria plunges into corruption and misrule. And one asks: Is Africa not capable of ruling itself? (par. 11).

This shows how the British view Africa: a dependent nation.

Earlier in the novel, at Oxford University, a film on Nigeria is played. The film portrayed the story of Nigeria's independence, and ended with an optimistic note for the future of the country. However, Ike, a Nigerian student, considers the film a shame, as he explains:

why aren't Nigerians directing these films? Or, at the very least, why aren't we narrating them? And why must film-makers always start with the colonial period as if that's where Nigeria's history begins? Why not the 10th century with the Benin and Hausa kingdoms or, if one must start with whites, how about the slave trade?

Ike adds: "And if colonialism is finished, why do British people still speak for us as though we are children?" (29) He also refuses the term 'Negritude' to be assigned to Africans:

Negritude is an ideology suggesting that Africans are blessed with a soul and not reason. They would have us believe that Africans can sing, dance, and feel, but not think. To merely emphasize the supposed African capacity to hear rhythm only supports the racist views of people like Trevor-Roper and Gobineau. (30)

Roper holds a deprecating view of Africa as he states: "*Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europe in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-Columbian America, and darkness is not a*

subject for history” (241). This disparaging statement demonstrates one cutting fact that everywhere in Europe, people are convinced that complete independence of Nigeria has not occurred yet.

CONCLUSION:

The present study has examined Manyika’s novel, *In Dependence* as a postcolonial work written by a woman half British and half Nigerian. The study has been an endeavor to clarify the relationship between the colonizer (Britain) and the colonized (Nigeria). The story of the so-called Nigerian independence has coincided with events relating the mutual but incomplete love story of Tayo and Vanessa. Besides, the study has pointed at the issue of racism through the eyes of Mr. Richardson, the ex-colonial officer. A clear hint has been also offered to define the concept of ‘Afropolitan’ and examine if it applies to the character of Tayo. Tayo and Vanessa have been portrayed as ‘Misfits’. The survey of such issues and concepts analyzed in the novel has been made in order to propose possible answer to the query: whether Nigeria has really attained its independence. The answer is: No, it has not got its complete independence.

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