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„Tradition and Modernity in Selected Anglophone African Novels"

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I confirm to have conceived and written this diploma thesis in English by myself. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references, either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors have been truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Africa is known to feature an incredibly vast multitude of cultures, languages and lifestyles – a social development that relates to influences throughout history, from the pre-colony up until modern times. In many ways, Africa today can be seen as a mosaic composed of the pieces of its past, comprising not only indigenous traditions but also colonial traces, while at the same time manifesting entirely new and modern modes of living. This state of hybridity has an effect on literally every sphere of life, public as well as private, and demands constant negotiation on the part of individuals living within this space, between the poles of the past and the present, the native and the foreign, the old and the new.

This piece of social reality has increasingly become a preoccupation of numerous contemporary African novelists in the last years who depict the daily struggles and challenges arising from the clash of those conflicting forces. Within the scope of this thesis I will examine how the theme of tradition and modernity is dealt with in the 20th-century Anglophone African Novel on the example of four representative texts from four different African countries, namely Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (Zimbabwe), Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (Nigeria), Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* (Ghana) and Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* (South Africa).

By looking at those novels in greater depth, I want to analyze how the authors present the clash of tradition and modernity and how their characters are affected by the hybrid space they live in. What is the impact on their daily lives in regard to family life and marriage, gender roles, personal quests of identity, professional careers, love affairs, beauty ideals and communication? How do they come to terms with contradicting ideologies and pressure from the outside? Are pre-colonial, colonial or global habits generally rejected, valued, adapted or fused? Why is the tension between tradition and modernity such a prevalent issue in contemporary African literature and in which genres is it most prominent? Those and many more issues shall be investigated and answered in the following chapters of my thesis.

2. AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA, GHANA, ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

2.1 Nigeria

Early Nigerian societies between 9000 BCE to 1500 CE, such as the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo (Falola and Heaton 159) were mainly dependent on craftsmanship and agriculture. Their organization was partly decentralized, i.e. organized on the village-group level or centralized, i.e. based on "kingship institutions" (Falola and Heaton 37) where the king ruled from a capital city. While communities were politically independent from one another, they needed each other on the economic and social level. They traded with each other and established cultural, spiritual and social links and thereby created a dynamic network of communities which by 1500 constituted an active, collaborative region of what today is referred to as the area of Nigeria (Falola and Heaton: 38). The organization of trade and social structures would change substantially with the coming of the Europeans and the slave trade.

Although slavery had been a common practice even long before the arrival of Europeans, it had been rather small-scale and much more humane. Slaves usually performed similar work to other members of the community they belonged to and were assimilated into their new societies (Falola and Heaton 59). However, with the rise of the Atlantic trade with Europeans, the demand for slaves became so high that it began to gain more and more importance. Slave supplies and sales were increased to an extent that by the 19th century, most of today's Nigeria had become "heavily dependent on slavery for their political stability and economic wealth." (Falola and Heaton 60). This would inevitably soon lead to transformations of the current economic and political systems thus far in use.

While the Islamic Sokoto Caliphate comes to power in the second half of the 19th century and unites savanna communities under a single government (Falola and Heaton 83-84), instability rises in the South, owing to the Yoruba wars, refugee migrations, the emergence of new powers and of authorities which "increasingly took the form of

warlords brandishing with European-made firearms" (Falola and Heaton 84). Simultaneously, changes also take place in the economy of the South, brought about by the abolition of slave trade by the United Kingdom in 1807. The economy shifts to so-called "legitimate" commerce, mainly in the form of the production of palm products. Slave trade continues to exist until the 1850s alongside "legitimate" forms of commerce (Falola and Heaton 84).

The ongoing political instability, the continuation of slave trade and the Yoruba wars, prompt Britain to plan an "eventual colonial takeover of the territories that would become southern Nigeria." (Falola and Heaton 84) and by the beginning of the twentieth century the first British protectorates come into existence. (Falola and Heaton 84)

The process of colonization lasts for approximately forty years, from 1861 to 1903 (Mukhtar 1100) until formerly independent states are brought together under the common rule of the United Kingdom as an amalgamated Nigeria (Falola and Heaton 109). This causes major social changes such as shifts of gender roles, the emergence of middle-class elites (Falola and Heaton 134) but also alterations in the economy and working modes, triggered by the expansion of exports and Nigeria's opening up to modern commerce (Mukhtar 1100).

By 1929 Nigerians begin to increasingly revolt against imperial dominance. The colonial regime that "had justified its presence on the idea that it provided progress, security and modern civilization," (Falola and Heaton 135) seemed to have failed. The Nigerian economy stagnates in the late 1920s and in reality only a very small elite is able to profit from colonial rule, while the majority feel exploited and alienated (Falola and Heaton 136) from their cultures. On these grounds, an anti-colonial resistance is born and emerges into a "full-scale nationalist movement" (Falola and Heaton 136) which would achieve complete independence on October 1st, 1960.

Independence and the discovery of petroleum in 1958 gave Nigeria great hopes and expectations for the future, for a rising economy and leading position on the continent. 10 years after Independence "Nigeria's stability and prestige had been greatly damaged by a decade of political corruption, economic underdevelopment, […] military coups" (Falola and Heaton 158) and shattered by a civil war which lasted from 1967 to 1970

and killed millions. But even internal conflicts among the different communities, who had been put together by their colonists by force and were reclaiming power at the regional level, caused conflicts. The politics of the First Republic of Nigeria which lasted from 1960 to 1966, was marked by "official corruption, rigged elections, ethnic baiting, bullying, and thuggery" (Falola and Heaton 159).

In 1967 Biafra, a secessionist state largely inhabited by the Igbo, declares itself independent from Nigeria. The separation arises due to political and ethnic tensions. The separation leads to massive violence and killing. By 1970 Biafra ceases to exist. (Encyclopedia "Biafra")

Between 1970 and 1983 Nigeria is governed by three regimes, two civilian and one military. Those have the complete control over the local oil economy and distribute wealth unequally, namely to those in power. This causes a major divergence between the peoples' will and those in power which until today plagues Nigeria. (Falola and Heaton 181)

In the 1980s and 90s the situation continues to be difficult and repressive under the military rule of Buhari, Babangida, and Abacha. Inflation, the devaluation of the local currency, lacking public services and basic goods, violations of the human rights by the Abacha regime and corruption, "turned Nigeria into a pariah state that overseas governments and corporations sought to divest from rather than invest in." (Falola and Heaton 242) The 1990s gave rise to a massive activist civil society movement which found its peak in the annulment of the presidential election in 1993 (Dibua 1125). Obasanjo (1999-2007) was the first pro-democratic president after military rule (Falola and Heaton 242), though – and that also holds true for his successor Yar'Adua – he followed undemocratic practices to reach his goals. Opinions of the present-day president Jonathan Goodluck remain controversial.

Today, Nigeria has a very diverse population of over 200 ethno-linguistic groups. English has been the official language since Independence and Nigerians frequently speak in Pidgin. While there are a range of religions, the majority of the country is Muslim or Christian. Only 10 percent of the population still practice indigenous religions based on ancestor worship. In terms of space, most of Nigeria is rural. Cities

however are growing at a rapid pace since many young people migrate to urban centers to seek education and employment opportunities. (Falola and Heaton 4-5)

In general, it can be observed that Nigerians are "influenced by both their indigenous traditions and by newer lifestyles that have been incorporated from the West" and hence identify with both (Falola and Heaton 6). This is strongly reflected in their lifestyles in a way that polygamy and monogamy, traditional and Western entertainment, strong kinship networks and more nuclear families, etc., simultaneously coexist (Falola and Heaton 6)

2.2 Ghana

In 1000 BCE, in what is presently referred to as *Ghana*, early village communities depended on cattle raising and agriculture. Between 100 and 200 CE, certain migrant groups developed iron technologies which facilitated farming. This allowed them to rise in status and become part of those village societies. In this way the first communities such as the Akan and the Ga-Dangme formed (Cocking 11-12). Until the 17th century, two major centralized states had developed: the Islamic in the savanna north and the Akan people of Asante in the rainforest south. About a century later, most of the north had been amalgamated with the Asante. (Cocking 12)

In the 15th century, the first Europeans, the Portuguese, subsequently followed by the British, began to invade the coast (Cocking 12) to seek for gold, which is where the designation "Gold Coast" derives from (Encyclopedia Britannica: "Ghana"). This gave rise to ongoing conflicts of power with the Asante for many years, although colonization per se did not begin before the 1830s (Boahen 567).

In an attempt to gain control once and for all, the British finally proclaim the coastal area a colony in 1874 (Cocking 12) after a defeat over the Asante. It is not until 1901 that a successful rebellion on their part causes the British to include them into their colony. A year later, the British declare the territories in the north a protectorate, for fear of other European powers wanting to exert power or claim rights. All three territories, the Asante, the protectorate of the north and the colonies of the Gold Coast then became one political unit administered by an indirect-rule policy (Cocking 12), i.e. with the

inclusion of indigenous chiefs as administrators. This policy sparked off strong disagreement among locals, especially among the educated class which "aimed at converting the legislative council into a fully responsible parliament" (Britannica: "Ghana").

In the early twentieth century, the country experiences major economic growth. Apart from exporting gold, the Gold Coast Colony also becomes the largest and thus most important cocoa supplier in the world. This new cash economy does not only bring wealth that enables the provision of transport facilities and social services (Britannica: "Ghana") but also leads to the rise of a common nationalist sentiment, "transformed notions about the ownership of land and the inheritance of property," (Cocking 12-13) as well as shifts in social order, from kinship to a more economic and individualistic orientation (Britannica: "Ghana").

While the economy seems to flourish, politics appear to have been left behind. The urge for self-government gives birth to the Convention People's Party (CPP), led by Kwame Nkrumah, which quickly gains popular support. In 1957 the CPP obtains independence and thereby makes Ghana the first colony in West Africa to be autonomous from colonial rule (Cocking 13). Henceforth, Ghana continues to fight for pan-Africanism under Nkrumah and indeed progressively more and more colonies become independent.

In 1960 Ghana is declared an official republic (Cocking 13). Nkrumah's mission however "was foundering under haphazard and corrupt administration, massive foreign debts, and declining living standards," (Britannica: "Ghana") which results in a military coup in 1966 that overthrows his government (Cocking 13). The regime is replaced by the National Liberation Council (NLC) which promises to restore civilian rule and give permission to setting up a new constitution for the Second Republic (Cocking 13). But parliamentary democracy is never actually reestablished (Britannica: "Ghana").

Hence, in 1969 the former university professor Kofi Busia becomes Ghana's prime minister and implements a strict austerity program that finds widespread objection among the people of Ghana. In 1972 the military seizes power and the National Redemption Council of the military (NRC) takes over the government to reverse most of Busia's undertakings (Cocking 13). Despite initial resistance, the NRC agrees to

cooperate with civilians but that still did not change the fact that the regime was failing to push Ghana forward in any way. This eventually led to another overthrow led by Jerry Rawlings, and the rise of a new military government, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, in 1979. In the meantime eight members of the NRC were killed. (Cocking 13)

Ghana's Third Republic is initially ruled by President Hilla Limann, who soon becomes unpopular due to his mismanaging Ghana's economy. Consequently, Rawlings once again initiates a coup and establishes the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), which would become civilian in 1991 (Cocking 14) and persist until Ghana's Fourth Republic, to revive the country's economy (Britannica: "Ghana"). The NDC lasted until 1996 but began to face strong criticism towards the year 2000, when finally the New Patriotic Party (NPP) won the vote (Cocking 14).

Henceforth, Ghana had four-year term governments led by John A. Kufuor until 2004, by John Evan Atta Mills until 2008 and presently by President John Dramani Mahama (Ghana Government Portal). In the last decade there has been a process of "decentralization of power to regional, district, local and unit levels across the country" (Ghana Government Portal).

The peoples of present-day Ghana consist of multiple ethnic groups such as the Akan, the Mole-Dagbani, the Ewe, the Ga-Adangme and the Gurma (Bitannica: "Ghana"). While English is an official language, about 60 additional other language groups are spoken too (Falola and Salm 8). Hence, nearly all Ghanaians are bilingual. Approximately one half of Ghana's population is Christian, one-fifth Muslim and one-fifth follow indigenous beliefs (Britannica: "Ghana"). Economically, Ghana is "considered a model of African economic recovery and political reform," (Britannica: "Ghana") having rapidly improved its situation since the 1990s.

According to Falola and Salm, "the cultures and customs of Ghana today are a product of diversity in indigenous forms, influenced by a long history of Islamic and European contacts [under] a dynamic process of adoption and adaptation" (xiii).

2.3 Zimbabwe

Today's Zimbabwe, formerly referred to as Southern Rhodesia, Rhodesia or Zimbabwe Rhodesia (Britannica: "Zimbabwe"), started out as a multi-ethnic society (Zimbabwe Government Online), consisting of numerous different groups among which the Shona and the Ndebele were two of the largest. The tribes interacted socially, politically and economically and were "characterized by both conflict and cooperation" (Zimbabwe Government Online).

Pre-colonial empires began to emerge around 1200 and thereafter coexisted next to smaller societies (Zimbabwe Government Online). The Great Zimbabwe State for example was one of the most powerful societies that lived on cattle-keeping and regional as well as long distance trade of minerals and goods. By the late 15th century however, Great Zimbabwe and its neighboring regions had lost their wealth owing to long-term shortages of food and natural resources (Zimbabwe Government Online). The downfall of Great Zimbabwe allowed the Shona leader Mutota to take over numerous ethnic groups which he would unite politically to create a vast empire known as the Mutapa dynasty (Zimbabwe Government Online).

When the Portuguese arrive in 1560, they attempt to convert the royal family to Christianity and take over power. Eventually however, the Mutapa unite with the Rozwi, who were descendants of the Mutapa, and successfully manage to drive the first Europeans off by 1694 (Zimbabwe Government Online).

In 1890, British settlers, belonging to the British South Africa Company (BSAC), led by Cecil Rhodes, arrive in the Shona territory of Mashonaland (Copson 3) and by "promising that white numbers would remain small" (Copson 3) they receive permission from the Ndebele people to enter and take possession of some land. In 1893 the BSAC declares war against the Ndebele and wins control over the territory. As a consequence, the white take over power and in the following years a division is made between rich and fertile land that was reserved for Europeans only, and poor land that was allocated to the natives (Copson 3). By the 1950s, Africans begin to revolt and press for independence (Copson 3) which leads the Brits to set up a Unilateral Declaration of Independence in November 1965 (Copson 4). Although the UDI officially declared independence, allegiance with the United Kingdom was maintained

and hence the will of the white rulers continued to be imposed on Rhodesia in multiple ways and especially in regard to economic sanctions (Copson 4).

In 1972, troops of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) start a guerilla war in Rhodesia. Three years later, Robert Mugabe is released from prison and takes over the lead of the ZANU. At the same time their rivals, the guerillas of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) also attack Rhodesia under the lead of the Ndebele Joshua Nkomo (Copson 4). Owing to ongoing fights and rebellions, "the white Rhodesian government was under diplomatic, military, and, increasingly economic pressure for a settlement" (Britannica: "Zimbabwe").

In 1976 Nkomo and Mugabe unite to form the Patriotic Front (PF) and receive major support in their fight against white minority rule in Rhodesia (Copson 5). Finally, in 1979 a peace agreement is concluded in London that provides for a temporary British transition government and "constitutional guarantees of minority rights" (Copson 5). In 1980, Mugabe's party, "renamed as the ZANU-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), won a parliamentary majority in the election, and he was installed Prime Minister of independent Zimbabwe" (Copson 5).

In the 1980s Zimbabwe made major improvements under Mugabe. Health care and education services, aid for the poor, roads and water facilities were established. Simultaneously racial inequalities were substantially reduced and Zimbabwe received notable economic assistance from the international donor community (Copson 5). However, the situation soon began to become difficult. Drought and white emigration weakened the economy and Mugabe's regime began to become increasingly authoritarian (Britannica: "Zimbabwe").

In 1982 Mugabe accuses Nkomo of having planned a coup and has him dismissed from the cabinet. But Nkomo's supporters revolt and declare a civil war that can only be reconciled through Mugabe's consent to merge the ZAPU into his party in 1987 (Britannica: "Zimbabwe"). Mugabe becomes executive president and is reelected three consecutive times in 1990, 1996, and 2002 (Britannica: "Zimbabwe").

In the 1990s frequent reports of severe corruption in connection with the president's name appear (Copson 6). These spark off demonstrations by groups of veterans,

students and workers. Protesters are suppressed by the police or even bribed to be silent (Copson 6).

During the 1980s and 1990s a large proportion of arable land is still in possession of the whites. In 2002 Mugabe confiscates this land but fails to redistribute it to those in need, hence leaving thousands of black farm workers unemployed. But even those in employment face the problem of an ever rising inflation and many leave the country to seek a better life. In the meantime Mugabe's regime becomes "increasingly brutal and repressive," (Britannica: "Zimbabwe") while Zimbabwe's economy deteriorates gravely.

During the elections in 2008 Tsvangirai, the leader of the MDC, is expected to win the elections, but the police and ZANU-PF loyalists harass MDC supporters to an extent that Mugabe gains the majority of votes after all. An international uproar calls for a power-sharing government, however, up until today Mugabe and Tsvangirai have not yet managed to come to terms, (Britannica: "Zimbabwe") which contributes to the presently "worsening economic and humanitarian conditions" (Britannica: "Zimbabwe").

Zimbabwe today is inhabited by the peoples of Kalanga, Karanga, Nyada, Zezuru, Rozwi and Tonga. Next to the official language English, the native African languages Shona and Ndebele are also spoken. The majority is either Christian or adheres to traditional religions. About one quarter of the population, largely consisting of males in the working age, live in urban centers such as the capital Harare. Therefore rural areas are excessively populated by women, children and older people (Britannica: "Zimbabwe").

2.4 South Africa

Archeological evidence provides proof for the existence of modern humans who lived on hunting and gathering in the region of today's South Africa over 100 000 years ago. About 2000 years ago, the pastoral Khoikhoi and the San began to hold sheep and cattle which caused the emergence of chiefdoms "based on control over cattle, which gave rise to systems of patronage and hence hierarchies of authority within communities"

(South Africa Government Online, henceforth gov.za 2). Later on, the pastoralists also developed metallurgical skills and began to produce crafts and traded on a regional level (gov.za 2).

In the early 15th century, Portuguese seafarers began to regularly visit the South African Coast. It was not until a century later, that other Europeans began to follow. In 1652 the Dutch East India Company (VOC) created the first European settlement which served as a provision station for passing fleets (gov.za 2). To facilitate and foster labor, the VOC imported slaves from Africa, India and Southeast Asia (Rosmarin and Rissik 23).

In 1795 the British settle at the Cape, seeing in it a strategic base from which they would be able to control the French (gov.za 19). During the Napoleonic wars, the Dutch reclaim the region but eventually it is retaken by Britain in 1806. Soon the British begin to invade Xhosa land and thereby set off a violent territorial war between the two groups.

In the 1830s the Voortrekkers, Boers who felt usurped and alienated by British liberalism (gov.za 20), broke away from the colony and began to spread inland. As they progressed and took over possession of land, conflicts emerged with indigenous peoples such as the Zulus which eventually escalated into a century of bloody battles. In 1838 the Boers defeat the Zulus and establish a republic in KwaZulu-Natal, which is annexed by the British in 1842. About a decade later, the Boers in the west and north manage to win land and found the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State (Rosmarin and Rissik 24).

The discovery of minerals such as gold and diamonds in the second half of the 19th century gave rise to even greater tension. Economic interests led to an increase in immigration and the intensification of African subjugation on the part of Europeans (gov.za 21). The fierce fight over resources resulted in the Anglo-Boer War which lasted from 1899 to 1902 (gov.za 22), eventually won by the British. The Treaty of Vereeniging was signed, uniting the Boer republics as one British colony (Rosmarin and Rissik 25) which would later be granted self-government (gov.za 23) within the British Commonwealth. In 1910 South Africa's four colonies became an independent dominion in which the rule was restricted to whites alone and "black people were defined as

outsiders, without rights or claims on the common society that their labour had helped to create" (gov.za 23).

After World War II, the National Party (NP) comes to power and "with its ideology of apartheid brought an even more rigorous and authoritarian approach than the segregationist policies of previous governments," (gov.za 25) its main goal being to reinforce and maintain white domination in all spheres of daily life. With the birth of the NP, resistance also rises on the side of the oppressed and organizations such as the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC), led by Nelson Mandela, are formed (gov.za 25).

The harder such organizations fought for their right, the harsher became the reactions on the part of the white government. Black people were "killed, tortured, and imprisoned, and organizations such as the ANC and PAC were outlawed" (Rosmarin and Rissik 26). This began to cause a severe uproar on the international level and countries such as the UK and the US began to interfere (Rosmarin and Rissik 26).

After three decades of oppression president F.W. de Klerk finally declares the end of apartheid (Rosmarin and Rissik 27), liberation movements are unbanned and political prisoners freed (gov.za 29). In 1994 the first free elections take place and Nelson Mandela is legitimately voted president of South Africa (Rosmarin and Rissik 27).

Current South Africa under President Jacob Zuma is a country that has progressed greatly. It is regarded as a first world country with a stable economy and political equality. Yet, South Africa still experiences severe social problems such as "rising crime rates, ethnic tensions, great disparities in housing and educational opportunities, and the AIDS pandemic" (Encyclopedia Britannica: "South Africa").

South Africa is a country of great diversity. There are eleven official languages comprising English and Afrikaans which cover major communication as well as indigenous languages such as Xhosa, Zulu or Ndebele (Britannica: "South Africa").

Few of the indigenous Khoikhoi and San still exist as distinct communities. The largest ethnic groups originate from Europe, India, Indonesia, Madagascar and speakers of native African languages (Britannica: "South Africa").

The majority of South Africa is Christian and a great number is part of African Christian Churches which are usually more open to indigenous cultures and beliefs. Other common religions are Hinduism or Islam (Britannica: "South Africa").

3. ON TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Tradition and modernity are concepts that have been extensively discussed and debated on in regard to Africa. Scholars of almost any discipline, ranging from philosophy and sociology to economics, theology and further, have for many years attempted to explain the two opposing terms in differing ways. Looking at the history of the majority of Africa's countries, including the ones discussed in this paper, partly explains the strikingly high numbers of such scholarly discussions.

Historically, one can make a very rough division of three larger phases, namely the pre-colonial stage in which indigenous societies developed, the colonial phase during which foreign ways were imported and imposed, and the post-colonial phase, referring to an era that features traces from the first two phases just as well as completely new and independent elements likewise.

What is particularly crucial in regard to the tradition-modernity discussion, however, is the middle phase of colonization, because it marks the point when "colonialism violently disrupted African cultural traditions and imposed, with varying degrees of success, European forms of thought and social organization upon colonized peoples" (Ciaffa 121). Those European ways of living were and are still very often stereotypically conceived as modern, progressive Western ideals to be pursued, while traditional, pre-colonial African ways are considered primitive and outdated impediments to progress. Seen from such a Eurocentric angle, tradition and modernity are normative concepts that "do not merely describe changes that have occurred or that might occur; [but] they identify changes that *should occur*" (Ciaffa 123).

The work at hand does not judge but observes and investigates how tradition and modernity are presented in Anglophone African Literature and how they affect the

novels' characters' daily lives in multiple spheres. Hence, in this case modernity and tradition are not to be seen as normative or stereotypical notions, as described above but much rather as tools according to which one can decipher how old and new, imposed and chosen ways of living interact and influence how characters live, feel, think and interact.

Consequently, in this diploma thesis tradition is to be understood as a cultural trait, habit, mode of thought, conception of identity, means of social organization and way of living in general, that has its roots in the African, indigenous past. Naturally, tradition is something that may exist way into the present in its original, adapted or even banned and restored kind of way.

Modernity then may be defined as something new and different to traditional ways, comprising both new African, and new imported ways or even fusions of both, in either case diverging from old behaviors. It is to be noted however that modernity may but must not necessarily always have a positive connotation and that it is definitely not synonymous to progress, to whiteness or to Western-ness. Modernity in this paper depicts a state of being and not a judgment of how good or bad something is or how a situation should be according to a specific model.

As to the importance and relevance of the tradition-modernity discussion, it is evident that probably more than any other continent, independent Africa is affected of the clash between the old and the new, the alien and the native in literally every area of life. This social reality is strongly mirrored in contemporary literature, as will be shown on the example of the selected novels under consideration.

4. BETWEEN WORLDS: THE THIRD GENERATION AND ITS QUEST FOR IDENTITY

4.1 The Third-Generation (Child) Narrator in the *African Bildungsroman*

Contemporary African literature is frequently written by, and increasingly features third-generation Africans. Those may be identified with the aid of using the definitions presented in Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness*, where generations are divided into three categories: the forebears, the middle generations and the people of the new world (1). The forebears can be seen as the native ancestors who lived according to their cultural beliefs and values in pre-colonial times. The middle generations were confronted with colonization, oppression and the imposition of Western ways by white men. As it is stated in *The Heart of Redness*, the middle generations "were more concerned with surviving and overcoming their oppression. They did not have the time to fight about the perils of belief and unbelief," (4) the focus in life clearly lying upon survival. The people of the new world, or the third-generation, can then be seen as members of the post-colonial, post-independence modern times, living in what Hron refers to as a "hybrid space" (28).

Hybridity is a key element in the daily lives of the modern African generations because more than ever before, they are affected by the fusions and clashes of the past and the present, the African and the Western, the global and the local. Living in such a hybrid space demands constant negotiation on the part of individuals in practically every sphere of their lives, ranging from religious beliefs to family structures, societal hierarchies and personal values, to forming an overall identity. Such situations of negotiation are often most prominent in children or young adults and are therefore most aptly narrated from the perspective of a child or adolescent in the process of psychological and moral growth, whose identity is not yet fixed and is still being negotiated within the challenges of the aforementioned hybrid space. This of course accounts for the fact that contemporary African writers have increasingly drawn upon the genre of the *Bildungsroman* in the past years.

Although the *Bildungsroman* is in its origin "European, male and bourgeois" (Okuyade 1), its paradigm has been adapted, transformed and extended by African writers to "portray the development of black, female and oppressed or colonized subjects" (Okuyade 1). It has therefore become a genre that treats growth and development on a universal level, including all nationalities and sexes likewise (Okuyade 1). In its present version, the African Bildungsroman is further used "to present different stories of young protagonists growing up and constructing identity for themselves in a postcolonial context to account for the African experience […] that is most times conditioned by the socio-cultural context and the pervading political climate of the time," (Okuyade 1-3) as well as by influences from the past.

Another important Africa-specific extension to the *Bildungsroman* can be seen in that the protagonists usually initially embrace societal values but later on build up an identity that opposes those very principles because they are destructive to them as persons (Okuyade 9) in their development and their quest for happiness and personal fulfillment.

Moreover, Okuyade claims that numerous texts of the genre feature an allegorical element by telling the story of young protagonists whose "growth process invariably becomes a parallel measure of the growth and development of their nations," (5) and that the speed by which growth takes place even calibrates the pace at which Africa grows (7). Jameson even goes as far as saying that "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (320). While this statement might be a little too generalized and extreme, it points out tellingly that African authors often use their narrators as a tool to speak of the nation's situation which, just like the youth protagonist "must establish a new sense of identity that dwells on its pluricultural values, myths, and traditions, but that also contends with the ramifications of increased Westernization and global capital, wrestling with such issues as economic disparity, social justice, and human rights" (Hran 30).

By letting the protagonist express his or her personal views, the authors stay in the background and thereby create "the impression that the text is [an] unfiltered or unedited, raw account of the narrator" (Okuyade 8), while they actually "deliberately navigate, negotiate or come to terms with imposed binaries by creating a hybrid space

in-between in their fiction" (Hron 39). "By showcasing these global issues, and by rewriting [Africa], albeit through the eyes of children, these third-generation writers invite [African] and Western readers alike to reconsider these global problems, and perhaps to envision some more viable form of global ethics" (Hron 30).

Having elaborated some important basic features of the African *Bildungsroman*, it is now of importance to understand in greater depth what is so unique about the youth narrator and why such a great deal of authors consequently opt for the *Bildungsroman* as a genre. It has already briefly been mentioned that precisely because of Africa's present state of hybridity, a child coming-of-age best reflects the situation because it is still in the process of forming an identity. Other than an adult, it has not yet developed a fixed personality with stabilized ideas, or, in other words, it has not yet been fully "civilized" (Hron 29) into its community. This inevitably leads to the fact that on their way to becoming adults, children need to question and negotiate what is happening around them and subsequently select, embrace or resist what society has to offer in order to build an identity.

While doing so, Hron claims, children also "emulate adult behavior, speech or cultural practices, they inadvertently render them comic, excessive, or even dangerous, revealing how redundant, stereotypical or even pernicious they may be" (29-30). In contrast to adults, children have the ability to "cross the adult shame frontier, and penetrate emotional danger zones which the adult can only control with difficulty" (Elias 167). By doing so, adult behaviors and values that are habitually regarded as the civilized, reasonable way of handling things, are destabilized and challenged.

Another reason making the child/youth narrator so attractive may be ascribed to the fact that the majority of publications in this field are published by and marketed for the Western readership in the US and the UK, who can clearly only have very limited knowledge on the interplay of political, economic, social and cultural issues which presently constitute Africa's hybrid state. The adult, Western reader may therefore "be more easily initiated into the complexities of […] culture or politics through a child's perspective" (Hron 29). By observing the adolescent's quest for identity, and how he or she questions ideals, negotiates cultural meaning and deconstructs socially engrained structures the reader is able to critically build his or her own opinion.

Erroneously, novels of the genre under discussion have frequently been dismissed as "kiddie lit" (Hron 28). In reality however, themes are represented that go way beyond teen's literature in their complexity and may in fact even bee too difficult to explain in any other way. As Pullman contests in this regard, "themes too large for adult fiction [can] only be dealt with adequately in a children's book" (qtd. in Hunt and Lenz 122). Similarly, in his foreword to *Nervous Conditions*, Appiah says: "Because that world is made real in the novel, it does not matter if you know nothing at all of Zimbabwe's cultures, politics, and history. Everything you need waits for you in Tambu's narration" (xi).

4.2 The Child/Youth Narrator in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Nervous Conditions*

Two prime examples of the African *Bildungsroman* can be seen in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Both novels feature a girl protagonist narrator on her way to adulthood, in the process of negotiating her position in society and weighing out differing ideologies to form an identity of her own within the aforementioned hybrid space.

In the beginning of *Nervous Conditions*, the reader is introduced to the Nigerian Shona village girl Tambu, who was born and raised in a traditional homestead, situated in the rural "communal lands that surround Umtali" (2). While Tambu attends to the daily chores of the harsh life at the homestead, her brother has been taken away to the city to live with his uncle Babamukuru in order to receive an education at the mission school. Every time Nhamo returns from the city, Tambu observes how his new environment has changed him a little more:

> Nhamo was forced once a year to return to his squalid homestead, where he washed in cold water in an enamel basin or a flowing river, not in a bathtub with taps gushing hot water and cold; where he ate *sadza* regularly with his fingers and meat hardly at all, never with a knife and fork; where there was no light beyond the flickering yellow of candles and home-made paraffin lamps to enable him to escape into his books while the rest of us had gone to bed. All this poverty began to offend him, or at the least to embarrass him after he went to the mission, in a way that it had not done before." (6-7)

Nhamo's behavior gives Tambu a preview or even a warning of how colonial lifestyle can estrange someone from the environment one grew up in, one's traditions and one's family. It is described how Nhamo has allegedly forgotten how to speak Shona and refuses to communicate in anything but English, how even his outer appearance has changed, the way he dresses and the way his complexion has turned lighter (52-53). In his negotiation of identity, Nhamo has decided to break with traditional Shona life to an extent that he begins to despise it.

Tambu at this point is still a very young girl and has never been exposed to what her brother experiences in his new life. On the contrary, she has been living in a community with stable values, hierarchies and behavior codes. Her identity, though still malleable, was so far composed of the ways she had learned at her home and could mimic from her elders. Knowing nothing different, she never had reason to question Shona life. She had grown into it and participated actively in it, by performing her predefined roles and chores. Her brother's leaving, opens up a whole new spectrum to Tambu and an incentive to question her life as it has been. She suddenly begins to become aware that there are possibilities that go beyond village life in her hometown, possibilities that she herself could take but which she is not granted because she is a girl and boys have priority in the patrilinear hierarchical system of the Shona. Her brother is granted Tambu's biggest wish of being able to continue school which causes her to become "less than healthily jealous," (48) whenever he brags about his new life. She begins to perceive the Shona value system as unjust and henceforth finds herself incapable of simply accepting things the way they are, as she used to.

When the day of her departure finally arrives, Tambu is already aware that her old Self is about to change:

> What I experienced that day was a short cut, a rerouting of everything I had ever defined as me into fast lanes that would speedily lead me to my destination. […] When I stepped into Babamukuru's car I was a peasant. You could see that at a glance in my tight, faded frock […], and in my broad-toed feet that had grown thick-skinned through daily contact with the ground in all weathers. […] At Babamukuru's I expected to find a new self, a clean, well-groomed self who could not have […] survived on the homestead." (58-59)

She reflects on her life and combines what she has heard from Nhamo, to imagine what her future will be like and while she is partly sad for having to leave, she is also happy

that she will no longer have to sleep on the kitchen floor and perform all the tiring chores at the homestead and, most importantly, she will be able to go to school. However, it is not until she arrives at her uncle's house that she begins to understand why Nhamo had changed the way he had. She is scared that she could become like her brother but also determined to resist that happening by making herself more aware of it, as demonstrated by her reflection in retrospect:

> Although I was vague at the time and could not have described my circumstances so aptly, the real situation was this: Babamukuru was God, therefore I had arrived in Heaven. I was in danger of becoming an angel, or at the very least a saint, and forgetting how ordinary humans existed (70).

When Tambu is dropped off in her new environment one can clearly observe that she perceives her surroundings with the eyes of her cultural background, i.e. with the eyes of a traditional Shona village girl. What she sees in her new home, clashes with what would be perceived as logical and habitual in her native culture. She finds the kitchen dull and sterile and wonders whether her aunt is ill to sleep in the middle of the day, when she takes a nap (68). She is overwhelmed by the opulence of the living room (69) and shocked that her aunt considers little tea strainers that can be used for nothing but tea as "vital" (73). When Anna the maid addresses her with "Sisi", she is confused because normally only people with a higher rank of respect are referred to in that way and Tambu is much younger than Anna (86).

By the means of such descriptions, the author also enables an outsider such as the Western reader to understand the differences between two cultures and the intensity by which they clash. Only by being acquainted to how Tambu used to live first, makes it possible for the Western reader, to whom the conditions at Babamukuru's house would appear quite normal, to understand how different they really are. The fact that Tambu is still young is significant in this regard because other than it would be the case with a grown-up narrator her ideas about how something should be have not yet been made up and are less absolute. Of course, she perceives the colonial lifestyle of her new family as strange and their behaviors do not make sense to her, but she does not dismiss their ways from the beginning, as an adult might have done, but observes and questions.

Similarly, she has begun to fight against the Shona value system (Sizemore) but at the same time still clings to it because it gives her stability in an environment where

everything is new and unknown to her. As Okuyade claims, the patrilinear Shona family structure "is a framework for identity-construction: the placement of the individual in a hierarchy. It is a prescription for procedure. Its patrilocality prescribes where to live, how to behave and forms of address" (6). Tambu acts according to those conventions in the way she addresses her aunt and uncle and sets them above her in hierarchy. She is obedient and quiet, as it is demanded from a good Shona girl. She thereby puts herself in the position of the "poor female relative" (Dangarembga 118) who needs to be grateful to her benefactors.

This behavior is contrasted to her "anglicised" (Dangarembgra 74) cousin Nyasha, who behaves impulsively, thoughtlessly and disrespectfully according to traditional ideals. It is described how Tambu is deeply embarrassed by the way her cousin speaks to family members of a higher rank, as for example in the case of her mother: "It really was very sad that Maiguru, who was the embodiment of courtesy and breeding, should have such a rumbustious daughter. It was so embarrassing, the way Nyasha thought she could say anything to her mother. I didn't know where to look" (74).

Nyasha can be seen as another young adult character in *Nervous Contions,* who is struggling with the negotiation of her identity and trying to find her place in a community she no longer fits into. Having lived in England for many years, she has adopted different ways of thought and behavior and while she is capable of distinguishing between what is considered as right and wrong in Africa and in the UK, she cannot simply decide for one way or another:

> You get so comfortable and used to the way things are. Look at me now. I was comfortable in England but now I am a whore with dirty habits. […] It's not England anymore and I ought to adjust. But when you've seen different things you want to be sure you're adjusting to the right thing. You can't go on all the time being whatever's necessary" (119).

Nyasha is trapped between two cultures and she struggles with the disapproval of her parents who feel offended by her because they think she is deliberately acting against traditional African ways: "[…] now they are stuck with hybrids for children. And they don't like it. They don't like it at all. It offends them. They think we do it on purpose, […] I can't help having been there and grown into the me that has been there." (79)

While Tambu is largely surrounded by people who adhere to traditional values, Nyasha stands out as someone completely different. By influencing Tambu with her otherness, she represents a key figure in contributing to her identity formation because she jolts her from her habitual views. She causes Tambu to reflect upon her situation and put into question whether she and her environment are going in the right direction. And while Tambu disapproves of Nyashas habits, her smoking, her provocative behavior, her disrespect to her parents, her obstreperousness, she slowly begins to understand her and even takes her side in certain situations, as for example after the dance when Babamukuru catches his daughter dancing with a boy and reacts aggressively to her (Dangarembga 119). Tambu considers his reaction wrong, despite the fact that she has idealized him as a "hero" (119). By the same token, in the course of the book, Nyasha begins to increasingly approve of the way Tambu is, even if she is very different to her. When she receives a scholarship to go to an English boarding school, she is even afraid that her cousin will be brainwashed and estranged from who she was and from her family. In that way, Nyasha and Tambu can both been seen as contributing to each other's identity building.

The longer Tambu lives with her aunt and uncle, the more she appears to naturalize the ways of living at the mission. While her family in the village is still important to her, she herself realizes that their relationship has changed: "I was surprised at how difficult it was to be correct with my mother when I managed so becomingly, so naturally with Baba and Maiguru" (131). The way Tambu has to put a great effort into treating her mother appropriately according to Shona codes shows that she has distanced herself from her old life, though without necessarily disregarding it. Her mother warns her that too much Englishness may kill her (207). Her words are disturbing to Tambu and she is indeed worried that she might be drifting off more than she wanted to: "[…] I thought about Nyasha and Chido and Nhamo, who had all succumbed, and of my own creeping feelings of doom. Was I being careful enough? I wondered. For I was beginning to have a suspicion. No more than the seed of a suspicion, that I had been too eager to leave the homestead and embrace the 'Englishness' […]" (207).

However, in the end Tambu manages to come to terms with herself and to gain confidence that she has the freedom of making up her own mind, that she does not have to be exclusively African or exclusively English or Western, but that she herself can

decide about what is right for her: "Quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed, bringing me to this time when I can set down this story […]" (208).

Tambu's story may be seen as allegory for Zimbabwe, a country which just like the protagonist struggles with biculturalism and is trying to come to terms with her identity. Dangarembga uses her novel to "interrogate the burdens of colonialism and its effect on Africans who struggle to construct new identities to enhance their position in a society in transition" (Okuyade 6).

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the fifteen-year-old protagonist Kambili grows up as the daughter of a Western-educated, fanatically catholic, wealthy father, who has turned his back to and utterly disregards traditional African ways of living. She is raised to study diligently and to obey. At school she is considered "awkward and tongue-tied" (Adichie 49) because she never speaks to anyone and immediately runs off after school (52). In contrast to Tambu she grows up in a Western house, shielded off from the everyday reality of poverty, hunger and uproars (43). She grows up in a microcosm dominated by her father and cut off from the outside world.

Consequently, in the beginning of the novel, she seems like a girl without an identity of her own at all. Her days are scheduled from morning to evening and she is raised to never take decisions of her own but do whatever her father demands of her without further questioning. Similarly to Tambu who clings to Shona patriarchal conventions so as to feel safe in treating people surrounding her appropriately, Kambili finds a role model in her father. Despite the fact that he is despotic and violent she loves him deeply and feels secure following his instructions and rules. She sees him as a norm: whatever he does, is right.

Her entire existence appears to be based on fulfilling her father's demands to his satisfaction, as demonstrated by her devastation when she only comes second of the class: "I wanted to make Papa proud. […] I needed him to hug me close and say to whom much is given, much is also expected. I needed him to smile at me, in that way that lit up his face, that warmed something inside me. But I had come second. I was stained by failure" (Adichie 39). It does not matter to Kambili that her teachers consider her "intelligent beyond her years" (38) and "a daughter to be proud of" (39), nor does it

matter what she herself or anyone else would think. The only thing that matters to her is to live up to her father's expectations. Needless to say, this is connected to the way she has been conditioned to seeing Eugene as the one who decides over everything that concerns her but also for fear of punishment and need of his love and approval.

In her home, African ways are treated as a taboo. Kambili hardly knows anything about her roots and her native culture. For Eugene, and this is what he has also transmitted to his children, the ideal or the norm for literally everything in life, is how white people would act, as is confirmed by the way he states that African people set their priorities in the wrong way and that "you would never see white people doing that" (104). Consequently, Eugene has converted to Catholicism and taught his children that African religious beliefs are heathen and dangerous (73). He conveys the idea that blackness stands for sin and evil, while whiteness represents innocence and virtue, to an extent that Kambili even imagines Christ as being blond (173) and God as white and that he speaks in a British accent (179), despite the fact that her environment is actually mostly black.

Whenever the Achike family stays at their country residence at the village Eugene grew up in, he strictly controls who comes in and out of his house so as to ensure that his children are not exposed to influences he does not approve of. In the same way, he also strictly regulates contact to extended family members by restricting them to an absolute minimum. When Kambili and her brother visit their grandfather Papa-Nnukwu's house once a year, they are not allowed to stay any longer than fifteen minutes nor drink or eat anything they are offered (61), because he still follows traditional African religious practices, or "devilish folklore" (85), as Eugene names it.

In this way, a colonial identity is imposed on Kambili, that makes her will-less and obedient. She is taught not to think independently and she is left ignorant concerning her family's cultural background. This old image of Kambili, the Kambili that lives in a world where only red hibiscuses exist (Adichie 16), indicating that there is only one right path and that is her father's way, is strongly challenged in Nsukka, where she is sent to spend her holidays at her aunt Ifeoma's place, together with her brother.

Nsukka represents a space of transformation, a place where things are different and hibiscuses also exist in the color of purple – a "hybridized species" (Hron 31) that does

not derive from one single type of flower but that is composed of a crossing to evolve into something beautiful and special. This purple hibiscus is later transplanted to the city, when Jaja takes it with him to their house in Enugu and has it planted in the garden (197). It appears that the hibiscus is metaphorical for the way Kambili's and Jaja's world opens up at Nsukka in a way that would change them forever and make them return to their old home as transformed persons: grown persons, independent thinkers with a new, hybrid mentality that includes an appreciation for traditional and modern values likewise. For it is in Nsukka that Kambili becomes acquainted with traditional beliefs and customs for the first time in her life. In contrast to Eugene, "who denies his roots, Kambili only grows and flourishes, like the purple hibiscus, when she learns to draw on her roots and cultivate her hybridity" (Hron 34). In Nsukka, she learns how to cook traditional meals (165), observes the family break into Igbo songs in the middle of the rosary (125) and even gets to establish a relationship to her grandfather, when her aunt brings him to her home so as to take care of him (148).

In Ifeoma's house literally everything is different to the ways Kambili knows from Enugu, where "silence and secrecy" (Hron 32) reign. There is very little space, the floor is made from rough cement, the kerosene stove has blackened the walls and water only runs in the morning (120). Meat is rarely eaten, and if there is some, each just gets a little piece and nothing is ever thrown away or wasted (144). Household chores are divided among the family members, since of course there is no maid as in the Achike house (140). But most importantly, Ifeoma's house is a place of laughter: "Laughter always rang out of Aunty Ifeoma's house, no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around the walls, all the rooms" (140) and it is a place where people just chat away freely, as Kambili observes: "Words spurted from everyone, often not seeking and not getting any response. We always spoke with a purpose back home, especially at the table, but my cousins seemed to simply speak and speak and speak" (120). Kambili is intimidated by so much freedom. It is more than she can take and for a long while, she does not know how to react to it.

Her character at this point in time, i.e. as it has been described in this chapter so far, is set into stark contrast with that of her cousin Amaka. As in the case of Nyasha and Tambu, the two girls are roughly of the same age but almost appear like opposites as far as their character is concerned. Amaka clearly is her mother's daughter. She has been

educated in a liberal environment to be autonomous, to think critically and question the world, to embrace Igbo traditions and to speak out her mind. When Kambili first arrives at their house, she is very hard and provocative to her. She has pegged her as a spoiled, snobbish rich kid and a stream-swimmer, who has no opinion of her own, as demonstrated by way of example, when she speaks about her music: "I listen mostly to indigenous musicians. They're culturally conscious; they have something real to say. Fela and Osadebe and Onyeka are my favorites. Oh, I'm sure you don't know who they are, I'm sure you're into American pop like other teenagers" (118). It seems as if Amaka has the idea that Kambili is shallow and instead of cherishing her own culture probably just mimics the Americans, like many African teenagers stereotypically do. Little does she know of the fact that Kambili does not even own a cassette player and can hardly tell different music genres apart (118). Later on, when Amaka learns that Jaja and Kambili have received schedules from their father, telling them what they need to do each day, she mocks them for being so dependent: "Interesting. So rich people can't decide what to do day by day, they need a schedule to tell them" (124). Similarly, Amaka has thought about her future and knows exactly, where she would like to live one day and what she will study. Kambili on the other hand had never wasted a thought on it because "[w]hen the time came, Papa would decide," (130) as with everything in her life.

It is under those circumstances that Kambili begins to develop an identity of her own. Initially however, she only observes and at times she is shocked about how things are handled at Ifeoma's house. It is her brother who opens up first and begins to flourish in Nsukka (128). Kambili watches him and is amazed at how he seems to feel so comfortable and assimilates to family customs (154). For Kambili the pivotal moment can be seen in her establishing a relationship with her grandfather, when he comes to stay at his daughter's house, as well as her gaining an understanding of him as a person. As Hron claims, it is "only after she regards her grandfather without shame, but rather with love and admiration, that Kambili is finally able to find her voice and retort to her cousin (170), experiment with lipstick (177), play with other children (175) or ask her first question (179)" (33).

In her reflections about her grandfather (167-168) one can clearly tell how Kambili has evolved into a person capable of drawing her own conclusions – conclusions that her

father would have never approved of. She watches Papa-Nnukwu pray, and for the first time she does not mind seeing him naked despite the fact that it is considered a sin where she comes from. She listens to him and realizes that his prayers are not much different to Catholic ones and concludes that he is not to blame for anything.

When Kambili and Jaja return to Enugu, she realizes that "[p]erhaps we have all changed after Nsukka – even Papa – and things were destined not to be the same, to not be in the original order" (209). She says this to herself, knowing that her father will soon discover the painting of Papa-Nnukwu that she was given as a farewell present from Amaka. She looks at it and knows that she and her brother will be severely punished but it does not matter to her. She knows that she has changed and that there is no going back to how things used to be, and if she needs to be punished, then that is what she will take so as to stand up to her father to prove loyalty not only to Papa-Nnukwu, but also to her new Self.

According to Hron, like Tambu's story in *Nervous Conditions*, Kambili's personal development too has an allegorical function. Her "journey to adulthood also reflects the struggles of young Nigeria, as it negotiates Western and traditional norms, while also being overwhelmed by economic disparity, bad governance, pervasive corruption, or human rights violations" (31). Indeed, numerous parallels can be seen as, for example, in the realms of violence and patriarchal oppression and cultural negotiation. While Kambili suffers from her father's abuse and suppression, it is mentioned in parallel by means of the child-narrator's perspective (Hron 34) how Nigeria too suffers from violent military coups (24), how women are whipped at the market place (44) and how power and money are abused (24). Eugene's behavior can be seen as reflecting "the behavior of various dictator generals, Buhari, Babangida, Abacha, Abubakar, or Obasango, who also styled themselves as *"papa"* or *"baba kabiesi"* (father of the country)" (Hron 34).

4.3 Camagu as a Third-Generation Subject in *The Heart of Redness*

While Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Tsitsi Dangarembga have both chosen to draw upon an *adolescent* third-generation narrator in order to convey stories of identity development in a pluralistic environment, Zakes Mda has opted for a third-generation protagonist, at a later stage in his life. Although his exact age is not given in the novel, one may estimate that he is somewhere in his mid- to late forties, judging by the fact that he has already accomplished an extended tertiary education and has been working abroad for a significant period of time (cf. Mda 31).

Unlike Kambili and Tambu, Camagu is not the narrator of his own story. Instead, Mda makes use of an extra-diegetic, omniscient narration, with a strong focus on Camagu and his perception of the world, hence offering considerably deep insight into his views, feelings and thoughts. Despite being older in age, Camagu has an important common feature with the two girl protagonists Kambili and Tambu; and that is his position of an outsider. As with Kambili and Tambu, this position also carries the advantage of enabling non-expert readers to gain a deeper understanding of what it is like trying to find one's place in a highly homogenous environment.

Having spent the majority of his life in the USA as an apartheid-exile, Camagu returns to a free South Africa in 1994 to avail himself of the possibility to vote. "Swept up by the euphoria" (31) that reigns among the peoples, he decides to stay and seek a living so as to contribute to South Africa's development and progress. However, he soon discovers that he has become a "stranger in his own country" (31). But unlike Nyasha, Camagu has nevertheless retained knowledge and respect for traditional South African values, maybe even exactly because he was in exile.

Despite his notable education and a doctorate in communications, he is unable to find an employment in the field he studied for, on the alleged grounds of being over-qualified. He realizes that "the corporate world did not want qualified blacks. They preferred the inexperienced ones who were only happy to be placed in some glass affirmative-action office where they were displayed as paragons of empowerment. No one cared if they ever got to grips with their jobs or not" (Mda 33). It appears that his knowledge is seen

as a threat and so he ends up working as a part-time teacher (34) to somehow scratch a living.

Camagu now deeply regrets "that he had acquired so much knowledge in the fields of communication and economics but never learnt the freedom dance" (31) – a dance that is performed to celebrate the end of the struggles and sufferings of apartheid and the beginning of a new, democratic society. He is constantly being blamed for having missed out on those struggles and is told "that he was unpatriotic, that he was deserting his country in its hour of need for imperialistic America," (29) only to return to ready paved ground, as a local complains: "Yes, while they were having a good time overseas we were dying here. We were the cannon fodder for those who are eating softly now" (35). He is further accused of being unfamiliar with South Africa and its problems, its "rulers, presidents, ministers and law makers" (32). But Camagu is proud and, unwilling to bend to nepotism, corruption or servility (cf. Lloyd 37) in order to receive the post and respect he wishes for, he sees his only option in going back to exile (34).

Eventually, however, his encounter with NomaRussia leads him to the rural amaXhosa region of Qolorha-by-Sea where his identity is strongly challenged and changed under the influence of the people he meets. Mda demonstrates this development by constructing characters surrounding Camagu, whose ideas and behaviors cause him to constantly contrast them with his own. Like Kambili and Tambu he is challenged in his world views and consequently enters a process of negotiation, eventually leading to a personality shift "from a specified mode in which the demarcation of an individual follows its accordance with recognised classifications, to a specific mode," (Bell 1) which "works through the active negotiation of relations and the deliberate taking of sides, choices and risks under constraints that are external to these undertakings" (Hallward xii).

In the beginning it is expected by the inhabitants of Qolorha-by-Sea, as well as the reader, that Camagu will associate with the Unbelievers. He has grown up in a modern environment in the city, far away from his roots, customs and traditions and is highly educated. All those factors would suggest that his identity clashes with the ideology of the Believers. And indeed, initially Camagu finds himself unable of comprehending "why [they] are so bent on opposing development that seems to be of benefit to everyone in the village" (Mda 79) and sympathizes with the Unbelievers. However, as

the story progresses and he gets to know different viewpoints, his seemingly clear-cut position begins to totter.

Camagu's development is mainly centered around his being drawn between two poles: "his admiration for the school principal and his *unacknowledged* passion for a young peasant woman" (Lloyd 175) [emphasis added]. At the beginning of the novel, Camagu is strongly attracted to the beautiful, educated Xoliswa Ximiya, the daughter of Bhonco, head of the Unbelievers, who is known for her "no-nonsense demeanour" (71). Xoliswa strongly rejects traditional African ways of living. She dismisses them as backward, outdated and primitive (12). Her biggest wish is to move to the city to work for the government (12). She believes that modernity and progress are synonymous to Westernness, which can be seen in her naïve idealization of America as the model to look up to and her supporting the idea of making a modern tourism area out of Qolorha-by-Sea. Even her outer appearance has a strong Western touch, as demonstrated in the following passage:

> She looks like the mistress she is […] in a navy-blue two-piece costume with a white frilly blouse. She has her father's bone structure, and is quite tall and well proportioned – which is good if you want to be a model in Johannesburg, but works against you in a village where men prefer their women plump and juicy (10).

Qukezwa is Xoliswa's counter-image. Where Xoliswa sees "darkness, witchcraft, heathens and barbarians, Qukezwa sees song, dance, laughter and beauty" (219). She is the daughter of the head of the Believers, Zim. Her father has raised her to "carry forward the tradition of belief" (51) – a matter that she has taken up ardently. She is very familiar with and cherishes her history. While her school education is modest, she has great knowledge of indigenous animals and plants (102), knows how to harvest the sea, practice old, native rituals (119, 121) and masters the art of the traditional split-tongue singing (175). It is Qukezwa who introduces Camagu to the amaXhosa traditions and makes him realize that his learning in the Western sense has made him blind in regard to certain aspects. When he expresses his support for the tourism project for example, Qukezwa retorts: "But you are so dumb. White man's education has made you stupid," (117) and makes him understand that the locals will not be able to profit from the tourism project but that they will lose the rights over their own land.

By getting into dialogue, alternately with Xoliswa and with Qukezwa, Camagu enters a process of negotiation between two opposing discourses, i.e. that of modernity and that of tradition (Bell 3); "With Xoliswa Ximiya it is a dialogue on the nature and relevance of civilization, progress and primitiveness; with Qukezwa on the nature of traditional beliefs […]" (Bell 3). He listens to both women and sets their opinions and ways of living in comparison to his own and weighs them out. He thereby creates a reflective process that makes him question and reassess his identity. Other than initially expected, the longer Camagu stays in Qolorha-by-Sea, the more he distances himself from Xoliswa and the more he feels drawn to Qukezwa. By taking her side, Camagu "chooses to define himself in relation to her views and beliefs, which [also] means that he re-enacts the journey taken by Twin, Qukezwa's ancestor, in the historical narrative" (Bell 4) of the book.

Camagu respects the religious practices of the Believers (99) and in contrast to Xoliswa Ximiya, he does not see the traditional isiXhosa costume as an embarrassment or sign of backwardness but regards it as a "beautiful artistic cultural heritage". In the same way, he comes to understand that the gambling "tourist heaven" (229), will not bring progress but destruction to Qolorha-by-Sea and even goes as far as fighting for its preservation by claiming it as a cultural heritage sight. Xoliswa of course is devastated by Camagu's behavior. She cannot understand how "an educated man who has lived in America for three decades is fascinated by such rubbish" (99) and thinks he is a bad example to the other villagers. Camagu however remains steadfast, insists that he is not an American but an African (173), and clearly distances himself from Xoliswa's ideas of progress and modernity. By making such choices Bell argues, "Camagu strips off the white mask of a Westernized African and regains a perceived sense of amaXhosa identity" (1).

A key event or turning point in Camagu's identity shift can further be seen in his encounter with the Majola snake – the totem of his ancestral clan of the amaMpondomise. Camagu is overjoyed by the snake's visit because it is said to only visit certain chosen members to bring them good luck (112). When the hotel workers come to kill it, he prevents them from doing so and thereby proves his respect for traditional customs and gains the locals' respect. Xoliswa subsequently condemns him for being a barbarian (172) for believing in a snake, but Camagu has made up his mind

that he values traditions from the past and that education and belief do not necessarily exclude one another.

In Qolorha-by-Sea, Camagu finds a new home and personal fulfillment. Having lived and failed in the city, he finds his place in the country. He is respected by the villagers, has settled in a comfortable sea cottage and has even established a family and a business that has nothing to do with what he studied for, but fully satisfies him. Finally, in Qolorha, he can be in his home country and make the contribution to South Africa's development that he always wanted to. He considers Qolorha the "most beautiful place on earth" (69) and feels fortunate to be living among people who celebrate their past and carry on their traditions (319). Camagu is hence not the typical "Jim" who goes to "Jo'burg", i.e. to "the metropolis to become ubanised and street-wise; instead, Camagu the exile returned from the United States, leaves the "deadly streets" [29] of Hillbrow for the Eastern Cape village," (Woodward 174) to find contentment in a rural area.

In accordance, Bell has found out that the word "Camagu" has been used in other texts dealing with the history of the amaXhosa as well, such as *The House of Phalo* (1981) or *The Dead Will Arise* (1989). In those texts, he claims, the name "Camagu" carries very similar meanings, i.e. "forgive and be pacified", or "Amen and Be satisfied, O great Ones!" (2). In the case of *The Heart of Redness*, it appears that the protagonist corresponds to those meanings quite accurately in terms of his character and personal development. Having been disillusioned and disappointed by his home country and city life, he finds peace and happiness in Qolorha-by-Sea. In "a site of contradictions, a microcosm of the postcolonial and the locale for sometimes stultified, historically entrenched social interaction," (Woodward 174) Camagu "abandons a sense of self that is specified by an imperialist discourse, and by extension in contemporary South Africa a neo-colonial one, to embrace a subject position in relation to a counter discourse grounded in the history, traditions and ecology of the land of the Nongqawuse story" (Bell 3).

It has been shown that authors such as Adichie, Dangarembga and Mda make use of the third-generation narrator and the genre of *Bildungsroman* to depict the state of hybridity Africa is currently in on the one hand, and, how a character deals and grows within such a situation, on the other hand. Kambili, Tambu and Camagu can be identified as such third-generation narrators who are in a process of forming or reforming their identity by

negotiating between influences stemming from their surroundings; the past and the present, the native and the foreign, the traditional and the modern.

In doing so, they are challenged by characters surrounding them who represent different ideologies. Camagu is torn between Xoliswa Ximiya and Qukezwa. Tambu negotiates between influences from her cousin Nyasha and her family at the homestead and Kambili contrasts her father's ideals with those of her extended family in Nsukka.

All three characters finally manage to reach a state in which they feel confident and comfortable about their way of thinking and being, having created a personal space inside themselves in which there is no one-and-only-policy but that allows for a pluricentric world view that matches their environment rather than imposed rules and ideas that aim at tradition or modernity only.

This state of being, as suggested indirectly by all three authors – would also be worthwhile and desirable for the protagonists' nations Nigeria, Zimbabwe and South Africa. In fact, the stories of Kambili, Tambu and Camagu might even be seen as an appeal for Africans in general to come to terms with their national identity.

The third-generation protagonists, being non-experts themselves in a process of personal growth, also enable the non-informed reader to learn of their situation and gain an awareness of the daily problems arising from the clash of tradition and modernity.

5. THE REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN WOMEN BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN FICTION

5.1 The African Woman – an Oppressed Queen?

All four primary literary works considered in this thesis can be seen as dealing with the fictional representation of women in post-colonial Africa in varying degrees. While Ama Ata Aidoo's novel *Changes* has the role of grown women in everyday life as its major focus, *Nervous Conditions* and *Purple Hibiscus* feature girls in the process of

becoming women in a hybrid society. Zakes Mda has equally set particular importance on the role of female characters in *The Heart of Redness*.

Three of the authors, i.e. Aidoo, Adichie and Dangarembga are even women writers themselves – a group that seemed to have disappeared for a long time from colonialism onwards and has only begun to revive in the last couple of years. This appears rather odd, considering that in pre-colonial times women had a strong presence and participation in the oral literary tradition as "per-formers and producers of knowledge" (Nnaemeka 138). Not only were they composers and transmitters of stories, poems, lullabies, dirges and songs that presented important themes in the realms of culture, belief, family values, politics and morals, but they also presented female characters as central subjects of their narrations (Nnaemeka 138-139). Why then, one may ask, did it take African women such a long time to mark their presence in the field of creative *writing*?

Nnaemeka claims that the reason can be found within the intervention of the colonizers who came and introduced written literature to Africa, though of course exclusively according to their own ways and on their proper conditions. They thereby influenced the development of African literature not only in regard to the themes and styles that were taken up but also in regard to who would have access to the field of literature and to whom it would be directly or indirectly denied:

> As the transition was made from oral to written literature, new imperatives for mastery emerged. The factors that legitimated centrality shifted from those based upon age and sex to those based upon knowledge of the colonizers' languages – English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese. The sexual politics and Victorian ideals of colonial education created a hierarchy privileging men by virtually erasing any meaningful female presence. (Nnaemeka 139)

The coming of the Europeans and the imposition of their ways caused a major shift in the standing of women writers, their traditional roles and their position in society.

Naturally, the primary focus of this chapter does not lie alone in the role of women *writers*. Much more than that, it focuses on the depiction of female *characters* in their novels. However, in order to understand the fictional representation of African women in the literary works under consideration, it is of great importance to digress for a

moment and have a look at the historical development of women in real life as well – writers included. Also, interestingly the development of female writers very accurately mirrors that of the position of African women in general too, and may therefore serve as a representative example for the purpose of illustration and greater comprehension.

It is a common Western misconception to think of Africa as a continent where people until recently lived as people did in the pre-industrial West long before modernization came and brought about the great social and economic changes that have marked us until today. This misconception logically goes hand in hand with the idea that women also held and might still be holding the position of Western women in the past. Needless to point out, this is a distorted view, ignorant of the fact that African countries have cultures of their own which are completely different and might not be connected at all to those of the West. As a consequence it is important to understand that African feminism is not to be seen from a Eurocentric, comparative angle but in its own context and dynamics.

Studies on indigenous cultures (see Sudakarsa) have shown that in contrast to what is commonly said about the West, women in Africa used to hold positions of high societal status: "[I]n precolonial times women were conspicuous in 'high places'. They were queen-mothers; queen-sisters; princesses, chiefs and holders of other offices in towns and villages; occasional warriors; and, in one well known case, that of the Lovedu, the supreme monarch" (Sudarkasa 91).

Many features of traditional African cultures even suggest a "societal deemphasis on gender" (Sudarkasa 101). On the linguistic level for example, Sudarkasa asserts that female and male names are frequently interchangeable and that many African languages do not have gendered pronouns (101). But even numerous "other areas of traditional culture, including personal dress and adornment, religious ceremonials, and intragender patterns of comportment" (Sudarkasa 101) were neutral in regard to sexual categories. This provides evidence that gender did not play a decisive role in regard to the status question between men and women in pre-colonial Africa which poses a major difference to the West. Hierarchies were hence not determined by sex but rather by age, as Sudarkasa establishes in her work: "In both patrilineages and matrilineages, interpersonal relations on a daily basis tend[ed] to be regulated by seniority as determined by order of birth rather than by gender" (Sudarkasa 95). Female

subordination as it is understood in classical feminist studies, i.e. as deriving from unbalanced hierarchical relations, appears "to have been absent in various precolonial African societies" (Sudarkasa 94).

Nevertheless, the stories of female characters such as Esi, Tambu, Kambili, Xoliswa Ximiya or Qukezwa display a completely different situation. The daily problems the women presented in *Changes* face, do not seem much different from those of the West after all. They struggle to find recognition and a fulfilled life in a world that is in many ways dominated by men. Indeed, numerous African feminists claim that "it is colonization and Western cultural hegemony that have hurt African women, by overshadowing their past achievements" (Nada 142) and that has caused women and men to incarnate a hierarchical social order. As it may be observed on the example of women writers, it is not the native culture that distanced them from the scene of literature, but colonization that led them away from their position as producers of (oral) literary texts. In the colonizer's view, writing was a male domain and so was education. In that way women were inhibited from participating not only in terms of the forced gender restriction alone, but they were also for a long time deprived of the linguistic tools, i.e. the language of the colonizers that would have enabled them to break through this constraint.

In the same way, regarding the position of women in general, it can be argued that "colonization contributed to the decline in status of African women, by imposing European gendered divisions of labor and social/spatial spheres on the subjugated culture […]" (Elia 142). Evidently, the eventual assimilation to such Western ways led to a substantial change of lifestyles and a fundamental shift in the perception of female roles and what is expected of them. As will be shown in the following chapter, this is a social development that is strongly reflected in the novels under discussion.

5.2 Women in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*: Love, Marriage, Sex, Identity

In *Changes*, Ama Ata Aidoo presents the lives of three women and their daily challenges in post-independence Ghana. Those three women; Esi, Opokuya and Fusena,

differ greatly from one another in regard to their personality, their goals, priorities and family constellations. However, they all have one important thing in common which may be seen in their quest for a fulfilled female identity in a changed, hybrid Africa and the similar dilemmas they face (Curry 2).

As in the cases of Tambu and Kambili that have already been explored in the preceding chapter, those three women too are in search of finding the right place in an environment full of ambiguity and tension, though in this case the author has put a particular focus on adult women and their *female* identity. By portraying this process through three individual characters, Aidoo provides multiple perspectives on central topics such as love, marriage, sexuality and female independence and thereby creates a multisided and hence considerably realistic painting of the situation of women in modern Ghana. As confirmed by Simpson: "Aidoo neither homogenises the group nor presumes to speak on behalf of all African women. Instead she focuses on three distinct characters, channeling personal and broader social issues through their circumstances and choices" (159).

Aidoo also puts a focus on deconstructing stereotypical roles of women with fixed, assigned functions. All female characters can be seen as actually representing a whole range of roles that may sometimes even contradict each other and stand in a state of constant negotiation: "Aidoo's characters do not have set identities or roles, such as those of 'wife' or 'mother,' but are developed in relation to a variety of factors (race, class, gender) and perspectives (personal, political, feminist). Their identities are constantly under construction, as is the world around them" (Simpson 157).

Esi Sekyi, the protagonist of the story, is an educated, independent woman. With her job for the government as a data analyst (12) she earns more money than her husband Oko and her post even provides for their housing. Her lifestyle is very modern and untraditional. She only has one daughter and does not wish to have further children, as can be deduced by the fact that she is on birth control (Aidoo 11) – a decision that she took by herself, without consulting her husband. She drives a car (3), drinks alcohol (39) and travels the world to visit conferences: "Geneva, Addis, Dakar one half of the year; Rome, Lusaka, Lagos the other half" (12). Clearly, Esi sets her professional life above household chores and meets her proper decisions out of her own, free will. In

fact, she even feels that her husband takes up too much of her time and suffers from his demanding demeanor to an extent that she suffocates.

Oko feels weakened in his manhood by Esi. He cannot cope with the fact that she takes those "dreadful birth control things" (11) and that she puts "her career well above any duties she owed as a wife" (12). He feels emasculated by the fact that his wife stands above him financially and complains that his friends do not think he is behaving like a man because he tolerates Esi's independent behavior (12). During a confrontation, Oko reflects: "Is Esi too an African woman? She not only is, but there are plenty of them around these days…these days…these days" (12). The repetition of "these days" in Oko's reflection can be seen as indicating a certain melancholy for old times, times in which, as he sees it, women were still how they were supposed to be. Africa has changed and so have her peoples. Esi apparently has become one of those new, modern women that are so different to the ones he grew up with. As it seems, he simply cannot adapt to or even merely accept Esi's choice of lifestyle because her strength and independence make him look weak and powerless.

As if to restore his masculinity, Oko commits marital rape. This scene may be considered as a crucial point in the novel because the author indirectly also addresses a cultural conflict. Later, when Esi sits in her office and reflects on the incident, she comes to realize that the concept of marital rape does not even exist in her own or any other African native culture. She tries to find a word for it in Akan, Yoruba, Wolof, Kikuyu and Xhosa (16) to come to the conclusion that there is none:

> But marital rape? No. The society could not possible have an indigenous word or phrase for it. Sex is something a husband claims from his wife as his right. Any time. And at his convenience. Besides, any 'sane' person, especially sane women would consider any other woman lucky or talented or both, who can make their husband lose his head like that (Aidoo 16-17).

While Esi has become certain that what her husband had done to her was rape, she is also aware that hardly anyone in her surroundings, friends or family, would interpret the incident in the same way. The fact that there is not even a word to describe marital rape in her native language provides evidence enough that sex within marriage is simply not perceived as an act of abuse in African culture, even if it is forced on a woman. Much rather it is seen as a man's right and a wife's duty which may be claimed at any time.

Consequently, sexual fulfillment is also clearly regarded as a male prerogative (Curry 189).

To illustrate the general position that the modern Ghanaian society holds in this matter, the author sets Esi in contrast to other female characters with which she enters into different dialogues about her marriage, her views on relationships, sexuality and love. The clash of perceptions within those dialogues not only demonstrates that the majority of women hold a completely different opinion but by opposing her, they also set Esi apart from the norm (cf. Curry 181) hence marking her as an outsider.

One such example can be seen in a discussion between Esi, her mother and her grandmother. When she reveals the news to them that she has decided to leave her husband because he demanded too much of her, they think she is out of her mind and call her "mad" (47) and a "fool" (47). The two women are outraged to such an extent that they dismiss her, no longer willing to have any more of the matter. Later, when the discussion is taken up again, her grandmother Nana admonishes Esi for her behavior:

> You had a husband of your own whom you just left because you say he demanded too much of you and your time. But Esi tell me, doesn't a woman's time belong to a man? […] But remember, my lady, the best husband you can ever have is he who demands most of you and all your time. Who is a good man if not the one who eats his wife completely and pushes her down with a good gulp of alcohol? (Aidoo 132-133)

The way Nana describes women, she sets them equal to a "plate of food" (Curry 189), a product that is there to be consumed and "swallowed up" (Aidoo 134). To refuse a man this wifely duty is a crime "that society spotted very quickly and punished swiftly and severely" (Aidoo 133).

But even her best friend Opokuya, who is much younger than Esi's relatives and could therefore theoretically bear less traditional views, does not share her ideas. When she hears why Esi no longer wants to be with Oko, she reacts with utter disbelief and calls her mad (54) just like her grandmother and her mother had done. She laughs about her friend's naivety and cannot believe that she had once thought her husband would support her independence, even if he had initially been fascinated by it:

> Opokuya had begun to giggle and then discovered she could hardly stop. "You see, it happens to all of us. Esi listen: men are not really interested in a woman's independence or her intelligence. The few who claim to like intelligent and

active women are also interested in having such women permanently in their beds and their kitchens." (Aidoo 54)

Opokuya even admits that the fact that society has led men to preferring dull women over successful and clever ones is indeed an "impossible situation" (55) and that even she herself feels caught in such a state. But a divorce or being single is simply not an option and therefore one has to be "realistic" (54) instead of clinging to naïve, utopian expectations which can only be destructive in a marriage where women come second.

Opokuya has opted for staying with her husband even though her job is demanding and her obligations as a wife and mother of so many children are overwhelming. In a talk with Esi she admits that her chores wear her out: "When I'm home, they try to squeeze me dry to make up for all the times they have to do without me" (42). She is even aware that her husband might be having an affair (Aidoo 66). Yet, breaking up with him is out of question. It appears as if she had never even considered another possibility but that she arranged herself with the fact that she was born as a woman and that she therefore had a predesigned destiny, prescribed by the society she inhabits.

What Esi is experiencing, as Curry claims, is a fictional mirror of societal changes in urban Ghana:

> In *Changes: A Love Story* Aidoo shows us that in urban Ghana domestic changes have also taken place, such as the disintegration of traditional family values and the evolution of conjugal attitudes and practices among the city's educated elite. However, African women still have to cope with deeply ingrained cultural beliefs. These are the reminders that they cannot cut their umbilical cord with their traditional communities (Curry 181).

Esi serves as a prime example of a woman who has taken up a path that clashes with the prevailing ideals and expectations of the society she lives in. By deciding to leave Oko, she attempts to free herself from an unhappy marriage in which she was kept small and silent. However, she never actually manages to break free entirely even after she leaves him because her so-called metaphorical umbilical cord still attaches her to her environment and the people surrounding her. The expectations of others put Esi under so much pressure that she cannot simply ignore them even if she wanted to.

Such a situation can be seen in the period of time in which Esi lives as a single woman. After Oko leaves, she brings her daughter to her in-laws to take care of her and thereby frees herself of all motherly and wifely obligations that have stood in her way for so

long. She is happy to have unbound herself from the restrictions and obstacles that Oko had imposed on her and enjoys her uncoerced love affair with Ali in which she even finds sexual fulfillment. Although Esi finds great pleasure in living alone in her bungalow and taking decisions without having to consider anyone but herself, she receives strong criticism from her friends and family for being single. In a further attempt to bring her friend to reason, Opokuya reminds Esi that being alone will make her life hard because the modern Ghanaian society simply "doesn't allow it" (59):

> Esi don't laugh, it's serious. You may be right. Because it is easy to see that our societies have had no patience with the unmarried woman. People thought the single state was an insult to the glorious manhood of our men. So they put as much pressure as possible on her. […] And of course if nothing cured her they ostracized her and drove her crazy. (Aidoo 57-58)

The fact that Esi can cater for her needs without the help of a man is irrelevant because "even when women attain economic independence and self-sufficiency, they are still expected to have husbands" (Diñan). Curry therefore claims that Esi serves as a representative example for a middle-class, educated single woman who has no place "in the cultural, ideological and social context of post-independence Africa" (180).

And indeed, despite being satisfied as a single woman, Esi eventually gives way to societal pressure and ends up marrying Ali. In this polygamous relationship she loses her freedom and becomes lonelier than she had ever been during the time she was officially single. Having to share Ali with Fusena and his professional duties she hardly sees him anymore and finds herself desperately waiting for his rare visits ever so often. She feels "shame for her dependence on a man who, as far as she could see, was too preoccupied with other matters to ever be with her" (Aidoo 144). By presenting Esi in both, a polygamous and monogamous relationship, Aidoo shows that even in very differing forms of relationships the position of a woman remains difficult.

Fusena represents another female character in *Changes*, who sacrifices her personal ambitions for the sake of fulfilling societal expectations. At the age of twenty-six, she has achieved a respectable education but her friends are "laughing at her behind her back" (70) for still being unmarried and childless. Her mother is so desperate about her daughter not being married yet that she even consults the family *mallam* (70) to inquire about her future. The peak of distress is finally reached, when Fusena even turns down

the wedding proposal of a wealthy man who, had she decided to accept his offer, would have made the whole family rich.

Seeing that there would be no way of escaping marriage, Fusena decides to at least marry someone she feels comfortable with and agrees to become the wife of Ali, whose family is also "worried over his continued bachelorhood" (73). She soon realizes that she thereby "exchanged a friend for a husband" (79) and deeply regrets the loss that resulted from this union (79). However "given the position of women in society, she would rather be married than not, and rather to Ali than anyone else" (80).

Henceforth Fusena lives "her life as Ali's wife" (79). She abandons her career and follows him to London where she becomes a mother. Her only purpose becomes looking after her family, doing housework and looking through catalogues (78). Having set her professional ambitions aside for too long, she one day expresses her wish to start teaching but Ali refuses because the payment is too bad and buys her a kiosk instead. Consequently, when she hears that Ali wishes to take Esi, a woman with a university degree, as his wife she is shattered. Her jealousy however does not arise from the fact that Ali takes a second wife, but much rather because he chooses somebody who is educated while he has deprived Fusena from any intellectual activity whatsoever for so many years.

Looking at the challenges Esi, Opokuya and Fusena face as women in modern Ghana, it becomes evident that many of their problems arise from the fact that established cultural norms clash with the reality of everyday life. In *Changes*, Ama Ata Aidoo describes a society in which women have clearly defined roles and expectations that restrict them in their professional and personal fulfillment and therefore place them in a subordinate position. Those current views on women however cannot be defined as being based on traditional, outdated, native values, but as norms that evolved from post-colonial times onwards and are therefore composed of a fusion of ideals. The example that probably best illustrates such a clash is the polygamous marriage of Esi and Ali, as contested by Simpson:

> In entering into a polygamous marriage, Ali and Esi rather naively accept a traditional structure that can only be successful if they subscribe to its codes and conventions. Ali's intimate proposal, the troubled marriage negotiations, and his failure to consult his first wife, Fusena, all imply that, as Western-educated,

> hybrid figures attempting to live in an African world, Ali and especially Esi […] do not realise that they cannot adhere to traditional structures when they see fit. They do not realise, that is, that they cannot simply use a social structure designed around family dynamics to legalise an extra-marital love affair. (165)

Esi, like the other female characters described in Aidoo's novel, is a woman who is educated and financially independent of her husband. Since she does not need to rely on a relationship of whichever kind in order to survive, it is only a logical consequence that it would be worthless and irrelevant if it would not involve romantic love. But as Hoist Petersen argues: "Romantic notions of love, or matters of the heart, upset the very logical equation on which the experiment [of a polygamous marriage] was built" (355).

The tension that arises between the continuations of traditional practices such as polygamous marriages in a modern world where the reasons out of which they arose no longer exist, is very poignantly displayed in a dialogue between Esi and her grandmother on the purpose of marriage:

> '[…] These days, young people don't seem to know why they marry or should marry.'
> 'But Nana, that is such an old and worn-out idea! Children can be born to people who are not married.'
> 'Sure, sure, but to help them grow up well, children need homes with walls, a roof, fire, pots.'
> '[…] We also marry to increase the number of people with whom we can share the joys and the pains of this life.'
> 'Nana, how about love?'
> 'Love?...Love?...Love is not safe, my lady Silk, love is dangerous. […] But when we need to count on human strength, and when we have to count pennies for food for our stomachs and clothes for our backs, love is nothing. Ah my lady, the last man any woman should think of marrying is the man she loves.' (Aidoo 51)

In this conversation, in which Nana impersonates tradition and Esi represents modernity, one can clearly see how the views between generations clash. While old societal structures such as polygamous marriages still persist even in modern times, the priorities and goals of people, and in this case especially of women that engage in them, have entirely changed.

For Nana, marriage meant a means of survival, a family structure in which all members cooperated in order to ensure that everyone was able to have a plate of food and a roof over their heads. Love obviously did not play a role in such a situation. On the contrary

it could have even been obstructive in regard to achieving the common goal of subsisting. But Esi being educated and financially independent does not need to rely on a marriage so as to reproduce or provide for herself and her daughter. She therefore knows that "the traditional roles of wife and mother, the spheres of marriage and family, are no longer sufficient to ensure [her] happiness" (Simpson 156). This position of course not least arises from her privileged status. As Aidoo points out in her foreword to *Changes*, Esi worries about such issues because she simply *can*:

> Several years ago when I was a little older than I am now, I said in a published interview that I could never write about lovers in Accra. Because surely there are more important things to write about? Working on this story then was an exercise in word-eating! Because it is a slice from the life and lovers of a somehow privileged woman and other fictional characters – in Accra. (Aidoo)

The protagonist's battle is not about survival but much rather about the battle of finding an identity and happiness in a "life lived in a modern world grounded on a traditional society" (Simpson 156). Naturally, the author is aware that current Africa has numerous grave problems to tackle. But is love really so unimportant? And hasn't it become the everyday reality of women in Africa, fictional or real, to experience challenges like Esi?

At the end of the novel, Esi has still not found fulfillment. Instead, she has discovered what it is that restricts her in getting there. In this way, she has begun to enter a self-reflective process that has brought her at least a step further to personal independence.

On the example of her female characters, Aidoo displays "a growing sense of African feminism" (Simpson 159). By naming the obstacles women have to face in both literature and the real world, she raises an awareness of the limits that hold them back. Those are often a result of the conflicting relationship between the past and the present, as has been shown on the example of marriage. While doing so, the author

> enables the novel to enact a form of African feminism that is neither meant to stereotype African men nor advocate a female centred worldview. Instead, Aidoo seeks to renegotiate the identity of African women, particularly the way in which it is represented in literature, and to re-examine the issues such women face, including female independence and the nature and form of an equal relationship between a man and a woman. (Simpson 169)

5.3 Female Identities in *The Heart of Redness*

In *The Heart of Redness*, Mda presents a very special case of feminism. Although he is "neither a female nor an ardent feminist," (39) as Cloete and Madadzhe claim, he paints an image of women with strong, independent characters in his writing and thereby promotes the ideal of "a caring and equitable society" (Cloete and Madadzhe 39) in which women and men are of equal standing.

The distinctive feature that sets *The Heart of Redness* apart from the other novels examined in this thesis is the focus on South Africa and its history of apartheid. Applied to women, this circumstance presents itself in a "threefold female oppression: by male domination, by apartheid discrimination, and by the physical constraints imposed on women by their femaleness – physically, mentally and educationally" (Cloete and Madadzhe 39). This means that female oppression as presented by Mda is not only a result of inequalities between genders but also a product of racist attitudes and capitalism (Cloete and Madadzhe 39).

By including powerful women into his novel, the author deconstructs the commonly presumed superiority of men, not only in contemporary South Africa but also in the country's past. Mda's narration features important female characters on a two-level narrative, that is in that of the present in Qolorha-by-Sea as well as in the telling of the past, in which female prophetesses such as Nongqawuse had substantial influence on the life and fate of the amaXhose people – indeed even until way into the present day, as can be seen by the fact that the village community is still divided according to proponents and opponents of Nongqawuse's prophecy.

Even the protagonist's development is presented as being determined almost entirely by the women he encounters. It is a woman, NomaRussia, who brings Camagu to Qolorha and it is the two major female figures Qukezwa and Xoliswa Ximiya that cause him to question and redefine his identity on multiple levels, as has already been examined earlier in this thesis.

Xoliswa Ximiya is always referred to by both her names, which is an indicator for her high social standing (Mda 2-3). She is representative of the new, emancipated South African woman, who has turned her back to tradition and has dedicated herself wholeheartedly to modernity. Having acquired a high level of education and accepted a

post as the school principal of Qolorha-by-Sea Secondary School (Mda 2), she has gained the reputation of a successful woman among the members of the village community. She is financially independent and takes her decisions autonomously without considering her family's will (cf. Mda 2). Oddly, the reasons for which Xoliswa Ximiya is regarded a person of high status are also the exact reasons for which she is condemned. In other words, her independence is presented as being both her strength and her weakness. Just like Fusena in *Changes*, she too is strongly criticized even by her own mother, for still being an unmarried and childless "old maid" (Mda 2) at the age of thirty-six. Xoliswa's eagerness and success has made the villagers think of her as a cold, distant woman that no man would like to marry because she is too independent, as demonstrated in the following passage:

> She is a man in a woman's body. That is why no man can tame her. That is why even a doctor like Camagu was afraid to marry her. He knew she was her own boss, and that she would not be controlled by any man. That is why she rules all those men and women at the secondary school with an iron stick. (Mda 302)

The fact that Xoliswa "feels no obligation to adhere to archaic edicts, which compel women to look up to men as the only providers," (Cloete and Madadzhe 43) shows a clear break with traditional patriarchy on her part. In fact, Xoliswa even destabilizes the image of the man as the head and bread-earner of the family by building her father a house. While the Unbelievers see this as a "wonderful gesture" (Mda 166), "[t]he Believers […] think it is a shame that a man who should have worked for himself to fill his compound with many rondavels, hexagons and at least one ixande has to depend on a girl to build him a house" (Mda 166).

The theme of women's financial independence is also taken up in further examples, as can been seen in the founding of the seafood cooperative which is exclusively led by women, with the sole exception of Camagu. The business relationship that is established between him, MamCirha and NoGiant is one of equal standing in every respect, including their distribution of roles and their genders. While Camagu brings in his knowledge on economics and marketing, the two women possess the equally valuable skills of how to harvest and prepare seafood (Cloete and Madadzhe 46). As in the case of Xoliswa, MamaCirha and NoGiant are also frowned upon, for earning their own money, while Camagu is accused of taking advantage of them (Mda 276). But the latter defends the women, as for instance when Bhonco calls them "foolish" (Mdam 276):

"Those foolish women, Tat'uBhonco, are making good money that you will not see even in your dreams," replies Camagu. "And they make this money from their own business. I do not own the co-operative society. Its members own it" (Mda 276). Camagu here indicates that he does not force anything on the women or attempts to profit from them but that a business has been established that should benefit each of its participants. As Koyana contests:

> In time, the mutual trust that develops in the business affects Camagu's personal life, thus suggesting ways in which the traditional African values of *ubuntu* (people first) can be invoked to function in the post-apartheid economy. More importantly, their collaboration addresses contemporary concerns about the role of women in economic and social transformation of society. (Koyana 54)

It appears that through his book, Zakes Mda attempts to debunk the common misconception that traditionally assigned female roles stand in the way of modern women who seek for independence and emancipation. MamCirha and NoGiant use their traditional knowledge for exactly this reason and succeed with their business.

Similarly, even NoPetticoat who is actually a member of the Unbelievers, one day decides to join the cooperative against her husband's will in order to earn her own money. Doubtlessly, this decision represents a step towards modernity, but at the same time she also begins to take up traditional practices that she had long abandoned and missed dearly ever since. By way of example, she starts smoking her pipe again and goes back to wearing the traditional isiXhosa clothes that she had always loved for their exceptional colors and beauty (Mda 300). Bhonco consequently feels betrayed by his wife. He thinks that she has joined the Believers but she claims that "she is still a loving wife, and that her stubborn husband is the one who refuses to understand her needs" (Mda 300). The character of NoPetticoat does not only prove that Unbelievers such as Bhonco have misinterpreted modernity but also shows that tradition does not hinder development.

According to Cloete and Madadzhe, with such descriptions Mda attempts to show the reader on the example of his characters that in order to make the best of democratic South Africa, men and women need to rid themselves of hindering beliefs and stick together in order to achieve better living conditions for everyone: "Mda cautions his

readers that unless there is a paradigm shift in which men discard archaic, oppressive, sexist practices, the creation of a utopia on this part of the continent will remain a dream" (47).

Another very strong female character can be seen in Qukezwa, the counter-image of Xoliswa Ximiya. As previously mentioned, as the daughter of the Unbelievers she stands for tradition and the preservation of old beliefs and practices. She is a "guardian of collective memory" (Ibinga 101). Although she is less educated and has a job of much lower standing than Xoliswa in Dalton's Vulindela Trading Store, she is nonetheless described as a very powerful, sagacious woman who refuses to accept discrimination of whichever kind and demands to be respected by men and women regardless of their age, level of education or social standing, as confirmed by Koyanda:

> Her organic, harmonious relationship with the natural and spiritual worlds does not prevent her from working for a living, and although she has a menial job as a shop assistant and cleaner in Dalton's store, her sense of self is not diminished. Qukezwa is neither under control of Mrs Dalton's authority nor under the spell of Xoliswa's academic superiority […] Although she is a reservoir of the past in her relationship with Camagu and her traditional authority, she is strongly centered in a contestatory womanist consciousness of the present. (Koyanda 57-58)

Qukezwa's confident personality is especially displayed in her relationship with Camagu. The latter is much more educated and has more experience in that he has travelled the world and lived in different, more developed places than Qukezwa who has spent her entire life in rural Qolorha-by-Sea. Nevertheless, Mda paints her as being the wiser one of the two. It is her, who educates Camagu to understand amaXhosa life by passing on her knowledge of the village people, their customs and traditions but also of the numerous local plants and animals. Through her and her knowledge of the native culture he regains his African identity. Next to Qukezwa, Camagu even appears child-like, as for example, when he declares his love to her (Ibinga 181):"'I love you Qukezwa! I love you!' he shouts breathlessly. 'You know nothing about love, learned man!' she shouts back. 'Go back to school and learn about it!'" (Mda 224). The way the two interact makes Qukezwa appear as the more knowledgeable, more experienced person, while Camagu seems like her disciple, who needs her to guide him (Ibinga 181). With this guidance and her influence on him she ultimately plays a leading role in the preservation of Qolorha and its protection from the evils of capitalism.

In *The Heart of Redness*, Mda also addresses the theme of female roles in regard to sexuality and marriage in a very similar way to how Aidoo describes it in her novel *Changes*. As in the relationship of Esi and Oko, NoGiant is expected to grant her husband his "conjugal rights" (Mda 253) when he returns home. However, she demands of him to clean himself first – an "unreasonable demand," (Mda 253) according to him which makes him so furious that he burns down their home. The idea of his wife working for the cooperative and then denying him the "pleasures of marriage" (Mda 253) on top of that is unacceptable to him. In fact, after the death of her baby, NoGiant is even accused of having killed it deliberately herself in order to have more time for her business. Here once again Mda not only shows the destructiveness that viewing women as being subordinate can have on an entire community, but he also stresses the importance of equal dues within a marriage and that women should be granted the right of finding pleasure in sexuality instead of being forced by established customs and rules to serve men's sexual desires.

Concludingly one may say that in the novel under consideration, women take up the position of "progressive leaders in their communities, defying the traditions of female suppression and oppression, expecting to be respected, developing their own identities, articulating their own views and being allowed to live full, fulfilled lives" (Cloete and Madadzhe 49). Mda stresses the importance of women participating in the creation of the aforementioned "utopia" (Cloete and Madadzhe 47) that the new South Africa ought to strive for. The author makes a point in stressing that the collaboration of all people, regardless of their sex, age, education or race is necessary in order to achieve this common goal. Last, it is shown by the example of women that tradition is not the obstacle to progress but, when used in the right way, it may even be the key.

5.4 Girls Growing into Women in *Nervous Conditions* and *Purple Hibiscus*

In both, *Nervous Conditions* and *Purple Hibiscus*, the girl protagonists Tambu and Kamibili are presented as growing up in strongly patriarchal family structures, in which their fathers or surrogate fathers represent the head of the family and male family members are generally attributed more freedom and power than the female ones who

take up subordinate positions. It can be observed that Tambu and Kambili both stand between sets of characters that represent different poles, that is, those who stand for the sphere in which patriarchy reigns and those who embody the counterpole that stands for gender equality, female rights and against the silencing of women. In *Purple Hibiscus* for instance, Kambili stands between her parents who exemplify a way of living in which women are of lower status and the so-called counterpole that is made up of characters such as her aunt Ifeoma and her daughter Amaka. Similarly, Tambu negotiates between her parents and her surrogate parents Babamukuru and Maiguru and her cousin Nyasha.

In the case of the two novels under examination, the influence of the characters surrounding the protagonists is of particular importance because they are not yet grown women like Esi, Qukezwa or Ximiya, but they are young girls in the process of becoming women. Hence, the people surrounding them represent role models with differing ideologies among which Kambili and Tambu are forced to negotiate by entering a personal reflective process that will lead them to form a decision in regard to their perception of themselves as young girls or women.

When Tambu comes to live with her aunt and uncle, she is ashamed of her cousin Nyasha, who takes the freedom to openly criticize her father and question everything that is happening around her, as demonstrated in the following passage:

> Beside Nyasha I was a paragon of female decorum […] I did not question things. It did not matter to me why things should be done this way rather than that way. I simply accepted that this was so. I did not think that my reading was more important than washing the dishes, and I understood that panties should not be hung to dry in the bathroom where everybody could see them. […] I was not concerned that freedom fighters were referred to as terrorists, did not demand proof of God's existence nor did I think that the missionaries, along with the other Whites in Rhodesia, ought to have stayed at home. As a result of all these things that I did not think or do, Babamukuru thought I was the sort of young woman a daughter ought to be […]. (Dangarembga 157)

The way in which Tambu was raised by her parents who had served as her role models so far, taught her that women were in an inferior position, like her mother who "suffered from being female and poor and uneducated and black" (91). Having grown up in an environment, where maternal relatives were excluded from festivities (37) and in which it is considered a waste to educate women (30) because their "real tasks of feminine

living" (34) are to get married and raise children, she has learned to put her needs and wishes behind those of male family members. In spite of living a much more modern and progressive life than Tambu's parents in the Western sense, Babamukuru and Maiguru only reinforce Tambu's perception of the subjugated woman. Babamukuru, being the male leader of the family, decides over everyone and everything in the family. His wife hardly has any influence on her husband and is not involved in decision taking. The fact that Jeremiah comes first and Maiguru second, is also mirrored in the way he is celebrated like a prince (36) when he returns to Africa with his degree, while nobody even knows that Maiguru has a Master's degree as well and that she does not even get paid properly for the work she does because she is a woman (102-103).

Nyasha, the "anglicised cousin" (74) however is different. She rebels against being oppressed on the grounds of being a girl and challenges her father in his decisions and his handling of the family – a severe insult in traditional Shona culture. She dresses provocatively (95), uses tampons (121) which is a threat to her virginity, speaks her mind and makes it clear that she does not consider her father an authority (117). Babamukuru denies that his daughter is growing into a woman and that she is developing her sexuality. He is devastated when Tambu's mother openly talks about how Nyasha's breasts have grown (133) and when he catches her with a boy, he condemns her to

> whoredom, making her a victim of her femaleness, just as I had felt vicimised at home in the days when Nhmao went to school and I grew maize. The victimization, I saw, was universal. It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. […] Men took it everywhere with them. Even heroes like Babamukuru did it. And that was the problem. […] You had to admit that Nyasha was altogether too volatile and strong-willed. […] But what I didn't like was the way all the conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness. (Dangarembga 118)

It is in this situation that Tambu realizes that in spite of being so different to her cousin, when it comes to the question of gender, they are the same, they are the weaker link. She comes to see that female subordination is not a question of modernity or tradition, of Africanness or of Westernness. It is present everywhere in the same, unfair way and hinders women from fulfilling their needs and aspirations. Even if respect for her elders is still important to her, she realizes for the first time that the way women are treated by men like Babamukuru and her father is simply not right.

Kambili's parents exemplify a similar relationship between man and woman to those of Tambu. Eugene rules over the family as a despotic patriarch. His wife Beatrice is silent and powerless to an even greater extent than Maiguru. She tolerates his beatings, even when she is brought to the hospital because he hits her so hard that she loses her baby (34). Although she suffers from his tyrannical behavior and his maltreating their children, she is unable to protect herself or the kids from Eugene. This helpless image of a woman would soon be challenged during her visit in Nsukka, where she encounters entirely different female role models such as her cousin Amaka and her aunt Ifeoma, who would influence her in discovering her femininity and her sexuality.

Ifeoma represents an independent, emancipated Nigerian woman who copes with her life without the guidance of men. She is a single mother of three children and manages to raise them next to her demanding job as a university professor (74). Ifeoma is painted as literally the only woman in the novel who is not afraid of Eugene and Kambili admires her for being so fearless and self-confident (89). She is so strong that to Kambili even her whisper sounds "tall, exuberant, fearless, loud, larger than life" (95). Ifeoma is not willing to buckle for any man, including her brother even if that means that life will be harder for her. When Beatrice tries to convince her to get help from Eugene, she simply replies: "But I will not ask my brother to bend over so I can lick his buttocks to get these things," (95) because she knows that if she asks for aid, he will only give it to her on the condition that she fulfills his demands: "Don't you remember that Eugene offered to buy me a car […]? But first he wanted us to join the Knights of St. John. He wanted us to send Amaka to convent school. He even wanted me to stop wearing make-up!" (95).

The difference between Ifeoma and Beatrice is particularly visible in their opposing views on marriage. Ifeoma regrets that so many of her female students at university marry at such a young age and thereby become financially dependent of their husbands. She believes that after their studies, their education will go wasted because they will sacrifice their professional careers for becoming wives and mothers. Beatrice on the other hand, sees nothing wrong in such a sacrifice. She believes that "[a] husband crowns a woman's life" (75).

Kambili observes and admires the way Amaka and Ifeoma feel so comfortable in their female bodies. As a girl who has never even ever worn trousers in her life (80) because

her father considers it sinful, she sits in mass, "thinking of Amaka's lipstick, wondering what it felt like to run color over your lips" (89). In Nsukka Kambili finds the necessary space to grow into a young woman, try out lipstick, experience that nakedness is not shameful and fall in love with a man. This is a development that her father had been strongly determined to hold back, as can be observed by the fact that he ignores her female traits entirely, teaches her to always cover her hair properly, never allows her to dress like a girl and even beats her up when she eats in order to cope with the pain caused by her menstrual cramps (102). His behavior clearly shows that he disregards the fact that his daughter is becoming a woman.

In the end Beatrice overcomes her passiveness and kills Eugene by poisoning his tea (290). Presumably, the driving force behind her action was to protect the family from the tyrannical father. However, his death leads to Jaja's imprisonment and Beatrice's misery. She falls into a deep depression and becomes lethargic. It appears that even though she has been freed of her husband, she will never be able to be happy again in her life (298). It remains questionable whether the author hereby criticizes the fact that it even had to come so far and that Beatrice should have never allowed Eugene to treat her in the way he did in the first place, or whether she is to be interpreted as a victim of her fate as a woman in contemporary Nigerian society.

5.5 Contemporary African Authors and their Fight for Equality

Whether presented as a primary focus or a side topic, having examined the novels under consideration, it can be contested that all authors to some degree paint the role of the African woman in contemporary times as suffering from the remainders of established beliefs that with all probability evolved from the post-colony onwards.

Those beliefs see women primarily as wives and mothers who have their place in the domestic sphere. In relation to men, they are of lower status and are hence subjugated in their freedom in multiple spheres, including sexuality, self-development and self–fulfillment in both private and professional matters. While this image of femininity is not originally African in its nature, as has been explained earlier, it has persisted for so

many generations that it has been naturalized. Hence, in the texts at hand the oppressed woman is presented as the traditional ideal, as can be observed, by way of example, in the speech of elders featured in the novels.

Female characters such as Esi, Fusena, Qukezwa, Xoliswa, Kambili and Tambu, so as to name just a few among the numerous examples, are all painted as having to deal with this traditionalized ideal that is still perceived as a norm. The difficulty in doing so is that times have changed and the aforementioned "oppressed queens" have long begun to regain their status – at least those who are in a more privileged situation. In their skills and abilities, their education and professional ambitions, they have come to reach equal status with men. Yet, they are not permitted to make their dreams and ambitions come true because their ideas clash with the established norm.

As contemporary African writers, Aidoo, Adichie, Dangarembga and Mda clearly attempt to raise an awareness of the obstacles set to women, through the literary depiction of their female characters' lives, their relationships and interactions with others. In doing so, they question existing values and deconstruct notions of femininity that hinder women. In doing so, they argue against gender based discrimination and promote cooperation and respectful coexistence which should eventually lead to an equitable society.

6. LANGUAGE AS A MARKER OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN *Purple Hibiscus, Nervous Conditions* and *Changes*

The fragmented communities and cultures and the state of hybridity that constitute contemporary African societies are mirrored respectively in the use of language. By making choices between communicating in native African languages, Standard English, African English(es) or other often pidginized varieties, speakers clearly mark their identification with certain groups or their dissociation with others. In some situations, such as for instance in the case of the character of Nyasha, characters might even

struggle with the fact of not being able to find the language that would adequately express one's identity.

Nervous Conditions and *Purple Hibiscus* display numerous such situations in which language is used as a marker of community or individuality, of sympathy with the colonizer, of approval of Westernness or of the endorsement of traditional customs and lifestyles. By speaking in one way or the other, characters project ideologies and influence the way in which they are perceived by their environment. The following chapter is devoted to the exploration of language use, choice and attitudes of the characters in the two novels under consideration with the scope of determining what they signal in terms of identity, ideals and ideologies and grappling with everyday life in a hybrid society.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the language theme is first presented to the reader through Tambudzai's brother Nhamo. Having left his family homestead and entered the milieu of Western education, he has begun to dissociate with Shona culture. This is particularly visible in his pretended forgetting of the Shona language. Tambu observes how her brother has grown and changed in appearance, but what is really unbearable for her is the fact that he has apparently forgotten his mother tongue:

> All this was good, but there was one terrible change. He had forgotten how to speak Shona. A few words escaped haltingly, ungrammatically and strangely accented when he spoke to my mother […]. He talked most fluently with my father. They had long conversations in English, which Nhamo broke into small, irregular syllables and which my father chopped into smaller and even rougher phonemes. (Dangarembga 53)

While their father is "pleased with Nhamo's command of the English language," (53) thinking that this is the "first step in the family's emancipation" (53) and a sign that his son is doing well in his education, he only encourages him to keep practicing his English to the maximum even when he is at the homestead (53). The rest of the family is distressed about this development and continues to speak to Nhamo in Shona. Most notably his mother is concerned about her son's degeneration of his mother tongue because she can sense that it is connected to his gradual estrangement and dissociation of his native culture and, of course, his family. However, Tambu notes that

> [t]he situation was not entirely hopeless. When a significant issue did arise so that it was necessary to discuss matters in depth, Nhamo's Shona – grammar,

vocabulary, accent and all – would miraculously return for the duration of the discussion, only to disappear mysteriously once the issue was settled (53).

From this passage, it becomes evident that Nhamo did not forget how to speak Shona but that it is a deliberate choice of his not to use his mother tongue anymore. It marks him as different, as not belonging to the village, the homestead and his family that he has come to think of as primitive and backward. However, when issues arise in which he wants to be involved and have a say, he draws back to his knowledge of the language in order to make his point. What is more, by neglecting the use of Shona, he also denies the rest of the family the possibility of engaging into deeper conversations with him because their level of English is simply not sufficient, as Tambu says: "The rest of us spoke to Nhamo in Shona, to which, when he did answer, he answered in English, making a point of speaking slowly, deliberately, enunciating each syllable clearly so that we could understand. This restricted our communication to mundane, insignificant matters" (53).

Nhamo turns into a stranger and marks his distance by means of language. A similar case is presented in Tambu's and Nhamo's cousins Nyasha and Chido, after their return from England. Having spent such a long time abroad, they hardly understand Shona at all anymore and are unable to speak the language, as their mother apologetically explains at a family feast: "They have been speaking nothing but English for so long that most of their Shona has gone" (42). Tambu is shocked by her cousins' change, remembering that she had known them so well and had always communicated "freely and fluently" (42) with them: "What Maiguru said was bewildering, bewildering and offending. I had not expected my cousins to have changed, certainly not so radically, simply because they had been away for a while. Besides, Shona was our language. What did people mean when they forgot it?" (42).

What does it mean, when people forget their native language? Without a doubt, Nhamo's loss of Shona means something different than Nyasha's and Chido's. With all probability, the latter might have not been able to sustain their language skills even if they had wanted to. Having spent such a long time in England at their age, with no input of Shona whatsoever, it is only natural that they began to forget their mother tongue and that English took its place as their primary language. Other than with Nhamo, their inability to speak Shona was therefore not a deliberate choice and certainly not just a

pretense but it was a loss that was imposed on them by their parents' choosing to leave their home country. Thompson in this regard also confirms that "[a] distinction must […] be made between English learned in the mother country, after Shona, and English learned in an exclusively English cultural context to the detriment of Shona" (58) as in the case of the cousins.

This forced language "detriment" (Thompson 58) had major implications, especially on Nyasha. As Thompson observes: "By the time the reader meets her, Nyasha lives and thinks in English, unable to replace it with Shona and is therefore detached from her community and family" (57-58). This becomes visible in numerous of her encounters and interactions with other people, such as, for example, at the aforementioned family gathering, at which Tambu is "bewilder[ed]" (42) and "offended" (42) by her cousin's inability to speak their language, to such an extent that she emotionally distances herself from her. This kind of estrangement is visible with even her own parents. Despite the fact that it is actually them who are to be made responsible for Nyasha's forgetting her mother tongue, they cannot accept her as the English-speaking person she has become. Wherever Nyasha goes, her English marks her as an outsider.

Thompson claims (59) that according to translation theory, culture and language are interconnected. No text could possibly be translated exactly as it was intended by its composer because the language into which it is being translated carries different cultural meanings and therefore bears a certain strangeness or otherness in it. This theory, as Thompson argues, can also be applied to Nyasha, who metaphorically attempts to translate her English self into Shona, knowing that the only way of being accepted by her community is to regain her traditional language and culture. However, this translation fails (Thompson 59) because Nyasha has changed too much. She can no longer just go back to being Shona and therefore "tries to force her otherness into Shona culture, to make people accept her despite her 'Englishness' " (Thompson 59). This failed translation is exemplified in her use of language, as becomes clear when she explains to Tambu: "They do not like my language, my English, because it is authentic and my Shona, because it is not!" (Dangarembga 200). Nyasha hence suggests that she is bilingual and bicultural, but her Englishness prevails so much that her Shona will never become entirely authentic anymore (cf. Thompson 58).

The consequence is that Nyasha has to find another way of communicating. As a hybrid she no longer finds it possible to express her identity by means of either of her two languages, which causes her to resort to extralinguistic means. This becomes particularly visible in situations in which Nyasha's Englishness clashes with what would be expected of her according to Shona behavioral codes, such as maintaining "silence and obedience" (Hill 79) with regard to elders. Whenever language fails her, Nyasha "expresses a voiceless anger through her body and her mouth," (Hill 78) for instance, by refusing to eat or by regurgitating her food. Hill confirms that

> [h]er refusal to eat food becomes a weapon of power in an otherwise powerless situation. The words have little to do with the original conflict, so they have the effect of shifting the subject to one in which she can have the last word. And by removing herself bodily, she controls the way in which the conflict is ended (82-83).

Different from Nyasha, to whom her English and Englishness pose an obstacle in her happiness and personal fulfillment, Tambu sees a possibility in the acquisition of English to emancipate herself and become a "member of the educated elite" (Thompson 58). When she leaves the homestead, her language skills are very modest but she is more than keen to learn, believing that English has a higher status than Shona (Thompson 58): "I did not speak English. But, I assured [Nhamo], I was going to learn English when I went back to school" (Dangarembga 28).

It is obvious that Tambu has incarnated her father's view on English, as it has already been described earlier in regard to his reaction to Nhamo speaking English at the homestead. She appears to believe that mastering the language will lead her away from her hard life at the homestead and enable her to strive for something bigger. She can be seen as "relegate[ing] Shona to 'the old ways' and English to 'progress'" (Thompson 58) and therefore embraces it, still unaware of the complications it might bring, aside of the profit that she hopes to gain. Tambu consequently tries to translate her Shona self into English (Thompson 55). As Nyasha, she too thereby imports Shona features into her new identity. However, in her case those help her to cope within her community and to still be accepted by her friends and family. Solely her mother, left back at the village, does not welcome her daughter's improvement in English, believing that it will draw her away from her roots and her respect for traditional values.

When it comes to the marriage of her parents however, even Tambu finds herself incapable of communicating through words and expresses her disapproval and fear by means of a physical reaction, like her cousin. By falling ill, she revolts without words against the patriarchal domination of Babamukuru and the humiliating wedding of her parents (cf. Dangarembga 155).

In *Purple Hibiscus*, language is used as a means of showing where characters stand in regard to their ideology and self-identification, between the poles of modernity which in this case is frequently perceived as something white and Western, and tradition or Africanness. One of the most clear-cut examples can be seen in the character of Eugene or *Papa*, who despises traditionalism and glorifies Westernization and modernity. This character trait is strongly reflected in his language choice or adaptation depending on the situation he is in.

It can be observed that, apart from some rare exceptions, Eugene exclusively speaks English to everyone surrounding him, whether he is in a professional or in a private situation. He has also made it clear to his wife and children that the use of Igbo should generally be avoided and that it is most definitely not to be spoken outside the four walls of their home under any circumstances. Also, the rare situations in which Eugene does speak Igbo always occur when he is upset and about to become aggressive or cruel to one of his family members. Already at the very beginning of the novel such an incident is described, in which Jaja upsets his father because he fails to compliment the new drink from his factory that the family tasted during dinner: "'Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us *gbo*? Have you no words in your mouth?' he asked, entirely in Igbo. A bad sign. He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English" (Adichie 13).

It appears that the author attempts to describe the character of Eugene by means of his linguistic behavior. The fact that he is strictly against the use of Igbo and that he glorifies English, informs the reader that he sees Africanness and tradition as shameful and evil while he apparently perceives originally White ways as the right path. This is fortified even more in situations in which he deliberately adapts his accent to make it sound more British. It is noticeable that such situations are usually interactions that take place in particularly white or Western milieus, such as at the school of Kambili where

he talks to her teacher, or at church, when he converses with Father Benedict (Adichie 46). Kambili also reports that he always "liked it when the villagers made an effort to speak English around him. He said it showed they had good sense" (Adichie 60).

It is evident that her father's attitude to languages has a very strong influence on Kambili and her own perception on Igbo and English. Oddly, as an African girl who was born and raised in Nigeria she has barely ever had contact to any other language than English. She goes to a Catholic English school, she mostly speaks English at home and even when the family visit their country home the villagers who usually speak Igbo, switch to English in order to please Eugene. Consequently she hardly even understands her own grandfather when he starts speaking with an African accent, as she describes: "His lower lip quivered, as did his voice, and sometimes I understood him a moment or two after he spoke because his dialect was ancient; his speech had none of the Anglicized inflections that ours had" (64). Moreover, Kambili's association to Igbo is also attached to her father's aggressive outbreaks, since this is when he starts speaking in his native language that he actually so much condemns.

Only Ifeoma, Eugene's sister, dares to speak in Igbo to her brother which once again demonstrates how independent and fearless her character is and how she embraces her roots and traditions. This is demonstrated for example during conversations between the siblings, in which Eugene speaks to her in English and she persistently answers back in Igbo nevertheless. Ifeoma frequently mixes English and Igbo without indicating any kind of hierarchical relationship between the two languages in terms of status.

In accordance with Dawson and Larrivée, who have composed a study on language attitudes based on Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, one could even argue that through the character of Ifeoma, the author also propagates the idea of a shift away from English as an imposed, colonial language, towards a view of English as having become the nation's own adapted African way of communicating in a unified manner:

> Following a replicable method, the study proposes results that validate the view that the Nigerian society has moved beyond a historically situated postcolonialist paradigm that pits Ibo and Standard English one against the other, to a globalized one that reflects a complex interplay of Ibo, Nigerian Englishes and Standard English that are not always strictly hierarchized. (Darwin and Larrivée 921)

Purple Hibiscus also features a form of silent communication. Kambili and her brother Jaja often communicate simply by looking at each other. As with Tambu and Nyasha, this appears to be a measure that is taken in extraordinary situations that could not possibly be handled by the ordinary means of open speech. Like the two girl cousins, Jaja and Kambili too suffer from the despotic rule and violence of their father. It seems that what they experience is too hard to talk about or maybe even too dangerous to utter in front of Eugene. Therefore they develop their own way of communicating silently.

However, this form of communication is also a sign of oppression. The longer Kambili and Jaja stay with their aunt, the more Jaja begins to change. He develops into an independently thinking, confident young man contrary to what his father had always taught him to be. He is no longer willing to bend to his father and does not idealize him anymore, having realized what a cruel man he is (Adichie 153). This sets him apart from Kambili, who is still attached to Eugene and the ways he taught her. She feels insecure when she does things her Papa would not approve of, and is frightened of making mistakes. It is at this point that Jaja and Kambili drift apart and are no longer capable of communicating silently by simply looking at each other. Jaja is no longer willing to share the world of Kambili in which their father is put on a pedestal despite oppressing and violating the entire family.

Although the theme of language is not treated in detail in *Changes*, some references are made that shall not remain unmentioned. Similar to Adichie, Ama Ata Aidoo propagates the idea in her novel that language reflects the social reality of her characters. This becomes evident, for example, when Esi realizes that although marital rape exists in her world, no African word, to her knowledge, could describe the concept (Aidoo 16). This suggests that to communicate experiences of current social realities taking place in contemporary Africa, or in this specific case Ghana, it is not enough to decide for one language or the other. It is also for exactly this reason that Africans have adapted the so-called language of the colonizer to express their feelings and ideas, as is exemplified by Esi:

> Esi was flabbergasted. Or rather, 'flabberwhelmed'! Then she laughed softly to herself as she remembered the freakish word. Trust Ghanaians again. They had

decided to create out of 'overwhelmed' and 'flabbergasted', a new word to describe an emotional state which they had decided the English were not capable of experiencing, and therefore had no expression in their language for… (Aidoo 179-180)

It seems that Aidoo hence also argues for a perception of English as indeed being a remnant from the past, but that it has also become Africanized and is therefore not to be seen as standing in whichever kind of hierarchical position anymore.

6.1 Language, the mirror of society: recapitulating the language theme

Having analyzed *Changes*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Purple Hibiscus*, one may conclude that the theme of language is commonly used as a mirror of the characters' social reality. Indeed, what would better reflect the current state of hybridity in Africa than the linguistic situation which displays the same tension between tradition and modernity, Africanness and Westernness, issues of cultural diversity and contemporary global trends?

By making a deliberate choice of a language, characters mark their belonging to or dissociation from certain groups. At times, as has been shown by the examples of Nyasha, Tambu, Kambili and Jaja, spoken language is no longer sufficient or suitable to express one's thoughts and experiences. The characters hence draw back to alternative, silent modes of communication.

By displaying hierarchical status relationships between native languages and English, authors such as Adichie and Dangarembga also call the reader's attention to the struggle of having to cope with competing languages and language varieties. While English persists as the language of the educated elite and the professional world, in certain cases it lacks the words to express African cultural meaning or even clashes with it. On the other hand, native languages are sometimes still seen as being of lower status, as demonstrated by the character of Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus,* and are therefore erroneously banned from their lives. Then again English is frequently discredited as the imposed language of the colonizer.

In her profile description in *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie explains: "[t]he way we are is very much the result of colonialism – the fact that I think in English, for example." (Adichie 4). This however does not mean that the colonizer's imposed ways are mimicked or idealized until today but that they persist as part of Africa's history which has significantly contributed, whether in a good or bad way, to what the nation has become. It appears that authors such as Aidoo and Adichie argue for a different view of English, as a language that unites Africa and that is no longer the colonizer's language but an adapted African English. This idea, seen in the bigger picture, can be applied not only to language but to all cultural spheres involved in this case.

Most importantly, however, the novels illustrate how "language plays a central role in the identity-formation and self-discovery of the characters" (Thompson 50) that they feature. While Kambili gets into contact with the language of her roots, Nyasha is trapped in an in-between space of languages. Tambudzai on the other hand learns English in order to emancipate herself and Esi discovers that "no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality" (Sapir qtd. in Steiner 87). Each of the characters eventually enter a process in which they attempt to translate their Self into the language(s) they can best express themselves in and communicate the way they feel and think.

7. BEAUTY IDEALS AND DISPLAY IN THE 20th-CENTURY ANGLOPHONE AFRICAN NOVEL

In the previous chapter it was shown how language is used in the four novels under consideration to mark character identities, their belonging to or dissociation from groups or to express personal values. In the case of beauty ideals and practices one may argue that they too, in a very similar way, represent a kind of silent "linguistic code" (Twigg 3) through which characters express themselves on a physical level. In other words beauty displays may be seen as a form of non-verbal communication through which the inner world of a character is transported to the outside, i.e. to his or her

environment within the novel as well as to the reader, in a materialized, physically imaginable version.

The theme of beauty ideals is broached by Mda, Dangarembga, Aidoo and Adichie as a means of describing their characters and informing the reader where they stand in regard to their appraisal or disapproval of modernity or tradition and lifestyle preferences in general. By describing their characters' looks and how they deliberately make choices between different kinds of clothing and make-up or control their body weight in order to come as close to their personal beauty ideal as possible, the authors depict differing views among characters, portray the protagonists' social standing within their communities and reveal information about their perception of the world and their social identities.

7.1 Clothing as a Means of Self-expression

In regard to clothing Twigg argues that

> [i]dentity and dress are intimately linked. Clothes display, express and shape identity, imbuing it with a directly material reality. They thus offer a useful lens through which to explore the possibly changing ways in which older identities are constituted in modern culture. (Twigg 1)

In *The Heart of Redness* it can be observed that the description of the characters' clothing is frequently used by the author to provide the reader with such a "lens," (Twigg 1) through which he or she is able to make assumptions about the characters' identities, i.e. what they are like, how they feel and think. At the same time, by looking at how differently the protagonists dress, for example in Western or in traditional styles, the reader has the possibility of noticing and determining diverging or even conflicting views among them. Such an example can for instance be found in Xoliswa Ximiya and her parents.

Already at the very beginning of the novel, even before explicit information is provided about Xoliswa's character in the text, the reader can deduce a lot about her personality based on the description of her outer appearance that undoubtedly implies modernity, Westernness and progress. She is delineated by Mda as usually being dressed in conservative cuts and classic colors such as navy-blue and white (Mda 10).

Furthermore, she always goes to town to have her hair dyed and braided and "people never stop wondering how she is able to walk among the rocks and gorges of Qolorha-by-Sea in those high heels" (Mda 10) she wears.

Clearly, Xoliswa's way of dressing sets her apart from the rest of the village community and marks her as a modern, untraditional woman who belongs to the educated elite. The fact that she wears completely unpractical shoes for walking in her environment even reinforces the reader's impression of her conscious attempts to signal that she is not part of the community of redness but that she is a proponent of modern ways and has turned her back to native culture and customs. Xoliswa's position however is not only mirrored in her personal choice of attire but also how she feels about the way others dress. By way of example, it is described how she is offended by the fact that her parents still dress in traditional isikhakha costumes because

> to highly civilized people like Xoliswa Ximiya, isiXhosa costume is an embarrassment. She hates to see her mother looking so beautiful, because she thinks that it is high time her parents changed from ubuqaba – backwardness and heathenism. They must become amagqobhoka – enlightened ones –like her. (Mda 47-48)

Her embarrassment makes Xoliswa even go so far as buying them "dresses and suits in the latest European styles" (Mda 48) in the hope that they would finally quit wearing their traditional clothes. But her parents nevertheless refuse to wear them for a long time and pack them away in boxes only to have them eaten by the moths, as their daughter laments (Mda 48).

Especially her mother NoPetticoat is particularly hard to convince since she finds such great pleasure in wearing her traditional clothes on the grounds of being

> one of the amahomba – those who look beautiful and pride themselves in fashion. She is wearing her red-ochred isikhakha dress. Her neck is weighted with bead-work of many kinds. There are the square amatikiti beads and the multi-coloured uphalaza and icangi. Her face is white with calamine lotion, and on her head she wears a big iqhiya turban which is broader than her shoulders. It is decorated with beads which match her amacici beaded earrings. To the amahomba, clothes are an art form. They talk. They say something about the wearer. (Mda 47)

It might initially appear odd to the reader that NoPetticoat wears traditional clothes, knowing that she is actually a member of the Unbelievers and should therefore be

against traditional, historical practices. While it seems only natural that characters like Zim, head of the Believers, are described as being dressed according to isiXhosa customs in a white ingqawa blanket, pearls of many kinds and colorful headbands (cf. Mda 48), it does not quite make sense why Bhonco and NoPetticoat should wear clothes that represent an ideology or state of being they so fiercely disapprove of.

This somewhat contradictory behavior may be interpreted as the result of a period of transition, in which the peoples of South Africa are caught between the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity as well as African values and the imposed ways of the colonizer. Evidently such a state of hybridity does not offer clear-cut, black and white boundaries and solutions that people can adhere to. Instead it calls for negotiation and compromise – an idea that Mda exemplifies by means of the theme of beauty ideals in regard to fashion. While Bhonco and NoPetticoat embrace modernity, they simply cannot entirely ignore their roots and reject the ways they grew up with. No matter how modern and progressive NoPetticoat may be in her way of thinking, she cannot suppress her fondness for the isiXhosa costume because during her entire life she has been taught to cherish it and has therefore learned to love it. As Bhonco explains, "[a]lthough she is an ardent Unbeliever, she is sold on the traditional fashions of the amaXhosa" (Mda 79) and is capable of identifying with her traditional clothes despite supporting the values of the Unbelievers.

Bhonco on the other hand represents a character going through change throughout the novel and this is also reflected in the way he dresses. The more fanatical he becomes in his disapproval of tradition and the more extreme he becomes in his "passion about development," (Mda 79) the more he also begins to adjust his looks to match this ideology while he simultaneously attempts to persuade his stubborn wife to join him in doing so:

> The Unbelievers stand for civilization. To prove this point Bhonco has now turned away from beads and has decided to take out the suits that his daughter bought him many years ago from his trunk under the bed. From now on he will only be seen in his suits. He is in the process of persuading his wife also to do away with the red ochre […]. When the villagers talk of the redness of unenlightenment they are referring to the red ochre. […] But Bhonco is a suit man. (Mda 79)

However, Bhonco obviously needs to convince himself to become a "suit man" (79). He tries very hard to find pleasure in his new clothes and comforts himself with the fact that his daughter will be pleased to see him wearing the modern garments she so "lovingly bought" (Mda 79) for him. It appears that his decision to start wearing Western apparel is based on an unfortunate development he eventually has to give in to, rather than a choice he makes out of his own free will because he likes European clothing so much. Since redness starts to increasingly become associated with "unenlightenment," (79) that is, with backwardness and savageness, he has no other option than breaking with his old ways of dressing because they begin to be associated more and more with notions that clash with his views.

By negotiating about clothing, the characters in *The Heart of Redness* metaphorically negotiate about tradition and modernity and their identities in general, as has been shown by the example of Xoliswa and her parents. Another case like that can be found in a debate between Xoliswa and Camagu that arises from their disagreement concerning the value of traditional clothing. Xoliswa is furious that Camagu begins to produce and sell traditional isikhakha attire within the scope of his cooperative's business activities, claiming that he thereby promotes redness in the village against which she has been fighting for so long. To Camagu however, the isikhakha dress "represents a beautiful artistic cultural heritage" (Mda 184) that should be retained by all means.

In spite of being a child of the third generation and having grown up far away from his home country and traditions, Camagu "is pleased to see that there are some people [in Qolorha] who still wear isiXhosa costume," (Mda 61) while he also considers it unfortunate that most of them have turned to the modern wear of the city:

> It is sad […] that when nations of the world wear their costumes with pride, the amaXhosa people despise theirs. They were taught by missionaries that it is a sign of civilization, of ubugqobhoka, to despise iskhakha as the clothing of the amaqaba – those who have not seen the light and who still smear themselves with red ochre" (Mda 61).

The influence of the colonizer is presented as a decisive factor in *The Heart of Redness,* in regard to how today's people of South Africa perceive their traditional clothing. As in the case of the standing of women that was dealt with earlier in this thesis (see p. 33), it is the colonizer who appears to be responsible for the degradation of isiXhosa clothing

as mere "curiosities" (Mda 61) worn only at "special cultural occasions" (61) and for its currently popular perception of it as signifying backwardness. And yet, as with language, nobody is willing to see modern clothing as the dress of the colonizer but as something that has been immersed and adapted to become an African product, as Camagu informs the reader:

> As their everyday attire the civilized ones wear German and Java prints that are embroidered in the West African tradition, but they still boast that they are in African dress. To them, African fashion means West African, and never the clothing of the amaXhosa or some other ethnic group of South Africa." (Mda 61)

While it has become unacceptable to dress in traditional South African dress, it is just as intolerable to wear the imported attire of the colonizer. Hence, contemporary South Africans claim their hybrid clothing as being *West* African. Just like English can no longer be seen as the colonizer's language, clothing too needs to be regarded as the result of a fusion or an adaptation that has indeed become an African product. Yet, it remains questionable why Mda presents *South* African clothing as shameful, while *West* African apparel appears to be acceptable.

While characters like Bhonco struggle to free themselves from tradition and redness, paradoxically those belonging to the Westernized, educated, urban milieu, who hardly have any connection left to their traditional roots, are described as being especially fond of traditional attire. IsiXhosa costumes are described to be worn by people in magazines (184), by cabinet ministers at the opening of the parliament on TV (184) and by the "glitterati and sundry celebrities of the city of gold" (185). It appears that the more distance people have to their history, the more they are capable of cherishing their traditions and vice-versa.

Twigg contests that "[c]lothes are cultural artefacts, embedded in current and historical sets of meanings, shaped by social and economic forces, reflecting current social and cultural concerns" (13) and that is very much what Mda stresses in his novel. The reader's attention is drawn to the issue of the difficulties brought about by the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity which his characters experience on a daily basis by the example of clothing and beauty ideals.

Such situations of conflict are also featured in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* as for example with Nyasha's arrival at the village in a "tiny little dress, […] hardly enough of it to cover her thighs" (Dangarembga 37) that causes an uproar among her relatives.Tambu is shocked by her cousins inappropriate English dress and even Nyasha herself seems to regret having worn it judging by the fact that she is "constantly clasping her hands behind her buttocks to prevent her dress from riding up, and observing everybody through vigilant eyes to see what" (Dangarembga 37) the others are thinking.

Nyasha's looks mark her as socially "disrespectful and indecent" (Hill 83). The description of her attire is just one more of the many techniques by which the author paints her as being a stranger to her original culture, customs and traditions. Her particularly Western outfit allows the reader to deduce that she has adopted English habits, including the way she dresses. Hill argues that her wearing a miniskirt may be read as "a subversive gesture by which she demonstrates the control she exerts over her female body" (Hill 83). However, it is highly possible that when Nyasha picked out the dress she wears for her visit at the village, she might have not even been aware of the provocation it would cause because she just dressed the way she always does and that feels natural for a girl who has grown up in England. As Hill further explains,

> [i]n 1965, when they [Nyasha's family] return from England, the European fashion industry was introducing miniskirts. In the West, skirt length was being reinterpreted as a referent to a woman's age, sense of fashion, and the thinness of her legs, rather than as a means of locating morality through her body. Having picked up this Western preference, Nyasha transports it back with her to colonial Africa. (Hill 83)

Maiguru on the contrary, who grew up in Africa, still has a higher consciousness level of what is appropriate and what is not in her ancestral culture and appears in "flat brown shoes and a pleated polyester dress" (Dangarembga 37). Therefore she "did not look as though she had been in England," (37) her outfit hence marking her as still belonging to the community despite her long absence.

7.2 'Unclothing'

Another important topic in regard to the physical appearance of characters can be found in the theme of nakedness or 'unclothing', as termed by Hopkins, since strictly seen "in no African culture have people commonly gone about [entirely] undressed" (132). Instead they have often made use of "nonwoven forms of clothing, such as leather, barkcloth, beads, and tattoos" (Hopkins 132) if woven material was not available.

It appears that ever since colonization unclothing has increasingly begun to be associated with backwardness, paganism and immoral behavior (cf. Jenkins 88). Even

> [r]ecent governments, both colonial and national, have subscribed to this equation of woven clothing with modernity in their campaigns to eradicate 'nudity' as a national embarrassment." (Hopkins 132)

Clothing has therefore evolved into a symbol of status which marks individuals as belonging to different classes. Hopkins even claims that nakedness is used by people to mark and exert their power on others so as to push them into positions of inferiority (132).

In accordance to this claim, Jenkins has found out that themes of unclothing are also taken up in literature, often in a very derogatory way, in order to express racist attitudes, ridicule blacks, present indigenous practices as immoral or simply for the purpose of marking difference between Europeans and Africans in an overstated manner (88). In such texts, where (white) authors refer to "customary nudity or near-nudity" (Jenkins 88),

> clothing and the state of dress or undress are signifiers of culture. The authors use them to portray what they think the views of the characters are about, differences in culture, while at the same time revealing their own attitudes. (Jenkins 88)

In *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Heart of Redness*, it can be observed how unclothing is used to portray difference and categorize characters as either belonging to the Westernized, new African scene or to the traditional, old African milieu. In *The Heart of Redness* for instance, the reader is presented with a passage in which Xoliswa openly expresses her disapproval of partial nudity:

> Xoliswa Ximiya comments that it is shameful that the girls are frolicking about topless, wearing only traditional skirts. Camagu responds that he does not see

anything to be ashamed of. The girls are from a culture that is not ashamed of breasts. (Mda 172)

As in their disagreement regarding traditional attire, here again Camagu and Xoliswa are described as adhering to differing ideologies, as can be deduced by their attitudes towards unclothing. Xoliswa clearly takes up the position of the Westernized, powerful woman who has adopted the view imported by the colonizer that unclothing is sinful and pagan.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili is ashamed to see someone naked. When Amaka begins to undress in front of her, she feels shame and extreme discomfort:

> Amaka […] pulled her dress over her head. In her white lacy bra and light blue underwear, she looked like a Hausa goat: brown, long and lean: I quickly averted my gaze. I had never seen anyone undress; it was sinful to look upon another person's nakedness. (Adichie 117)

Kambili's reaction reveals a lot about her attitudes and how she has grown up. At the same time, this passage also demonstrates what Jenkins refers to as "difference in culture" (88) between the two girls. Of course they originate from the same country but looking at how differently they handle nakedness shows how fundamentally dissimilar they are. While it appears perfectly natural to Amaka to undress in front of her cousin, Kambili is scandalized. This proves that she has adopted the culture of white, Christian ways in which unclothing is regarded as sinful.

7.3 The Body as a Mirror of the Inner Self

Whether thin or fat, short or tall, our bodies are and have always been interpreted as a symbol for societal status. Naturally, the perception of what is considered as 'beautiful' is not fixed but changes throughout history. By looking at how traditional and modern notions of beauty are paralleled in novels such as *Changes* or *Nervous Conditions*, the reader is able to deduce information about implicit value systems, associations with beauty, personal priorities and how these evolve and shift being exposed to different influences throughout time. As it is the case with language and the status of women, perceptions of the body are also often described as clashing with each other owing to the hybrid state of transition Africa is currently experiencing. In such a state both old

and new images coexist, which also accounts for the plurality of views among the peoples concerning the ideal of beauty.

In contrast to clothing, the influence we have on the shapes of our bodies is only very limited. Nonetheless, our physique has a major impact on how we are perceived by other people. Depending on the way a figure is built, it may trigger a whole range of assumptions about a person on the part of his or her vis-à-vis, reaching from a person's social origin or class, one's state of health, physical power in regard to others and many more. As Bordo confirms, body size can not only be seen as "the outer indication of the spiritual, moral, or emotional state of the individual" (186) but it also "indicates social identity and 'place'" (191).

Needless to point out, conclusions that are based on a person's physique are by nature deceitful because they derive from mere assumptions that are in turn connected to moral systems, personal taste and often faulty or corrupted normative ideas. A representative example for such a case may be found in *Changes*, in the description of Esi:

> Esi was a tall woman. The fact that made a short man of Oko, since people mostly expect any man to be taller than his wife [...]. She was quite thin too, which gave her an elegance that was recognised by all except members of her own family. When she was younger and growing up in the big compound house with her cousins and other members of the extended family, she had to be careful about starting a quarrel with anyone. Because no one lost the chance to call her beanpole, bamboo, pestle or any such name which in their language described tall, thin and uncurved. (Aidoo 9-10)

The description of Esi allows the reader to make several important conclusions. Many of those do not even directly regard Esi herself but refer to beauty ideals and values of family members or Ghanaian society in general. For instance, it is mentioned that "all" (Aidoo 9), i.e. people by which she is normally surrounded, consider her slimness beautiful. The information given by the author on Esi's educational background, where she lives and works implies that she largely consorts with individuals in the urban, modern milieu. Judging from the fact that those people consider thin bodies attractive allows the reader to assume that they have adopted the same beauty ideal as the contemporary industrialized West. This image is then contrasted with the view held by Esi's family members, who disapprove of her thinness and even mock her for her lack of curves. Hence, it may be concluded that within rural spaces, older, traditional beauty

ideals are held in which female bodies are preferred corpulent. Consequently, by means of her physique, Esi is marked as an outsider in her own family.

Another fact that can be derived from the description of Esi's physical appearance is Oko's feeling of inferiority. Interestingly, Aidoo deliberately chooses not to describe Oko individually, but in terms of his wife. He is not depicted as being short in general but as *appearing* short next to Esi because she is so tall. Oko's and Esi's relationship is mirrored even in their physical appearance. Next to his wife, he literally feels small and powerless. His feelings of emasculation that derive from Esi's independence, her successful career and her free spirit can physically be translated into her tall, thin and elegant (Aidoo 9) body.

A very contrasting body image is presented to the reader through Esi's best friend Opokuya who, compared to her,

> was definitely fat. Not that she cared. […] Any time the question of her obesity cropped up, she made it quite clear that the fact that she was fat had nothing to do with not knowing what to do about it. […] she had concluded that those who are interested in women, losing so much weight must be the same ones who are interested in women, especially African women, cutting down their birth rate. (Aidoo 18)

The description of Opokuya points out to the reader that "[n]o two humans could have been as different, physically and temperamentally, as Opokuya and Esi" (Aidoo 20). But apart from marking difference between the two friends, Opokuya also addresses the issue of fertility in connection to beauty ideals. Despite being slightly more traditional than Esi, as can be deduced from the fact that she adheres more strictly to the traditional female roles of the wife and mother as well as by her physical appearance, she can yet be classified as belonging to the group of the modern, progressive women of Accra. Like Esi, she knows how to drive and has her own job. Being a nurse, she is also aware that obesity is harmful to one's health. Therefore her concern in regard to thinness and fertility is not one of health but rather one that refers to a state of mind. To her it seems that women who want to be thin are probably too modern to *want* to have many children and fall into the traditional roles of wife and mother (Aidoo 18). Consequently, she concludes that a slim figure is connected to a typically new, independent way of thinking and living.

An even more traditional and at the same time more uninformed opinion regarding fertility in connection to body shape, can be found in Esi's mother and grandmother. According to the prevailing traditional beauty ideal that is held in their village, thinness is an indicator for infertility. The women are therefore worried that Esi can no longer bear children because "given [her] structure" (Aidoo 50), she has "waited too long" (50). Esi's mother

> shared the popularly held belief that a young woman who is too tall, too thin and has a flat tummy and a flat behind has a slim chance of bearing children. The longer she waits after puberty, the slimmer those chances get! (Aidoo 50)

As can be deduced from this passage, the fact that Esi is thin and does not have many children makes her less worthy as a woman, in the eyes of her mother and grandmother. Evidently, their idealization of the corpulent body is not simply a result of personal taste but it is strongly connected to a historically developed ideal based on traditional values and the living conditions they grew up in.

In times in which survival was the absolute priority, the rotund body was admired because it signified strength and health. A woman who was well nourished could not only endure the harsh living conditions at the homestead but she was also able to bear many children who would help to sustain the family. Moreover, a stout body was equated with prosperity since it meant that a person enjoyed the privilege of food abundance which was by no means evident at the time. All associations with Esi's mother's and grandmother's beauty ideal, are linked to issues of subsistence. But as in the case of polygamous marriages (see p. 42) the matter of survival has become redundant in the modern, urban milieu that Esi and so many other women inhabit. As Opokuya stresses in a conversation with her best friend:

> The days when being fat was a sign of prosperity and contentment are long over. You and I know these days the only fat people in the world are poor uneducated women in the so-called Third World and unhappy sex-starved women in the more affluent societies who are supposed to eat for consolation. (Aidoo 44)

Through Opokuya a reference is made to a social development that has caused an overall shift in the perception of what is considered a beautiful body. The reasons for which corpulence was so highly esteemed appear to have been reversed. In this respect Bordo notes that the perception of the ideal body being slender is

> possible only in a culture of overabundance – that is, in a society in which those who control the production of 'culture' have more than enough to eat. The moral requirement to diet depends on the material preconditions that make the *choice* to diet an option and the possibility of 'excess' a reality. (192)

It is crucial to point out one more time that this of course does not mean that there generally is an overabundance of food in Africa but that those who regulate cultural norms are in a position where food requirements are more than sufficiently covered.

In *Nervous Conditions* beauty ideals and the body are connected to where and under which conditions the characters live. Tambu and her brother Nhamo go through major changes when they move from the traditional homestead to the urban, Westernized milieu of their surrogate parents, which is also mirrored in how their bodies alter. The first time Nhamo returns to the village, he has not only forgotten how to speak Shona but even

> [t]he change in his appearance was dramatic. He had added several inches to his height and many to his width, so that he was not little and scrawny any more but fit and muscular. Vitamins had nourished his skin to a shiny smoothness, several tones lighter in his complexion than it used to be. (Dangarembga 52)

The change of Nhamo's physique owes to a change in lifestyle. By receiving the nourishment his body actually needs and that he would not normally get at the homestead, he grows strong and healthy. No longer having to perform manual work outdoors, he is less exposed to the sun and therefore develops a lighter complexion. His body clearly mirrors that his days of hardship are over and that he has adopted the lifestyle of a Westernized milieu – a liberation that his sister Tambu later experiences too when she moves to the mission:

> When I was dressed I admired myself in the mirror. […] It was a shock to see that in fact I was pretty, and also difficult to believe, making it necessary for me to scrutinize myself for a long time […] Nyasha returning from her bath caught me at it and did not allow me to be embarrassed. […] 'Not bad at all. You've got a waist. One of these days you'll have a bust. Pity about the backside' […] 'It's rather large.' (Dangarembga 92)

Like Nhamo, Tambu grows plump at her new home – "a physical condition with a close cultural connection to the material condition of prosperity" (Hill 82). Indeed, the fact that Tambu gains weight marks her as a member of a privileged society. Within this space she is no longer forced to preoccupy herself with matters of survival which leaves

room for other engagements and thoughts, as can be deduced, for instance, from the fact that she reflects on her looks for the first time. At the homestead on the contrary,

> food and its lack are a constant preoccupation […]. Much of the action revolves around its procurement, cultivation, gathering, and preparation. After Nhamo's death, when she leaves the homestead to live at the mission with Babamukuru's family, food becomes characterized by its overabundance and is associated with Babamukuru's established success, wealth, and power. In such an atmosphere of class and educational privilege, the concept of cultivation becomes abstracted from bodily necessity. (Hill 81)

Nyasha however is very slim, despite living in such a wealthy house that even features a table of which the

> shape and size had a lot of say about the amount, the calorie content, the complement of vitamins and minerals, the relative proportion of fat, carbohydrate and protein of the food that would be consumed at it. No one who ate from such a table could fail to grow fat and healthy. (Dangarembga 69)

The description of Nyasha's body and her obsession with being thin are utilized by the author to convey information regarding her personality. On the one hand her physique signifies an embodiment of the Western beauty ideal of the thin body. Even if beauty may not actually be her primary concern, paired with her Western clothing style and overall demeanor, she nevertheless displays an English stereotype to the people surrounding her. In that way her body marks her as being different and causes her to stand out in her community at the mission and even more during her family visits at the village.

On the other hand, Nyasha's thinness mirrors her personal "nervous condition" that results from her living in an oppressive, patriarchal environment in which she does not only fail to adapt and fit in after having adopted English ways but in which she is also strongly restricted in her personal freedom and interests due to prevailing cultural norms. Nyasha's failed "attempts to function in a society that does not allow [her] socially acceptable verbal or written outlets as [an] educated, female African[s] result in […] dissatisfaction and anger" (Hill 79) which is mirrored in the physical state of her body.

The most important function that can be seen in Nyasha's "search for bodily perfection (conceived of in a most un-Shona way in terms of an ideal of thinness)" (Appiah in

Dangarembga ix) can be seen in her use of it as a means of resistance against the above mentioned cultural restrictions that she experiences. In refusing to eat, she finds a possibility to take control in a space where she is constantly expected to be silent, respectful and obedient (cf. Hill 82). For Nyasha "the refusal to eat food and later the regurgitation of food become acts of rebellion. She expresses a voiceless anger through her body and her mouth" (Hill 87) in a situation where she would otherwise be voiceless. It may therefore be assumed that although she has incarnated the Western beauty ideal, as for example demonstrated in her remarks about Tambu's body being too plump (Dangarembga 92) for her taste, beauty is not her primary concern. Much more than that she attempts to gain power and pursue her free will by modeling her body the way she wants. This behavior is particularly prominent in dinner table situations, in which Babamukuru imposes his authority on her by forcing her to eat, as confirmed by Hill in the following:

> When Babamukuru connects obedience to the eating of food, the effect on Nyasha is loss of appetite, an emotional strategy that will become increasingly effective for her and develop systematically into anorexia and bulimia. By saying 'I'm full,' Nyasha shifts the site of battle from the dining table controlled by Babamukuru to the territory of her own body, which she controls. Her refusal to eat food becomes a weapon of power in an otherwise powerless situation. The words have little to do with the original conflict, so they have the effect of shifting the subject to one in which she can have the last word. And by removing herself bodily, she controls the way in which the conflict is ended. (Hill 82-83)

If one now goes back to Bordo's assertion (cf p. 68) that body size reflects the "spiritual, moral, or emotional state" one may contest that in Nyasha's case, her physique reflects her inner nervous condition and her struggle to cope with the outside pressure deriving from an environment to which she feels alien. Regarding the second assumption established by Bordo, according to which the body functions as an indicator for "social identity and 'place'" (191), the description of Nyasha allows the reader to establish that she is in her origin African but that she has also incarnated a social identity corresponding to Western cultural codes. Hence, even her body can be seen as having formed into the hybrid she has become.

7.4 Summing up the Functions of Beauty Ideals in *Changes*, *The Heart of Redness*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Purple Hibiscus*

Beatury displays and attitudes are used by authors for many of the following functions defined by Hopkins:

> as a visual archive, a window into social change; […] a way to highlight women's roles in public, […] as a multilevel link between the personal and the public, linking the individual to the community [...], [to show] the simultaneity of tradition and modernity; and the contingency of fashion, so that the interpretation of a particular style may vary widely across locales, times, and political atmospheres. (Hopkins 130)

The role of women is particularly prominent in *Changes*, where Aidoo describes this issue of "simultaneity," mentioned by Hopkins (130), i.e., the clash between traditional views, according to which the corpulent body is considered as increasing a woman's worth, and ideals of thinness which prevail in the urban, modern sphere. The author thereby not only points out typical female challenges in contemporary Africa but also addresses the broader issue of social change, brought about by colonization.

In *The Heart of Redness* the ways characters dress are used as a means of marking their belonging to groups. Xoliswa's physical appearance, for instance, mirrors her identification with Western ways. Other members of the village are described as wearing traditional clothing or being partially unclothed. Those are marked as members of "redness". Like Aidoo, Mda also broaches the coexistence of old and new customs, by the example of clothing.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha is painted as an outsider to her community. She does not only behave differently but she also dresses in a way that is inappropriate according to Shona codes. Her English clothing and her thin body, signal her being alien to her native culture and the community she lives in, as well as her nervous condition that arises from her culturally incompatible behavior and appearance.

While Nyasha deliberately uses the Western beauty ideal as a means of control and power, Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* presents a much more passive case, never having been acquainted with anything else that what she has grown up with. When she is exposed to feminine ways of dressing or nakedness she feels uncomfortable because she has adopted Christian ideals of beauty.

8. CONCLUSION

Hybridity and the clash between tradition and modernity have proven to pose a key element in the contemporary Anglophone African novel. Not only is it a recurring theme but in the texts examined in the thesis at hand, it even appears to be the driving force behind the majority of conflicts and challenges presented in the novels. Despite deriving from the same root, those conflicts are often very diverse in their nature and may concern issues from almost any sphere in life. This provides all the more evidence for the great impact the mingling and evolving of cultures, languages, lifestyles, beliefs and ways of living in Africa generally have on both, the individual and the community.

It is for exactly this reason that the issue of tradition and modernity has been taken up by so many African writers like Dangarembga, Mda, Adichie or Aidoo in the past years: because it concerns the nation as a whole. It is an undeniable piece of reality that accompanies people in their private and professional lives on a daily basis. Seen in this light, the 20th-century Anglophone African novel may then be regarded as a means of accounting and of reprocessing human experience.

The protagonists in the novels under consideration can all be identified as children of the so-called third generation. Their position as members of the postcolonial society in times of globalization, in which so many different cultural values and beliefs coexist, force them to enter an ongoing process of negotiation within which they form and reform their identities by evaluating and weighing out between the present and the past, the African and the Western, and the traditional and the modern in order to find what personally suits them best. Particularly the *Bildungsromane Purple Hibiscus* and *Nervous Conditions* feature representative examples of the quest for identity because they tell the story of young girls who have not yet developed fixed personalities and are in the process of coming of age. They therefore question influences from their surroundings to a greater extent than other grown-up characters and thereby also make their stories more accessible for the non-informed Western reader.

The conflicting forces of tradition and modernity are further visible in the distribution of gender roles and the status of women. In *Changes* for instance, Ama Ata Aidoo presents the reader with an image of femininity that views women in the subjugated position of

mothers and wives whose place is restricted to domestic spheres only. This traditional but not necessarily originally African distribution of roles causes a field of conflict because the reasons for which they were formerly assigned are no longer given in modern days. While expectations and pressure from the outside still prevail, women like Esi or Opokuya struggle between finding acceptance in their environment and reaching personal fulfillment as women. Aidoo as well as Dangarembga, Adichie and Mda all attempt to raise an awareness of the obstacles contemporary African women face by deconstructing hindering images of femininity and promoting the idea of a respectful coexistence of all people in an equitable society.

Another important subject addressed in regard to the tradition-modernity issue can be found in the theme of language, which is used in *Purple Hibiscus, Nervous Conditions* and *Changes* to designate self-identification and belonging. By negotiating or translating between African or Standard English(es) and native African languages, the characters are painted as either identifying or dissociating with groups of differing ideologies. Indeed, the linguistic situation in Africa very accurately reflects the continent's overall hybrid state in which African, Western and Global forces stand in constant competition. All three authors also appear to additionally point out that while English was once the language of the colonizer, it has now become an Africanized product that no longer stands in whichever hierarchical position.

Beauty ideals regarding the body, fashion or attitudes to 'unclothing', are just another means of nonlinguistic expression through which assumptions about characters can be made as to where they stand in regard to their personal beliefs, values and lifestyle preferences. Looks do not however only convey information about a character's personality but also how he or she is looked upon by people surrounding them. Like words, beauty practices carry meaning and change throughout time. While the plump body or nakedness were once considered beautiful, slim women represent the prevailing ideal today. Hence, even here traditional and modern ideals once again clash and consequently demand negotiation on the part of individuals.

By examining the tradition-modernity polarity within the Postcolonial Anglophone African novel, it becomes clear that it represents a whole range of literary functions. It is a major theme, a driving force behind conflicts within a text, a means of describing characters in terms of both, their personality as well as their physical appearance and

how they are perceived by other characters surrounding them. Most importantly however, it is social reality reflected and reworked through literature.

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10. APPENDIX

10.1 Abstract

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Fragestellung, wie das aktuell bestehende Spannungsfeld zwischen Tradition und Modernität im kontemporären afrikanischen, anglophonen Roman, aufgegriffen und behandelt wird. Da es sich dabei um die partielle Widerspiegelung eines Stückes sozialer Realität handelt, wird zu diesem Zwecke zunächst ein geschichtlicher Überblick jener afrikanischen Länder gegeben, aus denen die für diese Arbeit relevanten Texte stammen. Diese sind Ghana, Simbabwe, Südafrika und Nigeria.

Es folgen theoretische Erläuterungen zur Konzeptualisierung von Tradition und Modernität, in welchen festgestellt wird, dass es sich bei Ersterem um althergebrachte, traditionelle, afrikanische Lebens- und Glaubensweisen handelt, während sich Modernität zumeist auf neuere, nicht selten importierte oder adaptierte Ideologien oder Handlungsweisen bezieht.

In den nachfolgenden Kapiteln, werden die einzelnen Teilaspekte und Themen, welche sich aus dem genannten Spannungsfeld ergeben, unter thematischer Aufgliederung, theoriegeleitet und interpretativ, durchleuchtet. Ein solches Thema findet sich beispielsweise unter dem Titel „Identitätssuche" wieder. In diesem wird erklärt, dass die Protagonisten, welche in den in dieser Arbeit verwendeten Romanen, als Gesellschaftsmitglieder der Postkolonie von dem Auseinanderklaffen traditioneller und moderner Ideologien besonders betroffen sind. Demzufolge, stehen die Charaktere in einem kontinuierlichen Verhandlungsprozess, durch welchen sie Lebensweisen auswägen und –wählen müssen. Eine Thematik die sich daher vor allem in den beiden Bildungsromanen „Purple Hibiscus" und „Nervous Conditions" manifestiert, da es sich bei den Protagonistinnen um junge Mädchen in der Phase des Erwachsenwerdens handelt und diese daher ideologische und moralische Einflüsse besonders stark in Frage stellen.

Ein weiteres Feld, das von der Spannung zwischen Modernität und Tradition betroffen ist, kann man in der Verteilung von Geschlechterrollen und insbesondere dem Status der

Frau, sehen. Obwohl diese in vielen afrikanischen Urkulturen ehemals großes Ansehen genossen, manifestierte sich über die Jahre das Bild der Frau als Mutter und Gattin, dessen Platz allein in häuslichen Sphären vorgesehen ist. Autoren wie Aidoo oder Mda stellen solche Vorstellungen in ihren Romanen in Frage und beschreiben die Herausforderungen der heutigen, privilegierten, afrikanischen Frau, welche zwischen dem Dilemma steht veraltete Erwartungen von außen zu erfüllen und dabei dennoch persönliche Erfüllung und Freiheit zu finden.

Auch die Kommunikation wird in den untersuchten Romanen als Signal für Tradition oder Modernität verstanden. Der Kompetenzgrad, die Art der Aussprache oder die Gebrauchsfrequenz afrikanischer Muttersprachen oder Englisch, von Seiten der Charaktere, erlaubt es dem Leser als auch den Figuren innerhalb des Textes, Schlüsse darüber zu ziehen, mit wie viel Nähe oder Distanz die Protagonisten ihrer Ursprungskultur und deren dazugehörigen Ideale, Traditionen und Bräuche, gegenüberstehen.

Auf ähnliche Weise, spiegeln auch Schönheitsideale und –praktiken eine solche Positionierung wider, denn auch diese können als eine Art außersprachliches Kommunikationsmedium angesehen werden, mit welchem sich Individuen identifizieren und gewissermaßen auch vermarkten. So müssen Charaktere ähnlich wie in der Identitätssuche abwägen, zwischen alten und neuen und westlichen und afrikanischen Werten, um letztlich ihren Platz an einem stark hybridisierten Ort der Diversität, zu finden.

Im anglophonen, afrikanischen Roman stellen Tradition und Modernität also nicht nur einen thematischen Schwerpunkt dar, sondern auch die Wurzel vieler, in den Texten erzählter Konflikte. Ebenso handelt es sich um ein literarisches Medium wodurch Charaktere beschrieben werden, aber vor allem auch um eine reelle, soziale und aktuell omnipräsente Entwicklung, die in der Literatur nicht nur widergespiegelt sondern auch verarbeitet wird.

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