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Sous la direction de
Essodina Kokou PERE-KEWEZIMA,
Laré KANTCHOA & Sévérin-Marie KINHOU



Langues nationales au service du développement :
Littérature, Langues, Communication, Culture et Genre

« Diversités linguistiques et culturelles : les enjeux de la recherche pluridisciplinaire pour un développement socioéconomique et sociopolitique durable de nos sociétés »

COLLOQUE-HOMMAGE



Mélanges en hommage à titre posthume au
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Du 29 - 30 Juin 2022

Préface du Professeur Théodore Nicoué GAYIBOR

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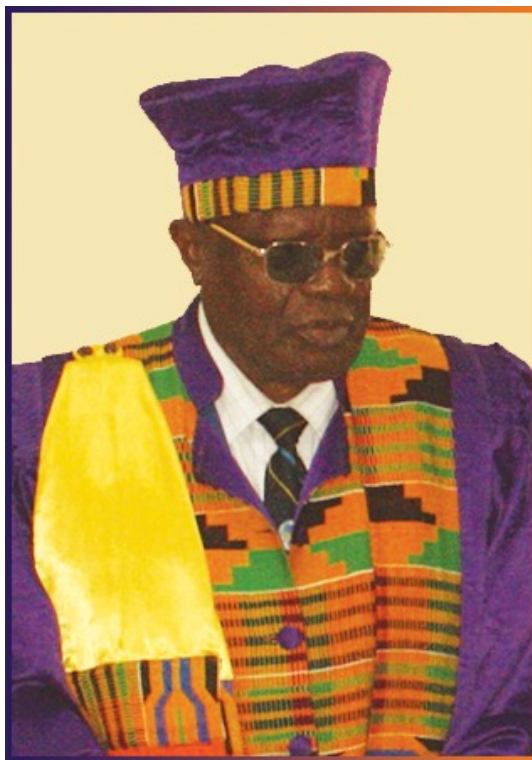
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SECTION II : VARIA

POST-COLONIAL HYBRIDITY AND SOCIAL COHESION IN ADICHIE, DARKO AND DANGAREMBGA'S DEBUT NOVELS

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Abstract

Published in 1988, 2003 and 1991 respectively Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* portray post-colonial hybridity. Mostly taken in the post-colonial African literature as a culture that gives rise to trauma due to Western cultural hegemony, post-colonial hybridity, however, is appraised for social cohesion by Dangarembga, Adichie and Darko in their debut novels. For the African female writers, post-colonial hybridity is a panacea for social cohesion for the colonized subjects. Through a thematic and textual analysis sustained by postcolonialism from the angle of hybridity proposed by Homi K. Bhabha, this article argues that Adichie, Dangarembga and Darko make use of post-colonial diglossia, heterogeneity and diaspora to promote social cohesion in the colonized Africa.

Key words: Diaspora, diglossia, heterogeneity, post-colonial hybridity, social cohesion.

Résumé

Publié en 1988, 2003, et 1991 respectivement *Nervous Conditions* de Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Purple Hibiscus* de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie et *Beyond the Horizon* de Amma Darko dépeignent l'hybridité post-coloniale. Prise généralement dans la littérature post-coloniale Africaine comme une culture qui engendre le traumatisme à cause de l'hégémonie de la culture occidentale, l'hybridité post-coloniale est cependant célébrée pour une cohésion sociale dans les romans de Dangarembga,

Adichie et Darko. Pour ces écrivaines féministes, l'hybridité post-coloniale est une panacée pour la cohésion sociale des peuples colonisés. À travers une analyse textuelle thématique appuyée par le postcolonialisme vu sous l'angle de l'hybridité, cet article démontre que Dangarembga, Adichie et Darko font usage de la diglossique, de l'hétérogénéité et de la diaspora post-coloniales pour promouvoir la cohésion sociale dans les sociétés ex-colonisées.

Mots clés : Cohésion sociale, diaspora, diglossique, hétérogénéité, hybridité post-coloniale.

Introduction

Nervous Conditions (1988), *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Beyond the Horizon* (1991) are debut novels written by Tsitsi Dangarembga, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Amma Darko respectively. The three female writers are respectively Zimbabwean, Nigerian and Ghanaian novelists. *Nervous Conditions* and *Purple Hibiscus* won the African division of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for fiction in 1989 and in 2005 respectively. *Beyond the Horizon* became Germany's best-selling novel by a black African writer. The three famous writers appraise post-colonial hybridity for social cohesion in their debut novels. From literal points of views, the stories are about Tambu in *Nervous Conditions*, Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* and Mara in *Beyond the Horizon* who struggle for their cultural assimilation in communities governed by two opposite cultures: the traditional customs and Western culture. In a sense, the female protagonists fight to assimilate what Homi K. Bhabha (1994, p. 114) terms as "cultural difference." This concept of Homi K. Bhabha refers to the colonized subject's knowledge of the colonizer's culture for a post-colonial social cohesion.

Contrary to this article that reads Dangarembga, Adichie and Darko as writers who appraise post-colonial hybridity for social cohesion in their

respective novels, critics such as Robert J. C. Young (2003), Leonard A. Podis *et al.* (1998) and Michelle Lynn Brown (2008) analyze Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* in the context of the colonizer and the colonized's cultural conflict. Vincent Charity Odamtten (2007), Roy Osamu Kamada (2010), Célesting Gbaguidi (2014) and Mawuli Adjei (2009) analyze Mara in the context of Western cultural hegemony. Brenda Cooper (2008) and Tanure Ojaide (2012) view Kambili as a colonized girl entrapped in Western religious indoctrination. The protagonists in the novels under consideration are clearly analyzed by several critics in the context of colonial cultural conflict. Such an insight of the critics is undoubtedly occasioned by the protagonists' cultural identities shaped by Western culture in a dominant and the traditional culture in periphery.

If one takes a close insight into the fact that the knowledge of Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus*, of Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* and of Mara in *Beyond the Horizon* are products of traditional and Western cultures, the above critics' points of view become limited. The critics' analyses fail to consider that the novelists do not only denounce post-colonial cultural conflict, they also appraise post-colonial hybridity for social cohesion. Thus, in this study, I argue that Dangarembga, Adichie and Darko appraise post-colonial hybridity for the social cohesion of the Shona, Igbo and Naka communities portrayed in their debut novels.

If one dwells in cultural syncreticity as perceived by Molefi Kete Asante (2007), Clarence E. Walker (2001), Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992) and Kevin Kenny (2013) to analyze the protagonists' knowledge as the result of both the colonized and the colonizer's cultures, Dangarembga, Adichie and Darko cannot but be said to appraise post-colonial hybridity for social cohesion. To preclude any misplaced misunderstanding, it is of paramount importance to sustain that post-colonial hybridity takes the context of Homi K. Bhabha's stance. Homi K. Bhabha coins post-colonial hybridity as a culture that has become "less than one and double" (1994, p. 116). Such a post-colonial hybridity that moves the colonized and the colonizer's cultures from their respective positions of dominated and dominant to the centre, is what Molefi Kete Asante refers

to as centrality. Molefi Kete Asante (2007, pp. 80–81) writes that in centrality education, an “educated person ... views both African and European education as significant and useful.”

The post-colonial hybridity that brings the colonized and the colonizer’s cultures at the same centre as perceived by Homi K. Bhabha and Molefi Kete Assante is what Dangarembga, Adichie and Darko appraise for social cohesion in their debut novels. As any dictionary will put it, to appraise is to celebrate. As for social cohesion, the British psychoanalyst Bertrand Russell (2005, p. 23) clearly articulates: “The original mechanism of social cohesion, as it is still to be found among the most primitive races, was one which operated through individual psychology without the need of anything that could be called government.” The female writers celebrate post-colonial hybridity for social cohesion as viewed by Russell. Through post-colonial hybridity and social cohesion, it consists for this paper to proceed by a thematic and textual analysis sustained by postcolonialism from the angle of hybridity proposed by Homi K. Bhabha to argue that Adichie, Dangarembga and Darko aestheticize post-colonial diglossia, heterogeneity and diaspora to advocate social cohesion in their fictional worlds.

1- Post-Colonial Diglossia and Social Cohesion

Bill Ashcroft *et al.* write:

Diglossic societies are those in which a majority of people speak two or more languages In diglossic societies English has generally been adopted as the language of government and commerce, and the literary use of English demonstrates some of the more pronounced forms of language variance. (2002, p. 74)

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili undertakes centrality education which brings her to speak two languages. Centrality, as Molefi Kete Asante (2007, p. 79) contends, is a “process of locating a student within the context of his

or her own cultural reference in order to be able to relate to other cultural perspectives.” Molefi Kete Asante brings to an equal footing the tradition and Western culture when educating the African child. Put in Homi K. Bhabha’s term, Molefi Kete Asante’s stance of centricity education is nothing but a post-colonial hybridity. Post-colonial hybridity in such a standpoint of centricity education is what characterizes Kambili in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*. Kambili speaks both Igbo and English languages. As the narrator, Kambili informs readers of the debut novel that her brother Jaja and she “spoke Igbo with Mama at home” (Adichie, 2003, p. 13).

As Frantz Fanon (1967, p. 17) writes: “To speak is to exist.” Kambili exists in the traditional world. She speaks the traditional language and lives in cohesion with the traditional community. She communicates in Igbo language with her traditional mother at home. She also communicates with the patriarch Papa-Nnukwu. She goes to Papa-Nnukwu to communicate with him. She decodes Papa-Nnukwu’s language though his dialect is ancient. She narrates: “I understood him a moment or two after he spoke. His dialect was ancient” (Adichie, 2003, p. 64).

Contrary to Kambili who lives in cohesion with the traditional world, her father Eugene lives in conflict with the Igbo traditional community. Eugene does not speak the Igbo language. Referring to Eugene, Kambili voices: “He did not like ... it” (Adichie, 2003, p. 13). The fact of hearing his children speak Igbo makes him nervous. As Kambili puts it: “Papa...did not like us to speak Igbo in public. We had to sound civilized in public...we had to speak English” (Adichie, 2003, p. 13). Eugene considers Igbo as the language of the uncivilized people. Therefore, he feels nervous when he sees his children speaking Igbo language. Since, as Frantz Fanon (1967, p. 38) states, “to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture,” Kambili’s collaboration with the Igbo language brings her to take the Igbo traditional world over her father. She communicates with the patriarch Papa-Nnukwu while Eugene does not.

Igbo is not the only language that Kambili speaks. She speaks the English language as well. She is even the “second” of her class due to Western “school” (Adichie, 2003, pp. 44, 38) in Igbo community. In this vein, Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992, p. 27) contends: “The intellectual projects of our one world are essentially everywhere interconnected, because the world’s cultures are bound together now through institutions, through histories, through writings.” The presence of Western school in Igbo community helps Kambili to speak the imported language in the same way that she speaks Shona language. Kambili thus takes on the Western world.

Contrary to Kambili who speaks English, Papa-Nnukwu is not educated in the English language. Referring to the missionary education of the Igbo children among whom Eugene, Papa-Nnukwu mentions that the missionaries “gathered the children ... in the mission and taught them *in the imported language*.” “I should not have let him follow those missionaries. *They* misled my son” (Adichie, 2003, pp. 83, 84) (italic mine). Papa-Nnukwu’s lack of education in the English language brings him to dislike this imported culture. He is not happy about his son Eugene’s presence in the Western world.

While Papa-Nnukwu conflicts with Western cultural world and Eugene is in crisis with the Igbo world, Kambili lives in cohesion with both Igbo and Western worlds. She communicates with the traditionalist Papa-Nnukwu and goes to missionary school. Such a social cohesion is achieved by Kambili because she is diglossic. In this vein, Molefi Kete Assante (2007, p. 158) writes: “The more fully we know our ancestors, the rounder, the more powerful our sense of identity.” If Papa-Nnukwu and Eugene want to solve their cultural conflicts, Eugene must accept to speak the Igbo language and Papa-Nnukwu must embrace education in the imported language. Through Kambili’s diglossic identity, Adichie thus appraises post-colonial hybridity as the panacea of cohesion between Igbo and missionaries’ worlds.

2- Cohesive Heterogeneity

In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga brings to the fore a cohesive heterogeneity. The novelist portrays a heterogeneity which brings the Shona inhabitants to live in cohesion. The plurality of cultures as portrayed by the Zimbabwean novelist brings the Shona inhabitant to escape the hegemony of Western monolithic culture. To show the presence of many cultures in Shona community, Dangarembga portrays her protagonist Tambu to voice: “I told myself I was a much more sensible person than Nyasha, because I knew what could or couldn’t be done” (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 208). Tambu is flexible about Shona and Western cultures. She perfectly collaborates with Shona tradition and with Western cultural world. She is not in cultural crisis. She brings culture to be ““forms of activity which are both at once ours and other”” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 163). With Tambu, the English culture becomes at once for Westerners and part of Shona culture. The English language is no longer only practiced by Westerners. It is also spoken by Shona inhabitants.

Whoever reads *Nervous Conditions* discovers Tambu as a Shona girl who has a mastery of the Shona tradition and Western culture. Though Tambu is educated in the homestead and practices all the homestead activities, she is also educated in Western school. In the homestead not only does she take care of the family by cooking and washing the clothes of the family but also, she sells maize from time to time to pay her school fees. Her collaboration with both the traditional activities and Western education is due to the fact that both the homestead and missionaries’ school exist in the Shona community. The existence of the homestead in the postcolonial Shona community occurs as the result of “colonial pedagogy’s failure as notably in francophone as in anglophone Africa fully to deracinate its objects” (Appiah, 1992, p. 9). Tambu is thus not an outsider in both the homestead and Western cultural world.

By being rooted in the homestead activities and embracing missionary school education, Tambu puts into practice Appiah’s stance of centrality education and Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of post-colonial hybridity.

Tambu's act of being located in the homestead tradition helps her to peacefully step in Western education. Her knowledge is thus the product of both Shona and Western cultures. Tambu's cultural identity does not present Western culture in dominant and Shona tradition in margin. Her cultural identity brings both Shona and Western cultures at an equal footing. Her knowledge of the traditional culture before embracing Western culture brings her to escape the crisis that her cousins Nyasha and Chido comes across in Shona community.

With the help of the colonial artifact Babamukuru, Nyasha and her brother Chido are translated into Western culture in such a way that they are alienated from Shona tradition. Nyasha and Chido are translated into English to the detriment of the Shona tradition. From their earlier ages, the two children are taken to England where they speak nothing but English and behave only in British manners. This brings them to adopt white attitude that they import to Zimbabwe. Tambu narrates Ma'Shingayi³⁰ opinion about Nyasha and Chido's attitude vis-à-vis the English culture as follows:

It's the Englishness. ... It'll kill them all if they aren't careful.... Look at them. That boy Chido can hardly speak a word of his own mother's tongue, and, you'll see, his children will be worse. Running around with the white one, isn't she, the missionary's daughter? His children will disgrace us. You'll see. And himself, to look at him he may be look all right, but there's no talking what price he's paying. She wouldn't say much about Nyasha. About that one we don't even speak. It is speaking for itself. Both of them, it's the Englishness. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 207)

Contrary to Tambu who honors the family by speaking Shona language and practicing the homestead tradition, Nyasha and Chido disgrace the traditional family. They are not able to speak the Shona language and practice any homestead activity. They run away from any Shona custom. Since Ma'Shingayi embodies Shona tradition, she is upset by Nyasha and

³⁰ In *Nervous Conditions*, Ma'Shingayi refers to Tambu's mother Mainini.

Chido's loss vis-à-vis the traditional language and custom. Ma'Shingayi complains against Nyasha and Chido's cultural loss. She thus expresses her nervous condition occasioned by Babamukuru and his children's denigration of the tradition. Contrary to Chido and Nyasha, Tambu's cultural knowledge brings her to live in harmony and cohesion in both Shona and Western worlds.

Like Tsitsi Dangarembga, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie brings in her debut novel a heterogeneity through which the Igbo child can live in cohesion with both Shona tradition and Western cultural world. Adichie represents both Igbo custom and Western cultural institution in the Igbo community. Kambili goes to the Aro festival during which the traditional custom *mmuo* takes place. Auntie Ifeoma shows that she drives her children Amaka, Obiora and Chima with Eugene's children Kambili and Jaja to the traditional ceremony. She voices: "We're going to pick Papa-Nnukwu, he will come with us to the *mmuo*" (Adichie, 2003, p. 80).

Like Auntie Ifeoma and her children, Kambili attends the Igbo *mmuo* during the Aro festival. She collaborates with the traditional custom in the same way that she collaborates with Western school education. Contrary to Kambili who lives in cohesion with both the traditionalist Papa-Nnukwu and the *mmuo* ritual, Eugene is in crisis with both Papa-Nnukwu and the *mmuo*. During the Aro festival, when Auntie Ifeoma informs Eugene that "Jaja and Kambili should spend some time with her at the *mmuo*," Eugene grunts and rejects the traditional ritual as follows: "I do not want my children near anything ungodly" (Adichie, 2003, p. 78). Eugene not only rejects the *mmuo* which is the custom of the Igbo people as ungodly but also rejects his father Papa-Nnukwu who is the traditionalist. Eugene does not communicate with Papa-Nnukwu because he believes that Papa-Nnukwu is a "pagan..., one of the people whose conversion Catholic prays for so that they do not end in the everlasting torment of hellfire" (Adichie, 2003, p. 81).

Contrary to Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* who decodes Papa-Nnukwu's ancient language and who assists to the *mmuo* ritual, Nyasha and Chido cannot decrypt Shona language. Not only have they "forgotten how to

speak Shona” but are “aphasic” vis-à-vis the tradition (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 53). While Babamukuru’s and Eugene’s Western attitudes make believe that “the black man cannot take pleasure in his insularity. For him there is only one way out, and it leads into the white world” (Fanon, 1967, p. 51), Kambili’s diglossic identity and heterogeneity, and Tambu’s heterogeneity show that with the diversity of cultural institutions, the colonized individual can live in cohesion with both his or her traditional community and the white world.

3- Post-colonial Diaspora and the Development of the Colonized Society

Mara’s centricity unfolds in her diegesis through her diasporic culture. Taking my cue from the fact that Clarence E. Walker’s *We Can’t Go Home Again* puts at stake the impossibility to return to a pure traditional culture, the home to which Mara cannot return as mentioned in her diegesis cannot but be the pure tradition. Any reader who takes a close insight into Mara sees that in reality she is not separated from her community. She rather puts forth her diasporic culture. Though being far from her village, Mara is constantly in connection with her parents. She states: “I have sent my elder brother ... a video set and television.” “I shipped to” “my third brother ... datsun saloon.” “I am also financing a cement-block house for my mother in the village ... I have issued instructions to them to find a small cement house in town which I can buy for my two kids” (Darko, 1991, p. 140).

In the foregoing quotations, Mara is connected to her homeland economically. This is diasporic cultural connectivity since diasporic culture, as Kevin Kenny contends, is “when migrants ... in one country continue to involve themselves economically ... in the affaire of their homeland” (Kenny, 2013, p. 13). Mara’s diasporic connectivity brings her to put her traditional community at an equal foot with the West. Her diasporic culture helps her, while being in the West, values her homeland. She develops her homeland through her diasporic culture.

Both her traditional community and the West are at the center of her culture. Mara's knowledge in this vein is a centrality. It is an appraisal of post-colonial hybridity.

Contrary to Kambili and Tambu's centralities that have been uncovered with the view of Asante, Mara's centrality is disclosed through centrality in the view of Walker and Appiah. If one takes a close insight into Clarence E. Walker's *We Can't Go Home Again* and Kwame Anthony Appiah's statement: "Africans can learn from ... all of humankind" (Appiah, 1992, p. 26), what one brings forth is cultural centrality. This, because *We Can't Go Home Again* is a struggle against separating the tradition and Western culture. Put in another way, by *We Can't Go Home Again*, Walker advocates the intermixing of the tradition and Western culture. Clarence E. Walker (2001, pp. xxv, xxxiv) puts it as follows: "Demonstrating ... intelligence in *Western culture* is not a form of racial inauthenticity or 'acting white' ... Show you are ... competitive is not thought of as an act of racial betrayal" (*italic mine*).

In the aforementioned light, it can be surmised that Clarence E. Walker advocates the tradition and Western culture at an equal foot. In other words, Walker advocates centrality. By the same token, Appiah's statement advocates cultural assimilation since what it puts at issue is learning from the others. To put this in stark argumentation, for a non-Westerner to learn Western culture is to assimilate this foreign culture in addition to the existed culture. Such cultural assimilation is nothing but centrality. And what is at the heart of Mara's diegesis is centrality in such a standpoint. When as narrator Mara voices: "There is no turning back for me" (Darko, 1991, p. 139), she conveys that there is no reason for both Western and her traditional worlds to be separated. She reveals that cultural hybridity is the panacea of social cohesion.

Conclusion

The probe of centrality in Tambu, Kambili and Mara reveals that in the debut bildungsromans the third-generation writers are concerned with

appraising post-colonial hybridity. Dangarembga is clearly revealed appraising post-colonial hybridity when reference is made to Tambu's cultural heterogeneity. Similarly, Kambili's polyglot is perfectly illustrated for Adichie's appraisal of post-colonial hybridity. By the same token, Darko's voicing of post-colonial hybridity is unveiled when reference is made to Mara's diasporic culture. This gives room to a post-colonial hybridity that is deep-rooted in centricity in the view of the Afrocentrists and the post-colonialists mentioned earlier in the introduction.

The post-colonial hybridity in the debut bildungsromans of the third-generation writers, it must be made plain, has nothing to do with putting at the peripheral the traditional culture and at a dominant position Western culture. Too, it would also be utterly irrelevant on behalf of critics to overlook the advantage of post-colonial hybridity and always voice the clash occasioned by the encounter of African and Western cultures in these debut bildungsromans. This stance undoubtedly takes its root in "Colonialism, Neocolonialism, and Postcolonialism" where Simon Gikandi contends: "It is hard to find an African literature that has completely escaped the colonial influence. That influence ... reflects the trauma of colonial encounter" (Gikandi, 2003, p. 169). But such a hegemony of Western culture that leads critics to set post-colonial hybridity in the context of trauma is brought into question in the third-generation literature. As such, it is useless to keep on holding this talk of trauma of postcolonial hybridity.

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