

Under The Hibiscus: An Eco-critical Reading Of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Postcolonial
Novels.

by Sibongile Khumalo



A thesis submitted in full fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium, in the
Department of English, University of the Western Cape

December 2019

Supervisor: Prof Jane Taylor

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WESTERN CAPE

Key Words

ecocriticism,

ecological thought

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Anthropocene

Phallogocentrism

Nigeria

Aesthetics

Abstract

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S. Khumalo

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Eco-theorist Timothy Morton writes that “ecological thinking is to do with art, philosophy, literature, music and culture”. As this statement suggests, ecocriticism is concerned with more than the representation of environmental questions in literature. It provides a way of examining the intersections and interconnections between the natural and human worlds. An ecocritical approach can examine the ways in which these interconnections are produced aesthetically in literature of different kinds, and not just literature that is overtly about the environment. I will argue in this thesis that the novels of one of the rising stars of African and world literature, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, are underpinned by an ecological aesthetic in this broad sense, and can, therefore, be read from an ecocritical perspective in the manner implied by Morton. This thesis will show that Adichie's preoccupation with intersectionalities, interconnections and relationships lend her narratives to an eco-critical inquiry of this kind.

December 2019

DECLARATION

I declare that *Under The Hibiscus: An Eco-critical Reading Of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Postcolonial Novels* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Sibongile Khumalo



December 2019

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Sibongile Khumalo".

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Andrew Mellon Foundation and the Centre for Humanities and Research for their unending and unbending support in the completion of this dissertation. I thank my Supervisor, Professor Jane Taylor, for her enduring patience, positivity and wildness of mind, that would allow for the continuation of a work so deeply imaginative and thought provoking. I thank my late Supervisor, Professor Michael Wessels for holding my hand “through the belly of the beast” for as long as he could. May he rest well.

Most of all, I thank my family; the members of 245, 932, and “Upington 26” – the home with a name and a number. I finally and dearly thank my late mother, Nomfazwe Martha Khumalo, for her teachings and nursings that I would not *be*, without. Dankie Fazo.



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Prologue

This dissertation is an exploration of thought, of current imaginations for future orientations. This work concerns itself with the future, the future of thought and how we imagine thought's ecologies to emerge. We are concerned here with the ecological thought; an exercise of the mind that is as novel, as radical and as freely imaginative as Jose Estabon Munoz's ideas in *Cruising Utopia: The then and there of Queer futurity*.

Estabon Munoz articulates queerness¹ as an ideality beyond the "prison house" of the here and now, "what we must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel then and there." (1). What Munoz means is that to know queerness is to know that the present is not the entirety of who we are and can be. There must be a consideration of who we can be and can evolve into, and it is at this point where queerness emerges. Like queerness, ecology is yet to be realised. We are constantly moving towards ecology's ideality in our ideation of ecology. This is the thesis argument of this dissertation; ecology is a future orientation that we must think, and perhaps feel, towards for its emergence.

The narratives of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are what sparked this kind of theoretical engagement and are what I will use to articulate the 'ecological thought'² as it is understood by Timothy Morton, as it appears in the Novel as genre, but particularly in the novels of Adichie. My thesis argument is that there is a theoretical conversation between Morton and Adichie. Adichie's fictional orientation opens up and expands Morton's theoretical engagement by its fictional ideation that helps to imagine how the 'ecological thought' can be realized. My primary engagement is thus with Adichie's narratives. In this thesis, I articulate Adichie's narrative philosophy through the lenses of Morton's theory. Adichie's work is concerned with unravelling the present to realise the future. Her narratives are widely known for their deconstructive technique that, like Morton's 'ecological thought', articulates future possibilities.

The conversation between Adichie and Morton's works is useful for the consideration of how ecology is articulated in literature and the possible impacts of this for the growth of the discipline. This is not to suggest that Morton is the authority for ecological discourse, because he is not.

¹ 'Queerness' by Munos is offered in the terms of sexuality and gender ideation.

² The 'ecological thought' is a conception by Timothy Morton which I aim to draw on as I expand thinking on ecological thinking. With that said, as I move through to attempt at articulating Morton's ideas, I aim to expand on them by ideas garnered from mainly the fictional works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

However, his ideas in *The Ecological Thought* (2010) are how I can best imagine and want to imagine ecological futurity.

Ecology, as it is about many things, is about ethics. It is about the choice of survival; how we imagine it. This became apparent from my reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's texts, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half Of A Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013). The reading of these narratives opened a concern with ethics that nags at the questions: *how do you choose to survive?* and *with what culture do you choose to survive?* Adichie's narratives, by their concern with local and global cultures, enhance depth-full contemplation about our choices for survival. The reader of these texts is often compelled to ask: *how do I want to survive?* and further, *how do we want to survive?*

Literature, as it is about the internal structure of texts, is also about the text's engagement with the world – we must pay mind to this (perhaps further engagement on the ethical production of a text?) Literatures play an important role in the formation of individual and collective consciousness. This, in turn, shapes our environments, however discursive the use of the term 'environment' may be. We must thus be mindful of the ethical responsibility of the texts we produce.

So, my task with this work was complex and necessary. My deepest hope for this work, beyond its literary and theoretical engagements and ambitions, is when it is picked up, when someone reads it, they can find how this work connects to them and how they connect to the rest of the world. I do understand that this is a literary study of fictive engagements and so, as tradition dictates, one must find and limit oneself to the boundaries of the fictional works. Be that as it may, what is important to understand is that this dissertation, as it is of a fictional orientation, is an ecological engagement purely because its matter has to do with the matters of the world. This then stretches the boundaries of the narrative works beyond storyline; to what storyline has to do with the world out there, to what the story has to do with us; the readers of narrative texts.

Ecology is complex, multi-layered and interconnected. So is literature. What might be simpler is knowing one's contribution to the world. That is why 'ecology'³ must be brought closer; to what we are reading, to what we are eating, and where to we call home.

Melanie Klein, in developmental psychology has written about the human infant in the making. Klein offers that the becoming of the human infant is an act of translation⁴ – an inscription into

³ Ecology here, refers to the theoretical engagement of ecology; to bring that closer to the practice of everyday engagements with the World.

⁴ 'Translation' is used here in reference to Klein's meanings regarding the subject in formation. The subject in formation is impacted by external phenomena, like where they live and how they eat, as it navigates its own reality. This is an important ecological undertaking as it opens questions of cultures and their impact on the becoming of ecological beings; how they move through the world and in turn define it. See Spivak, *Translation as Culture*

culture; what it is and wants to be. Klein offered that “the human infant grabs on to one thing and then some things. This grabbing of an outside indistinguishable from an inside constitutes an inside going back and forth coding everything into a sign system by the thing grasped” (Spivak 14). This is important because here Klein talks to us about culture and consciousness; how the mind becomes in the culture wherein it becomes and how the culture becomes because of that mind. This is made clearer by Gayatri Spivak’s extensions (not translations, at least not in the literal sense) of Klein’s ideas. In Spivak’s *Translation as Culture* (2002), the term ‘translation’ is not offered in the literal sense i.e. a seamless conversion of codes from one language to another – Spivak also struggles with the literal sense of this meaning of ‘translation’, implying its impossibility. In Spivak’s writing, ‘translation’ is offered as a melting of one language into the language of the speaker. The term ‘translation’ is only used because it is a catachresis. It is in this sense that Spivak also melts Klein’s ideas into her own articulations of how culture becomes. Spivak argues that the “natural machine programming the mind” is equally programmed by that mind (15). Spivak, with Klein, offers that the shuttling of the infant between internal and external phenomena, the “grabbing of an indistinguishable from an inside”, forms the human infant, who forms their environment and vice versa (15). This understanding of human consciousness and its impact on culture is an important ecological consideration.

More than the theoretical conversation between Spivak and Klein, as presented in Spivak’s paper, *Translation as Culture*, Spivak, in that very same paper has offered an ideation for articulating theoretical ecological abstractions. As translation, in another sense that Spivak provides, is a matter of decoding and encoding phenomena, this thesis then aims to decode ecological abstractions or hyper-objects, in the language of Morton, for the reader. By the base that Adichie’s works provide, this literary analysis of Adichie’s texts will decode ecological phenomena for its reader to encode towards a new ‘homed’⁵ thought, a new language and a new action for ecology.

It is in such terms that I have merged the ideas of Morton and Spivak in the analysis of Adichie’s texts to consider an ecological aesthetic. Morton and Spivak’s theoretical formulations speak to a knowing of the self and the self’s relationship with their environments. This is not to mean that ecology is an anthropocentric engagement, because it is not. This engagement is simply organised in this way because the concern of the narrative texts here under analysis is the human and their relationship with their worlds. Spivak with the help of Klein, expresses the development of the human infant by an intimate relationship of the becoming infant with phenomena out there, internalised to a code or system with which they create meaning for their survival in the world.

⁵ My meaning of ‘homed’ is bringing ecological phenomena closer for the ‘translating’ being, in the sense of Spivak. This means thinking about ecology as less of an abstract, and more as part of our immediate environment. See Spivak, *Translation as Culture*.

Adichie's texts are consistently engaging with the philosophies of 'translation' as a process of inculturation i.e. the gradual acquisition of cultural⁶ norms and values by a person or group, and it is this concern too, that opens them up to ecological engagement.

There are specific ecological engagements that this dissertation opens itself up to. A focused ecological concern is de-thinking⁷ hierarchy. For this, this text thinks around ideations and conceptualizations like *Strangeness*, an idea explored in the works of Georg Simmel. *Strangeness* expresses the construction of identity as relative to location. i.e. how the attachment to space forms our identity in the world, and probes questions like; *what does it mean to be African or American?* and *how does that impact our engagement with this world?* This is important for contemplating space and its ownership in the Anthropocene, which is essential for de-thinking anti-ecological ideology. Simmel's *Strangeness* is further extended to *strange strangeness* by Timothy Morton. Morton herewith offers species getting to know other species and things they are surrounded with in the ecosystem, and in that process, getting to "un-know" the self as it is fixedly constructed by things like locale. This exercise opens us up to questions like; *who can we become when we are un-African or un-American and what opportunities does that offer to the world, to ecology?*⁸ These ideas express a move away from fixity and towards a more fluid existence where species and things live in a mesh with and between other organisms in the ecosystem⁹. These concepts aim to destabilise systems of hierarchy like capitalism, patriarchy, race, heteronormativity and anthropocentrism which stoically present a particular kind of ideology which practically prioritizes one life over the other.

The narratives and theoretical texts included in this dissertation are selected because they speak together on destabilizing anti-ecological structures. The engagement of these narratives and theoretical ideas radically suggest de-thinking hierarchies and renewing ethics by which we make meaning to survive, as a response to our ecological crisis.

⁶ 'Culture' is here referred to as a social construct, this means that war or war culture, too, falls into that definition culture, in the case of *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

⁷ De-thinking not re-thinking, refers to a gradual abandoning of certain modes of thought.

⁸ Simmel also wrote about how strangeness is relative to and not a fixed identification, in the way that being African or American is interpreted in the world. See Simmel, *The stranger and the sociology of knowledge*

⁹ This articulation aims to open up the conversation of systemic operations in consideration of the ecological system. Is it useful to think ecology as systematic? Does that not perhaps prove too teleological? It argues that we ought to rethink our language as we are rethinking ecology.

Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's narratives, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half Of A Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2013) are known for their innovative narrative structures. Adichie's texts are known to employ skilled techniques that make allowance for a reading of intersectionality¹⁰ and interconnections not commonly found in third generation Nigerian writing¹¹. Even as that is so, very little criticism has delved deeply into the organisation of these narrative techniques to interpret how they contribute to larger political and socio-economic concerns. This dissertation will concern itself with interpreting Adichie's weltering narrative techniques to an ecological thesis. It will analyse the elements of plot and character of Adichie's texts and discuss how these produce the ecological thesis for each text and then altogether as a collected thesis argument.

I suggest that the thesis of Adichie's texts, by their set up, are presenting an ecological aesthetic. Modern ecological theorist, Timothy Morton, in his ecological ground breaking book, *The Ecological Thought* (2010), articulates ecology as a concern with the cosmos. This means that ecology is not a weather or environmental problem or concern (however one establishes the difference), but a cosmic one. Ecology concerns itself with built and natural environments, objects, beings and things that all are a significant part of the ecosystem. In my interpretations of Adichie's text as an ecological intervention, I work with this ecological idea by Morton.

Morton's 'ecological thought' does not consider nature or the environment as the problem that exists out there, on the other side of the line that separates human from "nature's environments and beings"¹². Morton's 'ecological thought' considers a blurring of the lines between the human self - if the self is human - and the other¹³. Morton proposes a radical ideation that *we* are the beings out there. By "we", I with Morton, aim to present all living beings under one blanket - an attempt to blur the distance between *us* and *them* in species organisation¹⁴. With Morton's ideation, this dissertation is therefore not teleologically concerned with presenting "environmental issues" as they emerge in the narratives. It is rather concerned with the movement or emergence of an ecological

¹⁰ Intersectionality refers to overlapping and interdependent systems.

¹¹ Third generation Nigerian writing is reference to contemporary Nigerian writers. See, Ashcroft et al, *The Empire Writes Back*

¹² By nature's environments and beings, I mean species that are not considered to form part of the human category

¹³ The use of 'other' is again not to "other" - meaning to centralizes the human and place other beings on the other side. It is used here to indicate more beings that don't fully identify as human, in their own sense.

¹⁴ I am aware of the colonial, capitalistic and patriarchal nuance of the term organisation. My use of the term serves to indicate the orientation of our current ecological paradigm. As it stands, world ecological outlook is very much rooted in systems of hierarchy by its mere anthropocentrism. And as Morton finds "rather than closing our ears and making loud noises to combat the sound of anti-ecological words, we shall absorb them and neutralize them from within" My use of the term is thus to highlight a problematic of this and in so doing, to attempt at writing against this phraseology that is so deeply rooted in hierarchy and is so anti-ecological. See Morton, *The Ecological Thought*.

thought - a future orientation that combats the existence of today that perpetuates the crisis of ecology in the contemporary world¹⁵. I, with Morton, contend that to live in an ecologically renewed world, we must tear through and dismantle the hierarchical structures of today.

I argue that Adichie's texts, by their aesthetics, are exactly in this orientation of ecology proposed by Morton. Adichie's narratives present ways of living ecologically; they present the everydayness of ecology. The texts are concerned with ways of being in the cosmos which very much illuminate Morton's ideation of a living ecology. Although the texts present phenomena from the positioning of the human, i.e. how the human sees, feels and engages, its anthropocentrism works to a fundamentally ecological advantage. The texts, by their anthropocentric positionality open a theoretical engagement about the subversion of the systematization of first and last which govern anti-ecological practice. By ideating from the space of being human, the author - a human - displays a keen sense of her own humanity as situated next to or above other ways of being, and so creates an able-ness to question, dismantle and subvert the anti-ecological systematization which hierarchically orders and categorizes. In this case, by their anthropocentric presentation, the texts reveal a deep concern with ecological responsibility.

Atmospheric chemist and Nobel Prize winner Paul Crutzen's theorization of the Anthropocene acknowledges that humans are the major cause of the earth's current transformation. Crutzen offers that the effects of the human on the global environment has escalated over the last three centuries. In Crutzen's *The Geology of Mankind* he considers:

Because of these anthro-pogenic emissions of carbon dioxide, global climate may depart significantly from natural behaviour for many millennia to come. It seems appropriate to assign the term 'Anthropocene' to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch, supplementing the Holocene — the warm period of the past 10–12 millennia. The Anthropocene could be said to have started in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when analyses of air trapped in polar ice showed the beginning of growing global concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane. This date also happens to coincide with James Watt's design of the steam engine in 1784. (2002)

When Crutzen offered his theory of the Anthropocene, its merits were taken under serious consideration, even while many disagreed with it. According to writing in Alex Blasdel's *'A Reckoning For Our Species': The Philosopher Prophet Of The Anthropocene*, scientists have viewed "geological time as a drama punctuated by great cataclysms and not merely a gradual

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accretion of incremental changes”, since the late 20th century (2017). It has so made sense to see humanity itself as the “latest cataclysm” (2017).

Blasdel offers that the Anthropocene “is not only a period of manmade disruption. It is also a moment of blinking self-awareness, in which the human species is becoming conscious of itself as a planetary force. We’re not only driving global warming and ecological destruction; we *know* that we are” (2017). This reveals that humanity is consistently and consciously aware of the impact of our behaviours on the global climate. Blasdel found in the work of Morton that a deep condemning consciousness emerges in the performance of activities, even as mundane as turning the ignition of our cars, with the awareness of the Anthropocene. Our awareness of the Anthropocene fosters thoughtfulness that would emerge in our actions and our choices that have to do with everything else in the world. It is this awareness that makes Adichie’s particular engagement of subject matter in her texts, from an anthropocentric stance, fruitful for discovery of the ecological thought in narrative.

Morton proposes that ecology is “a vast sprawling mesh of interconnection without a definite centre or edge. It is radical intimacy, coexistence with other beings, sentient and otherwise... [ecology] fans into questions concerning cyborgs, artificial intelligence, and the irreducible certainty of what counts as a person”⁸ (8). This means that ecology is a concern with everything and how everything is connected to everything. Morton’s concern with ecology is thus with the self but/and with *more* than the self - the self being sentient or otherwise (non-sentient, semi-sentient etc.). Morton contends that to think ecologically one must be concerned with things and beings beyond the self, beyond the scope of the self and what is or might be the same as the self. Morton thus proposes the following clusters wherein these ideas orient;

Thinking Big

Dark Thoughts

Forward Thinking

These clusters of ideas are intimately connected to themselves as they are to each other. These ideas, each, and together, reflect the responsibility of thought that hopes to be useful for the emergence¹⁶ of an ecologically thinking world - a world that knows its ethical responsibility to

¹⁶ I use emergence because ecology is not driven or constructed. It emerges gradually by small adaptations in thought and the exercise of being. At every point ecology emerges as we (all in the cosmos) evolve.

itself. I will discuss the contents of each cluster as it orients within and flows through to connect to the next cluster.

Thinking Big

By Thinking Big, Morton suggests a consideration of the world as more than just about the person. Morton presents a vast¹⁷ ecology complete with full¹⁸ organisms. In this sense, Morton presents that to think ecologically requires thinking about what is beyond the situational placing that we have framed for ourselves. Morton's argument in this chapter calls for a useful consideration of anthropocentrism, that fosters awareness of human impact on ecology – even if this might be condemning or paralysing. Morton calls for a consideration of many 'others' presented and prevalent in the space of the cosmos. Therefore, in ideating ecology, there must be a consideration of the world as bigger and more-vast than just the human experience and the place of the human. Morton asks:

Could we have a progressive ecology that was big, not small; spacious, not place-is; global, not local (if not universal); not embodied but displaced, spaced, outer spaced? (28).

Morton with this includes the 'Mesh' of thought and of existence as part of his ecological writing. With the mesh, Morton offers existence to be interconnected; "lives crossing into one another without a definite edge or point" (28). This mesh combats hierarchical ordering which places one species before the other or makes one life experience more superior than the other. Morton suggests a smash of existence wherewith he makes the radical offering of destabilizing present structures that hold hierarchy and order in place.

With the mesh of interconnection, Morton invites an awareness of *more than*, an awareness that within the cosmos there is always more than the self or what reminds of the self. Morton offers that:

The ecological thought consists in intimacy with the *strange stranger*. We can't predict exactly who or what *strange strangers* are, or whether they are "who" or "what". If we can, then we are clinging to a reified concept of Nature, whether it's the old school version, or the new and improved version...interconnection implies separateness and difference. There

¹⁷ The concept of Vastness in Morton's *The Ecological Thought* refers to the realization of a world bigger than the human self, where more species exist and come into contact with "strange strangers", which to other species we are too. See Morton, *The ecological thought*.

¹⁸ Morton's articulations of Full Organisms offer a consideration that each organism within our ecosystem is full, not lacking. This is a response to perpetual personification of organisms that are not human which suggests that the only way these can be in complete form is when they are human or possess human qualities.

would be no mesh if there were no *strange strangers*. The mesh isn't a background against which *strange strangers* appear. It is the entanglement of all strangers...the encounter with the *strange stranger* breaks the cycle of sameness (47, 48).

For Morton, difference and separateness are important for an ecologically thinking world. By difference and separateness Morton means the realization of our unlikeness in the cosmos. Morton suggests that it is by difference and separateness that coexistence takes effect. Intimacy with what is separate and different pierces the membrane that governs hierarchy and apart existence. As an example, Morton provides an analysis of Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner*.

When the Mariner looks at the water snakes, he is not, as he says, "Alone, alone, alone" (2.232). He is coexisting with other beings that liv[e] on...Darwin argues that human sympathy derives from the basic social instinct of other sentient beings. He provides many examples of non-humans acting with seeming sympathy. What the Mariner learns is how true sympathy comes from social feeling - the awareness of co-existence. (47)

What is key in coexistence with *strange strangers* is the realisation that one is a stranger to other strangers in the mesh. i.e. The mariner is also a *strange stranger* to the snakes. The awareness of this involves an unfamiliarity of the familiarity of the self and the "place" of this self. The more one discovers about one's own strangeness, the quicker the idea of place disappears. One begins to realise that there is no centre to align oneself against. There is no alignment, just existence. The idea of place, as it is so intimately connected to identity in the colonial and/or post-colonial¹⁹ world, becomes fragile. There is no fixedness of being to locale. We are in fact displaced and de-centred. This presents us with ultimate chaos, the kind that is useful for the emergence of newly emerging ecologies.

Jesse Patrick Ferguson in *Violent Displacements: Natural and Human violence in Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss (2009)* presents articulations about the nature of identity construction by attachments to place that are useful to ideate the necessity for disorder. It is important to note first and foremost that Ferguson refers to identity as a construct, thus abstract, suggesting a fluidity where it is formed and reformed depending on the phenomena used to define it. It is in this way, Ferguson suggests, that place-ness or a sense of place-ness is created. Ferguson contends that by identity formation a "historical presence" to place is alluded to (36). By individual or communal

¹⁹ If we are to assume post-coloniality. See, Centro de Estudos Sociais da Universidade de Coimbra, *Interview with Spivak*

attachment to space, place is created. Place, in the manner explored by Ferguson, by the construction of place from space sets the scene for violent imperialism in the determination to own place. The ownership of place through attachments becomes a matter of identity - as we align our identities to space. This then has the impact of cutting the world down to size as we increasingly become enlightened of how much more of our identities we can attach to place, and so, how much more of the world space we can own or attach to our personal identities.

This ideation of identity and space are, as Ferguson's writings have imagined beyond the writing itself, often at the centre of violence on ecology. Therefore, in order to move to an evolved ecological condition, as an intervention, identity as it is attached to place-ness, must be dismantled as an intervening process. Morton, in the subtle way that he presents his ideas, suggests a gradual movement away from such ideations of place and identity. Morton suggests displacement, de-centralisation and disorientation inside the mesh - everything and everyone goes everywhere. This is a move away from the borders and boundaries that attempt at the separation of beings. It is a radical fostering of co-existence which the present ordering of existence does not make allowance for.

The mesh that Morton describes is composed of strangers who are different but interconnected in incomprehensible ways, so *what truly makes one different or the same? What makes one superior to the rest?* This is a very important idea explored by Morton about the shape of real coexistence. If what distinguishes the human from the "other" animals and justifies their place in the pecking order of existence, is not sentience or intellect, how is the human qualified to be at the centre of existence or at the top of the social hierarchy? It is not, because the human is not at the centre, at the edge or at the top. There are no positions or pecking orders. There is a mesh of entanglement. Knowing this mesh and that there is a mesh is thinking toward and away from oneself, subtly pulling anti-ecological hierarchical systems apart.

Dark Thoughts

When we ask ourselves these questions: *"Do non-humans possess language? How about imagination? Reason? A sense of mind? Can they use tools? Do they possess the quality to acquire skill? Can non-humans feel compassion? Do they have a sense of humour? How about wonder? Choice?"* We will find that there is little distinction between the human and the non-human profile. *How strange is the strange-stranger?* We are prompted to question. The answer of course is not

known until contemplation is done, but I hypothesize that the *strange- stranger* is strange, but not too strange.

The realization of our difference - but very little difference - from other species proves to be a threatening idea for the human, as picked up from my reading of Timothy Morton, Paul Shepard²⁰, George Simmel, Paul Crutzen and Aarthi Vadde²¹. The realisation that we are not too different from other species and (perhaps) things, threatens our positionality and the privilege that emerges with this position. Panic ensues because we begin to understand that there is no basis to our superiority claim. We have to think about these privileges that we have awarded ourselves; we have to de-think them, unknow them and *What would happen now? Who do we become? What are we? Who are we? What is human? What is non-human? Where is the line?* This is chaos.

The chaos is what 'Dark Thoughts' is all about. Morton speaks of a deep contemplation of the order of the world, a kind of thinking that threatens the world as we have come to know it. This deep contemplation involves going down and deep into the history of things in the world, *How are we here? How did we get to be here?* Here we are thinking and questioning history and evolution. We are thinking Charles Darwin and Karl Marx at the same time. We are overwhelmed by history, causality and mutation - why do we eat other animals? (Is it survival of the fittest? Or enlightenment?) We are the animals²² that we think exist out there! What Cannibals we are!

The exercise of 'Dark Thoughts' is overwhelming. It requires thinking that moves backwards through the history of the theory of man, and once we have discovered the problematics of this past, to emerge from it, anew.

The exercise of 'Dark Thoughts' is like time lapse photography. Each frame in the history of how we have come to know existence matters and will be observed and analysed. In time lapse photography, there is not only one sequence of phenomena at play. Multiple phenomena are captured and developing at their own rate and speed in each frame. The histories of phenomena in the shot don't move up or down a singular temporal axis, but they merge into one another. For example, in a time lapse of a nature photograph: the clouds move up and down at their own speed, the trees are breathing to their own rhythm, the birds flying at their own speeds, responding to phenomena that motivate their movement, water from a stream ripples, perhaps because a rock was thrown into the stream or for reasons of its own. Many things happen at many points.

²⁰ See Paul Shepard, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*

²¹ See Aarthi Vadde, *The Backwaters Sphere: Ecological Collectivity, Cosmopolitanism, and Arhundati Roy*

²² The meaning of 'animal' is explored here in the human – animal juxtaposition framework of the Anthropocene, see Shepard *The others: how animals made us human*

In F Percy Smith's 1910 film, *The birth of a flower*, where by time lapse, the opening of a flower is revealed, in each frame, more than one phenomenon of the flower is captured i.e. there is the opening of the petals, the shift and shape of the flower beds, the reach of the stem etc. each at its own momentum, although it seems like it is synching with the other parts. With the compilation of the frames, an impression that one singular act casually affected all others, in the way that dominoes might, is created. But as we can see, by observation of each frame, each part acted on its own, by its own speed. By examination of each frame a mesh of action is observed. The actions of each part of the flower intersect, and by its *finis*²³ have spiralled into one another and then cohesively present what looks like the opening of the flower. Without careful observation it might seem as though the opening of the flower moved down a singular causal linear temporal axis, when this of course is not the case.

Time lapse photography has in common with Morton's 'Dark Thoughts' a rhizomatic²⁴, intersecting contemplation of existence. Each frame presents its own (many) phenomena in a particular time and space. At each point, many actions are at play which synch, smash, spiral into one another. What is more, each action by the flower is not designed or teleologically oriented. Each moment in each frame must so be considered as a complete action. The flower's intent is not to present to us its own existence i.e. to show that it opens. This is the work of the photographer who organised phenomena to reveal this to be what the flower does – This is his own design. The flower does as it does, or lives as it lives. However, by capturing and compiling the data of the flower's existence as it were, an essentialism is designed by the human capturer about the flower. This essentialism gives a sense of a trajectory, a linear movement of actions that bring forth the output that the photographer hopes to provide.

For all we know, the flower is not birthing but dying.²⁵ However, by the essentialist output framework of the modernist era, which focuses on functionality, we see a causality that is output oriented. We allow ourselves to see only a birth because we are fixated by the idea of our own mortality. With a close frame-by-frame analysis of the content as time lapses in the film, we are able to see the many deaths and mutations that have spiralled in the formation or decease of what we are now calling a flower.

Morton suggests that causality happens backward. Thus, in the naming of the flower as a flower a scope of its history is recalled. The naming of phenomena tells how it came to be named. In nature, names carry histories, not functions. In the reference of the flower, its Latin origins *flos* translates to

²³ Latin for end. Of course, the idea of an 'end' is only a convention for the film-maker. The cycle of regeneration is without end.

²⁴ See Oppermann, *The Rhizomatic trajectory of eco-criticism*.

²⁵ The flower, can of course, both be birthing and dying; dying for the birth of a new, but the notion that the flower is dying and turns into seed for the birth of another is a teleological framing that this paper hopes to move away from.

a part of, or a part blooming. This means that the basic form of a flower is to be in transition from form to form. In this sense, how do we know when a flower starts and ends? Morton writes:

At the DNA level, it becomes impossible to decide which sequence is “genuine” and which is a viral insert: there is no DNA flavoured DNA. Moreover, there is no life flavoured DNA. Evolutionary theory deconstructs “life” itself. “Life” is a word for some self-replicating macro-molecules and their transport systems. But for “Life” to start, there had to be a pre-living life”: Otherwise, there would be an infinite regress or sudden creation from nothing. (67)

So where is the beginning? What is the beginning? Have we always just been mutating, translating transitioning forms? What are our ends from our beginnings? When did we begin? - What about the big bang? What moved the asteroid that set off the potential for all the universe to form? These questions open more pathways to explore more questions philosophy has grappled with since classical times; Does time move forward or backwards? Does it move forward and backwards? Does time move at all? Or is time a mere human construct that aims to bring a sense of order to our existence? What is time? And why are we designed by it? These questions have been with us since the philosophy of Zeno. They have been at the core of inquiry in nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy and physics, from Henri Bergson, Albert Einstein and Martin Heidegger, but what is the contemporary thinker to do with them? We are now on the brink of a mass extinction, and in such a foundational sense - we are beginning to speculate about the end of time, as we know it. *Where does time go? Where does the thinking of time go?*

The question of time is the task of the contemporary thinker; the ecological thinker. *Do we de-think time? What conception of time do we work with? Should there be a conception of time in the ecologically thinking world? is there room for time in the ecologically thinking world? perhaps the end of time is not so bad?* The more we question, the more uncertain we become and that is what Morton’s chapter that conceptualizes ‘Dark Thoughts’ is all about. The premise of ‘Dark Thoughts’ is that with such deep contemplation, the thinking being, in their darkened state of paralysis starts to think a way through. The ecologically thinking being thinks about the future, but not in the way of steps, in the way of more. To think ecologically is thus always to orient oneself to thinking more. The way forward and through rests on thinking about more phenomena, more beings, more environments, more art, more connection. The question is thus not what is next, but what is more? Thinking ‘more’ is always about realising your responsibility to more beings and things in the world. Thinking more and darker thoughts is the ecological thought.

Forward Thinking

We shouldn't be too hard on capitalism. Capitalism with all its faults has deeply engaged us with a systemic model of participation and responsibility. In capitalism, systematically (though teleologically) all parts matter; everything is material. In ecology the same is true, there are no irrelevant or unfit parts. Everything has a purpose. This does not mean that all must be used to a particular function or exist teleologically. It just means that everything is material²⁶, everything is matter and all matter matters²⁷. It is important to understand here that the engagement with capitalism herein, is not to offer capitalism as ideal, it is just to learn from aspects of the model. There are fundamental ecological things for which capitalism's theory cannot account. For example, the question of waste in ecology. As we have learned; everything is matter, all matter matters and all matters in matter have a rhizomatic expansion. This means that waste is not just waste in ecology. Waste can be many other things because many other things are in waste (or are waste). In capitalism's industrial model, waste can only be waste. capital's industrialism's linear, output oriented, functionalist paradigm cannot allow for waste to be anything more than waste.

In 'Forward Thinking', we are thinking about our purpose in this vast web of species connectivity. With more phenomena presented, with more species before us, more responsibility is required. 'Forward Thinking' is about thinking responsibility and participation. If it hasn't occurred to the reader yet, we are responsible for global warming. Morton stresses it so in "whether or not we caused it, whether or not we can prove that we caused it. We are responsible for global warming simply because we are sentient. No more elaborate reason is required (98).

What Morton is suggesting is that we have an ethical responsibility for ecological sustainability. All ecosystems within the ecosystem must concern themselves with collective ecological growth. Morton believes that even capital²⁸ in the era of the global ecological crisis can be rolled to orient itself to ecological growth.

Capitalism has brought all life forms together, if only for the negative. The ground under our feet is being changed forever, along with water and air. So, along with the political radicalism that seek to create new forms of collectivity out of the crisis of climate

²⁶ See Harry Garruba, *On Animism, Modernity/Colonialism, and the African Order of Knowledge: Provisional Reflections* for a discussion on materiality and the ethics of materiality – where all matter matters - as it emerged from animist thought by indigenous cultures and has been expanded to the materiality of modernity.

²⁷ See Grosz Elizabeth, *Thinking the New: Of Futures Yet Unthought*.

²⁸ Morton's framing of capitalism, see Timothy Morton, *The ecological thought*.

disruption, there must also be rigorous and remorseless theoretical radicalism that opens our minds to where we are, about the fact that we are here. This radicalism is almost religious in its passionate intensity. Perhaps postmodern art and philosophy were the heavy digging for the emerging ecological constellation. Yet the words environment and environmentalism aren't right to describe this. First, in a world where we truly cared for the environment, there would be no need to point it out as such. We would be it in the most radical sense. Second, a religious vocabulary is risky: it might set up ecology as another kind of super-being outside the mesh, outside the impermanence and evanescence of reality.

Is the ecological thought just a killjoy, then? What's wrong with the "re-enchantment of the world"? There is nothing wrong with enchantment. It's the prefix "re-" that is the source of the problem. This prefix assumes that the world was once enchanted, that we have done something to disenchant it, and that we can and should get it back to where we once belonged. We simply can't un-think modernity. If there is any enchantment it lies in the future. (104)

We must be realistic about our present existence. Capitalism has had a long run. It emerged through the enlightenment period, in the 1700's, and has evolved from strength to strength all the way through modernity and post-modernity. Capitalism is a part of the mesh, and much like the "environment", it would be a mistake to put it over yonder, as outside of ourselves and our engagements with creating a new ecology - as many environmentalists like to do. Capitalism is part of our fabric in the modern world, it is parahuman in the language of Spivak. Our lives are structured according to capitalism's movement. Therefore, what is needed is not a denialism, or a yearning for a past that is unfamiliar to everyone living in the modern world, but to work out a present as it pertains to the future. The ecological thought must reimagine capitalism as a part of the mesh. The 'ecological thought' must transform capitalism, de-think it, it must alter capitalism anew. This, like all kinds of variations, is a gradual and subtle process which brick by ecological brick, if we prefer, it must occur.

'Forward Thinking' is about the future, not a future over there, but a future over here. 'Forward Thinking' is about our ethical responsibility to our ecological present that we can only hope will serve the future well. In thinking forward, ethically, responsibly and ecologically we are concerned with our service to ecology in the present moment. In thinking forward, we take responsibility upon ourselves, personally, to transform the world anew.

Although I contend that it is indeed sufficient to realise ecology or its thought by these clusters presented by Morton, I further suggest that to know the possibilities of these ideas, a conversation

with Gayatri Spivak on translation²⁹, is necessary to think along. Spivak builds her thesis from the ideas of Melanie Klein, who considers the becoming of the infant a process of translation itself. It is the ‘becoming’ that we are interested in for the articulation of the ideas of this thesis. Spivak, with Klein’s ideas, explores the concepts of the ‘ethical subject’ and the ‘subject in responsibility’ which, for the ecological ends of this paper, are essential to drive towards. These concepts drive us towards the ecological possibility also expressed in Morton’s *Ecological Thought* and opens up literary engagement with Adichie’s texts that also speak to this possibility.

As such, I have braided the ideas of Spivak, with Klein, expressed in Spivak’s writing, *Translation as Culture*, with Morton’s ecological clusters for an articulation of how the anthropocentric³⁰ subjects in Adichie’s texts become ethical subjects; the subjects in responsibility who carry through the ecological thought by their own development. I have so titled my chapter headings pertaining to Adichie’s fictional works as: Thinking Big And The Subject In Translation in *Purple Hibiscus*, Dark Thoughts And The Production Of The Ethical Subject In *Half Of A Yellow Sun*, and Forward Thinking And The Subject In Responsibility in *Americanah*. These chapter headings are particularly designed to reflect the role and personal³¹ responsibility of the self, if the self is human and sentient, to the world, and the space of the self, no matter how minute, in ecology.

Both Spivak and Morton have done brilliant work in demonstrating the movement or becoming of the ecological subject, although in the work of Spivak, that the subject is an ecological subject, is not explicitly expressed. However, because Spivak writes about the becoming of the subject as they are confronted with “the world out there” in her text, *Translation as Culture*, the subject is thus assumed ecological simply because they exist in in the world (13). Morton and Spivak are thinking towards how the subject, as they are shaped by the world, shape the world, and as an extension, what possibilities exist to escape modes of thought that do not carry ecological principle in the shaping of the ecological subject. Morton has offered ‘Thinking Big’ as an ecological intervention, which right next to it, this paper positions Spivak’s idea of the ‘subject in translation’. Morton’s thinking big is concerned with thinking vastness, with thinking about more than the self – an

²⁹ When Spivak writes about translation she does not mean in the literal sense. Spivak writes about translation as catachresis “a term I use not for obscurity, but because I find it indispensable.” What Spivak refers to when speaking about translation is the becoming, the taking from an outside force from an inside in the making of meaning. This translation does so not only to refer to language, but to culture as well; how a subject translates a culture or a system and how that culture is informed by the culture translated by the subject.

³⁰ The human subjects in a human centred narrative that prioritizes the experience of the human subject.

³¹ To think ecology in the way Morton suggests, is to think about the relationship of the self with world phenomena. This by no means suggests that ecology is an anthropocentric orientation because it is not. The self in ecology is not necessarily human or a sentient being. However, as we are presently thinking and limiting inquiry within the bounds of Adichie’s narratives, where the self is the human, where the human and their ecological positioning is in inquiry, language, like personal, person, and personhood will be used for the analyses of the human subject.

intimate relationship with the world and all species in the world. This is complemented by Spivak's idea that the growth of the individual is impacted by the world out there. In Spivak's articulation, the subject is in relationship with the rest of the world too, a relationship with more than the self. How the subject moves in the vastness of the world is the concern of both Spivak and Morton and a lens through which I will undertake an analysis of *Purple Hibiscus* in Chapter One.

Chapter One opens discussion on the protagonist as the subject in translation in *Purple Hibiscus*. *Purple Hibiscus* offers a conscientious protagonist, Kambili, who keenly observes her own experiences with the experiences of those by whom she is surrounded. The plot hangs on the growth or individuation, in the terminology of Carl Jung, of the protagonist. It is by Kambili's individuation that we are guided from one order of being to another i.e. from a patriarchally organized ways of existing in Kambili's religious and strict home environment, to a free way of living in Nsukka with Kambili's well educated feminist aunt, in the second half of the narrative. The structure of the text expresses the subversion technique of the text that the author is famously known for. It is this technique which demonstrates how the movement to an ecologically thinking world can occur.

The presentation of two realities in a comparative manner in the text is what this paper will draw attention to in its exploration of Kambili's journey. By these compared realities, I draw on Morton's ideation of vastness in ecology. I reflect on his theorisation of patriarchy as an obstacle to the protagonist's realization of the vastness of ecology. With my exploration of how the subversion techniques occur in the text, I will then make the argument that the protagonist, in the way that she shuttles between two kinds of realities, forms, at the end of the narrative, as a subject with ethical responsibility that demonstrates collaborative practices that foster thinking and living *with*, in the way that Morton's 'ecological thought' offers for thinking and living ecologically.

The development of these ethics is through what Spivak, with Klein, offers as a violence or violent process. Spivak's text, *Translation as Culture*, presents that the becoming of the subject by the "grabbing (*begreifen*) of an outside indistinguishable from an inside" in the formation of the self (as the formation of culture) involves a shuttling or going back and forth which for the becoming of the ethical subject is a violent process (13).

In this never-ending weaving, violence translates into conscience and vice versa. From birth to death this 'natural' machine, programming the mind perhaps as genetic instructions program the body (where does body stop and mind begin?), is partly metapsychological and

therefore outside the grasp of the mind. Thus ‘nature’ passes and repasses into ‘culture’, in a work or shuttling site of violence (deprivation – evil – shocks the infant system-in-the-making more than satisfaction, some say *Paradiso* is the dullest of *The Divine Comedy*): the violent production of the precarious subject of reparation and responsibility. (13)

The exploration of violence in the formation or the production of the ethical subject speaks well to Morton’s concept of ‘Dark Thoughts’. With ‘Dark Thoughts’ Morton explores deep dark contemplation which often leads to a paralysis for the thinking subject. It is in this sense that these ideas come together in the exploration of the ecological aesthetic in *Half Of A Yellow Sun*. Adichie’s *Half Of A Yellow Sun* explores contemplation and dislocation during the extremely violent period of the Nigerian Civil war. The narrative explores the loss of self as that self is connected to place, and with that a continuing effort to reconstruct that “lost” identity. The effort to reconstruct what was lost or what was violently denied is aligned to Spivak’s articulation of reparation, which is a space where one contemplates how to return or repay what is lost (or owed) even while this is not repayable.

It is thus that Chapter Two will weave Morton’s ‘Dark Thoughts’ together with Spivak’s ideas of the production of the ethical subject. Chapter Two will therefore explore the violence and the role it has played in the formation of the novel’s lead focalizers. The narrative’s lead focalizers, Ugwu, Olanna, Kainene and Richard, all experience trauma’s that affects their understanding of themselves, this in terms of their national identity and their personal identities. This thesis thus explores the focalizers’ contemplations of themselves and their countries. This will reflect how the violence of the war denied and imposed identities on the lead focalizers and how that worked to the formation of their ethics. The narrative further opens up other questions of identity and nationality which are essential in the project to destabilise an anti-ecological world, in the sense Morton provides. By this chapter, my thesis reveals the importance of disorientation and dislocation in the process of real ecological contemplation.

As Morton offers, beyond contemplation come renewed ideas. The third chapter of this paper will thus reflect on Morton’s ‘Forward Thinking’ and with that the manifestation of responsibility in the ecological subject in Adichie’s *Americanah*. With the ideas of Spivak, chapter three will ask *How thinking forward begins?* It will ask *What we are thinking to?* And *How the realization of these renewed ideas might occur?*

Adichie’s *Americanah* presents a future responsibility dialogue. The two main protagonists Ifemelu and Obinze are continually contemplating futures and pasts, moving between past and

present to make sense of future realities. The imaginations of these futures in the narrative present a collective disjuncture where the West imagines a return to nature while the global South or the Third world, imagines a future already obtained by America in the first world, as highlighted by Obinze. In the sense that Obinze provides, America has already discovered the dangers of their capitalist orientations and so want to return to the simpler way of living - which in the fiction we are presented with is the reality of Africans. Obinze expresses the impossibility of a return to a “simpler” more environmentally friendly time that Americans yearn for, in the text. Obinze expresses the conflict that Nigerians (and Africans, as an extension) have with this ideology due to their determination to move to a more technologically and economically advanced existence - like that of the Americans. Obinze’s revelations in the text have much to do with the reality of Africans and Americans in the real world outside of the text – as is the case with the Realism genre of literature. In this way, what the text does is open questions of global collective ecological sustainability, in the space outside of the text. In this section my thesis highlights and opens discussion on transmigrating ideas of progress and the impact of that on the global collective goal of ecological sustainability.

Each narrative by Adichie illuminates spectres of each principle in the *Ecological Thought* by Morton. Each of these narratives also weave together the ideas of Morton and Spivak in a way that not only abstractly navigates the ecological thought, but also, with the help of Spivak in *Translation as Culture*, offer the conditions under which these ideas are working in Adichie’s texts. Each of the narratives offer a more nuanced articulation of the ideas expressed by the ‘ecological thought’, from the first to the last narrative (ordered by publication succession in this paper). The ecological thought evolves in Adichie’s texts, almost as if Morton’s texts were written next to Adichie’s or vice versa. By this, I offer that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s texts are by far a more exemplary narrative of ecological possibility than any “Environmental” text, and by that offer their own theoretical engagement for ecological reading in the Novel.

Chapter one: Thinking Big And The Subject In Translation In *Purple Hibiscus*

When Spivak writes about the subject in translation she not only writes about the subject, but about the subject and her environment. Spivak writes that the becoming of the subject is not under the control of the *I* nor under the control of the environment.

The subject in the shuttling described by Klein is something that will have happened, not something that definitely happens; because, first, it is not under the control of the *I* that we think of as the subject and because, second, there is such a thing as a world out there, however discursive (15).

The subject becomes as their environment becomes and the environment becomes as the subject does. Spivak with the articulations of Klein writes that the subject's becoming by the shuttling experience is "something that will have happened, not something that definitely happens" (13). This is to demonstrate that there is not a teleological becoming of the subject; the subject does not definitely turn out in a particular manner because their environment designs for it to, but because of how the subject translates the phenomena of the environment. This is a re-description of the emergence of the subject that contradicts the Freudian model of etiology of the human subject along a normative line of development that gives rise to gendered sexual adult identity.

With *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie displays this exact kind of theoretic by Spivak with the ideas of Klein, by the evolution of the lead protagonist, Kambili. Kambili's telling of how "things started to fall apart" vivisects the narrative into two realities lived at two time periods (3). The first reality is ordered by her father to a teleological expectation that Kambili, her brother and mother will evolve in a particular way. This reality is patriarchally dominated and organised in a fashion that determines carrying through patriarchal ideals. The second reality does not have any expectation of how Kambili and Jaja should turn out. This reality has no determination or motivation to form any kind of becoming for Kambili and her brother, Jaja, in particular. Be that as it may, both of these environments are translated by Kambili and are decoded to a meaning best-suited for her survival, in her telling of events.

Kambili's narration sets off with a preface of how "things" in the home "started to fall apart" (3). Adichie, with this opening, makes particular reference to Chinua Achebe's³² renowned, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), wherein Achebe explores the patriarchal family structure and how it comes undone in

³² Adichie acknowledges Chinua Achebe as "the writer who gave her permission to write". See, saharareporters.com.

face of colonial European inculturation in the West African region. This theme is expanded in *Purple Hibiscus* with which Adichie explores the cultural and religious conflict in post-colonial³³ Nigeria. Kambili's narration, underpinned by the abuse of her mother, brother and herself at the hands of her father, is an exploration of a journey from oppression to freedom. It is a movement from one state of being to another state of being defined by a meeting with the purple hibiscus flower in Nsukka, at the centre of the narrative. This is so delicately told that the narrative does not explicitly and objectively outline which state of being is better, but allows for the reader to learn from Kambili what meaning she makes of each reality and with which or in which she chooses her survival. And it is by this choice that the analysis of this thesis determines and can bring to the analysis of the narrative the ecological ideas of Timothy Morton.

When the narrative comes to its close, we learn that the environment that best suits Kambili is one where the patriarchy that ruled her home environment is subverted – consider Kambili's exploration of 'a different silence' in the chapter *A different silence*, in the text. This is a special technique by the author, which she employs very delicately in this work. One of the key facets Morton raises in the chapter "Thinking Big" is the subversion of anti-ecological structures to move toward a renewed ecological society. Patriarchy, in ecofeminist theory³⁴ too, is known as the biggest anti-ecological structure. Morton offers that to move toward an ecological society, patriarchy must be subverted. I will be analysing this gradual subversion of structure in *Purple Hibiscus*, as an exemplary orientation of Morton's ideation of patriarchal subversion as means to the realisation of vastness for an ecologically thinking world.

By design, the narrative is sectioned into three time periods marked by the section titles; Palm Sunday, Before Palm Sunday, After Palm Sunday, and The Present Day. These time periods, by my analysis, are categorised by two orders in my writing³⁵; *Patriarchal organisations*, which span over Palm Sunday and before Palm Sunday, and *Nsukka*, which spans over the sections, Palm Sunday and the Present day. The two ecologies are marked for differentiation by a narrative element; meeting the hibiscus flower, which builds the theoretical engagements of this text as an allegorical site for Morton's ecological engagements. Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1987)*, offer the theory of 'Affect; the ability to affect and be affected – in a pedestrian sense - as a theorisation of the engagement of bodies in ecology. It is

³³ I use post-colonial as catachresis in this paper, simply because I believe, as reflected in the writing of Kwame Nkrumah, that it is premature to identify the present African condition, politically, culturally, and economically as post-colonial. Post-colonial does not sufficiently identify our present state, but like Spivak, I use this term simply because there is none other yet, that would most accurately transfer my meaning.

³⁴ See Vandana Shiva and Marie Mist, *Ecofeminism*

³⁵ I understand the anti-ecological assumptions of this word, but I use it to describe the structure of the home set-ups as simply no other word will do.

by this theorisation that my engagement with *Purple Hibiscus* is opened up to an allegorical reading of the text as an ecological site, in the way that Morton offers.

The two worlds are not particularly presented in opposition to each other, but as a gradual movement from one ecological environment out into another. This demonstrates, as Morton believes, that the preferred features of an ecologically thinking society are thus not what already exists independently in the future, but what we must and ought to evolve into by Appropriation³⁶. Paul Crutzen too reflects that the human mind, by appropriation is capable, as it is responsible, of moving ecology into a renewed reality. Crutzen offers:

In 1962, V.I Vernadsky acknowledged the increasing impact of mankind: “The direction in which the process of evolution must proceed, namely towards increasing consciousness and thought, and forms having greater influence on their surroundings.” Teilhard de Chardin and Vernadsky use the term ‘noosphere’ - the world of thought - to mark the growing role of human brain power on shaping its own future and environment... A daunting task lies ahead for scientists and engineers to guide society towards environmental sustainable management during the era of the Anthropocene (23).

Although my thesis rests on the idea of widening the responsibility of ecological care beyond the sciences, unlike Crutzen offers in this expression, I stand by the sentiment of the world of thought as an important space to nurture in the movement toward an ecologically living world; one that we are yet to see, but which it’s arrival we can anticipate. Jose Esteban Munoz in his explorations of Queer theory writes that “Queerness is not here yet. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future” (1). It is much the same with ecology which can only thrive in an anti-patriarchal world. In the world of the narrative, and specifically narratives which are highly regarded as anti-patriarchal or feminist, an anti-patriarchal world is not yet known. Narrative plotting in texts like these still circle around the idea of the patriarchal block to overcome for the obtainment of personal freedoms, and so narrative’s task is always to imagine an anti-patriarchal world. This is the realm where *Purple Hibiscus* plays. The narrative lends a deeply contemplative narrator that narrates, importantly, an alternative reality. Rachel DuPlessis offers that narratives like *Purple Hibiscus* are given this ability by a technique

³⁶ Paul Crutzen discusses appropriate behaviour as means to obtaining an ecologically thinking society. See Paul Crutzen, *The geology of mankind*

called “writing beyond the ending”, which she determines is a transgressive strategy that expresses critical dissent from the dominant narrative. DuPlessis offers that:

“the tactics, among them, reparenting, woman-to-woman, brother-to-sister bonds, and forms of the communal protagonist, take issue with the mainstays of the social and ideological organisation of gender, as these appear in fiction. Writing beyond the ending, “not repeating words and following your methods, but finding new words and creating new methods”, produces a narrative that denies or reconstructs seductive patterns of feeling that are culturally mandated, internally policed and hegemonically poised” (5).

The narrative’s feminist, antipatriarchal mandate is so subtly produced that it is un-missable. *Purple Hibiscus*’ transgressive strategy offers relationship bonds that unravel the hegemonic structure bit by bit. A few key relationships are the relationships that Kambili and Jaja develop with their aunt, Ifeoma, Father Amadi, and that with the hibiscus flower. These relationships are key in the development of voice - a key dissenting technique - for Kambili, Jaja and their mother Beatrice. Kambili takes care to narrate from the beginning of her memory, so as to release the subtle and nuanced manner in “which things started to fall apart” (16). Kambili narrates her quiet patriarchally dominated home, the religious oppression that governed it and the gradual manner that her mother, Beatrice changed the order of their home by killing their physically and emotionally abusive father, Eugene. Therefore, I begin my analyses on the patriarchal order that maintained oppression in Kambili’s home. I will then depart from this with analysis of how when the home becomes unravelled the story imagines, beyond the limits of narrative, an alternative ecological existence and how that can be achieved.

1.1: Patriarchal organisations: *speaking with our spirits*

Pauline Ada Ukwue writes that “silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women’s social well-being, thinking and expression that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure” (67).

We went upstairs to change, Jaja and Mama and I. Our steps on the steps were as measured and as silent as our Sundays: the silence of waiting until Papa was done with his siesta so we could have lunch; the silence of reflection time, when Papa gave us a scripture passage or a book by one of the early church fathers to read and meditate on; the silence of evening

rosary, the silence of driving to church for benediction afterward. Even our family time on Sundays was quiet, without chess games or newspaper discussions, more in tune with the day of rest...Lunch was jollof rice, fist-size chunks of azu fried until the bones were crisp, and ngwo-ngwo. Papa ate most of the ngwo-ngwo, his spoon swooping through the spicy broth in the glass bowl. Silence hung over the table like blue-black clouds in the middle of rainy season. (31-32)

Kambili had a deep sense of awareness of the role that ‘silence’ played in holding the deeply patriarchal and oppressive structure of their family together. In the extract above, Kambili repeatedly refers to silence i.e. “silence of waiting... the silence of reflection... silence of scripture and the silence of driving”, moreover, Kambili refers to the period before they paid visit to their aunt in Nsukka as the time they “were speaking more with [their] spirits than with [their] lips” (16, 31). The repetition of ‘silence’ is an example of an iterative narrative technique referred to as ‘Frequency’ by Gerrard Genette. This technique illustrates the importance of phenomena or events for a speaker or narrator by the number of times the event or phenomena is referred to by the speaker. By Genette’s meaning, ‘silence’ or the construction of silence is important in Kambili’s narration of events. It indicates that Kambili knew the important role that ‘silence’ played in the organisation of their home.

The maintenance of the patriarchal order in the colonial and post-colonial periods in Africa is predicated on the silencing of women, children and nature. Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* (1966), Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Wangari Maathai’s *Unbowed* (2006) and Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine* (1966) also thematise silence as a tool of subjugation. In these novels, the cis gender heterosexual female³⁷ protagonists are silenced by the patriarchal set-ups which position women, children and nature (if nature is a thing out there) as lower species than the human male. Silencing holds oppressive structures in place in these narratives, and by that is a deeply anti-ecological technique that these narratives speak to. Silence, as reflected in the narratives of Adichie, Achebe, Nwapa, Elechi, Dangarembga and Maathai, leave very little room for the exploration of new thoughts and ideas, most especially anti-patriarchal ideas. Silence fosters ‘sameness’, in the language of Morton. Kambili’s narrations reveal exactly to what degree her father hoped to maintain sameness, consider the extract below:

³⁷ The specificity of gender and sexuality is an important dynamic to consider in the opening of the conversation of ecology. It is vital to normalize the language of gender and sexuality especially in a thesis that writes to the “more-ness” of being in the world. Although Adichie’s texts are densely heteronormative, which is a large part of the criticisms of the novels, they are not rigid in their articulation of gender constructions, which for a novel that aims to express an imagination of changing realities is a kind of progress we should be mindful of, although I do contend that more must be done in these narratives.

I wondered when Papa would draw up a schedule for the baby, my new brother, if he would wait until he was a toddler. Papa liked order. It showed even in the schedules themselves, the way his meticulously drawn lines, in black ink, cut across each day, separating study from siesta, siesta from family time, family time from prayer, prayer from sleep. He revised them often. When we were in school, we had less siesta time and more study time, even on weekends. (23-24)

In this extracted passage, Kambili presents a keen awareness of Jaja, Beatrice, the coming baby, and her own productions³⁸ in their home. Her wonder at when her Father, Eugene, would draw up the schedule for the coming baby reflects her realisation of her own formation as she grew in their ordered and meticulous home environment. In “Papa liked order, it showed even in the schedules themselves, the way his meticulously drawn lines...[separating] study from siesta, from family time...he revised them often. When we were in school, we had less siesta time and more study time, even on weekends” Kambili’s narration reveals how her father’s order impacted her own formation (23, 24). The flow from “he revised” to “when we were” reveals the seamless manner at which what Eugene instructed was the order by which they lived their lives, or translated for themselves, as themselves, in the language of Spivak with Klein, in their home environment. The order and meticulousness with which Eugene determined their lives was effective, in the home at that point in time, for who Eugene wanted them to become.

Morton offers that the trouble with sameness and order is that it is as an attempt of someone desperate to restart a broken machine (6). The efforts of the patriarch are thus to guard against evolution i.e. the evolution of the self and of the culture with which the self becomes. But what builds this obsession to maintain order, to keep things the same? Morton theorises that:

Masculine nature is the operating system of the authoritarian personality. Masculine Nature fears its own shadow - subjectivity itself. It wants no truck with the night of the world, the threateningly empty dimension of open subjectivity. This dimension is feminine. “Feminine” is a term, perhaps a deeply patriarchal one, for the open, purely apparent dimension of subjectivity. Environmental phenomena exhibit this concrete infinity. Levinas talks of the defenceless eye of the face. Masculine nature is afraid of

³⁸ The use of “production” is in the tradition of capital industrialism which serves to indicate that the characters in the household under Eugene’s order are meant to serve a particular function. This also makes the argument that free existence is denied under these systemic orders.

the nothingness of feminine “mere” appearance. It’s the Trickster quality found in many indigenous cultures. When we approach the idea that all sentient beings are equal and free we discover the Trickster. (82)

Morton, by this theorisation, means that patriarchal authoritarian masculine orders are not open to ‘more’, the ‘more’ that open subjectivity offers. Opening up to more brings the realisation that equality and freedom are for all and this ideation is inherently damaging to structure³⁹. The damaging effects of structural ordering is what especially feminist novelists like Adichie take to task when deconstructing dominating narratives of patriarchy. Ogaga Okuyade (2009) offers that “The creative art for the African writer is not just an art form that seeks to entertain the audience, it functions beyond that, it is more of a social document geared towards the reconstruction of the socio-political configuration of the African people” (246). Although this can be said about all kinds of literature i.e Russian, English, and French, it is very particular in the literature of developing worlds which take to task, truly, the responsibility of liberating and empowering the people in previously colonised regions of the world.

The literatures of new generation African writers are particularly organised to reflect the progress of African localities in the Neo-independent condition, and this is what new generation African writers like Adichie express in their writing. Adichie takes this to heart in her engagement with this novel which illuminates the subtleties of the patriarchal order. The narrative illustrates how patriarchy enforces a veil of ignorance of the lives and experiences of those outside of the phallic tradition, but particularly those outside of the heteronormative phallogocentric tradition. The silence that Eugene enforces maintains order in the home through disallowing opportunity for individual expression. By ‘de-voicing’⁴⁰ Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice, Eugene enforces that they exist timidly and tentatively – taking care to not assert their presence in the home. Kambili’s narration reveals that they could only speak, and so exist, in a telepathic way. This is revealed in “*I wish we still had lunch together*, Jaja said with his eyes. “Me, too,” I said, aloud.” And “*what if she vomits?* Where Kambili narrates Jaja speaking to her with her eyes (22, 30). Kambili, by this, illustrates how Jaja, Beatrice and herself were not allowed to exist freely in their home. Their role was to fold themselves, soften themselves or quieten themselves so that they would fit into the order.

³⁹ By structure I refer to all inherently hierarchical orders that operate on the basis of superiority and inferiority. This is inclusive but not exclusive to patriarchy, classism, racism, Capitalism etc.

⁴⁰ A term which refers to silencing or denying the voice of a speaker in a powerless position.

The order, with which Eugene ruled the household, left very little opportunity for Kambili to expressly individuate⁴¹ in the home environment, and participate as a self in the culture of the home. Because Eugene has expressed teleological expectations and bullies Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice into the performance of these expectations, Kambili, as one must, as Klein and Spivak has written of the becoming infant, has not had the opportunity to individuate as per her own translation of her environment.

Translation as expressed by Spivak with Klein means the grabbing (*begreifen*) of an outside indistinguishable from an inside constitutes an inside, going back and forth and coding everything into a sign-system by the thing(s) grasped (13). This, firstly, entails taking from the outside from an inside, and, secondly; making meaning of that phenomenon to a meaningful system of one's own. Whatever it is that one would grab and then decode, would be encoded in a unique way. The meaning of whatever grabbed phenomena changes formation as it meets the internal constituents of the grabber. This then indicates that the culture Eugene was set on instilling in Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice was destined for translation as soon as it existed in the world. Be that as it may, Eugene ascertained that encoding the phenomena anew by the constituents of the self was forbidden. The silence that Eugene enforced through violence assured, that what he taught and how he taught it was grabbed on to and purely transferred, read and performed by his wife and children, as their culture, inside and outside of their home. However, the narrative reflects that the subjects do in fact individuate by their own reading of culture. This happens in a gradual, almost surreptitious manner. Consider the telepathic reading on page 30 of the novel expressed below:

Jaja spoke to me with his eyes: *what if she vomits?* (30)

In the line above, Kambili and Jaja are in a telepathic conversation about their father's instruction for their mother to join them at Father Benedict's house even when their mother informed him that she was not feeling well enough to do so. When Eugene succeeds in threatening Beatrice to enter Father Benedict's house with the question "are you sure you want to stay in the car?" where the question bullies Beatrice into reconsideration, Beatrice begins to show signs of nausea and it is at this point where Jaja and Kambili start to wonder if their father was wrong in his action (29). Their wonder at this question shows signs of deviation, which suggests that both Jaja and Kambili are no longer following Eugene's school of thought as strictly as they should.

⁴¹ The concept of individuation was developed by psychologist Carl Jung. The concept refers to individual determination, beyond any control, to develop into a unique self no matter the structure of their environment. See Jung, *Man and his symbols*.

Spivak's, offer that the subject of any culture will individuate and alter learnings and teaching of that particular cultural doctrine or belief, is evident in this novel. This presentation by Spivak, with the work of Klein, can also be identified in the two contrasting practices of Christianity by Eugene and Father Amadi, a religious leader from Nsukka. For example, when Father Amadi said mass as visiting priest at St. Agnes, he surprised the congregation by breaking out in Igbo song, and so "the congregation drew in a collective breath, some sighed, some had their mouths in a big O" (28). This suggests that the St. Agnes congregation is strictly used to songs and sermons in English under Father Benedict's example. This is further impressed by Eugene who, because of Father Amadi's slight deviation from the usual order of mass, by including Igbo in his sermon, describes Father Amadi's faith leadership as "godless leadership" (28).

With Father Amadi, a difference is presented where, comparable to the practice of Christianity by Eugene and Father Benedict, Father Amadi's practice of Christianity allows freedom of thought, empowers questioning and the right to praise in the language of one's preference. This deviation reveals what Jungian Psychology also teaches i.e. No matter the environment or control of the environment, the individual will form in their unique way, or as Spivak, with Klein, offers; will code information from the outside in accordance to their own internal constitution.

In the ideas of Morton, there really is no point to holding the individual hostage to 'sameness' because they will break through that barrier. The evolution of the self is guided by the self's exploration of the meanings in the world and how that determines how they would want to exist in the world. *Purple Hibiscus* shows this by the eventual individuation of its protagonist, Kambili, her mother and her brother.

As the narration moves closer to Kambili (and Jaja's) individuation, it moves closer to meeting with an alternative environment where openness is encouraged. In the second half of the narrative, which really gets set in motion when Jaja meets with the purple hibiscus, a vast sprawling existence where lives mesh into one another and, in the theory of Morton, the idea of the *strange stranger* emerges. Here, as Kambili and Jaja explicitly experience their selves individuating, what Morton calls 'more-ness' and 'vastness' is realized. In Nsukka we get a taste of what an ecological world might be like and what it might sound like.

1.2: Nsukka: *New words and worlds*

I lay in bed after Mama left and let my mind rake through the past, through the years when Jaja mama and I spoke more with our spirits than with our lips. Until Nsukka. Nsukka started it all, aunty Ifeoma's little garden next to the verandah of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence. Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma's experimental hibiscus; rare, fragrant with undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the ones the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government square after the coup. A freedom to do, a freedom to be. (16)

Many a literary critic have found "breaking silence" as a methodical orientation used by novelists to subvert oppressive orders like patriarchy. However, In the case of *Purple Hibiscus*, not many African literary critics have reasoned the breaking of this silence to 'Affect', in the way that affect is discussed in the work of Giles Deleuze and Felilx Guattari⁴². A theorist that alludes to this arrangement of the relationship between human life and plant life Geoffrey Hartman theorised that "the spacious ambience of nature when treated with respect, allows physical and emotional freedom" (158). Although Hartman writes about Nature as the thing out there, the sentiments about human engagement with plant life are in sympathy with this dissertation.

Although the ideas by Hartman, Deluze and Guattari are fruitful for discussion on the relationships between the human and plant life, it is important to highlight the work of African thinkers on these engagements, particularly because these African engagements like animism, in particular, were historically discounted as indicators of epistemological failures of primitive peoples. Harry Garuba asks and answers:

How do we account for the recent resurgence of interest in animism and animist thought? Once considered a kind of cognitive error, as evidence of cognitive underdevelopment and epistemological failure, animism has once again become an object of discursive attention and intellectual inquiry, in addition to serving as a platform for political action, particularly around issues of ecology and the environment. (01)

Animist thought has re-emerged as a critical response to the global ecological crisis. Animism's engagement of the relationship between the human and natural worlds fosters a conscious interaction between human and natural life as a mode of getting to know the world. Animism's

⁴² See *A thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Giles Deleuze and Felilx Guattari

relational orientation offers that many consciousnesses other than human consciousness exists and all consciousness impact one another other.

Garuba further notes Alf Hornborg's assertion in his essay "Animism, Fetishism, and Objectivism" that the work of animism, which has impacted ecological movements was derived from indigenous communities, postmodernism's relativist epistemologies, New Age spiritualism, and contemporary anthropologists' whose work has impacted certainty of the separation of beings and things and the natural and social worlds in the last few decades. Animist thought has informed key ideas in contemporary ecological thinking and this includes the ideas of Morton and Crutzen that have expanded their scope of thought to include the richness of the ideas of more-ness, strangeness and the mesh of existence which advocates for developing a closeness with other beings and things, recognizing the more of existence and that the human does not take centrality to existence. These are useful conceptions to think through the relationships that Adichie's characters, animate or inanimate, sentient or non-sentient, build with each other in the two opposing realities and how this aids to their development as ecological beings.

The relationality between the social and natural worlds is most evidently realised when Kambili traces Jaja's defiance to his interaction with the hibiscus flower in Auntie Ifeoma's garden. Kambili suggests that by interaction with the plant in the garden, Jaja had become more defiant and gained a bit more freedom. Deleuze and Guattari's 'Affect' provides explanation for this complex thought expressed by Adichie's character. 'Affect' as an ability to affect and be affected, is "a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection* (Spinoza's *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies)" (xvi).

The work of 'affect' is very often missed in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie which is surprising because Adichie's narratives are densely nuanced in the poetics of affect. Adichie's narratives are keenly observant of the affective relationships between bodies - and that is also bodies in the broadest sense possible. *Purple Hibiscus* is observant of the affective relationships between human bodies, spiritual bodies, human and spiritual bodies, human and animal bodies - where the human is not animal, or vice versa, animal and natural bodies, human and natural bodies,

and human and techno bodies⁴³. Consider Kambili's narration of Nsukka, above, which articulates the effect that space had on the understanding of the self.

Kambili's narration reveals that things changed in Nsukka, especially with Jaja who found a freedom and defiance in Aunty Ifeoma's garden. Kambili reveals that while Jaja was working in the garden, she noticed that she "had never seen his arm move this way, never seen this piercing light in his eyes that appeared when he was in Aunty Ifeoma's garden" (145). Kambili also narrates that Jaja seemed to notice himself or parts of himself only at that point while working in the garden, she observes that it was "as if he were just then noticing the gnarled finger, deformed like a dried-stick" (145). The interaction with the garden had a clear effect on Jaja, as watching who Jaja becomes while working in the garden had on Kambili as well. The freedom or defiance that the garden affected on Jaja had an effect on Kambili, who thereafter, at their return home, acted in a fundamentally defiant manner which consequently accelerated the fall of their father, the patriarch, and consequently opening up a new world for them.

"No! I shrieked. I dashed on the floor as if to save them, as if saving them would mean saving Papa Nnukwu. I sank to the floor, lay on the pieces of paper.

"What has gotten into you?" Papa asked. "what is wrong with you?"

I lay on the floor, curled tight like the picture of a child in the uterus in my Integrated Science for Junior Secondary Schools text book.

"Get up! Get away from that painting!"

I lay there, did nothing.

"Get up! Papa said again. I still did not move. He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked nonstop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English, like soft meat and thorny bones. Godlessness. Heathen worship. The kicking increased in tempo, and I thought of Amaka's music, her culturally conscious music that sometimes started off with a saxophone and then whirled into lusty singing. I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of painting; they were soft and feathery. They still had the metallic smell of Amaka's paint palette. The stinging was raw now, even more like bites because the metal landed on open skin on my sides, my back, my legs. Kicking. Kicking. Kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed to heat. Because I could hear a swoosh in the air. A low voice saying, "Please, Biko, please"

⁴³ This is particularly evident in Adichie's *Americanah*.

More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warned my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet. (211)

Affect illustrates elements of what Timothy Morton calls a recognition of the *strange stranger*. Morton suggests that in a meeting with the *strange strangers*, we are also in a new meeting with ourselves. Kambili develops voice and opinion and becomes protective of these. The extract above demonstrates Kambili's most notable and fundamental act of defiance. She stands against her father's act of destroying her Papa Nnukwu's painting, and voices this. Beyond voicing, Kambili uses her body as a shield to not only protect the painting of Papa Nnukwu, but to protect her idea of Papa Nnukwu. This is a radical act of defiance in the eyes of Eugene who has always tried to instil in his children the idea that Papa Nnukwu is a heathen, less-than and so not worth protection. By realizing and expressing voice, Kambili realizes herself as a "being" person, a person that has the freedom to do, a person that has the freedom to be. This is a fundamental thought pattern of and in an ecological world. Once the self comes into their sense of being, the openness of the world is demonstrated. This is what Morton calls 'the trickster' of ecology. The trickster tells of openness, of more, it dismantles structure and opens our minds to the vastness of being and existing in the world. With the trickster there are no structures that divide and close us off to the experiences of others. The trickster knows all beings equally, it doesn't make room for the consideration of women as indeterminate as patriarchal capitalist systems of the world often do. The development of the trickster in the narrative is allowed by affect which demonstrates, for an allegorical reading, how an ecological world; an open and equal world, outside of the text, is possible.

The narrative more poignantly demonstrates ecological possibility by the murder of Eugene by Beatrice. Beatrice, by murdering her husband, by poison, morphs the family structure into a new existence. Janet Ndula in *Deconstructing Binary Oppositions Of Gender In Purple Hibiscus: A Review of Religious/Traditional Superiority & Silences* (2017) provides that "It is the time following Papa's death by Mama's poisoning, that there is hope in the future. By the same act, Papa is silenced for good and the silence/speech opposition is disrupted with Mama as the new silencer (40). Beatrice has in this sense silenced Eugene, but the goal was to dismantle hierarchy not to claim Eugene's positionality. Silencing Eugene was an act of self-determination for Beatrice, with which she opened up the world for herself and her children. 'Silence', as a method for determination, is thus differently fashioned and has a different purpose in Beatrice's use of it. By murdering Eugene, Beatrice opens her voice for herself, and creates opportunity for the expression of voice for her children. Beatrice, by silencing Eugene, demonstrates the possibility to self-determine in the absence of patriarchy.

Kambili's narration in "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka" reveals that Beatrice murdered her husband in an active and calculated manner (295). Beatrice was as present in gradually poisoning her husband, which led to his murder, as she was in sharing the testimony that she was responsible. Kambili narrates that "Her movements were calm and slow. When she spoke, her voice was just as calm and slow" which suggests that Beatrice was in a conscious state (295). Beatrice's action was calculated which reveals its intentionality. Even while this is so, Beatrice was denied the responsibility, intention and determinacy with which and for which she performed this act. Despite Beatrice's confession, Jaja's assumption of responsibility for the murder - and his consequent punishment for it, discounted Beatrice's action against her oppressor, rendering her, again, indeterminate. It is in this sense that Beatrice's autonomy and self-will is yet to be acknowledged by the patriarchy that the narrative forces its reader to think against.

To realise ecology, in the sense that Morton provides, we must think against patriarchy, in the way that the novel teaches the reader to do. Gayatri Spivak's *Can the subaltern speak?* (1983) also speaks to this idea, and it is by this, that this paper echoes Spivak's questions and asks; *can the subaltern be heard?*⁴⁴ In her most controversial work yet, Spivak explores Gramsci's subalternity to the exploration of the class imagination⁴⁵ of Dalit women in India. *Can the subaltern speak?* Asks of the considerations of Dalit women in India: *if their consciousness is not considered conscious, can they speak it?* Many theorists have fought against Spivak's interventions on this subject, arguing that Spivak is, by this, silencing the subaltern woman and disregarding her consciousness. Other critics, like Chinnaiyah Jangam in *Politics of identity and the project of writing history in Postcolonial India: A Dalit critique* (2015), developed their critique of Spivak around class discrimination in the project, arguing that Subaltern studies and particularly, Spivak's exploration of subalternity misrecognizes the historicity of the Dalit Class (66). Although his is a worthy position, Jangam misrecognises an important element that Spivak's theorisation of subalternity always makes a point to articulate. Spivak highlights that the subaltern is not a "generalizable" position, that means that it does not belong to a particular class or race. Subalternity is a matter of consciousness positionality. By this, in response to Jangam, it is important to consider that in the Dalit caste that Spivak based her study on there are consciousnesses or voices that are regarded or heard more than others. The subaltern's consciousness

⁴⁴ *Can the subaltern speak?* is a question that Gayatri Spivak negotiates in her studies on the subaltern Indian woman. I extend the question to *Can the subaltern be heard?* for the argument that it is not for a lack of speaking, but for a lack of being heard based on one's identity.

⁴⁵ Spivak, although she expresses subalternity to the class imaginations of Dalit women, reminds that the subaltern as a concept is not generalizable, it changes according to conjecture, a particular positioning (or non-positioning) of the person without citizenship. The recognition of citizenship is here in the text alluded to 'having a say' or being unrecognizable as one who can have a say. See Centro de Estudos Sociais da Universidade de Coimbra, *Interview with Spivak*

is not considered – it's an outside-of-the-canon positionality; completely marginalised. Therefore, the subaltern is not a who i.e. this is what they look like and this is where they live, the subaltern has no recognizable identity, (there can be subalterns within subaltern groups). But in the particular case Spivak makes, her question can the subaltern woman speak? Remains and is important to us here because here too we are dealing with a subaltern, in the case of Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus*, a woman figure whose consciousness is not considered conscious.

To understand Spivak's articulations, one must understand the marginalising processes of phallogentrism. The ability to speak goes hand in hand with the opportunity to be heard. Among others, Spivak's question and critique is really of the social structure that castrated the voice of the particular Dalit woman figure whose life she was bringing into the centre⁴⁶ in a discussion of resistance in *Can the subaltern woman Speak?* Spivak's argument is that in this patriarchally hierarchically ordered world, it is the one who is listened to who is heard, not the one who speaks. This is not to say that the subaltern woman, this subaltern woman, cannot speak, but that the structure refuses to listen to what she has to say because of where it hierarchically placed her; she is outside of the canon⁴⁷. In this case, Spivak later remarks in her keynote *The trajectory of the subaltern woman in my work* at the University of California, that the lesson she has learned from the work done in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* from its reception is that "agency is institutional validation" (2008). This, in the case of the subaltern woman presented in Spivak's work, means that particular social status also because of the educational background, frames the particular agency or right to agency and resistance of persons.

Adichie's narrative constantly evokes the interplay of speaking and of hearing as measures of agency and resistance in *Purple Hibiscus*' story. In the first half of the narrative, until after the murder of Eugene, Kambili and Beatrice, in their home, are not heard. They are silent not because they cannot speak or do not want to speak, but because they are not listened to. This is evident in "when we were speaking with our spirits and not our lips" when Kambili precludes the changes that they would experience in their household after they return from Nsukka (16). Although there are great changes in the expression of voice in the household before Beatrice murders Eugene, another form of silencing becomes apparent in the home immediately after Eugene's passing and after Jaja's imprisonment.

⁴⁶ This was Spivak's aunt, which adds an importance consideration to the positionality of subalternity. See Spivak, *The trajectory of the sub-altern in my work*

⁴⁷ The canon refers to structure where a particular subject positioning is at the center.

Beatrice confesses to the crime as a form of resistance and to claim her agency, but this agency is not recognised as such. Consider:

She has been different ever since Jaja was locked up, since she went about telling people that she killed Papa, that she put poison in his tea. She even wrote letters to Newspapers. But nobody listened too her; they still don't. They think grief and denial, that her husband is dead and her son is in prison – have turned her into this vision of a painfully bony body, of skin speckled with blackheads the size of watermelon seeds. Perhaps it is why nobody criticised her for not wearing black or all white for a year. Perhaps it is why nobody criticised her for not attending the first – and second – year memorial Masses, for not cutting her hair. (296)

Beatrice, as revealed by Kambili's narration, is refused the agency to stand in her resistance against Eugene in her death. Her acts of resistance against Eugene are discounted as "grief and denial" (296). Kambili also narrates that despite Beatrice's best efforts to claim her resistance, by telling the truth to whoever she could, she was not listened to. Beatrice was allowed the grief and denial, no other emotional response was deemed appropriate, and so all her actions and ideas were discounted and appropriated to grief. This is primarily because Beatrice was a wife to a man who had died and a mother to a son imprisoned. Because mother and wife were her only recognised identities in her society, all her feelings and expressions were confined to what would've been appropriate feelings as mother and wife to these losses.

In the world outside of the text, critical constructions of Beatrice, because of this act, renders the character a mutation in the conception of mother, of wife, and of woman in African society⁴⁸. Thus, to imply that resistance and agency do not have place in the traditional framework of woman, of mother and of wife. The construction of Beatrice's character as presenting a mutative reality of these identities further echoes Spivak's question *Can the subaltern speak?* Where subaltern presents a differential position of no autonomy and no agency. To expand, this thesis more poignantly, tellingly, asks; *Can the subaltern⁴⁹ be heard?*

⁴⁸ Uku discusses Beatrice as a mutation to the reality of motherhood because of the murder, suggesting an impossibility of mother or wife in this particular society perform resistance. See Iniobong I Uko, *Reconstructing Motherhood: A mutative reality*

⁴⁹ In this paper, Spivak's expression of the subaltern, is stretched to its definition of 'lower status' and so refers to the Black Woman, aided by theoretical engagement in literature, feminist theory and ecofeminist theory which argue the status of the black woman as lowest in patriarchally established hierarchies i.e. "Black woman is the mule of the world" Zola Neale Hurston.

Adichie's narrative reflects how, as asserted in Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* the "figure of woman is [always] at issue, one whose minimal prediction as indeterminate is already available to phallogocentric tradition" (82). In accordance to this, Adichie provides us with a female mother character who kills her husband as a form of resistance and reclamation of power. Beatrice's act of resistance to Eugene's oppression is however not seen as an act of resistance because, as woman, wife and mother, she is already considered indeterminate to her patriarchal surroundings. Beatrice is denied agency because of the norm of womanhood, motherhood and wifeness in the Nigerian world of the narrative.

Adichie plays with the complexities of this "grounding" belief of motherhood in *Purple Hibiscus*, by not just the murder, but the telling of the murder. Consider Kambili's short narration of Beatrice's the telling of killing Eugene:

"They did an autopsy", she said. "They have found the poison in your father's body." She sounded as though the poison in Papa's body is something we all had known about, something we had put there to be found, the way it was done in the books I had read where white people hid Easter eggs for their children to find.

"Poison? I said.

Mama tightened her wrapper, then went to the windows; she pushed the drapes aside, checking that the louvres were shut to keep the rain from splashing into the house. Her movements were calm and slow. "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch-doctor" (295).

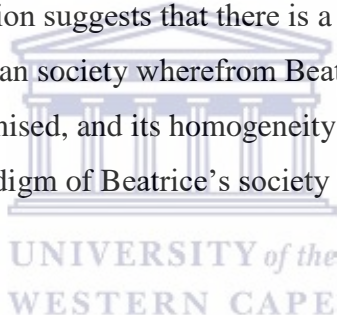
Kambili's narration of Beatrice's confession, presents Beatrice as calm about murdering her husband. As Beatrice tells, she performs ordinary acts i.e. closing the window, tying her wrapper, which suggests that nothing is seemingly new, unfamiliar or out of the ordinary. Kambili comments that Beatrice narrates as if the murder of Eugene is a possibility they ought to have known about or have expected. Beatrice's sense of calm suggests a deliberate quality about her act, so with the telling of the act.

Critics like Iniobong I Uko often articulate the circumstances of the murder as unusual on the grounds that Beatrice is the mother because, in African cosmology, murder or termination of life by women is atypical, or reality shifting. Uko in *Reconstructing Motherhood: A Mutative Reality* reveals that:

Maternity is viewed as sacred in the traditions of all African societies. In all of them, the earth's fertility is traditionally linked to women's maternal powers. Hence the centrality of women as producers and providers, and the reverence in which they are held...In many cultures, motherhood is revered as the status by which human race is preserved and genealogy is perpetuated. This means that motherhood is closely linked with life and a life-giving essence (57).

Uko's articulations speak to the representation and function⁵⁰ of women as mothers in African society. By this, Uko reflects how the identity of African women is confined to motherhood in under a particular prescribe in African culture.

Uko's outlook is what Beatrice represents as a woman and a mother inside the text, and the effect that has or might have on the construction of motherhood outside of the text. The problem with Uko's thesis concern is that it presents its readers with an essentialist view of motherhood and of womanhood in Africa even as it attempts to present a reality shift in motherhood. The construction of Beatrice's motherhood as a mutation suggests that there is a purist or singular form of being mother and of being woman in African society wherefrom Beatrice's motherhood derives. Motherhood is in this sense homogenised, and its homogeneity is achieved by the powerless position of mother in the social paradigm of Beatrice's society as well as the power dynamic in the critic-character relationship.



Spivak in the same keynote, *The trajectory of the subaltern in my work*, notes that while agency comes in the form of institutional validation, "subject formation exceeds the borders of the intending subject" (2008). This suggests that certain identities, particularly those in the position of the unthought⁵¹ are formed and decided upon by those with the power to perceive these identities⁵². Interestingly enough, in Saidiya Hartman's interview with Wilderson in reflection of the particular subject formation of the Black body, in the case of *State of Missouri v Celia* (1855) where Celia kills her slave owner because he rapes her repeatedly, Celia is recorded as the culpable agent. This, Hartman offers, is because Blackness, in the formulation of law and punishment, is always culpable. The conversation between Hartman and Wilderson is in the context of slavery and blackness in America which have through history been the leading discourses to demonstrate lack of agency of Black persons in their own subject formation.

⁵⁰ In ecological ideation, function as it is teleological, is anti-ecological. Thus, the consideration of the woman figure as representative and to a function is an anti-ecological paradigm.

⁵¹ See Saidiya Hartman, *The position of the unthought*

⁵² Saidiya Hartman discusses registers of subjectivity and preconscious interest

Hartman and Wilderson discussion reflects on the powerlessness of the Black body to construct itself or to give consent to its formation as a subject in the position of the unthought. Consider this extract from a conversation between Hartman and Wilderson, where Hartman offers:

In *Seduction and the Ruses of Power* you not only explain how the positionality of black and white women differs, but you also suggest how blackness disarticulates the notion of consent, if we are thinking of that notion as universal. You write: “[B]eing forced to submit to the will of the master in all things defines the predicament of slavery” (10). In other words, the female slave is a possessed accumulated, fungible object, which is to say that she is ontologically different than a white woman who may, as a house servant or indentured labourer, be a subordinated subject. You go on to say, “The opportunity for non-consent [as regards, in this case, sex] is required to establish consent, for consent is meaningless if refusal is not an option...consent is unseemly in a context in which the very notion of subjectivity is predicated upon the negation of will...” (186)

I like to merge Hartman and Wilderson’s expressions regarding the subject formation of the Black woman with Spivak’s expression of the subaltern. Both these articulations make the point that the subject formation of the Black woman or the subaltern woman, where subalternity is regarded from a differential position, in the way the Spivak expresses, is without her consent. In the context of *Purple Hibiscus*, by the character of Beatrice the same point is articulated. Beatrice is not even given the opportunity to consent that Jaja confess to her crime – “non-consent” was not even considered a possibility (186). As Wilderson has offered “consent is unseemly in a context in which the very notion of subjectivity is predicated upon the negation of will” (186).

Subject formation usually occurs when the subjectivity of a person or thing is formulated according to a preconscious idea of the said subject or thing. It is in this realm where representation occurs. From the position of the unthought an identity is decided upon, what a person represents or should represent (as an identity) is decided upon. Representation in this sense, can remove agency from person, and in turn essentialise it to a purist singularity i.e. consider Uko’s representation of Beatrice’s motherhood as a mutation.

This essentialism will not serve us in the ecological world, for the ecological thought. In the ecological thought we cannot focus on what one represents because representation is always on the back log of something else i.e. a true essence, that another will either assimilate to or differentiate from, is always assumed. The problematics of this is that the idea of the true essence is very close to the idea of a pure essence which is often used to differentiate and categorise species. The idea of the

pure essence also insinuates a right essence with which we have historically used to canonize and marginalise. Moreover, representation works in the optical genre which is not sufficient in knowing the full scope of person or character. James Ker in his capture of the Roman representation *Roman Repraesentatio* reveals that:

When the verb Repraesentare and its derivative noun representatio] are applied to certain social and political acts of "representing" in Rome of the late republic and early empire - most prominently, acts by Cicero or Augustus they have a surprising dual structure that is not evident in the corresponding English term. Two distinct senses are variously at work, one denoting the presentation from the past of something that in one way or another lends authority to action, the other the presentation of something owed or obliged that was otherwise being deferred to the future, underlining the action's efficacy. These two senses of repraesentare can be translated as recall or depict "vividly." (342)

The English "representation" from Latin "repraesentatio" is easily captured by the second "sense"; a "vivid depiction" as presented by Ker in the above illustration of "repraesentatio (342). A more singular idea of "repraesentatio" is produced in representation of the contemporary. The derivative, "representation", in likeness of (from Middle English), presents representation as an image of, an imitation, and at best mimetic. Representation, in the contemporary, is semantically captured as a vivid depiction, an idea. Character cannot resound in representation, neither can it in perception. It is in this sense that a more intimate exploration of character is required. In the sense of Uko's work, a depth-filled exploration is required for the character of Beatrice, that goes beyond representation. It is by moving away from Representation that the "moral" or the patriarchal norm is subverted.

Representation, as of appearance, is in the exhibition of the watch "in the sense of visual surveillance... in relation to the optical genre" (11). Charlotte Mandell in translation of Jean Luc Nancy's *Listening* constructs that "There is, at least potentially, more isomorphism between the visual and conceptual, even if only by virtue of the fact that the morph, the form, implied in the idea of isomorphism, is immediately thought or grasped on the visual plane. The sonorous on the other hand outweighs the form. The visual [of the form] persists until its disappearance." (12). The visual is thus less manifestly than the sonorous, which has more of a resounding presence. The sonorous is mobile, "vibrating from the-come-and-go between the source of the ear, through the open space, the presence of the presence rather than the outer presence", it has depth, it has base, it *is* (12). With such articulations, French philosopher Jean Luc Nancy brings us the importance of 'listening', being more immersed in what resounds - within and outside of ourselves. Consider:

“A subject feels. That is his character and his definition. This means that he hears (himself), feels (himself) or represents (himself), approaches (himself) or strays from (himself) and thus always feels himself feeling a self that escapes [s’echappe] or hides [se tranche] as long as it responds elsewhere as it does in itself, in a world and in the other” (12).

Mandel, with Nancy, articulates the presence of the presence of the subject. The subject can only be by feeling, which is by attention to the come-and-go between the source of the ear - his own vibrations; is by the experience of a condition. Therefore, when we listen, we are living *with*, we are taking phenomena - also with a dual semantic structure; of experience and of consciousness - in, from the world, and we live that condition inside of ourselves “between the open source of the ear” (12). When we listen, we are living *with*, with ourselves and with others, not *without* or outside.

Listening very interestingly connects to Walter Benjamin’s thoughts on translations - which present translation as a listening *with* and a talking *with*. For Benjamin, “translation is a mode” (152). Therefore, the task of the translator is “to set free in his own language, the pure language, spellbound in the foreign language, to liberate the language imprisoned in the work by revisiting it” (162). What Benjamin presents is a ‘moving’ of narrative, a production that is not disconnected from its past, but sheds pieces of it as it develops into itself, into its ‘new’; a narrative that is resoundingly present and so generous to its future. Nancy suggests the same of the subject. For Nancy, temporality is the dimension of the subject “insofar as it waits for itself and retains itself, insofar as it desires itself and forgets itself” (17). The subject manifests resoundingly in the “open space between the ears” and so as it is translated, as it translates, it manifests *with*. Benjamin and Walter connect at the *with* where listening and translating cannot happen, if without.

The articulations by Benjamin, Randall and Nancy provide room to negotiate the concept of representation that we are often so fond of in literary analysis. Especially in the narratives of African women. The critical work of narratives like *Purple Hibiscus* often centre around what these narratives represent, the kind of female characters they produce which would often serve as the indicators of how radical or how traditional they might be. Perhaps it might be time to consider less the performance of identity and more what characters are contributing in thought and ideas. Writers provide us (critics) with a lot, we should use the *more* they provide us with and locate the thinking and future orientations of the texts - surely narratives are not simply about the performance of identity, although this too is important. There are ideas in narrative that we must explore alongside

identity - our literary conversations cannot only centre around that, especially in regard to African literatures.

Perhaps literary criticism can stretch its imagination and become more about what is envisioned about the worlds becoming, bearing in mind what it is, by the characters that we are analysing. James Baldwin in *A Letter From A Region In My Mind* writes, “In the case of the girls. . . they began to manifest a curious and really rather terrifying single-mindedness. It is hard to say exactly how this was conveyed, something implacable in the set of lips, something far-seeing (seeing what?) in the eyes, some new and crossing determination in the walk, something peremptory in the voice” (1962). Baldwin is saying something so important about the nature of being and becoming of young Black girls. He is, in this letter, articulating the visions that young Black girls hold in their eyes. These are visions that change the world, so it would be imprudent if we got stuck on the simple fact that we are Black girls. We are Black girls who are imagining and seeing more, and critics, when they read about us should wonder at what more we are seeing and not how we are seen.

How we see the ‘other’, what they represent is not a complete knowing of that ‘other’. Representation, as it is in the optical genre”, is *with-out*. The subject, when represented, becomes the object, external and abstracted. It is not connected to itself and to the other, it has no *with*. Representation is in the abstract tradition of *of*. It is always *about* and so on the surface of, it does not have resonance. With these ideas, the usefulness of Representation, with its representative categories is questioned in the imagination of an ecologically thinking society. Can we think ecologically when we are thinking *of*, instead of thinking *with*? The same question is applied for the subaltern woman; can we hear her if we are speaking *of* her instead of *with* her⁵³.

Timothy Morton shares these ideas by exploring ecology as an intersectional undertaking in the ecological thought. Morton writes of ecology as follows:

“It isn’t just to do with the sciences of ecology. Ecological thinking is to do with art, philosophy, literature, Music, And culture. Ecological thinking has much to do with the humanities wing of modern universities as with the sciences, and it also has to do with factories, transportation, architecture, and economics. Ecology includes all the ways we

⁵³ But of course, conceptually, we are not supposed to hear her because hearing her will changes her subject positioning. The only way the subaltern can exist is outside of the center/ canon; on the margins. Once the subaltern is heard, there will be no subaltern and that changes everything. This is of course my ecological point, to disappear the subaltern positioning.

imagine how we live together. Ecology is profoundly about coexistence. Existence is always coexistence.” (4)

Morton’s ideation of ecology thematises thinking *with*. *With* is central to intersectionality, to co-existence, to collaboration. To evolve into an ecologically thinking society we must think *with* and not *of*. To think *with* is to radically dismantle hierarchy. Hierarchy is sustained by *of*. To speak of is to speak without the subject, it is to objectify the subject. To speak *of*, positions the subject outside of the conversation. To think ecologically, we must think *with*, not of.

Purple Hibiscus challenges its readers to think against the hierarchy of patriarchy. The novel’s deconstruction mechanism lies in its subversion of thinking *of* and its employment of thinking *with*. The narrative’s evolution from a hierarchical ordering, characterised by silence, suppression, indeterminacy and a cling to representation (of gender), i.e. the idea of the father as the head and ruler of life, to a self-determined existence where the subject speaks and speaks *with*, is itself, represents itself, retains itself, “desires itself and forgets itself”, remains present in itself, present in its world and moves *with* into a new temporality, as captured in the section *Nsukka*, is evidence of this (17). To think ecologically the subject carries itself and moves *with* itself as *with* others. Adichie’s narrative subtly, and in a wonderfully stylish way, captures this ecological orientation offered to us by Morton. Adichie’s protagonist, Kambili, although much of the initial parts of the narrative focus on what she represents as a child in an African home, takes charge of her own subjectivity as the narrative develops. When Kambili gets into contact with more enabling environments, her growth forces a comparative between homelife under patriarchal dominance enforced by her father and homelife in his absence. By this, the narrative reveals the possibilities of living in an ecological world in the absence of oppressive patriarchal and capitalist systems. Kambili, in this sense, reveals the possibilities of living as an ecological subject, in an ecological world.

Chapter 2: The production of the ethical subject and Dark Thoughts in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Gayatri Spivak in consideration of the ideas of Melanie Klein offers that it is by a violent shuttling, the go between of the world outside and the world inside, that the ethical subject is produced.

In this never-ending weaving, violence translates into conscience and vice versa. From birth to death this 'natural' machine, programming the mind perhaps as genetic instructions program the body (where does body stop and mind begin?), is partly metapsychological and therefore outside the grasp of the mind. Thus 'nature' passes and repasses into 'culture', in a work or shuttling site of violence (deprivation – evil – shocks the infant system-in-the-making more than satisfaction, some say *Paradiso* is the dullest of *The Divine Comedy*): the violent production of the precarious subject of reparation and responsibility (13).

When Spivak, suggests that the ethical subject is produced by a violent shuttling from outside to inside, what she offers is that the subject will have contemplated the outside with the inside, inside the subject. The subject contemplates the outside inside and establishes a code of meaning making wherewith they decide their action in the world.

What we learn from Ayn Rand is that this code with which we decide how to act is the conversation of ethics. Rand's objectivist ethics in the book *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1961), offers that "Ethics is an objective necessity of man's survival – not by the grace of the supernatural nor your neighbours nor your whims, but by the grace of reality and the nature of life" (1). This, of course does not in any way suggest that Rand's ethics do not care about the relation of species, because they do (as it is their fundament to think through survival and the nature of life, but this is not their present orientation). Rand's ethics discuss ethics as a matter of survival, a matter of code – not a matter of good and bad, however discursive. With that said, the ethical subject is who is enabled to decode the code of culture and inscribe by themselves and on themselves a kind of survival.

But the production of the ethical subject involves a deep knowledge of the cultural code to survive the code and impact of the code. This requires a deep contemplation of ones inculturation, as Morton offers with the installation of 'Dark Thoughts' in his 'ecological thought'. It is thus that one must ask deep dark questions to encode a renewed ecological sequence for the self.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* is known for its intersectional undertaking of big, world questions. The narrative has a quest to reconstruct a history forgotten – the history of the Nigerian civil war. With that, Adichie's story lends a deeply ecological question; *why were you silent when we died?* which is useful to think through ecological responsibility.

Morton suggests that with ecology, like with history, the only way out is in, deep in, and then through:

We shall now go further, down into the darkness. How deep? Is it deep? Will we know when we are near the bottom? The journey is disorienting, perhaps we aren't going down at all. Perhaps we are going in... The history of life forms is like a book. Many pages are lacking: we can infer them only from the few remaining ones... within those pages whole paragraphs are missing or fragmented... within existing sentences some words tend to miss a letter or two. And some letters might not be letters at all, just squiggles. Interpreting the book depends upon interpreting the blanks between the marks, letters, words, sentences, paragraphs and pages. Is there something in the blanks, or nothing? How can we tell? (61, 62)

To *think* the world, to *think* world histories involves going into the depths of history, getting lost and disoriented in the interpretation of our present day. Adichie provides one such narrative where the depths of memory are consulted to piece together a fractured existence. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is an effort to tell a history many have chosen to forget and which many more have been forced⁵⁴ to forget. Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* tries and succeeds at piecing together the history of the Nigerian Civil war from the Biafran perspective, an attempt to validate the histories of the Biafran people that Biafran's were forced to forget by the Nigerian government at the dawn of Nigeria's reconciliation.

Chikwendu PascalKizito Anyanwu writes of Adichie, about her efforts with *Half of a Yellow Sun*, as one emerging as “one of those great reminders in a Nigeria where collective amnesia has become a major malaise” (149). The narrative is a telling of the history of the Nigeria- Biafra civil war from the perspective of Biafra. The telling determinately pierces through forgetting, traveling to and through the depths of history to relay a memory of a people who were for long denied the freedom to exist.

⁵⁴ The Nigerian Federal government ordered civilians returning from Biafra to not speak of Biafra and the history of the civil war as it affected Biafra. See Yakubu Gowon's “*The Dawn of National Reconciliation*” *Speech 1976*

The telling of this history serves as what Spivak in *Translation as Culture* would write as a repayment of a “mother debt”; a debt impossible to repay, but can be returned in the form of accountability (16). Spivak writes:

I grasp my responsibility to take from my mother-tongue and give to the ‘target’-language through the ethical concept- metaphor of *matririn* (mother-debt) – a debt *to* the mother as well as a debt (that) the (place of the) mother *is*. For the father debt I can give you chapter and verse. I cannot provide a citation for *matririn*. The aphorism: *matririn* is not to be repaid, or cannot be repaid, was part of my childhood everyday, as it is of my intellectual life now. The mother-debt is the gift of birth, as it is imaged to be, but also the accountable task of childrearing (literally *manush kora*=making human, in my mother tongue). One translates this gift-into-accountability as one attempts to repay what cannot be repaid, and should not be thought of as repayable.

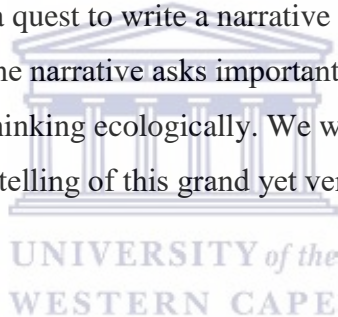
This, in the context of this paper, is not particular to a biological notion of mother, but a notion of home and life giver in whatever manner that is apparent for the reader. In the case of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Biafra is allegory for mother, in the sense it is the source that gifted identity. The mother debts, in the context of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, is the determination to validate the history of a place (Biafra) which for long served as life giver to many Biafrans. For Adichie, as grand-daughter to Biafra, the need to tell is a need to assert and write into history the place and identity Biafrans were forced to deny for generations in post-war Nigeria. This is an attempt to give life to the story of Biafrans not spoken of in the Nigeria that many feel forced to live in⁵⁵, post war.

Spivak importantly notes further, that a mother debt is impossible to repay. In this sense, the narrative can only strive at an attempt to repay the debt and it is by this knowledge that the author has that makes the text spectacular in its navigation of this impossibility. Even as the mother debt cannot be repaid in full by an exact replica of that history in the case of the novel, its author spends the characters in the task of contemplating, remembering, retelling, and translating to a story of Biafra. By this story, Biafra makes a new magnanimous offering to the world and this emerged in the form of holding the world accountable. The telling of this narrative, the telling of this history makes the world confront itself and this is an incredible contribution to world history.

⁵⁵ See Soyinka, *War in Nigeria: victory remains elusive*

In the text, Adichie provides the reader with three focalising⁵⁶ characters that aid in the telling of this narrative. Morton tells us that “the ecological thought is concerned with personhood” it is a deeply personal and intimate endeavour (76). Because history is so grand and has affected Nigerians at various degrees of life, the narrative does well by its focus on character as the site of telling. By this, the narrative is also able to articulate the effects that the Nigerian civil war had on Nigerians/Biafrans at all levels of life. Ugwu, a houseboy from the village who works for a University professor and ends up a historian of the war, and is characterised as the teller of the narrative. This was a very specific political choice by the author who wanted to put the question, “who should be the one to write your [African] story?” to the reader, as she anchors the reader through the history of the war (*The right to tell your story*, the Louisiana channel).

Ugwu’s telling is aided by the experiences and memories of Olanna, a university educated woman from the upper class of Igbo society. Olanna is a deeply inward and melancholic character who is well suited for the task of memory which, as Morton writes of history, is an inward experience full of uncertainty and a need to be affirmed. Memory is well guided by questions which the character, Richard, a white European male on a quest to write a narrative about Africa, helps deepen in his “need to know”. Through Richard, the narrative asks important questions on human and space categories which are important for thinking ecologically. We will look at each character and their individual contribution to Adichie’s telling of this grand yet very detailed narrative.



2.1: Ugwu

As we have come to learn in articulations of *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), ‘telling’ is an important part of the ecological thought, for it is by ‘telling’ that there is opportunity to subvert systems which are fundamentally anti-ecological. ‘Telling’ has for generations been instrumental for ecological consciousness. In the case of African literature especially, ‘telling’ bears the burden of social awareness more than it does entertainment. This argument was expressively brought forward by Ogaga Okuyade. Moreover, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back*, further articulate that the concern of new African writing with regional locale is move towards privileging home as the centre in post-colonial writing. This insistence on locality, which is a paramount and intimate part of her writing, is of course to counter ‘traditional’ colonial misrepresentation of local environments (2). ‘Telling’ is important and widely affirmed in third generation African writing, as also in the writings of other members of the global south, in response to colonial misrepresentation

⁵⁶ See Akpome, *Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Half of a Yellow Sun*

of people and locale in the global south. This has since extended to ‘telling’ being used as a tool to hold accountable, even in domestic conflicts i.e. Wangarai Maathai’s *Unbowed* wherein she highlights concern for the environment by the centralisation of the greenbelt movement⁵⁷ in the telling of her life. This kind of ‘telling’, by Maathai, garnered enough support to work against the Moi regime’s development plan⁵⁸. That ‘telling’ would be instrumental in redirecting Kenya’s environmental and indigenous policies

In Adichie’s narrative, the ‘telling’ concerned with political and social issue is tasked to her very complex, simple-speaking and honest character, Ugwu. Ugwu - a lead focaliser - is responsible for ‘telling’ the Biafran narrative. Ugwu is a houseboy who will also become a historian and the author of the included text, *The World was silent when we died*. It is this text that compels the burning world question, *why were you silent when we died?* of the narrative.

Ugwu absorbs essential information from his master, Odenigbo’s, teachings. These lessons would form his foundational arguments which also question why the *world was silent when we died?* Adichie’s characterisation of Ugwu is very similar to Romesh Gunesequera’s characterisation of Triton in *Reef* (1994). Triton is the houseboy-chef-restuaranteer-in-training for Mister Salgado. By Triton’s development, which the reader is also drawn into, the readers of the text are able to track the social upheavals of Sri Lanka. It is by what Triton learns and how he engages with these knowledges from his Mister Salgado, Miss Nili and their friends, at every point, that ideas and historical facts about Sri Lanka, and about communism and the coral reef, are presented to the reader. In *Reef*, as in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the houseboy is tasked with telling the Grand narrative. The difference between the ‘telling’ in *Reef* and the ‘telling’ in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is that the houseboy character in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is provided two methods of telling; a detailed and intricate telling that illuminates the grand narrative (as also in *Reef*), and the ‘telling’ of a grand historical narrative with the historical text that he writes.

“There are two answers to the things they will teach you about our land: the real answer and the answer you give to the school to pass. You must read books and learn both answers. I will give you books, excellent books”. Master stopped to serve his tea. “They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered river Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in the Niger long before Mungo Park’s grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it is Mungo Park.’

⁵⁷ See Wangari Maathai *Unbowed*.

⁵⁸ See Rob Nixon *Slow Violence and the environmentalism of the poor*

Yes sah. Ugwu wished that this person called Mungo Park had not offended Master so much (11).

Odenigbo sets off Ugwu's thinking about world questions as Ugwu arrives in his home, and this accelerates Ugwu's ideas and interactions with world phenomena, particularly as they relate to civil war. As the narrative progresses and Ugwu evolves in the presence of Odenigbo and Olana, he starts to think to his own questions about the world, about the war, about Biafra and their return to Nigeria. And as Ugwu puts his thoughts to words in the writing of his text, *the world was silent when we died*, Ugwu contemplates the depths of history; the causes of the war and separation of people. This kind of contemplation is particularly what Morton writes of in his ecological thought. It is by such deep ideation that we might contemplate our position and role in how our world cultures evolve.

The British preferred the North. The heat there was pleasantly dry. The Hausa Fulani were narrow featured and therefore superior to the negroid Southerners, Muslim, and therefore as civilised as one could get for natives, feudal and therefore perfect for indirect rule. Equable emirs collected taxes for the British, and the British in return, kept the Christian missionaries away.

The humid South, on the other hand, was full of mosquitoes and animists and disparate tribes. The Yoruba were the largest in the South east, the Igbo lived in small republican communities. They were non-docile and worryingly ambitious. Since they did not have the good sense to have kings, the British created 'warrant Chiefs'. Because indirect rule cost the Crown less, missionaries were allowed in to tame the pagans, and the education they brought flourished. In 1914, the governor-general joined the North and the South, and his wife picked a name. Nigeria was born. (115)

Ugwu's narratives question, *why were you silent when we died?* speaks to more than the deaths or the human deaths during the Nigerian Civil war. With every chapter Ugwu writes on the matter, his reflections, as closer to the Nigeria - Biafra conflict as they move, expand on other world traumas and questions i.e. World War Two (the German woman who fled Hamburg⁵⁹), The Rwandan Genocide⁶⁰, Europe's division of Africa in 1884 and the palm oil trade that led to ethnic clashes in West Africa⁶¹. As Ugwu writes, the question seemingly opens up to more atrocities and his inquiry

⁵⁹ See, *The Guardian, If this is woman: Inside Ravensbrück, Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women* by Sarah Helm

⁶⁰ See, Chigbo Arthur Anyaduba, *Writing Postcolonial African Genocide: The Holocaust and Fictional Representations of Genocide in Nigeria and Rwanda*

⁶¹ See, Klieman, *The oil curse*

into the *silence* of the World in Biafra's time of strife, become more with the world. Ugwu's interrogation morphs into holding consultation with the world about global complacency on the violence by colonial Capitalist structures. His question, *why were you silent when we died?* is thus not just specific to the deaths of Biafrans, but to the deaths of many in the world at the hands of these colonial capital structures. Ugwu, by this question holds the world accountable to the deaths of all in the world, sentient and non-sentient. Ugwu's question really is; *why were we silent when we died?*

Crutzen's *appropriation*, as well as Morton's ideas on accountability, resurface. Ugwu's connection of world traumas and tragedies to colonial vapid structural organisation are exactly what these theorists are speaking to. Both Crutzen and Morton have written about anthropocentrism and its impact on what Morton calls hyper-objects, like global warming. Crutzen has provided a concise conceptualisation of this impact by anthropocentrism, going all the way back to the later part of the 18th century - unsurprisingly the same period when Europeans thought it within their right to divide continents among themselves. Crutzen and Morton write that we must act appropriately for our ecology. By this we will become cognisant of our humanity and know that it means just the same as other ways of being. We must become aware of other consciousnesses. We must become aware of our own consciousness and know the limits and boundaries of our humanity. *Half of a Yellow Sun's* exploration of consciousness is very well demonstrated by its lead focaliser, Ugwu. Ugwu is keenly observant and, very much like the lead protagonist of *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili, is very conscientious.

Ugwu, because he is Odenigbo's domestic helper, thinks about what everyone needs and can have at particular points. Ugwu is tasked with many responsibilities and it is because he is tasked with responsibility and awareness that makes him appropriate⁶² for the task of 'telling'. Ugwu being a houseboy is what really drives the narrative's ecological questions and concerns. Other than having to be responsible, which is inherent part of his occupation as a houseboy, Ugwu is the only character with a distanced intimacy that allows him insight and objective-like⁶³ 'telling'. This is an important ecological demonstration in the narrative because it reveals a knowing that is also unknowing. Ugwu knows the characters intimately enough, but not too intimately that gives the sense of an omnipresent or omnipotent account. It is as Morton writes of a relationship with the

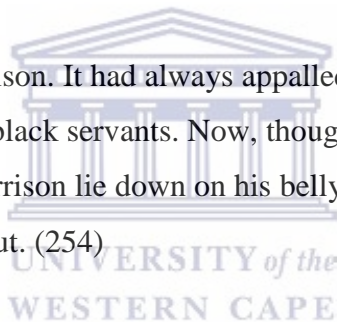
⁶² The language of Crutzen, please consider Paul Crutzen *Geology of mankind*. And Sara Guyer *Anthromorphism, anthropocene from Time, on the Critical Edge*, 2015

⁶³ I am hesitant to use words like 'objective', I fear they might be too patriarchal in tradition. They are too sure of themselves and in the ecological thought one ought to make room for uncertainties.

strange stranger in ecology, we will constantly be in a relationship of getting to know, but we can never know all. The claim that we do know all of another species is anti-ecological. It smells like Capitalistic misogynistic patriarchy which, I repeat, is anti-ecological.

There is a long tradition of ‘telling’, in literature and in film, of the house-help. In Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) too, there is the house-help, Nelly Dean, who Bronte tasks with the ‘telling’ of the relationships between the two households, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. The tradition of ‘telling’ by the helper has over the years created an insecurity around the helper in many respects. For example, in Andy and Susan Borowitz’ sitcom the *Fresh prince of Belair* (1990) this insecurity was comically represented in an episode where the family is threatened by the idea of the Butler writing a memoir, concerned about how they might be represented in the book. It is in this same line of frantic insecurity where we find characters like Olanna’s mother and Richard of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, reflecting an ambivalence about the helper; a push and pull that struggles between an inclusion and an exclusion of the helper in their lives. Consider this extracted extract from Richard’s focalisation:

Richard wanted to cane Harrison. It had always appalled him, the thought that some colonial Englishmen flogged elderly black servants. Now, though, he felt like doing just as they had done. He longed to make Harrison lie down on his belly and flog, flog, flog him until he learned to keep his mouth shut. (254)



Richard wants to punish Harrison for knowing and for speaking what he knows. His reflection of the methods of colonial Englishmen to punish their Black servants and his want to employ this method himself, on this matter, reveals a consciousness of a long tradition on the boundaries of what the Black servant ought to know (and not know) and to speak (and not speak). With Ugwu, a difference in the relationship between masters and servants is revealed. Ugwu’s master, Odenigbo, is not violent to Ugwu, in the way that it is commonly articulated of the servant master relationship in West African literatures and cinema. When Ugwu burns Odenigbo’s socks by ironing, Odenigbo, in his rage calls Ugwu an “ignoramus” a word that reflects only that Ugwu is unknowing (13). Odenigbo’s language is not aimed to dehumanise Ugwu. Moreover, Odenigbo’s acceptance of Ugwu’s opinion, especially in regard to his relationship with Olanna further reflects a deviance in the master servant relationship commonly found in the West African text and other forms of narrative production. For example, in “Ugwu told me what happened. I am so sorry my mother acted that way” It is revealed that Ugwu exists outside of the relationship by only a curtain of separation (100). This is also quite literally exemplified by their sleeping arrangements in their

room in Umuahia (326). Ugwu is outside of the relationship, but also in it. If not invited into the intimacy as revealed in “She shook her head. Ugwu watched the sun fall. Darkness came swiftly, brutally; there was no gradual change from light to dark. ‘what am I going to do? Olanna asked. What am I going to do? ‘Master will come back, mah” where Olanna allows Ugwu into her despair, Ugwu steals moments to become intimate with Olanna and Odenigbo as revealed in, “later, after dinner, he tiptoed to Master’s bedroom and rested his ear on the door. She was moaning loudly, sounds that seemed so unlike her, so uncontrolled and straining and throaty” and similarly in “Ugwu did not shut the kitchen door, so that he could stand by it and listen” (25, 240, 301).

There is very little that Ugwu is not allowed to know and to speak of. It is in this way that he can tell Odenigbo that Odenigbo’s mother is using witchcraft against Olanna and also tell Olanna that Odenigbo’s mother is a witch. Even though Ugwu is their houseboy, his own opinions, ideas and choices are heard and accepted. With Ugwu, the novel begins to combat stereotypes in interesting ways. By Ugwu, social constructs of *being* or for that matter, the idea of representation gets subverted. The narrative by this kind of subversion opens to the exploration of strangeness, queerness⁶⁴, unfamiliarity, and the uncanny.

Ugwu’s telling anchors the narrative of the war, and as it does this, it presents the queer aesthetic of ecology. Ugwu’s character dissents from the norm of representation of the ‘helper’ character in Western and West African literature. Ugwu, in the text, is not only a helper, he is “extraordinarily” articulated as a houseboy, a soldier and historian in the narrative. Ugwu moves across boundaries of representation as he does through space, and in each new space, at a period, he becomes differentiated, more-uncanny, to himself. For example, when he becomes a soldier and rapes a young woman, Ugwu, to himself, becomes unlike he thought he could ever be. He sickens himself after raping the girl and the memory of “those” soldiers raping girls at the Barracks that sickened him, lingers on his breath (365, 399). Ugwu, by raping the girl, became what he never thought he would be; violent and strange to himself. He becomes the monster that he always thought existed over yonder. Ugwu is what the ecological thought teaches - the ecological thought gets dark too - we are the strangers that we think exist out there and the more we learn about ourselves, the more we will come to know this.

Ugwu’s characterisation challenges many norms about class within the narrative. More than this, Ugwu’s characterisation also challenges normative notions on heroism of protagonists in the Novel.

⁶⁴ ‘queerness’ is here used, not in the way of gender and sexuality as offered by Munoz in *Cruising Utopia: The then and there of Queer futurity*, it is used as a simple signifier of difference or differentiating.

Ugwu's rape is a villainous act, not commonly expected of the hero as protagonist and as hero of war, in the novel. This construction of Ugwu, asks important ecological questions and, what is especially special about this characterisation, probes into ideations of 'single stories'⁶⁵. This characterisation does not limit identification of hero and villain to certain categories, it constructs heroism and villainism to context. This also makes being a hero or a villain an ordinary every day experience that can be assumed by anyone. In the same way that being a hero is not drawn as a special endeavour for certain people of a certain class, race, or gender group, so is ecology or ecological responsibility mapped too, in the narrative and in the works of Morton.

Fanon, in his chapter, *Criminal impulses found in North Africans*, from his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) offers that "in reality, the soldier who is engaged in armed combat in a national war deliberately measures from day to day the sum of all degradation inflicted upon many by the colonial oppression. The man of action has sometimes the exhausting impression that he must restore the whole of his people, that he must bring every one of them up out of the pit and out of the shadows" (237). Ugwu impresses this same virtue as a military soldier, a helper and a writer. His characterisation orients around responsibility; responsibility to others and for others. By his writing and military contributions Ugwu expresses a national responsibility to his people. It is by this that he takes special care to listen to Olanna's experiences in the following passage.

For the prologue, he recounts the story of the woman with the calabash. She sat on the floor of a train squashed between crying people, shouting people, praying people. She was silent, caressing the covered calabash on her lap in a gentle rhythm until they crossed the river Niger, and then she lifted the lid and asked Olanna and others close by to look inside. Olanna tells him this story and he notes the details. She tells him how the bloodstains on the woman's wrap blended into the fabric to form a rusty mauve. She describes the carved designs on the woman's calabash, slanting lines criss-crossing each other, and she describes the child's head inside: scruffy plaits across the dark-brown face, eyes completely white, eerily open, a mouth in a small surprised O.

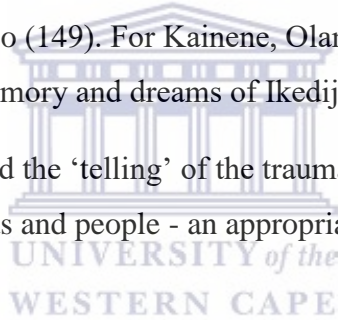
After he writes this, he mentions the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases. The Rwandan women who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies. But he is careful not to draw parallels. For the book cover, though, he draws a map of Nigeria and traces in the Y shape of the rivers Niger and Venue in Bright

⁶⁵ Single stories or 'The dangers of a single story' is ideated by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, as a warning against the assumption that people are one way or a particular way because of their race, gender or country. See, Adichie *The dangers of a single story*

red. He uses the same shade of red to circle the boundaries where, in the south east, Biafra existed for three years. (82)

The extracted passage, from Book One of Ugwu's narrative, is a 'telling' Olanna's experience of the Igbo evacuation from Kano. This narrative is of course revealed to the reader once again in the passages of Olanna's focalization (149). Genette asserts that this quality to repeat, what he calls the iterative, is indicative of important ideas that the narrative wishes to express. In the foreword of Genette's text, Jonathan Culler suggest that Genette's iterative "leads to the discovery of topics which have not been much discussed, but which prove, on investigation to be extremely important" (11). The story of the head in the Calabash is repeated three times in the narrative. It is first met in Ugwu's book, it is then again explored by Olanna herself and then again by Olanna's twin sister Kaninene. At each representation it takes a different shape, but on all accounts, it connects experiences. In Ugwu's text, the narrator reveals that Ugwu is careful to not draw any parallels between Olanna's experience and the experiences of other women in wars, which then of course draws parallels and does connect the experiences (82). In Olanna's narration, the woman with the calabash, by showing the severed head to the passengers, connects the train passengers with the trauma of the head in the calabash too (149). For Kainene, Olanna's trauma of the head in the calabash is connected to her own memory and dreams of Ikedije's severed head.

The narrated trauma's gather around the 'telling' of the trauma of the head in the calabash. Ugwu by his 'telling' connects stories, ideas and people - an appropriate ecological orientation.



2.2: Olanna

There would be no 'telling' of history, if there were no memory of it. Memory is essential for knowing pasts, for walking through pasts to make sense⁶⁶ of the present. But like the record of history, as a record of history, memory often proves fragmented, uncertain, deeply frustrating and dependent on interpretation to come together. Olanna appropriately demonstrates the woes of memory; the troubles of remembering and forgetting, and the melancholia of interpretation. Olanna is perhaps Adichie's only female character who threatens anti-ecological appropriateness, only because she does not recover. Olanna, unlike Beatrice, Kambili or even Ifemelu⁶⁷, remains

⁶⁶ Sense is in many ways very closely associated with logic and rational, especially in the language of ecology, it appears navigational. But I remind that we are still in the era hermeneutics, of sense making and as Morton has provided, we can't ignore the anti-ecological words, we must work our way through them. At the same time, before we are too hasty, sense is in the space of consciousness which is what the Ecological thought works at opening up.

⁶⁷ Ifemelu is the lead protagonist of Adichie's *Americanah*. See *Americanah* 2010

burdened by memory. Be that as it may, Olanna is a necessary piece of the ecological puzzle because it is by her memory and her doubts and insecurity that Ugwu's telling is pieced together. The narrative that Adichie tells is spooked by doubt, insecurity and fragmented memories. This means that it is haunted by questions and thus, it is only by the character of Olanna that Ugwu's 'telling' can become.

Dodgson-Katiyo in *Fragile Negotiations* (2017) asserts that there is a "necessary narrative of trauma mourning and melancholia that circulates around Olanna" (117). I agree. I contend that it is in this way that the narrative's Ecological message is projected. Morton has written of the depths of ecology, of dark ecology. The depths of ecology is where we meet the darkness; a space of deep contemplation that reduces the certainty of structural thinking that has hierarchically ordered the world into its doom. Consider the following passage from the texts which illuminates the workings of uncertainty and contemplation:

She watched him get up and leave. He banged the door. They had never had a quarrel; he had never been impatient with dissent from her as he was with others. Or it might simply be that he humoured her and did not think much of her opinions in the first place...

'Give me the number quick, I have other things to do,' the lazy nasal voice said. Olanna was used to unprofessional and inept operators, but this was the rudest she had experienced. 'Haba, I will cut this line if you keep wasting my time,' the operator said. Olanna sighed and slowly recited Kainene's number...

'Why don't we talk anymore, Kainene?'

'What a question.' Kainene sounded amused and Olanna imagined that mocking smile pulling up one side of her mouth.

'I just want to know why we don't talk anymore,' Olanna said. Kainene did not respond. A static whining came over the phone. They were silent for so long that Olanna felt she had to apologise. 'I shouldn't keep you,' she said.

'are you coming to Daddy's dinner party next week? Kainene asked.

'No'

'I should have guessed. Too opulent for your abstemious revolutionary and yourself, I take it?'

'I shouldn't keep you,' Olanna repeated and placed the phone down. She picked the phone up again and was about to give the operator her mother's phone number before she dropped it back. She wished there was somebody she could lean against; then she wished

she was different. The sort of person who did not need to lean on others, like Kainene.
(102-103)

Morton predicts that knowing more (or wanting to know more) “results in more uncertainty” (59). Olanna’s uncertainty starts off as questioning. At first, Olanna does not assume to know what others feel and think, she instead wonders until she starts to question overtly. In the extract, Olanna asks her twin sister Kainene, “why do we not talk anymore” (102). Although Olanna might have her own understanding of why there is a fracture in their relationship, she is aware that Kainene might too have her own ideas about this fracture. Her question opens a thought pattern for Kainene as well, who responds “What a question”, illustrating thought provocation (102). The question opened up ideas, and speculations, both good and bad, about the relationship. The question immediately opened up possibilities of re-forming their relationship for Kainene who attempts to lengthen the conversation by asking a question that she herself remarks that she already knew the answer to. For Olanna, the question opened up a sea of speculations about herself and about Kainene. Olanna speculates that Kainene does not need to lean on others the way that she needs to. This was a reproach of herself. It is revealed herein that Olanna wished to be unlike herself, to be more like Kainene, an attempt to move away from a self she is not comfortable being. This is all caused by Olanna’s uncertainty and unwillingness to stand by her question and explore it deeper than she has done. Olanna’s retreat from her question is what makes uncertainty difficult, the only way for Olanna to recover from these undesired feelings of herself is to make her way through the question by delving into it. As Morton offers, *the only way out is in*⁶⁸.

There are, however, certain situations whereby we must patch uncertainty with speculation in order to survive, in order to lay to rest. Speculation is as ecological as uncertainty is. Speculation is theorisation, hypothesis, it rings with as many questions as uncertainty does. At the Igbo evacuation/elimination in Kano, Olanna witnesses the deaths of her family members, Auntie Ifeka, Uncle Mbaezi, but not Arize. However, to create a record of Arize’s death, Olanna, throughout the narrative is compelled to use her imagination to fill in the gaps where memory has failed her to design a trauma for Arize. This is revealed in “she caressed his neck, buried her fingers in his dense hair, and when he slid into her, she thought about Arize’s pregnant belly, how easily it must’ve broken skin stretched that taut” and “can you imagine what must have happened to Arize? They rape pregnant women before they cut them up” where Olanna and others fill in the gaps of Arize’s possible death with popular rhetoric of the traumas dealt to South Eastern pregnant women

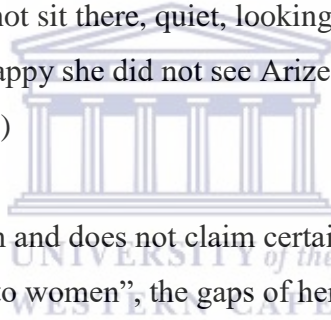
⁶⁸ See, Morton, *The Ecological Thought*.

(161,193). Olanna of course realises the ineptness of this as an account of what happened to Arize. Consider:

He would say others have come back and we have kept our eyes on the road for our son Mbaezi and our daughter and wife Ifeka and our Daughter Arize as well as our son inlaws from Ogidi. We have waited and waited and we have not yet seen them. Many months have passed and our eyes ache from being too focused on the road. We have asked you to come today and tell us what you know. Umannachi is asking about all her children who did not return from the North. You were there, our daughter. What you tell us, we will tell Umannachi.

...

She wanted mama Dozie to hit her and slap her if it would make Mama Dozie feel better, if it would turn everything she had just told the members of her extended family gathered in this room into a lie. She wished that Odinchenzo and Ekene would shout at her too, and question her for being alive, instead of dead like their sister and parents and brother in law. She wished that they would not sit there, quiet, looking down as men in mourning often did and later tell her they were happy she did not see Arize's body: everyone knew what those monsters did to women. (193)



Olanna is uncertain of Arize's death and does not claim certainty. However, because of what is known of what "those monsters did to women", the gaps of her memory are filled out by narratives of others (193). These narratives help Olanna speculate an ending for Arize, which creates an opening for many other questions and narratives to flood through. Adichie has written about this technique in her narrative in her *Q&A Stories of Africa feature* (2007). Adichie, in this interview, asserts that what she hoped to create with *Half of a Yellow Sun* was to construct a narrative of emotional truth and by that she would have to write a narrative with a "quality different from honesty and more resilient than fact, a quality that exists not in the kind of fiction that explains, but in the kind of fiction that shows" (9). By this, Adichie suggests a dedication to experience to make up where facts are lacking. So, with the death?⁶⁹ of Arize what is counted on are the experiences of others; what everyone knew about "what those monsters did to pregnant women" to create an end for Arize, to lay her to rest (193). Olanna's memories are filled out by "more" experiences i.e. the experiences of other women. This, in as much as it brings one narrative together, tells of more narratives of more women and more families who were dealt with this trauma. We are with this

⁶⁹ In the narrative, Arize's death is not confirmed, there is question to it and my writing hopes to reflect that.

confronted with questions like; *how many more women were there? Why were they killed in this way? Were all of them killed? Where have the others gone? How many families have lost? How many families are looking? What is the scale of this trauma? How far does it reach? How connected are they to each other? How connected are they to me?*

As Morton suggests, the more questions there are, the stranger things become, and the stranger things become, the more intimate they become.

Morton states that “Infinity implies intimacy” i.e. the more *strange strangeness* and strangers we realise exist next to us, the more intimate we become with them (78). This is true especially in the case of Biafra and Nigeria. In this conflict, the trouble was not “over yonder”. The monsters were the ‘us’. The monsters were ‘our’ brothers and sisters that ‘we’ once shared homes and beds with. The narrative also demonstrates just how easily brothers, sisters and lovers become strangers by construct under structure. This is revealed in Olanna’s relationship with Mohammad for whom Olanna’s feelings radically change because of the division that their ethnic identities put between them during the civil war. Mohammad was Hausa and Olanna Igbo, and due to the war that placed them on opposite sides, Olanna built a wall between the two of them, even though Mohammad reaches out to her (376).

Olanna’s experience of the war brought many questions and uncertainties of selfhood to the fore. Morton predicts that the ecological thought creates these uncertainties not just of self, but of others too. The ecological thought blurs the distance between ‘things’.

2.3: Richard

Richard tells Ugwu that “the war is not [his] story to tell”, and really, it is not. By this, the author makes very clear the boundaries of identification and of telling that this thesis wishes to unlock in a discussion of post-colonial ecologies. Richard is a white European male, an identity positioning that the reader is thoroughly reminded of in the progression of the narrative. Richard’s identification is a necessary polemic because in the motioning of the question *why were you silent when we died?* the text engages with the subject positioning of “we” and of “you” and the allowances that come with this differentiation. By Richard, the text expresses whose ‘tellings’ are more emergent and more credibly assumed, and in that expresses the texts theoretical contributions to post-colonial engagements on ecology which I will engage with at the endings of this paper.

Richard is a white male journalist. By Richard's characterisation the narrative makes a brilliant point on the consumption of African culture and of Africans⁷⁰ by Europeans. The mere fact that Richard is a journalist and hopes to write back home about hidden African treasures and customs is testament to this.

Richard didn't mind standing by and waiting until she was ready to leave, didn't mind that none of her friends made an effort to draw him in, didn't even mind when a past faced drunk woman referred to him as Susan's pretty boy. But he minded the all expatriate parties where Susan would nudge him to 'join the men' while she went over to the circle to compare notes on living in Nigeria. He felt awkward with the men. They were mostly English, ex-colonial administrators and business people from John Holt and Kingsway and GB Ollivant and Shell-BP and United Africa company. They were reddened from the Sun and alcohol. They chuckled about hoe Tribal Nigerian politics was, and perhaps these chaps were not quite ready to rule themselves after all. They discussed cricket, plantations they owned or plan to own, the perfect weather in Jos, business opportunities in Kaduna. When Richard mentioned his interest in Igbo-Ukwu art, they said it didn't have much of a market yet. So he did not bother to explain that he wasn't totally interested in the money, it was the aesthetics that drew him. And when he said he had just arrived in Lagos and wanted to write a book about Nigeria, they gave him brief smiles and advice: ...
...Richard did, not only because of the prospect of writing in a university, but also because he would be in the southeast, in the land go Igbo-Ukwu art, the land of the magnificent roped pot. That after all, was why he had come to Nigeria. (53-54)

The consumption and capitalisation of the culture and history of Nigeria by Europe is very explicitly revealed in the extracted passage above. The male expatriates in Richard's company speak of land and property acquisition, as well as setting up businesses in Nigeria. Richard, not completely on the other hand, wants to know the culture of the Igbo and write about Nigeria and its people. The methods of acquisition are different, but in principle it is the same kind of imperialism. Richard, in the surreptitious manner that writing allows, is enabled a slower, gradual, beneath-the-surface kind of imperialism. This, in the way that Rob Nixon has written of the slow violence on

⁷⁰ By the consumption of Africans I do not mean in cannibalistic terms, but by identification - an emersion of the 'other' into the self - a positioning that merges Freud's object Cathexis with Fanon's treatise of the white mans desire to humanize itself, which I argue is at great lengths an expression to become the Black human man.

Kenya's environmentalism⁷¹, reveals a more dangerous form of imperialism; a less emergent danger with a longevity of historicism that will effectively determine the structure of Nigeria's cultural development for generations. It is in this way that the narrative ensures that the writing of this sensitive history is not given to Richard. Richard opens theoretical engagements on discourse, the nature of discourse, and the shaping of culture by discourse, in the text. I am by this reminded of Fanon's engagements of the theorisation of the Algerian man as inherently violent and criminal by white authors. Fanon's engagements in the chapter Colonial war and Mental Disorders, in his final treatise⁷², *The wretched of the earth*, finds the root of this theorisation of the Algerian man thus;

The Algerian's criminality, his impulsivity and the violence of his murders are therefore not the consequence of the organisation of his nervous system nor of a particular trait in his character, but the direct product of the colonial situation (250).

Fanon's historical trace of this theorisation of the Algerian man elaborates a history of colonial authors *not* considering the role of revolutions and colonial wars on the violence and criminality by and of Algerian men. Fanon indicates that missing this important detail is what has determined the structure of the Algerian man in World history;

It was affirmed that the Algerian was born a criminal. A theory was elaborated and scientific proofs were found to support it. This theory was taught in the Universities for over twenty years. Algerian medical students received this education and imperceptibly, after accommodating themselves to colonialism, the elite came also to accommodate themselves to the inherent stigma of the Algerian people: they were born slackers, born liars, born robbers and born criminals (239).

Accommodating oneself to an inherently violent system is what will cause and perpetuate such a violent ideation, as noted above of Algerians, of the self. It becomes difficult to question the system if one is designed and oppressed by it - Europeans too are designed by this system; to foster it. The structure of the colonising system has designed the colonised man "lazy" and "violent". As Fanon contends, the demoralisation of the colonised body is the thriving tool of imperialism.

⁷¹ Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the environmentalism of the poor* speaks about a graduating violence against Kenya's natural environments. Nixon dictates that by the intersections of politics and culture, many small 'violences' are committed against the environment, unseen to us at present, but will eventually reveal themselves as an effect of a big explosion.

⁷² I write 'treatise' to follow on Ziauddin Sardar construction of Fanon's *Black Skin White masks*. I contend, along with Sardar, that the ordering of Fanon's ideas are not simply befitting to be characterized as psychoanalytical case studies, a work of sociology or simply a work of literature. Fanon's writings are generous to all these genre's, making for systematic and systematically organised pieces of work that are of the system, but also outside of it. They are specific with their engagement with the black body within the system. Thus, a treatise. See Sardar, *Black Skin White Masks*.

Accommodating to this system, as the colonised and the colonising being, furthers its imperial ideological agenda. Thus, it is the principle of the colonised (and colonizing) body to dissent from it. Richard does not dissent from this system. It feeds and protects him. Therefore, despite his expressions to be of Biafra or his expression to want to be Biafran, he is not, and so, he will not be able to articulate a Biafran experience. Richard by his white European maleness was born on the side of a system responsible for this conflict. Richard will forever be on the outside of the Biafran experience.

Madu's irreverence, calling his excellency Ojukwu, always bothered Richard but he said nothing because he did not want to see Madu's amused smirk, the same smirk Made had when he had told Kainene, 'We are running our cars with a mix of kerosene and palm oil' or "We've perfected our the flying ogbunigwe or 'We've made an armoured car from scrap'. His we was edged with exclusion. The deliberate emphasis, the deepened voice, meant that Richard was not part of we, a visitor could not take liberties of the homeowners. 'Don't be so dramatic. I think they want experienced insiders to do stories that are about more than just the number of Biafran dead (304).

The narrative is explicit in pointing at the complexities of the insider outsider role of Richard in the telling of this story. Richard, although he struggles with this truth is not Biafran, neither is he Nigerian. His identity formation, the construction of a possibility of his belonging to Biafra is enabled by Kainene. Richard, by Kainene is allowed into the circle. The 'we' that Kainene includes him into is as Richard has outlined, "by Kainene" (304). Through Kainene, there is possibility of Richard becoming Biafran - an allowance provided by love. By Richard, the text tries to complicate the boundaries of identity. In the relationship between Richard and Kainene, their one-ness, their merging, their movement into 'we' is by the love relationship they have with one another. However, we must be careful to note that although the love allows this oneness, it is only on account of Kainene. Throughout the narrative there is no negotiation of Kainene moving into a oneness with Richard, there is no account of how Richard desires for Kainene to become a part of him, to share his culture and his beliefs. Richard wants to be Biafran, on the virtue of Kainene being Biafran, but we must also note that Richard had an interest in consuming Kainene's culture before they even met.

A reading of Richard's characterisation reminds one of Diana Fuss' articulations on Fanon's elaborations of European occupiers and their relationships with local, but specifically Algerian women. Fuss writes;

For the European occupiers, the veil functions as an exotic signifier, invested with all the properties of a sexual fetish. Faced with a veiled Algerian woman, Fanon writes, the European is consumed with a desire to see, a desire that, in colonialism's highly sexualised economy of looking, also operates as an urge for violent possession. (26)

Spectres of this can be found in Richard's observations of both Kainene and Olanna in:

Richard read the next issue of Lagos life, and when he saw her photo, he searched her expression, looking for what he did not know. He wrote a few pages in a burst of manic productivity, fictional portraits of a tall, ebony coloured woman with a near-flat chest. (60)

Now though, he was bereft. His admiration had thrived on her being unattainable, a worship from afar, but now that he had tasted the wine on her tongue, pressed himself so close against her that he too smelt of coconuts, he felt a strange loss. He had lost his fantasy. But what had worried about was losing Kainene. He was determined that Kainene would never know. (236)

The urge to reconstruct an already constructed being goes back to Spivak's observations of translation as catachresis⁷³ - an it that is not entirely it, but somehow nothing else will do. I think of this because in Spivak's articulations that commit themselves to an elaboration of Melanie Klein's use of Translation, there is identified a reconfiguration of the figure in the process of translation.

Consider:

In the sense that I am deriving from Klein, translation does indeed lose its mooring in a literal meaning. Translation in this general sense is not under the control of the subject who is translating. Indeed, the human subject is something that will have happened as this shuttling translation, from inside to outside, from violence to conscience: the production of the ethical subject. This originary translation thus wrenches the sense of the English word translation outside of its making. One look at the dictionary will tell you the word comes from a Latin past participle (of *transferre* = to transfer). It is a done deal, precisely not a future anterior, something that will have happened without our knowledge, particularly without our control, the subject coming into being.

⁷³ see Gayatri Spivak *Translation as a culture*

...It is in this sense that the human infant, on the cusp of the natural and the cultural, is in translation, except the word translation loses its dictionary sense right here. Here, the body itself is a script – or perhaps one should say a ceaseless inscribing instrument (26).

For Spivak, with Klein, the subject is already genealogically and culturally in translation, but more so by the translating subject. The translated subject is in inscription by the cultural consciousness of the translator (the translator can be the subject self or an external translator). This culture grants a new formation of the being in translation. A process of reconfiguration - of it, but not entirely it - is present in this process. In the inscribing of Kainene by Richard, this process is eerily present. Richard makes reference to the ebony figure “a tall, ebony coloured woman with a near-flat chest”. In the time outside of the narrative, the real time, the phrasing of the ebony figure has already been established exactly the way Richard describes in this i.e. “tall, flat chested and dark” (236). The ebony is a historically fetishized figure. This figure manifests in traditional and contemporary pornography and its organisation centres around the ownership of the black women by white men.

There is in this sense a clear link between this inscription by Richard and the economics of looking that Fuss, with Fanon, are writing to. The looking by itself asserts the otherness of the figure looked at and by extension possessed. Within Richard, there is thus a complexity of owning and of differentiating, in the same way that Fuss, Fanon and Bhabha write about subversion and assimilation of the colonised woman figure⁷⁴. Only for the African woman, it is a negotiation of power and powerlessness, while for the colonising white man power is all the way maintained.

Fuss contends that “The colonizer projects what we might call identification's “alienation effect” onto the colonized”, constantly establishing a difference between their self and the colonised subject (24). This is revealed also with Richard who, by his expressed desire to be “one”, consistently others himself expressively, or as found in the focalized parts.

Madu saw him as a foreigner, which was perhaps why he thought he would be good at this. When Madu called and asked if he would do it, Richard said no.

‘Have you thought about it?’ Madu asked.

‘You would not have asked me if I were not white.’

‘Of course I asked because you are white. Look, the truth is that this is not your war. This is not your cause. Your government will evacuate you in a minute if you asked them to. So it is not enough to carry limp branches and shout power power to show that you support

⁷⁴ Diana Fuss, *Frantz Fanon: Interior colonies and the politics of identification*.

Biafra. If you really want to contribute, this is the way that you can. The world has to know the truth of what is happening, because they simply cannot remain silent while we die. They will believe a white man who lives in Biafra and who is not a professional journalist (304-305).

The focalising effect reveals that it is Richard that distances himself. His suspicions that there is a “we” that excludes him in Madu’s speech, alongside his contemplation of the ‘insider’ pass that he thinks is only Kainene that provides him, next to his rejection to further the cause based on his belief that Mdu saw him as a foreigner, are testament to this barrier that he holds up (304-305). The narrative of course does something really interesting with this complexity within Richard. Richard’s expression of his difference in “You would not have asked me if I were not white” is affirmed by Madu who reminds Richard that this difference offers an advantage if used for the cause (305). Even with the construction of Richard, as a Neo-imperialist and neo-colonizer, the text navigates Richard carefully to tell of the differences between ‘allyship’ and consumption of culture and of people.

In the extracted passage above, Madu reminds Richard of the credibility of telling and of listening warranted and unwarranted on the basis of identity. Madu informs Richard that “They will believe a white man who lives in Biafra and who is not a professional journalist.” revealing the clear politics of truth in the structure of the Eurocentric world - which Africa is part of (305).

In the assertion of the self’s identity by the white man in a canon that opposes black and white, reveals that everything the white man is not, the black man is, and vis a vis. In Fanon’s re-theorisation of the theorisation of the Algerian, North African man - and by extension through the work of Dr Carothers on the Southern and West African man - Fanon found the Algerian man constructed as a criminal, liar and a lazy subject. The inference is of course that the White man is an honest, truth telling hard working subject (never mind colonial oppression). These differences as theorised by Fanon have entered discourse, they are studied and well known and even today hold up stereotypes of the white and the Black man. Knowledge of this, in the way the character Madu points out, creates the advantage of communicating across a colour line and positioning the history of Biafra as a universal truth, in the text. The story, particularly, outside of the text and in to the World, gains a credibility that would not have been connected with had there not been a white writing character who was observing what-would-have-automatically-been-assumed as the truth and was determined to tell it.

The narrative, again, reminds of the responsibilities of ‘telling’; what kind of ‘telling’ is allowed and what is not, and to a far end, whose telling is allowed and whose is not allowed. It cannot be that Richard writes a narrative of the war. As Adichie attests, the writing of such a text involves the telling of emotional truths that Richard does not have because as Madu reveals, it is not his war. Richard is partially in the war, with one foot already out. It is in this way that the text gives the narrative to Ugwu; it is only Ugwu who can tell such a story. The best Richard can do, as indicated by Madu, is to write reports home, which is vastly different from constructing a national story of a people.

What we are presented with here again, with Richard, is the responsibility of the allowance to ‘tell’; the allowance to speak *with*. Adichie is careful in her navigation of the space of telling and the accessibility to it. The character of Richard, though the text continually reminds the reader, by the characters inside the text who continually remind Richard that the war is not his story to tell, reveals the importance of his ‘telling’ as well. The text, however, establishes a difference with Richards telling. Richard cannot speak *for*, but can speak *with*. Richard can then use his privilege as a white European to write with Biafrans, in support of their cause, but he cannot write the war on behalf of those who have experienced it, that ‘telling’ is for them. It is in this way that the narrative grants Ugwu the experience of telling, Ugwu is active in the war, ‘the man of action’ in Fanonian ideolect. Ugwu lived as a civilian and as a militant during this period. Ugwu is conscientious; as the man of action, he thinks and does for his people, trying his best to keep them alive, in shape and forward moving in and outside of the context of the war. Ugwu is also the character that absorbs teachings and learnings. It is Ugwu who allows for the ‘telling’ of Olanna’s memories - memories that are important for closure and for moving forward.

Half of a Yellow Sun is an impressively detailed narrative. It provides strong commentary on national consciousness, historical awareness and the right to *tell*. These are all significant aspects in the ideation of Africa’s ecologies. Firstly, by the narrative’s aim to provide a narrative about a history that the World cannot and should not forget, it is the epitome of ecological truth – it provides that in order for us to know our present, it is important for us to know where we come from and how it is that we got to be here. Secondly, to understand this historic ecological moment, contemplation is invaluable, especially a personal and collective contemplation of our role in the survival of our ecological systems. The narrative’s dedication to building story through character allows for an in-depth consideration of exactly the question; *why were/are we silent as we are dying?* The novel operates in the realm of accountability and brings forth the connections between human nature and its role in species survival (consider the physical damage of bombings on land

and seas) The narrative considers our anthropocentric cultures and brings accountability to our ethics in our cultures.



Chapter 3: The Subject In Responsibility And Forward Thinking In *Americanah*.

Spivak writes about the ethical subject as a subject that feels accountable to repay a debt that is not repayable, “Matririn (mother-debt) – a debt *to* the mother as well as a debt (that) the (place of the) mother *is*”(16). Matririn in Hindi is in the feminine, a debt to being produced (by a life giver) , and a debt that one must produce (be a life giver) because one is positioned to. Spivak, next to the ideas by Adichie, expressed in her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* helps to think very widely and thoroughly about this debt and our feeling of responsibility to repay it, especially ecologically. But why should African repay this ecological debt Adichie’s, *Americanah* (2013) asks and answers.

Adichie’s *Americanah* explores the journey of protagonist, Ifemelu between Africa, America and Europe in pursuit of a better life. Ifemelu is a blogger who observes cultural experiences of Blackness and Africaness, but particularly Nigerianess across these contexts. Her journey between continents allows her contemplation about global futures, collective growth and consciousness.

Taylor Hackford’s *The Devil’s Advocate* (1997) provides a rewardingly useful consideration for the nature of the world’s ecologies. Heckard’s film explores the journey of a lawyer from a small town as he builds his successes in the big city, New York at a prestigious law firm owned by the father he didn’t know about, who also happens to be the Devil. The Devil, cheekily named John Milton⁷⁵ in the film provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the world in the face of Capital and grandiose:

You sharpen the human appetite to the point where it can split atoms with its own desire,
You build egos the size of cathedrals, you fibre optically connect to every eager impulse,
grease even the dullest dreams with these dollar green gold plated fantasies until every
human becomes an aspiring emperor, becomes his own God and where can you go from
there? And as we are scrambling from one deal to the next who has got his eyes on God’s
planet? As the air thickens, the water sours, even the bees honey takes on a metallic taste of
radio activity. And it just keeps coming and coming, faster and faster.

There is no chance to think, to prepare, it’s bi-futures, cell-futures, when there is no future.
We got a runaway train boy! We got a billion Eddie Barzoon's all jogging into the future.
Everyone of them getting ready to fist fuck God’s ex-planet, lick their fingers clean as they
reach out to their crispy kibernetic keyboards to toad up their fucking billable hours.

⁷⁵ John Milton is the author of *Paradise Lost*, a religious reading, whose name Heckard assigns to one of his lead characters modelled after the devil – or who he could be in the contemporary world - in the film.

And then it hits home. You gotta pay your own way Eddie! It's a little late in the game to buy out now. Your belly is too full, your dick is sore. Your eyes are blood-shot and you are screaming for somebody to help. But guess what? There is no one there! You are all alone Eddie. You are God's special little creature (John Milton).

Heckard, by his character, Milton, simply reveals to us why we have an ecological debt and how we (the humans) have accumulated and are accumulating it. Heckard opens up a thoughtful ecological engagement on the role of Capitalism; its construction of futures, our emergence to that future and the role those ideated futures play in the structure of our ecologies. By Capitalism's moves, by its desires and our desires, we have sized-up an ecological debt the size of the earth. It's payback time and our debt to "mother earth" is due. But can we? Can we give back to our ecology what we have taken from it?

We cannot, so we should not be too hard on capitalism, on ourselves, as Heckard and Crutzen are. Timothy Morton suggests that "Capitalism marks only the beginning of thought beyond our personal backyards...Capitalism shows only the truth of cooperation" (101). This has merit to it. Although Paul Crutzen has done the work in revealing the interlocked ways capitalism, by anthropocentrism, played its role in global warming, the truth is we cannot press rewind. We are already here and what Capitalism has demonstrated (not done) is a way forward, to the ecological thought of cooperation, democracy and working with the *strange stranger* - many strange strangers. Today, technology is a *strange stranger* that we cannot be without - *was there ever time without technology?*

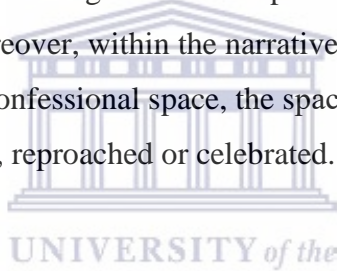
Adichie's *Americanah* wonders at these futures. The novel's lead protagonist, Ifemelu, is a forward looking blogger who engages on the social condition of North America, and later Nigeria. Ifemelu's key orientation with her blog in America is a concern with race and how Americans - particularly Black and African Americans strive on a daily basis to move through this racially captured period in North American history. This is an important ecological fundament, particularly as a technical intervention on race and its hierarchical organisations. The internet has played an important role in fleshing out arguments around race and conscientizing people about its effects on social cohesion and collective growth at a global scale.

Serena Guarracino reflects on the author's views on the novel:

when asked on the "International Author's stage" (2014) why she made her character a blogger, Adiche answered: <<I wanted this novel to also be a social commentary, but I I wanted to say it in was that are different to what one is supposed to say in literary fiction>>.

Blog writing, or blogging, features prominently in the novel as such a space, both embedded in, but also outside of creative writing, and as a place where social realities can exist without the trappings of character and action...Because of this peculiar structure, *Americanah* offers a good case study for some reflections on the role of technology in writing, and especially on the global resonance of postcolonial writing. (2)

Guarracino herewith suggests that *Americanah* does two things: It reflects on the impact of technology on creative writing, and the influence of technology on human futures. I agree with these offerings. By the rise of social media networks as an intervening space between the ideation of reality and reality itself, technology or digital technology has had a great impact in shaping the human form, and shaping human expression. With sites like Wordpress, twitter and facebook, and applications like Instagram, tumbler, and Pinterest, creative writing has taken on a new face. Examples of this are the works of rupi kaur⁷⁶, whose poetry by the intervention of these digital sites has revolutionised the form and its reception especially for the younger, mostly ‘millennial’ generations. *Americanah* which predates the publications of kaur’s works operates as an opening to these revolutionary forms in creative writing. The novel opens up the digital space as a space where creativity takes form and shape. Moreover, within the narrative time and space, the digital space, the space of the blog, serves as the confessional space, the space where the “reality” outside of the blogosphere is reviewed, questioned, reproached or celebrated. Consider the following narration from the text:



He would in future often ignore her. Later, she read his online posts on Nigerian Village, all of them sour toned and strident, under the moniker “Igbo Massachusetts Accountant”, and it surprised her how profusely he wrote, how actively he pursued airless arguments.

He had not been back in Nigeria in years and perhaps he needed the consolation of those online groups, where small observations flared and blazed into attacks, personal insults flung back and forth. Ifemelu imagined the writers, Nigerians in bleak houses in America, their lives deadened by work, nursing their careful savings throughout the year so they could visit home in December for a week, when they would arrive bearing suitcases of shoes and clothes and cheap watches, and see, in the eyes of their relatives brightly burnished images of themselves. (88)

⁷⁶ rupi kaur is a poet, dubbed “instapoet” for the expression of her work through the digital application instagram. Her collections *Milk and Honey* (2014) and the *Sun and her Flowers* (2017) have sold over 3 million copies globally. See Khaira-Hanks, *rupi kaur: the inevitable black lash against instagram’s favorite poet*

Ifemelu presents a stark contrast of being between the social media presence of the Nigerian “authors” and their lives outside of the virtual world. Ifemelu presents lively passions in her articulation of the interaction on the blogosphere in “where small observations flared and blazed into attacks, personal insults flung back and forth” (88). While her imagination of the lives off the blogosphere are presented as “bleak” and “deadened” (88). This is not an uncommon kind of comparative. In fact, with the rise of mass media and social media, communication theory has taken to analysing the construction of reality in the social world against the lived realities of people. Michael Carter explores frame analysis in communication theory to the end of revealing the operations of reality construction in media.

Frame analysis has its origins in sociology as well as media theory. Erving Goffman (1974) wrote extensively on the topic and was one of the first sociologists to use frame analysis for explaining social phenomena. For Goffman, frames refer to the definitions of a situation that are built up in accordance with principles of organisation, which govern social events and our subjective involvement in them. Frame analysis then refers to the examination of frames in terms of the organisation of experience (Goffman, 1974). Entman offers another definition of frames: <<To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman, 1993, p. 52, as quoted in McCombs & Ghanem, 2001, p. 70)>>

Frames help organise facts, and facts take on meaning by being embedded in some larger system of meaning or frame (Gamson et al., 1992). Frames provided references for the public about what is important, and the media has great power because of this. A basic proposition to this is that the perceived salience of a public issue will be directly related to the amount of coverage given to that issue by the mass media (Holz & Wright, 1979) (1).

Framing by this meaning articulate that the framer of narrative frames in accordance to the public would want to engage with, and in terms of mass medias that depend on algorithmic systems i.e. what the public responds to most. Peter Brooks in his chapter *Narrative Transactions and Transference* (1984) writes of a contractual engagement between writer and reader (framer and receiver). Brooks presents that:

The motivation of plotting is intimately connected to the desire of narrating, the desire to tell, which in turn has much to do with the need for an Interlocutor, a listener who enters into the exchange. The shapes taken by stories and the reasons for their telling suggest the

need to explore more fully the narrative situation - narrative in situation between teller and listener - and the kinds of reaction and understanding that narratives appear to want to elicit...storytelling asks for something in return for what it supplies (216).

The meta-narratives of the blogs in the narrative projects this. Ifemelu reveals an affirmation she receives from her readers by writing her blogs. This is similar to what she indicated her aunt's boyfriend, Bartholomew, who also blogs about his experiences as an expat, must be getting from his blog posts on the Nigerian village. Consider the following passages:

She felt dispirited and, while Curt watched a game that evening, she drove to the Beauty supply store and ran her fingers through small bundles of silky straight weaves. Then she remembered a post by @Jamilah1977 - I love the sisters who love their straight weaves, but I am never putting horse hair on my head again- and she left the store, eager to get back and log on and post on the boards about it. She wrote: Jamilah's words made me remember that there is nothing more beautiful than what God gave me. Others wrote responses, posting thumbs up, telling her how much they liked the photo she had put up. She had never talked about God so much. Posting on the website was like giving testimony in church; the echoing roar of approval revived her.

The blog had unveiled itself and shed its mil teeth; by turns it surprised her, pleased her, left her behind. Its readers increased, by the thousands from all over the world, so quickly that she resisted checking the stats, reluctant to know how many people had clicked to read her that day, because it frightened her. And it exhilarated her. When she saw her posts reposted on another site, she flushed with accomplishment, and yet she had not imagined any of this, had never nursed any firm ambition. Emails came from readers who wanted to support her blog. Support. That word made the blog even more apart from her, a separate thing that could thrive or not, sometimes without her and sometimes with her. So, she put up the link to her PayPal account. Credits appeared, many small and one so large that when she saw it, she let out an unfamiliar sound, a blend of gasp and scream (158, 221).

In these lines, an inter-dependence is reflected between Ifemelu and her readers. In the first passage, it is narrated that Ifemelu gains spiritual validation from the reading and engagement of her blog by her readers. This spiritual validation comes not only from the reading of her work, but also from the content that her readership identifies with. The reliability of her experiences affirms her as a non-American black. The way she experiences her Blackness in America, is not the same as the way

American Blacks experience theirs, because, as Ifemelu reveals, by moving to America, this had been the first time she became black (212). Although she has always been Black her presence among more white people accentuated that Blackness, it established a difference in her that she was unaware of, prior to her move. The space of the blog is where Ifemelu could practice her Blackness which is also different to the American Blackness. By the Blog, Ifemelu constructs her situation and places it in conversation with other “situations” of race.

The affirmation Ifemelu gets about being a non- American Black is what frames her motivation for writing. John Frow provides that:

The authority of the frame is equivalent to that of the genre expectations which it establishes, and the internal structure of the text may either confirm this authority or react dynamically to it, or at the extreme it may break it. In all of these cases, structure is only made possible by the presence of the frame, as norm or restriction and as the conventional sign of a closure which separates the limitedness of the aesthetic object from the unlimitedness of its environment... [Erving] Goffman... distinguishes two levels of the frame: “One is the innermost layering, wherein dramatic activity can be at play to engross the participant. The other is the outermost lamination, the rim of the frame, as it were, which tells us just what sort of status in the real world the activity has, whatever the complexity of the inner laminations” (27).

The support Ifemelu receives helps to frame her writing. It organises the salient elements that define the boundaries of the blog i.e. the more she blogs about race, the more support she gets, and invitations to present herself and her ideas for career prospects and monetary exchange increase as well. This is so because the blog addresses the socio-political situation of America. The salience of race in the blog is in conversation with the salience of race that defines the socio-political climate of the America in the narrative. In this, another kind of framing is presented by the elements of the text that is in conversation with the real environment of both America and Nigeria that the text is culturally engaging with. For Nigeria, because race is not particular to the make-up of the Nigerian society, the cultural engagement of the text, of the narrative and of the blog, *The small redemptions of Lagos*, shift to consumerism and corruption. These themes in the blog open the ecological engagements of Capitalism and its futures for ecology.

Ifemelu’s opening reflecting her return to Nigeria is characterised as “At first, Lagos saluted her; the sun-dazed haste, the yellow busses full of squashed limbs, the sweating hawkers racing after cars, the advertisement on hiking billboards (others scrawled on walls - PLUMBER CALL 0801777777) and the heaps of rubbish that rose on the roadside like a taunt. Commerce thrummed

too defiantly”, introducing herself (mostly) and the reader to the fast-paced consumer culture of Lagos (277). The reader prior to this got a sense of this kind of Capitalism, but only from the perspective of Obinze, whose presentation of consumer Capitalism is different from what Ifemelu - in almost a pedestrian fashion - presents to the reader. Ifemelu’s return solidifies Obinze’s cultural observations and expressions of the Nigerian lifestyle reported at various points. Obinze’s observations and Ifemelu’s impressions of Lagos presents the situational framing that the narrative drives for the reader to engage with. This situational framing presents an obsession with commerce and Capital that the narrative presents as the cultural conditioning of Nigeria, and offers, for my analysis, an aesthetic ecological intervention with the novel.

Obinze observes and reveals to Ifemelu:

When I started in real Estate, I considered renovating old houses instead of tearing them down, but it didn’t make sense. Nigerians don’t buy houses because they’re old. A renovated two-hundred-year-old mill granary, you know, the kind of thing Europeans like. It doesn’t work here at all. But of course it makes sense because we are Third Worlders and Third-worlders are forward looking, we like things to be new because our best is still ahead, while in the West their best is already past and so they have to make a fetish of that past (314).

Obinze’s observations speak poignantly to, particularly, Western theories of environmentalisms which suggests “a return to nature”⁷⁷. This is not a plausible imagination for Africans in and outside of the text, particularly due to interruption of colonialism that imposed a way of being which, as according to Emmanuel Obiechina (2013) created a barrier between nature and person in African tradition. As inherited from Western Colonisers, the African of today is on the moving train towards the futures of technology, Capital and consumerism. The modern Nigerian wants to become the master he was forced to obey, and this return to old traditions is unseemly for the programming that the new Nigerian is now living under. As Morton articulates “it’s easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of Capitalism” (101). This is especially true for a continent whose *turn it is to eat*⁷⁸ Obinze’s articulations present the odds in imagination of what the future ought to be and look like for the African and American and, to some degree, the European. With regards to the West; Europe and America, Obinze reflects on their purist imagination of the futureworld, where Nature, clean pure Nature of the of pre-modern times is yearned for. While for

⁷⁷ See Morton, *The ecological thought*

⁷⁸ The concept exemplifies a change of order in government and business post-independence across Africa, where the black man becomes the master of his own fate and his belly. See, Wong, *It’s our turn to eat: the story of Kenyan whistle blowers*

the global south, Africa in particular, the movement is toward the modern, fast paced consumerist future that the West has already obtained. An ecological question is brought to mind with these ideas; - If ecology's survival depends on collective imagination, thinking and effort - how can a consensus be obtained in the world ecological direction when the Global North and South are moving in opposite directions toward their futures?

Obinze and Ifemelu engage on the movement of these futures in a conversation about her food order, a sandwich and chips in a local restaurant:

“Do you have real Potatoes?”

“Madam?”

“Are your potatoes the frozen imported ones, or do you cut and fry your potatoes?”

The waiter looked offended. “It is the imported frozen ones”

As the waiter walked away, Ifemelu said, “Those frozen things taste horrible.”

“He can't believe your actually asking for real potatoes,” Obinze said drily. “Real potatoes are backward for him. Remember this is our middle-class world. We haven't completed the first cycle of prosperity, before going back to the beginning to drink milk from the cow's udder” (320).

Ifemelu assimilates to American culture. This is presented by her choice of order in the passage above where she insists on the local freshly fried potatoes over the imported ones. Obinze must remind her that it is not the culture of Nigerians, for whom imported is always better. Gichingiri Ndigirigi suggests Ifemelu is in “an empowering paradox of Diaspora where dwelling here assumes a solidarity and connection there” (209). This I argue is not only by her loyalty to the American space and ideals in Nigeria, but for the Nigerian space and ideals too while in America. Ifemelu's order connects her to the “there” of America or Americanness. She entered the space with the Western world out-look that Obinze had alerted her to on a previous account, and she herself had observed and articulated in her blog.

Lagos has never been, will never be, and has never aspired to be like New York, or anywhere else for that matter. Lagos has always been undisputedly itself, but you would not know this at the meeting of the Nigeropolitan club, a group of young returnees who gather every week to moan about the many ways that Lagos is not like New York as though Lagos had ever been close to being like New York. Full disclosure: I am one of them. Most of us

have come back to make money in Nigeria, to start businesses, to seek government contracts and contacts. Others have come with dreams in their pockets and hunger to change the country, but we spend all our time complaining about Nigeria, and even though our complaints are legitimate, I imagine myself as an outsider saying: Go back where you came from! If your cook cannot make the perfect panini, it is not because he is stupid. It is because Nigeria is not a nation of sandwich eating people and his last yoga did not eat bread in the afternoon. So, he needs training and practice. And Nigeria is not a nation of food allergies, not a nation of picky eaters for who food is about distinction and separation. It is a nation of people who eat beef and chicken and cow's skin and intestines and dried fish in a single bowl of soup, and it is called assorted, and so get over yourselves and realise that the way of life here is just that, assorted (303).

Ifemelu's "here" and "there-ness" is also projected in her blog about the Nigerpolitan returnee, where a plural or a fragmented sense of self is presented. Ifemelu presents an ambivalence, where she reproaches and embraces her new returnee status. Her writing goes into the fleeting, but necessary - she interjects - complaints about food stuff that the Nigerpolitan concern themselves with, suggesting that the Nigerpolitan should "get over [themselves]" because "Nigeria is not a nation of food allergies, not a nation of picky eaters for who food is about distinction" (303). In this illustration of Nigerpolitan concerns, Ifemelu constructs an 'us' and 'them' framing, where there is differentiation between the Nigerpolitan and Nigerian⁷⁹ identities. Ifemelu further writes that "[she is] one of them" where the sequencing of "I am one of them" projects Ifemelu as both apart and a part of the Nigerpolitan identity, and equally, away from herself in her assimilation into the identity of *them* (303).

Ifemelu also presents a plurality or duality of her own Nigerpolitan identity, in the blog, when she writes "...I imagine myself as an outsider saying; 'Go back where you came from!'" (303). In this, Ifemelu constructs Nigerpolitans in two positions; as both insiders and outsiders (303). Although her content aims to express how outside of 'Nigerianess' the Nigerpolitans are, by their interaction with local food stuffs, She, at the same time, constructs how at the centre Nigerpolitans are, by their power to construct "insiderness" and "outsiderness". This can be found in "go back to where you came from" (303), where the Nigerpolitan is at the centre.

Both the Nigerian and Nigerpolitan, in the differentiated sense that Ifemelu's blog provides, do not have a fixed presence or identity, even though the blog post hopes to present these identities as

⁷⁹ By Nigerian, I intend to articulate the stayed-behind Nigerian who did not travel abroad for longer than ten years to a point where they have a dual citizenship, whether official or not. See, Adichie, *Americanah*.

fixed. The Nigerian and the Nigeropolitan can exist equally within and outside of the margins, depending on the margins that the writer or speaker presents.

It is interesting to note that the framing of margins of the blog becomes just as fluid once the identity is not as fixed as that of race, which remains fixed due to the otherness that race is always underpinned by. Although it is said that a double consciousness is most evident while Ifemelu is in America, I argue that this double consciousness becomes surprisingly more accentuated in the Nigerian context where, because race is de-factored, Ifemelu must translate herself as returnee in multiple ways; as one who belongs, as one who once belonged and one who wants to belong. It is so that in her writing she tasks herself to a speaking across⁸⁰ where she reproaches her returnee status in a way that aligns to the ideological beliefs held by the “stayed-behind” Nigerians about returnees. The extract above, Ifemelu’s blog post, receives mixed reactions, where one reader relates to Ifemelu’s writing, while the other simply regards it as “Rubbish post” asking “who cares?” which proves the difficulty in finding and maintaining a fixed situational framing that her readers would want to support (303). Moreover, as revealed by the comment on ‘youth service’, and the response to this comment which gained more traction than the original post did, it is also reflected that Ifemelu’s situational framing is disconnected to the realities of Nigeria.

Ifemelu enters Nigeria with a first world gaze that Obinze constantly must teach her to think against in order to properly acclimatise to the Nigeria she has returned to. Obinze must remind her that her concerns are not shared by Nigerians. The consumerism that she was assaulted by upon entering Nigeria is the life that ordinary Nigerians take pride in, because it leads them closer to their post-colonial dream i.e. becoming the middle-class or upper class their previous colonisers were and they always wished to become. Fanon has explained this complex before:

The national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime is an under-developed middle class. It has practically no economic power, and in any case, it is in no way commensurate with the bourgeoisie of the mother country which it hopes to replace. In its wilful narcissism, the national middle class is easily convinced that it can advantageously replace the middle class of the mother country (235).

Americanah’s concern with Nigeria’s class organisations further extends Fanon’s theorization particularly as it takes shape in the contemporary. The text is constructed in post-independence

⁸⁰ Harriet Jacobs in her book *incidents in the life of a slave girl* employs this technique of writing across what was called the color line to gain the ear of white readership. Jacobs; technique was that of attracts ad reproach, where she speaks with and to the ideologies of the white reader and then turning that around into a reproach.

Nigeria, in the contemporary, the time when the black man is illusively⁸¹ the ruler of himself. *Americanah* so speaks to these kinds of complexities that were inevitably meant to arise in this *Post* context. Chikwendu Paschalkizito Anyanwu in *Corruption in Post-Independence politics: Half of a Yellow Sun as a reflection of A man of the people (2017)* observes the corruption in Nigeria in a manner that is thematically comparative to the corruption articulated in *Americanah* as well. This kind of writing, Anyanwu reflects, took on the responsibility of exposing the breadcrumbs of corruption of post-independence politics:

Nigeria in the 1960's was fraught with political unrest and anxieties, evaporating the pre-independence excitements and the hope of freedom from the excruciating colonial regime. Political Independence from the colonial regime - As Achebe describes it, was a complete hoax (1979, 82). Consequently, Achebe upholds that the work of the writer was not done yet because he found himself with a new terrifying problem on his hands'- the emptiness political independence and the will of colonial masters being propelled by black stooges (140).

As Anyanwu and Achebe have noted, the cancer of industrialism, consumerism and capitalism is upon the third world. This is the contemporary paradox from which the writer must untangle her society. In Adichie's text, the money train is moving, and many Nigerians are gearing to get on it, never mind the consequence that they are aware of, just as equally. Obinze and his friends, the commercial fat cats, reflects on Nigeria's political economics:

"The problem is not that public officials steal, the problem is that they steal too much" Okwudiba said. "Look at all these governors. They leave their state and come to Lagos to buy up all the land and they will not touch it until they leave office. That is why nobody can afford to buy land these days"

It's true! Land speculators are just spoiling prices for everybody. And the speculators are guys in government. We have a serious problem in this country," Ahed said.

"But its not just in Nigeria. There are land speculators everywhere in the world,' Eze said. Eze was the wealthiest man in the room, an owner of oil wells, and as many of the Nigerian wealthy were, he was free of angst" (338).

⁸¹ Kwame Nkrumah's Neo-colonialism argue that most colonisers never really left and that African states are still very largely under the control of imperialists. Nkrumah suggests that the control of imperialists has now just shifted in shape, but at the heart of it, the minds, cultures, movements and abilities of the African people and other previously colonised worlds, are still largely dictated by former colonisers.

Achebe indicates that “It all becomes too confusing for the people can only say ‘let them eat’ since they did not commit suicide when the white man was eating alone” (146). The complacency of Obinze’s company of friends, as revealed in these lines, is a commentary on the complacency of country men in the face of political corruption in the real world outside of the text. The complacency to corruption has shaped in the form of “eat because you have starved”, a kind of social contract among Nigerians that excuses corruption in their new order on account of a painful starved history, and the knowledge that their present system of governance is inherited from this history. Anyanwu reveals that:

Pre-Independence propaganda convinced the common people that the colonial regime was oppressive and denied them the fruits of their labour. However, the African politician who appeared benevolent patriots bringing the colonial maltreatment to an end, did little or nothing to change the status quo and improve the conditions of ordinary people...The African politicians enriched themselves through corrupt means at the expense of the masses, and the people were unable to control them because the new form of government introduced by the West was very strange to them (146).

As Achebe has drawn, writers had to concern themselves with a new kind of preoccupation; one that addressed independence, their new status quo. This meant that in the articulation of corruption in literature, writers are also, especially in the contemporary, tasked with the special responsibility of retracing the bread-crumbs, even if just a little, as demonstrated in *Americanah*, to reveal the genealogy of corruption. This then meant a special consideration of the status quo at home against the operation of the world system, which is what *Americanah* aimed to do.

Adichie, through *Americanah*’s interrogations, measures the progress of North America against that of Nigeria. Adichie’s social, digital ethnographer character, Ifemelu, observes American culture through the lenses of her own country, and similarly, when in Nigeria, Ifemelu performs this same kind of comparative measuring. The observations of culture in both spaces inside the text, then become instrumental for interrogating global collective ecological growth which lie at the core of eco-critical interventionist theories, outside of the text. Adichie, with Ifemelu and Obinze, provides two cultural perspectives of growth and future movement; one is an American preoccupation to move backward, re-enchant, and return to indigenous ways of living to save the earth, and another is an African preoccupation to move forward to a well-oiled industrialised machine where capital works smoothly. These observations present a stasis in the ecological flow, it reflects how, in the real time outside of the text, in the way that realistic fiction allows, there is a global disconnect in ecological futurity.

Americanah, by its situational framing of two societies, one from the West and another from the Global South, so leads us to two questions in the space outside of the text; *how do we imagine a collective ecological future when our ideals for a future are at odds? Whose futures do we move towards and whose do we abandon?*

Chapter 4: Big, dark, forward thinking African questions: *What is a post-colony and what are its ecological concerns?*

We must be clear: when Timothy Morton thinks ecologies, thinks “world” ecologies, he thinks Western ecologies – the west is his centre. So, why think ecology through with him? To answer this, we must be clear of another thing: The post-colony is a thing of the future. We are not there yet. Morton’s ecological thought is a future orientation in movement today. This is what makes Morton’s ideas appropriate to think with. Morton’s imagination of ecological futurity that explores the dismantle of hierarchical systems as it critiques notions of Africa as a post-colony align well to an ecological vision for Africa. This ecological vision must see an Africa that believes in its own vision to sustain its growth. This cannot be achieved so long as we don’t gradually move through our neo-colonised condition to a truly post-colonized Africa.

I have written in the Chapter *Forward thinking and the subject in responsibility in Americanah* about ideas of the future that are at odds with each other and prove to be major stumbling blocks for ecological thinking. If the ecological thought is a cooperative orientation, then as Timothy Morton writes about capitalism, it must be imagined collectively. How is this achieved when we are thinking differently about the future of the World? This raises yet another question; is collective thinking in ecology only a possibility by homogenous thinking? I think not.

Morton also tells us about the double-bind; the beginnings of what he imagines a democratic society of all life forms, where all consciousnesses are considered, would be concerned with. This orientation by Morton is no different from that of Spivak, Fanon, Guyer, Adichie, Munoz, Mies, Shiva, Nancy, Benjamin, Crutzen etc, we are all asking for the same thing; we are asking for a democracy, a free existence and appropriate considerations of consciousness of the ‘being’ of others as of the self. But what would it take? What would we be concerned with? How will we survive it? The truth of this is that we will not see it, although we are working towards it. This generation, will

not taste or feel ecological futures, so what are we afraid of? Why are we wretched with uncertainty? Spivak, Fanon, Guyer, Mies, Shiva, Nancy, Benjamin and Crutzen present one idea to this effect, to the ideation of our ecological future; we have to move through fear and uncertainty. We should take care to pierce through the membrane of fear that estranges beings from one another. That will require a subversion of structures - from the biggest to the smallest ones.

In the case of Africa, it would be a heavy load to subvert a system that we are yet to be a part of and yet are governed by it. As Nkrumah, Soyinka and Achebe, to name a few, have indicated, we do not exist in a post-colonial condition, we are at best neo-colonised. We cannot imagine ourselves at equal playing field with our colonisers when our necks are under their feet. So, what appropriate action can we take to deconstruct this system from the position of the unthought⁸²?

4.1 Europe must fall.⁸³

To live in a post-colonial world, Europe must fall. I have for some time been captured by the idea of ecological responsibility; *whose responsibility is it really to clean up the earth? Whose responsibility is it to subvert systems that are damaging and threatening for our survival?* If we consider Crutzen, Morton, Guyer and move all the way back to the Romantics we know that Europe and his son, America, are responsible for the gradual fall of the world. We are aware that Europe designed colonisation, the most violent system the World has ever known. Europe, as a concept and structure must fall, if we want to see an ecologically thinking world.

Qadri Ismail writes:

The trouble with dead white men is that some are not men, many not white and an alarming number, not even dead. Put differently, since individuals, dead or alive, are not at stake: eurocentrism suffuses, saturates, structures the modern epitome. It is here: apartheid, in Hendrik Verwoerd's formulation, separates European from non-European races; there: the English department I teach in has just one single author requirement, Shakespeare, and

⁸² 'The position of the unthought' is a theorization by Saidiya et al. *The position of the Unthought*. This reference refers to registers of subjectivity of the Black "subject". Herein, meaning is extended to the subject outside of consideration. The subject not registered as a subject of agency or autonomy in the World structure.

⁸³ An extension of "fees must fall" in the South African fallist theory.

everywhere: the prime meridian, a geopolitical not geographic delineation , traverses London, frames time globally; we reinforce eurocentrism every time we do something as banal, quotidian as check the time. (40-50)

Europe has long inserted itself into the root of our being, it has long surpassed its identification as a mere continent. Europe is a world concept whereby we measure our time, ourselves, our progress and our thinking i.e. When Europe says we are a post-colony, suddenly we are a post-colony. We must for all necessities dissent from this alignment. We cannot become a post-colony, a queer society or even a post-colonial society with Europe still standing. Europe is the structure that we must undo, or in my conceptualisation, de-think.

The fall of Europe brings with it self-identification, self-determination, connection, borderlessness, Trump-lessness, more people, more strangeness, more species, more consciousness, more hospitality, more intimacy. Without Europe, we define ourselves. Homi Bhabha in the foreword to Fanon's *Black Skin, white Masks (1986)* writes that by whiteness we are defined. All cultures, ideas, environments, in the modern world especially, are defined by their degree of sameness or difference from Europe's. Europe has marked itself, and we mark it, as the centre and this is where we are hindered.

But the remedy is simple, and we have discussed at length. It is true what Ismail says, "The trouble with dead white men is that some are not men, many not white and an alarmin number, not even dead" we are responsible for reinforcing Europe as the world standard (43). We are responsible for why we are dying, but mostly Europeans because they have inherited a damaged and damaging system and they do not seize to grow the empire.

Timothy Morton says it's easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of Capitalism. With Europe, it is even worse because Europe designed Capitalism by its industrial revolution. The revolution is still upon us, our words have changed, but we are still fooling ourselves and working in the fog⁸⁴. The questions are; *why do we? Why do we want to live like this? Why do we check the time?*

⁸⁴ The fog refers to the London fog of 1952, where London was trapped in a deadly cloud fog and pollution for five days.



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Conclusion

Timothy Morton's *The Ecological Thought* opens up impressive questions on the nature of being and being in the world. The conversation between the narratives of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Morton have excitably expanded my ideas on the role of literature in opening up ecological questions. Morton's reflections on "Thinking Big", "Dark Thoughts", and "Forward Thinking" were useful in guiding my reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's deeply intersectional narratives, *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*. All three of Adichie's novels have a special preoccupation with world questions. The narratives encourage a deep introspection and consultation with the self, thinking towards how the self-appropriates itself in the world. The narratives, because they are not explicitly 'Environmental' were able to expand on ecological ideas because as Timothy Morton has offered, ecology is not a green over yonder exercise, ecology is an intimacy with life, it is a way of living.



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