

From Postcolonial to Global Trajectories: Nigerian Novels and the Literary-Generational Historical Model

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned, Oluwafunmilayo Miriam Akinpelu, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History: From 1500 till Present Time declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

This thesis is mostly dedicated to an in-depth discussion of the literary generational paradigm used in the historicisation of written Nigerian literature-in-English. This method of historically ‘periodising’ the literary trajectory of Nigeria is commonplace but, as is posited in this thesis, it is very problematic. Owing to this viewpoint, this thesis offers historiographical and conceptual insights into how this generational model used in Nigerian literary history came about. Knowing that postcolonialism and globalisation are two concepts that relate directly to discourses about written Nigerian literature-in-English, chapter one of this thesis is dedicated to delineating the concepts in relation to the generational model, while paying attention to the evolving dynamics that have re-configured these concepts within the context of Nigerian literature. Then, by focusing on the novelistic genre, this thesis offers a descriptive delineation of the three generations that are associated with Nigerian literary history. This is followed by criticisms of the appropriated national-generational paradigm, and its frictional relationship with postcolonialism and globalisation/globality using arguments that revolve around such phenomena as the nation, language, form, time, and space. The first and second generations are often discussed in relation to postcolonialism while discussions about globalisation almost always involve the third generation. It is argued that the use of the generational paradigm in Nigeria’s literary criticism and history leads to exclusivity, unrepresentability, stereotypes, ambiguities and does not in fact capture the dilemmas and ambivalences of Nigeria’s supposed national literature. Towards the end, some hypothetical alternative frameworks are suggested.

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Introduction

0.1 On the Historical Periodisation of National Literatures

Alone, alone, one cannot produce history - Yao Proverb¹

“Ask the crocodile to know more about the river you are in,” although this Nkoya (Zambian) proverb has more to do with conversational exchanges between a stranger to a nation and a local, it perfectly depicts the relationship between literature and a nation.² Literature has got to be one of the most ‘approachable’ crocodiles in the ‘river’ called ‘nation’ as it forms an important repository of national collective memory. The sustenance of this significant receptacle of national events, experiences and aspirations is achieved through the process of historicisation. In Robert Johnstone’s words, “the history of a national literature is ‘a genre of the cultural imagination’. The narrative constructed is assumed not only to cast light on the historical development of the literature, but to use the literature to illustrate the present happy or sad state of the culture.”³ This statement earmarks the need to be painstaking and meticulous in the creation of national literary histories.

According to Jordan Stein, national literary histories must “describe peoples and nations in terms of progress, development, and maturity; they characterize processes like immigration and war as though they are decisive events; and they identify different decades, movements, and generations as the direct inheritors of their predecessor... These literary histories [are supposed to] quietly but consistently map national history onto the movements of chronological time.”⁴ This infers that most national literatures are historicised through the convention of periodisation, i.e, huge chunks

¹ ‘2020 African Proverb of the Month – African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories’, accessed 9 June 2021, <https://afriprov.org/2020-african-proverb-of-the-month/>.

² ‘2002 African Proverb of the Month – African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories’, accessed 10 June 2021, <https://afriprov.org/2002-african-proverb-of-the-month/>.

³ Robert Johnstone, ‘The Impossible Genre: Reading Comprehensive Literary History’, *PMLA* 107 (January 1992): 31.

⁴ Jordan Alexander Stein, ‘American Literary History and Queer Temporalities’, *American Literary History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 859.

of a nation's literary productions and activities are broken down and chronologically distributed into periods based on significant epochs and events.

However, national literatures have always had tenuous relationships with history; although there are often attempts to persistently historicise the developments of national literatures; 'the literary', like the concept of the nation, can elusively disappear from intellectual gaze, thus nearly causing literary historians to chase their tails in the process of documenting a nation's literary legacies. One of the reasons for this is that most literary productions involve individual crafts(wo)manship, especially written forms. However, as posited by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, although literary history does not dismiss the individuality of every literary work, it also does not mistake the precondition of individuality for "complete particularity and uniqueness" but rather attempts to "characterise the individuality of a work, of an author, of a period, or of a national literature... in universal terms, on the basis of a literary theory".⁵ Also, in emphasising the importance of geographic literary knowledge, Edward Said underscores the role of nationalistic parameters and categories in shaping literary productions.⁶

It is through the search for viable means to properly render holistic national literary histories that several theories, concepts and literary-historical approaches have been formulated and promoted. One of these utilised methods of literary historicisation is the national-generational model. Just as the name suggests, the national-generational model allows for the division of a nation's literature into generations; each generation represents a period. However, unlike the denotative meaning of a period, what determines generational division goes beyond the category of temporality and spans several theoretically conceived criteria. Nigeria is one of those countries that make use of the national-generational paradigm in discussing and historicising its literature. Hamish Dalley offers a concise exposition into how the generational model used in Nigerian literature works: "Nigerian literary criticism [and history] is defined by a mode of contextualization in which texts are assigned a temporal position... derived from an understanding of where they make themselves at 'home'...

⁵ Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Third (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1956).

⁶ Edward Said, 'Globalizing Literary Study', *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001): 64–68.

In this way, critical discourse ascribes meaning to texts by linking their supposed spatio-temporal positioning to forms of ethico-political affiliation.”⁷

The most obvious advantage of using the generational model to create a system of understanding for the vast and often confusing repository of postcolonial Nigerian literature is what Sule Egya referred to as “convenient categorisation”.⁸ This convenience stems out of the lax focus of the generational system on authorial and temporal dimensions of Nigerian literature. Relatedly, Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton praised the generational approach for being one of the ‘cornerstones’ of Nigeria’s literary criticism and history; they credited this to “the possibilities it offers for a systematic understanding of literary trends and currents synchronically and diachronically.”⁹ While the appreciable qualities of the national-generational model as used in historically periodising Nigerian literature are recognised, this thesis raises objections against its suitability for the Nigerian context.

The reservations that are expressed about the generational approach are inextricably connected to the distinct national, postcolonial, and global characters of the nation’s literature. This informs the research aim and objectives of this thesis. In clear terms, this research aims to criticise the appositeness and appropriateness of the national-generational paradigm for historicising written Nigerian literature-in-English. Although it overtly seems like a good model in organising and engaging the politically charged, eventful literary trajectory of the country’s post-independence phase, there are problems and complications underlying this method of periodisation which makes it rather inadequate within the context of Nigerian literary history. On this note, this thesis seeks to understand the meaning(s) of the literary generation, whilst studying it in relation to postcolonialism and globalisation with which it shares affinity, especially in the Nigerian context. Secondly, there is an attempt to conscientiously inquire into the historiographical details of Nigeria’s literary generations schemes, with a clear focus on enunciating the difficulties in

⁷ Dalley, ‘The Idea of “Third Generation Nigerian Literature”: Conceptualizing Historical Change and Territorial Affiliation in the Contemporary Nigerian Novel’, *Research in African Literatures* 44, no. 4 (2013): 17, <https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafritlite.44.4.15>.

⁸ Sule E. Egya, ‘The Question of Generation’, in *Nation, Power and Dissidence in Third Generation Nigerian Poetry in English* (NISC (Pty) Ltd, 2019), 13–35, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvhn0c0j.5>.

⁹ Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, ‘Nigeria’s Third Generation Writing: Historiography and Preliminary Theoretical Considerations’, *English in Africa* 32, no. 1 (2005): 13.

applying them. However, the most important objective of this thesis is to offer scholarly criticisms of the generational historical narrative and look into alternative frameworks that can be adopted.

0.2 A Bird's Eye View of Written Nigerian Literature-in-English

As can be perceived from the section above, what I intend to concentrate on in this thesis is written Nigerian literature-in-English. It constitutes the most recent of all strands of Nigerian literary history. Written Nigerian literature-in-English has only been existent for about a little over half of a century; it started in the 1950s and is only a little over 52 years of age, but it has been the most prominent form of literary practice within the context of colonialism, post-independence and post-coloniality in Nigeria. In fact, it is based on this young yet continuing strand of literary explorations that the whole of Nigerian literature has come to be decidedly defined. In this sense, Taye Awoyemi-Arayela defines Nigerian literature as “any Nigerian literary work of imagination which is written by Nigerians for Nigerians; it discusses issues that are Nigerian and shares the same sensibilities, consciousness, world-view and other aspects of the *Nigerian* cultural experience.”¹⁰

It must be said that written Nigerian literature-in-English was birthed out of the hybrid concoctions of colonialism, western education, Christianisation, the civilising mission, and the successful establishment of English as the official language of instruction in Nigerian education, commerce, and day-to-day communication. As an interesting aside, the earliest writers of Nigerian literature in English have been deemed to be “Europeans and returnee slaves of Nigerian origin”.¹¹ One is Olaudah Equiano who wrote *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa* which was published in 1789.¹² This suggests a lot about the direction in which written Nigerian literature-in-English was headed upon its inception. But beyond the colonial literary indoctrination, written Nigerian literature was catalysed by the national consciousness to understand, express and project the burning desire to gain independence. Independence nationalists like Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikwe, Herbert Ogunde, Herbert Macaulay and Dennis Osadebey used literature - especially the dramatic genre - to amplify their already resounding cry

¹⁰ Taye Awoyemi-Arayela, ‘Nigerian Literature In English: The Journey So Far?’, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 2, no. 1 (2013): 29–36.

¹¹ Fasan, ‘Mapping Nigerian Literature’, 38.

¹² Fasan, 38.

for independence and they encouraged others to do the same by welcoming literary contributions to newspapers and journals. This agitative clamour for enabling a deeply nationalised literary mission has been said to have led to the local Onitsha market literature that was active in 1945 to the 1950s after the end of the Second World War.¹³

When it became necessary to find a suitable method of historicising the fast-evolving developments of written Nigerian literature-in-English, the generational paradigm was adopted by 20th-century African literary scholars who saw it as befitting for the projection of how the national experiences of the country have been presented in literary ways. Thus, the scholarly or secular structuring of specific literary outputs within the spatio-temporal provisions of the generational model is tied to the essence of Nigerian nationalism. Through the literary generational historical narratives of Nigeria, seemingly nationalised knowledge production about the country's shared beliefs, ideologies and idiosyncrasies is disseminated. Also, by tracing Nigerian literary history along the lines of the national-generational paradigm, insight is provided into specific historical landmarks and events in Nigeria. The literary historiographical leaning on the generational model has yielded three generations so far, with the first one labelled to have started in the year 1958, the second generation is tagged to have begun in the 1980s and the third generation is said to have taken over from the 1990s. At the moment, 21st-century literary works produced by Nigerians are tagged to be part of the third generation. More details on the generational formation are provided in a subsequent subsection.

For now, one should bear in mind that Nigerian writers were, for a long time, perceived as post-colonial “questioners and reformers” who criticise the “human condition obtainable in the society it mirrors”.¹⁴ However, there is now a greater awareness about how contemporary literary works reflect individual idiolects and interests, rather than collective political attitudes and actions. Some literary critics like Osa Osayimwense who have noticed this global shift situated in personhood have collectivised contemporary literary works in Nigeria as the New Nigerian literature.¹⁵ There is indeed a new class of writers within whose works and realities the global-local intellectual

¹³ Awoyemi-Arayela, ‘Nigerian Literature In English: The Journey So Far?’, 30-31.

¹⁴ Abiola Irele, ‘Narrative, History, and the African Imagination’, *Narrative* 1, no. 2 (1993): 156–72.

¹⁵ Osayimwense Osa, ‘The New Nigerian Youth Literature’, *Journal of Reading* 30, no. 2 (1986): 100–104.

dynamics have received accentuation. In terms of forms, although Ben Okri, a Nigerian writer classified as part of the second generation did set the pace in the exploration of speculative fiction, contemporary Nigerian writers have appreciably delved into fantasy, science fiction, magical realism in inventive ways, even writing defiant, genre-bending works that reject categorisation due to exposure to a more diverse literary sphere that demand theorisation and in-depth study in literary-historical capacities. For Nigerian literary scholars, this is not to say that the ‘old’ Nigerian literature of the late 20th century did not deal with issues of subliminal interactivity with a context greater than the national or postcolonial nature, but contemporary Nigerian literary production is believed to be experiencing a surge of genuine global orientation and integration into a universal storyboard flourishing with diversity in form and content in a way that necessitates historical contemplation and engagement.

0.3 A Short Overview of Nigeria’s Literary Space

One too many times, it has been said that written literature in Nigeria and Africa was heralded by the kind-hearted pale faced *Oyinbos* who took it upon themselves to acquaint the natives with English, the language of civilisation, which cannot only be heard and spoken but also written and read. These British *Oyinbos* came to ‘Nigeria’ after other forerunners had come to test the waters, they saw the abysmal non-literate situation in almost all of the parts that later came to be Nigeria, they shook their saged necks like skinned Agama lizards, and they decided to build an empire of literacy, of English-ness, of civil, four-cornered formal, missionary educational centres that they simply decided to call schools. They, the sage-necked, gran-like wisdomers embroidered the paths to the schools with scented confectionaries that, no doubt, attracted every Hansel, Gretel, and Man Friday, but fed them not with food, but with alphabets, numbers, and Christian doctrines.

However, before colonialism, Christianity, Islam, Arabic or English, the pre-colonial societies that later came to constitute Nigeria had oral literature(s) of their own. What constituted and still constitute the orature of these societies include poetry (panegyrics, religious, political verses, songs, rhymes); prose narratives (folktales, legends, myths), proverbs, riddles, oratory and elaborately enacted dramas, rituals and festivals.¹⁶ Deemed to be “as natural as speech precedes

¹⁶ Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*, vol. 1, World Oral Literature Series (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012).

writing”,¹⁷ these oral literary practices are posited to be the origin of Nigerian literature written in other indigenous languages or English. Well, it is not uncommon to trace the written literature of most societies to their oral precedents. However, in the Nigerian case, several oral literary forms have been nearly eroded due to the volatility of transmission but also because of the demonising, dismissive and, most times, derogatory treatment they received at the hands of Christian missionaries, colonial administrators and Western scholars who thought them to be more useful for anthropological or ethnographic (comparative) research rather than for artistic and creative endeavours that deserve appreciation.¹⁸ Thus, for subversive reasons, it has made it historically necessary to stress more than ever the oral root of *any kind* of written Nigerian literature and also make clear the reason for its disparaged status which Rotimi Fasan presents nicely in these words:

The relegation of oral Nigerian literature and the disruption of the smooth and natural transition from an oral to a literate culture was partly a consequence of the interruption occasioned by the advent of the Abrahamic religions and their introduction of Arabic and English into pre-colonial Nigerian societies. An additional factor was colonialism which provided political ballast to the assimilationistcum-hegemonic effort of foreign religionists, particularly Christian missionaries.¹⁹

While oral literature constitutes the first strand of Nigerian literary history, the second strand, which is the literature written in indigenous languages, is a derivative of the first and an antecedent of the third. However, it is noteworthy that despite the over 250 ethnic languages Nigeria boasts of, only the three major indigenous languages have a written literary trajectory. Just as it has been noticed by most scholars, most Nigerian languages (like in several parts of the continent) can only be heard and spoken; only a few of them can be read and written. In essence, the most acknowledged languages with written literary cultures are Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, with each of the languages having an etymological evolution of what has come to constitute their scripts.

Surviving seventeenth-century Hausa literary poems and the works of later scholars in the nineteenth century as well as the early twentieth century reveal that the written form of the language is a mix of Ajami, Arabic, Boko, and Roman scripts. Independence nationalist Abubakar

¹⁷ Rotimi Fasan, ‘Mapping Nigerian Literature’, 34.

¹⁸ The oral literary practices of Nigerian pre-colonial societies were compared to their Western counterparts. Most of the conclusions reached was that the former is the crude, childhood form of the latter and is highly tied to ritualistic, spiritual functions.

¹⁹ Fasan, ‘Mapping Nigerian Literature’, 35.

Tafawa Balewa is one of the Hausas whose 20th-century novel titled *Shehu Umar* resonates with the most contemporary variant of the Hausa lingo.²⁰ Pita Nwana's *Omenuka* is the first acknowledged novel written in Igbo. However, before his novel, Igbo non-literary works had been produced by Christian missionaries, with Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther becoming regarded as a major pioneer of literatising the Igbo language. He translated the English Bible into Yoruba and Igbo in the mid-1880s. On a contemporary note, Tony Uchenna Ubesie has a longstanding reputation of being the most known novelist that writes in the Igbo language.²¹

The Yoruba language has a longer, denser trajectory of literary history; although it has been scholarly asserted that it did not become a written language till 1842 with the advent of Christian mission projects, it has been alternatively claimed that, like Hausa, the language was written in other scripts like Ajami (adapted Arabic) and Roman before what is now known to be Yoruba letters and writing came to be established by educated elites.²² However, amidst contentions about the beginning of writings in Yoruba (literary or otherwise), literary scholars have acknowledged the 1930-published *Itan Emi Segilola Eleyinjuege, Elegberun oko Laiye* by Isaac B. Thomas to be the first written Yoruba modern novel.²³ This work has been followed by an array of Yoruba written literary explorations, the most popular and internationally recognised being the novels written by Isola Akinwunmi as well as Daniel Olorunfemi Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* (1938) which, in 1968, was translated into English by Wole Soyinka as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*.

Because of the heavy conceptual and historiographical descriptions subsequently provided in this thesis, the introductory chapter does not contain sections on theory and methodology or literature review. Rather, what follows is an in-depth elucidation of the sources and structure of this thesis. It should be noted that, going forward, the term 'contemporary written Nigerian literature-in-English' is abridged to 'Nigerian literature'. So, unless it is stated otherwise, the phrase 'Nigerian

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ernest Emenyonu, *The Literary History of the Igbo Novel*, African Literature in African Languages (London: Routledge; Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003017455>.

²² Karin Barber, ed., 'Yoruba Language and Literature', *African Studies: Oxford*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199846733-0156>.

²³ Adeboye Babalola. "Yoruba Literature." In *Literatures in African Languages*. Edited by B. W. Andrzejewski, S. Pilaszewicz, and W. Tyloch, 157–189. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

literature' refers only to contemporary written Nigerian literature-in-English which this thesis primarily focuses on.

0.4 Sources

True enough, this thesis tilts towards a literary base; this has necessitated the consultation of some literary texts that are mostly useful as references for explicating on mentioned concepts and supporting arguments or criticisms handed down in subsequent chapters. The literary texts are selectively analysed in bits and pieces just as references are made to names of books, authors, and publishing houses when applicable. However, what constitutes the bulk of this thesis is mostly contingent on secondary sources, and the resultant delineations that stem from a close reading of several secondary texts. Thus, secondary research materials are also *primarily* important within the context of this thesis. Different kinds of secondary sources are used in each chapter for the purpose of providing historical evidence to support assertions or augment specific criticisms.

For one, several online articles in international circulation that focus directly or indirectly on the three concepts that are important to this thesis are consulted and mentioned to varying degrees. Only few scholars write extensively on the concept of the literary generation, and most of these discussions about the concept is usually tied to national literary traditions, with the likes of Ichim Laurentiu, Marius Hentea and Astrid Eril, connecting their writings to the literary practices of countries that are outside the boundaries of West Africa or even the African continent. However, their articles prove to be useful for understanding the definitions of the literary generational concept as well as its applicability in settings and spaces outside Nigeria or even the literary-historical discipline. In fact, the result of consulting a chunk of secondary materials about the description of literary generational paradigms in countries that stretch across several continents is essentially what makes up a whole sub-section of chapter one.

Postcolonialism and globalisation are also broad concepts that are applied in different contexts and within different disciplines. Efforts have been made in this thesis to study and source from fundamental texts that provide in-depth theoretical knowledge about these phenomena. Leela Gandhi, Edward Said, Franz Fanon, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatri Spivak are all popular names whose originary explications into the nature of postcolonialism have been considered and made to

feature significantly in this thesis' own cogitations about the theory. Arjun Appadurai, Raymond Grew, Michael Lang, and the works of a slew of global historians are also core parts of defining the conceptual structure of globalisation as it features in this thesis. However, Frederick Cooper's centering of the term globalisation within the African context has found great applicability and appreciation within the scope of this thesis; Cooper's own skeptical projection of the term onto the distinctly rugged African situation allows for a reflective, tailored discursive incorporation of the equally tenuous concept. The originally conceptualised notion of the Dance of the Flows and Fragments provides the right footing to further explicate on the circumstantial association of globalisation with Nigeria's third generation literature, but it also provides an opening into criticising the assumptive premises that have birthed the claim in the first place.

Away from these first kinds of secondary sources, more focus has been placed on sourcing for materials that specifically focus on Nigerian literature and its historical development. The online articles of Rotimi Fasan and young literary scholars studying in Nigerian universities have proven particularly helpful. Also, works by Alan Roscoe, Chris Dunton, Harry Garuba, Ernest Emenyonu, Maik Nwosu, Isidore Diala, Solomon Amuzie and so on have been consulted and incorporated in this regard. However, while these literary scholars make constant reference to the three literary generations in Nigeria, they hardly speak of how it came to be that the country's national literature is modeled after the generational paradigm. Thus, there is hardly a tracement of ontological or historical beginnings in these articles, but by critically examining these sources as a collective, a historiographic pattern has been 'recovered' and used to construct a structural, formulaic idea of how the generational model might have come to be adopted and used, especially since the 1960 independence of Nigeria.

With regards to the critical aspect, this thesis has particularly built upon the criticisms of so many scholars about the use and method of literary generations. Most consulted critics like Harry Garuba, Biodun Jeyifo, Abiola Irele, Taiwo Osinubi etc. are Nigerian scholars, but a majority of the criticisms brought up in chapters three to have been appropriated based on the readings of the work of scholars from other former colonies who share the same sentiments about the problems of the literary generations and other axiatic concerns.

On a third note, reviews, journalistic reports, and literary appreciations of particular canonical books in Nigerian literature constitute another major set of materials that are brought into fore, especially in aiding the brief description of literary texts as they are highlighted and discussed extensively in the presentation of arguments in the three research chapters. Given the problem of generational representability, a major decision was made to not focus on the literary analyses of specific texts but to rather put the focus on referential attributions of characters and criticisms to concerned literary works in the analytical section of the thesis. This decision has reflected greatly on the outcome of subsequent chapters, taking away from them the literary edge of close reading, but also bestowing on them an appreciable historically accentuated outlook. Within the discussion of each generation, certain literary texts will be made reference to, more than others, because of their positionings in general discourses about Nigerian literature. An example is Chinua Achebe's *The African Tetralogy Series* (*Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, *Man of the People*). Given the proliferation of literary outputs in the twenty-first century, there are quick, passing references made to books that have received domestic and international acclaim in recent times.

0.5 Thesis Outline

Following this short introduction, the rest of this thesis is divided into three chapters, of which the first is conceptual and comparative, the second descriptive, and the third critical. The conceptual chapter explores the notions of literary generation, postcolonialism and globalisation as they relate to the topic at hand. The second chapter presents and historicises the Nigerian pattern of literary generations while the third chapter focuses on criticising the literary generational historical narrative through the lens of the already discussed concepts as well as other categories of analysis like the nation, space, and language. In this third chapter, a section is dedicated to briefly discussing alternative frameworks that can be used instead of the generational paradigm.

On a comprehensive note, the first chapter eases the way for a discussion about the adoption of the generational concept as a framework for historicising Nigerian literature. It contains highly nuanced and deftly stacked information about the state of the research on literary generations. The description of the literary-generation concept is followed by a deconstruction of the historical narrative of postcolonialism and globalisation, with references made to examples from Nigerian

literature. These concepts are approached from a theoretical angle, but they are presented in a tailored fashion which resonates with the thrust of this thesis. It is worth mentioning that the description and delineation of these concepts come from different directions and spectrums, hence they tend to give a clustered vibe. Beneath the clustering of information and critical reflections, the chapter serves the purpose of unpacking the conceptual frameworks of this thesis in a way that allows for a better understanding of subsequent chapters.

The second chapter is structured based on the three numerical generations that comprise the history of Nigerian literature. Aside from the introduction, the first section is dedicated to descriptively providing historiographical information about the first generation and the next two sections discuss the second and third generations in such a manner as well. However, a last section is added in which 21st-century developments in the Nigerian literary sphere are discussed. The evaluative outlook presented in the last paragraph becomes the leeway that allows for thorough critical perspectives on the generational paradigm to be presented in the third chapter. After a number of alternative frameworks have been briefly highlighted in the last section of chapter three, a conclusion follows. In the conclusion, there is a summative reiteration of the points that have been raised and discussed in the three research chapters. At the same time, the conclusion offers itself as a medium to emphasise that the thesis does not propose definite solutions or answers to the many questions raised within the scope of the thesis.

Chapter One:

The Literary Generational Paradigm in Postcolonial Contexts

The significance of a particular date (whether expressed as 1989, or the 1980s, or the Reagan years, or the late twentieth century, or the recent past) is, for the purposes of literary history, always going to be a representation, a narrative device, rather than some kind of more externally measurable temporal bedrock. - Jordan Stein²⁴

1.1 Defining the Literary Generation

The literary generation which constitutes the crux of this thesis is both a practical method of literary historicisation as well as a concept. It is sociological in its initial orientation, but it has now been deployed in different contexts and disciplines including history and literature. However, the concept of a generation can be said to be analogous to a giant beanstalk that has grown into a formidable methodology in literary-historical discourses, but whose origin is in above the clouds and not so comprehensible or overtly perceptible to the minds of many scholars in literary studies. It has, many times, been used as an axiom, a casual term of convenience in the discussion of national literatures but its uncritical, heuristic usage is mostly unchecked because of the concept's biologically related etymology and the scientific shininess it possesses.

However, in the last ten years, attempts have been made to accord the usage of the concept a provenance that resonates with its historical development. If there is one fact that scholars making these attempts hold strongly, it would be Robert Wohl's words that "historical generations are not born; they are made".²⁵ Attempting to provide a refreshing shift from Henri Peyre's seminal yet problematic recasting of several national literatures into self-constructed generations, Marius Hentea inquired into its origin and evolution. He briefly highlighted the role of post-Enlightenment scholars in transposing the term 'generation' from a naturalistic context to a sociological and

²⁴ Stein, 'American Literary History and Queer Temporalities', 861.

²⁵ Marius Hentea, "The Problem of Literary Generations: Origins and Limitations," *Comparative Literature Studies* 50, no. 4 (2013): 567–88, <https://doi.org/10.5325/complitstudies.50.4.0567>.

philosophical context.²⁶ The institutionalisation of the sociological turn of the generation and its eventual literary appropriation mostly happened in France during the nineteenth century, with Sainte-Beuve considered to be the “greatest champion of the generation as a critical tool in literary history.”²⁷ Even at that time, the creation of literary generational categories was tied to burgeoning modern socio-political logics and events such as democratisation, centralisation and technology.

Norwegian literary scholar Hans Jaeger also wrote extensively about the evolution of the generation as a term, but he could not fill in the gap with regards to the rationale behind the terminological transition and quick adoption of the term in literature.²⁸ However, according to Ichim Laurentiu, the significant rise and usage of the literary generation concept has been informed by ideological and political “destabilising forces acting for so long upon the creative act and cultural products” which have, in turn, conditioned scholars to look for convenient ways to sequentially and ‘phasally’ study the literary outputs that have emerged across several national settings through the passage of time.²⁹ Thus, literary-historical generations are carved out of the dominant mentality(ies) of the epoch. While political realities like totalitarianism and communism (or communist dictatorship) have shaped the formation, disintegration and reformation of literary generations in former European, Soviet Union and even Central Asian countries like China, ‘New-Worlding’, colonialism, slavery and the death-dealing historical event of 9/11 has greatly shaped America’s own way of conceptualising generations.

This would make it seem like literary generations are conceived synchronically based on historical events as they happen in time and space, but it goes beyond this. The concept of generation finds its theoretical rootedness in the basic, sociological practice of collective grouping based on age, genre, ethnicity, gender etc. Even more, what constitutes a generation of writers is shaped by prevalent discourses propagated by literary journalistic endeavours that are often insensitive to academic contemplations and are more inclined to take into consideration the extent to which writers are influenced by or deviate from their antecedents, their commercial success, and the

²⁶ Hentea, ‘The Problem of Literary Generations’.

²⁷ Ibid, 571.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ichim Laurențiu, “Theories and Theorists of the Literary Generation Concept. Contemporary Semantic Re-Evaluations and Their Socio-Cultural Impact,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 63 (October 1, 2012): 283–87, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.10.040>.

history of the reception of their works amongst readers and critics. There is, thus, a connection linking together generationality, sociology, temporality, spatiality, and memory so much that a generation is also diachronically “connected to notions of cultural genealogy and memory transmission... mnemonic communities formed from inherited experiences of previous temporal realities, and in relation to their positionalities with regards to past historical periods”.³⁰

The multivocal nature of the literary generational concept as it has been elucidated above has constituted a problem with regards to finding a common definition for it. There has so far been a constant re-thinking of the criteria upon which the birthing of a generation was founded. Most of these conceptually evolved definitions take into account Albert Thibaudet’s premise that “a generation does not begin or end in a precise point. It belongs to continuity... The literary generations result from abstractions of criticism, whose duty is to construct ideal realities that can be imagined and circulated”.³¹ In framing an ideal framework of a literary generation, Mircea Vulcanescu appealed to the ‘seven-sense’ core of academia, drawing from the variant genealogical, chronological, sociological, economical, cultural and psychological explanations accrued to the term in order to come up with a solid, literary-based definition. Laurentiu translates it to read as thus: “A generation is a social bio-psycho-historical group predominantly made up of persons of the same age who act simultaneously, spontaneously, with their age-solidarity awareness. The manifestations of this group are determined by the fact that its members took part in a certain historic event whose influence they suffered during their intellectual formation – which makes similar concerns prevail, as well as a resemblance in material and masters.”³²

A Brazilian literary scholar Ralph Dimmick identified seven criteria that must be fulfilled before a generation can be said to exist. Firstly, the members of the generation must be contemporaries, born around the same period; also, they must have similar educational backgrounds and institutional affinities. The third and fourth criteria mandate the generation members to have achieved artistic maturity at about the same time and even published/debuted their greatest works

³⁰ Investigadora independiente and Elsa M. Treviño, “The Concept of Generation in the Study of Twenty-First Century Mexican Literature: Usefulness and Limitations,” *Lingüística y Literatura*, 2018, 110–29, <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.lyl.n74a06>.

³¹ Laurențiu, “Theories and Theorists of the Literary Generation Concept. Contemporary Semantic Re-Evaluations and Their Socio-Cultural Impact,” 284.

³² Laurențiu, 285.

in the same period.³³ The fifth criterion is that the members must be connected by means of shared personal contact enabled by their individual contributions to similar political movements within which they must have exhibited strong traits of leadership while the sixth criterion has to do with linguistic uniformity. The seventh criterion which I consider the most important is that the generation members are compelled to have emerged at the eve of a ‘generational event’ that binds them together and causes their works to be channeled to speaking to similar situations. On a colloquial note, generation members are required to be ‘Justice League’ characters who emerge from the blues at a significant, turning point in history. All the criteria, requirements and guidelines set by the above scholars are similar in many ways as they mostly imply ‘same-ness, similarity, congruence, coherence’.

Bringing it home, the generational criteria emphasised by Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton also resonate with what the likes of Dimmick already pointed out. According to them, writers of a generation “either fall within a loosely determined age bracket or are published within a loosely defined timeframe.”³⁴ The other important criterion is they share “themes / tropes [that] are shaped by *identifiable* events or experiences.”³⁵ One essential point raised by the duo is that generations can exist without bearing the banner of a particular cause or mission, but when generational members ‘instrumentalise’ their works for the purpose of advocating for sociopolitical movements or propelling activism as it concerns certain collective causes, then, that generation becomes a school that can be likened to “Italian and Russian Futurism, French Surrealism, Latin American boom fiction, American Beat poetry”, HopePunk etc. It is within the locus of this assertion that postcolonial Nigerian literature lies. In this sense, Adesanmi and Dunton managed to compare the literary generations that operate in modern Africa (beginning from the 20th century) with the European and American literary movements/schools.

Other scholars like Tudor Vianu, Astrid Eril and Elsa Trevino do not necessarily see the age component as important but they agree that writers of a generation must share individual, national, socio-economic, artistic similarities amongst themselves that lead to manifestations of a convergence of poetics. In other words, they (writers that constitute a generation) must “feel,

³³ Ralph Edward Dimmick, ‘The Brazilian Literary Generation of 1930’, *Hispania* 34, no. 2 (1951): 181–87, <https://doi.org/10.2307/333570>.

³⁴ Adesanmi and Dunton, “Nigeria’s Third Generation Writing,” 13.

³⁵ Adesanmi and Dunton, 13.

believe, know and want similar things and have identical attitudes towards similar issues.”³⁶ It is just as Adesanmi and Dunton noted, “most literary traditions agree on temporal coevality, and ideological/thematic coherence as two significant features in the constitution of a generation.”³⁷ However, in the Nigerian case, although it is not explicitly stated, age markers are quite important in the process of generational formation. Isidore Diala attempted to justify this by saying that “age-grades are markers of history... they are also markers of historical milestones in oral cultures. [...] There is surely a sense in which Soyinka’s generation differs from that of the group of writers born mainly after 1960, even if the Nobel laureate is still active in writing and producing literary works.”³⁸

From the scholarly consensus about the criteria upon which the essence of a generation rests, it is clear that the generational concept stems from the need to conveniently and scientifically fold literary-historical processes into understandable layers of meaning that help scholars to easily come to grips with evolving heterogeneous trends as it concerns the literary practices of a place or group of people. However, the problem of finding a ‘definite’ definition for the concept of the generation has put a harrowing blight on the efforts of literary historians who adopt the model in their studies. According to Hentea, the different, constantly changing metrics around which a generation is defined has watered down its analytical potency and created an anti-scientific ‘crisis of value’. In his opinion, “until literary historians agree on a definition of the generation (based on biological age, national or linguistic groupings, spatial proximity, etc) there will be no means of moving beyond the merely anecdotal.”³⁹ This problem of definition sets the pace for the criticisms that will be discussed in chapter three. At the moment, it is enough to know that the fault-lines exhibited by the generational model have led to its erratic adoption in national literary traditions. The next section provides insight into the reception of the generational paradigm within the scope of different national literatures.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Solomon Awuzie, “Narratives and the African Experience,” 124.3.

³⁹ Hentea, 581.

1.1.1 National Literary Traditions and the Generational Paradigm

Although the history of literature is one that dates to the earliest men who had their peculiar storytelling methods and traditions, national literary histories are actually recent constitutions still in the process of morphing and becoming. This is because, in different parts of the world, nations are modern phenomena. Jordan Stein pointed this out while noting that the creation of a literary history only became trendy amongst US scholars in the late nineteenth century⁴⁰. The traditional approach to creating the literary history of any nation is through the formation of literary pedigrees and genealogies which are then consistently passed across from one epoch to another through pedagogical tools such as school curricula and periodised teaching schemes. Based on this methodological praxis, it is generally assumed that literary history should be chronologically rendered because history is measured by temporal flows. This idea has been held true and abiding since the conception of history itself, with Leopold von Ranke defining history as a documentation and scripting of the past “as it actually happened” (‘Wie es eigentlich gewesen’).⁴¹

Thus, although there is a general acknowledgment that the disciplines of literature and history are both involved in the production of narratives that might be in non-sequential orders, temporality and chronological ordering of events are still considered the distinctive qualities of historical study, even by literary scholars. This assumptive importance of chronology in literary history offers validation to the concept of literary generation in a way that makes it seem like a sensible choice for literary historicisation. The acceptance of the literary generation trope is further foregrounded against the frantic efforts by literary scholars to debunk the prevalent belief that the infusion of abundant theoretical knowledge in literary history has rendered it ahistorical.⁴² By using such periodising approaches as the generational model, literary historians aim to suppress the influence of ahistorical approaches in literary studies.

Owing to this, the literary generational paradigm has, to certain degrees, found acceptance amongst literary historiographers in different countries. It can even be said to be universal as much of oral

⁴⁰ Stein, ‘American Literary History and Queer Temporalities’.

⁴¹ Colin Campbell, ‘Ranke’s Place in (Writing) History: The Key Is “What Actually Happened”’, *The New York Times*, 9 November 1986, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/09/us/ranke-s-place-in-writing-history-the-key-is-what-actually-happened.html>.

⁴² Stein, ‘American Literary History and Queer Temporalities’.

genealogical traditions rely on it. It is more so common in religious literature, with the literary authority structure of several religions like Judaism, Islam, and Christianity basing the trajectorisation of their handed down scriptures on the generational model. The Judaist's Talmud, Islamic Hadith and the Old and New Testaments of the Bible are filled with generational and genealogical mappings. Genesis chapter five and Matthew chapter one start with a rendering of the "book of the generations" of the first man Adam as well as the "book of the generations" of Jesus Christ.⁴³ Also, in volume eight, book 76 of Hadith 437, these words are quoted with fervour: "The best people are those of my generation, and then those who will come after them (the next generation), and then those who will come after them (i.e. the next generation), and then after them."⁴⁴ This goes to show how grounded the use of the generation is.

On a literary note, it is worth noting that the generational approach is used differently in other national contexts. Although modern Nigerian literature has acknowledged it as its primary method of discerning and dissecting its literary trajectories, it is only partially used by some nations while other national environments reject it entirely, viewing it as incapable of capturing the literary heritage of their countries. It is thus necessary to evaluate how the literary generational paradigm has been received and used on transnational and comparative levels. According to Hentea, the first, strongly impactful use of the term 'generation' to refer to a group of literary writers was in France during the 1820s when Balzac, Comte, Cournot, de Vigny, Hugo, and Michel considered to be children of the French Revolution were, by way of literary reference, called the glorious generation.⁴⁵ Hentea's claim is subsumed beneath a more general argument that the generation concept, as it applies to a literary context, developed sporadically in different parts of the world but gained prominence starting from 1914 and in the periods following the First World War, a time when literary works dwelt on the lived experiences of soldiers and citizens whose everydayness was filled with hunger, violence, pain and death. The writings inspired by the war sparked Wohl's popular conception of a war generation and birthed the theoretical cogitations of generational proponents like Karl Mannheim, Wilhelm Dilthey, "Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Wilhelm Pinder, and Julius Petersen [who] wrote about generation [and generational

⁴³ This reference is made from the Bible and it applies to any of its many versions.

⁴⁴ 'Sahih Al-Bukhari 6429 - To Make the Heart Tender (Ar-Riqaq) - Kitab al-Raqaq - Sunnah.Com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad', accessed 31 May 2021, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6429>.

⁴⁵ Hentea, "The Problem of Literary Generations," 571.

identities] in the 1920s and 1930s, either apparently under the impression of, or with direct reference, to the First World War”.⁴⁶

Furthermore, although one is prone to think that the generational concept used in the Nigerian context was adopted from the colonial British literary system, Hentea made it clear that while the concept is always in use in the literary scholarship of countries like France, Spain, Germany as well as Hispanic-American regions, “the generation [as a concept and methodological tool] has not found a comfortable home in American or British scholarship despite the efforts of Robert Wohl and Samuel Hynes to give it greater prominence”.⁴⁷ This explains why English literature still weaves its historical developments around established periodisations that range all the way from the Anglo-Saxon era, the medieval, classical period to the Renaissance and (post)modern times. In a more contemporary context, it has to be mentioned that, in the US and the UK, the generational paradigm is still acknowledged and put to use. But it is employed in fragments, not utilised holistically as in the case of Nigeria. For one, David Cowart gave examples of how the First World War as well as the modern and postmodern periods birthed literary generations in the US, especially of poets.⁴⁸ Also, in a report, Anders Olsson and his colleagues spoke of how the literary history of the USA has given rise to three generational cohorts of 20th-century prose fiction writers, all of whom are part of the broader literary period called the American Century.⁴⁹ In the UK, the same also obtains; the age of Romanticism in English literature has been categorised using the generational model as Romantic poets like William Wordsworth, John Keats, Samuel Coleridge etc. have been generationalised as British ‘Lake poets’.⁵⁰ However, the use of generation in these literary settings merely serves as a sub-historiographical paradigm under the umbrella of much larger systems.

There are, however, some countries whose national literary histories heavily depend on the generational model. One of these countries is Spain. Spanish literary history which is charted from

⁴⁶ Astrid Erll, “Generation in Literary History: Three Constellations of Generationality, Genealogy, and Memory,” *New Literary History* 45, no. 3 (2014): 385–409.

⁴⁷ Hentea, “The Problem of Literary Generations: Origins and Limitations,” 567.

⁴⁸ David Cowart, *The Tribe of Pyn: Literary Generations in the Postmodern Period* (USA: University of Michigan Press, 2015).

⁴⁹ Anders Olsson et al., ‘Literary Generations and Social Authority: A Study of American Prose-Fiction Debut Writers, 1940-2000 -- A Scholarly Account’ (Mid Sweden University, Faculty of Human Sciences, Department of Humanities, 2006).

⁵⁰ Hentea, 571.

the period before the Spanish Civil War to the decades following the war is, in connection to the generational model, called *generacion literaria* (literary generation). While it is a practiced model that has become naturalised, longstanding, and convenient, like in the Nigerian case, it has also attracted criticisms from scholars, one of whom is Christopher Soufas. According to Soufas, the generational approach is “an extreme model in relation to other possible approaches to literary history within the larger profession in both the United States and Europe”.⁵¹

It is by tracing the historiographical origin of the Spanish literary generation that Soufas was able to reveal the extreme inconsistencies of the generational approach used in Spanish literature. The earliest Spanish Generation of 1898 made prominent by Azorin (José Martínez Ruiz) in 1910 has been deemed to be too simplistic given how it classifies Spanish writers within the time period by using the criteria of age and the controversial, multivalent historical event of *el desastre* in which Spain lost its Cuban, Filipino, Puerto Rican and Guamanian colonies.⁵² This Generation of 1898 is followed by the generations of 1914 and 1927, and together, they form the periods around which Spanish literary history is taught. Geographically variant as this example may be, it reflects the condition of the three stipulated Nigerian literary generations. In the case of the two literary generational traditions (Spain and Nigeria), the central essence of the formations and mechanisms with which they are made are questionable. They are also both profoundly influenced by nationalism and nationalist activities.

While Spain provides a good example of a country that uses generations as a totalising way of understanding its literary processes, Brazil provides a convenient example of using the model to simply represent phenomenal literary periods, events, or consequential coincidences. For one, literary scholar Dimmick confidently constituted the Brazillian literary “Generation of 1930” in a way that has become largely acceptable within the national literary history.⁵³ The premise for setting up this generation is that most of Brazil’s finest authors and “brightest [literary] stars” published their first novels within the space of 1930 - 1935. These writers - Jorge Amado, Marques Rebelo, Jose Lins do Rego, Gilberto Freire, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Raquel de Queiros,

⁵¹ C. Christopher Soufas, ‘Origins and Legacy of the Spanish Literary Generation’, *Anales de La Literatura Española Contemporánea* 36, no. 1 (2011): 209–23.

⁵² Hentea, 577.

⁵³ Ralph Edward Dimmick, ‘The Brazilian Literary Generation of 1930’, *Hispania* 34, no. 2 (1951): 181–87, <https://doi.org/10.2307/333570>.

Graciliano Ramos, Erico Verissimo, Luicio Cardoso, Dionelio Machado, Viana Moog, Amando Fontes, Jose Geraldo Vieira - are, for Dimmick, the 'members' comprising the 'Generation of 1930. Admitting that simply putting together a list of writers who debuted in the 1930s is not the only thing that makes a generation, Dimmick went on to make a list of other criteria of a literary generation following the recommendations of other literary theorists and then, he applied them to his theoretical 1930-generation.

As made known in the previous section, a specific, important criterion is that writers that are placed in a literary generation must be bound by a 'generational event', some sort of historical incident(s) which the authors reel into their representational narratives, even as they establish themselves as adherents and leaders of political, national and literary movements. For Dimmick, the historical event of importance that connected the Brazillian literary Generation of 1930 was the Revolution of October 1930, a historical occurrence preceded by the impact of British imperialism and Portugese colonialism in Brazil as well as the zealous activism for democracy by political and literary leaders.⁵⁴ Dimmick also pointed out that the Generation of 1930 had a common language and possessed some common ancestors that connected them to the past. Concluding his presentation and elucidation on the Generation of 1930, Dimmick ended on this note:

By their concern with contemporary problems, by the raciness of their language, the members of the Generation of 1930 stand out in the literary history of the country. In their common flowering at an important moment in Brazilian history, in their character of auto-didacts, in their similarity of ideas, ideals, and mode of expression, by their constant contact one with another, they form a group which for homogeneity can hardly find a parallel, now or in the past.⁵⁵

From Dimmick's presentation, the Generation of 1930 obviously constitutes a significant aspect of Brazil's literary history but it, by no means, follows from a long string of other generations; this generation is a standalone and it is considered as such.

Away from this line of thought, one of the literary histories that share a strong affinity with Nigeria's literary historical processes is India. As it is, Indian literature also confronts the problem of late historicisation and systematisation, as it only began to be structurally organised at about the same time the country was colonised by Britain. The non-parallel or asynchronous development

⁵⁴ Dimmick, 'The Brazilian Literary Generation of 1930', 182.

⁵⁵ Dimmick, 186.

of its literature and its literary history has been noted by P. P. Raveendran who posited that although “literature in India is as old as its paintings or its sculpture, a sustained pursuit of its history began only at the dawn of the 19th century. That [was] when Indian literature became a theoretical category.”⁵⁶ The novelty of Indian literary history and its nationalist outlook necessitate a means of cohesive historicisation. However, South Asian literature, particularly Indian literature, does not strictly work with the generational method of periodisation. While it is acknowledged that certain literary practitioners had their heydays and reigning moments at certain time periods, there is no historiographical classification of writers based on temporalities or thematic sameness. Instead, Indian literary history is categorised along the lines of its existing ethno-national categories. This is, more or less, referred to as adopting a *genealogical* historiography. Raveendran talked about “the division of Indian history into a predominantly Hindu ancient India, a Muslim-dominated medieval India and a British designed modern India”.⁵⁷

According to him, the literature of Hindu ancient India is considered to be the authentic, old, traditional literature of India, hence, it has been placed in a time capsule and frozen in a state of pastness, such that recent literary explorations of the present that align with what was produced back then are completely ignored. This bears the same tenor with the treatment of Nigeria’s pre-colonial oral literature. Although oral literary practices are still ongoing in Nigeria, and have undergone metamorphic processes of re-enactment like other forms of literature, they have largely been ignored and confined to the past. For this reason, oral literary practices are not included within the praxes of Nigerian literature and their spatio-temporal transformative trajectories have not been periodised inclusively in the same way as contemporary written Nigerian literature.

In any case, the term ‘generation’ is also employed in Indian literary language, but it is used to endorse prominent literary phenomena and events. It is noticed that Salman Rushdie acts as a big influence in Indian literature; thus, he is classified as being a forerunner of a generation attuned to an exquisite, modern, refined form of Indian diasporic English writing. Raveendran does not think too highly of the Rushdie generation, and this is because of the seeming roles of the generation of Indian diasporic writers as colonial demagogues “working in an altered cultural environment in

⁵⁶ P. P. Raveendran, ‘Genealogies of Indian Literature’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 25 (2006): 2558–63.

⁵⁷ Raveendran, ‘Genealogies of Indian Literature’, 2560.

which literature itself has been enlisted in the service of an unscrupulous global and globalised economic order by contemporary capitalism.”⁵⁸ This bears semblance to the perception some literary scholars have about contemporary English writers of Nigerian orientation. The very preference for the use of the English language and the supposed pandering to former colonial authorities for validation and privileges are, for these scholars, enough to discredit this category of literary expressions. The generational mode which authenticates and reifies the colonial roots and continuities of what should be Nigeria’s national literary heritage makes it all the more an unacceptable model for these scholars and even for me.

Speaking further on the origin of historicising and systematically periodising Indian literature, Raveendran speaks of the difference between Indian Literature, literatures in India and literature in India. The author spoke of the distinction between these three, saying while literature in India focuses on the textbook history (the origin and practice) of literature in India, its counterpart literatures in India acknowledges the several strands of literary idiolects, legacies, and practitioners. Indian Literature, for Raveendran, is the more recent form of literary production in India which became “constituted as a self-validating body of knowledge.” This theoretical-bent conception of Indian literature came to be accompanied by a lot of bias and exclusivity of regional literatures that damage what has come to be the established knowledge production about Indian literature. According to Raveendran, the term “Indian Literature” was first used interchangeably with Sanskrit Literature in 1823 by a German romantic theorist named Wilhelm von Schlegel.⁵⁹ This Eurocentric approach to the construction of the theoretical base of Indian language later came to be the foundation upon which Indian scholars built new, ‘Indianised’ praxes of knowledge, most of which underscore and advocate for the embrace of a unified historicisation of the divergent literary cultures in India.

There is a strong similarity between the historical formulation of Indian and Nigerian literature. While both of them have natively peculiar literary trajectories that are worth considering in their own respects, they only became established as objects of knowledge during the “period of colonialist and capitalist expansion, social reform movements, nationalist awakening and the freedom struggle leading finally to the country's independence. It [was] also the period of

⁵⁸ Raveendran, 2561.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 2559.

increasing modernisation of the society with its attendant good and evil effects, of an expanding English studies programme, of a proliferating print culture, of the democratisation of the reading public and, in the sphere of literature, of an overall consolidation of the western ideology of aesthetics.”⁶⁰ Thus, as much as these recognised national literatures try to project unified, holistic literary histories, they are constricted by the political situations, ideological climate and ‘alien’ theoretical base upon which they are built.

Considering the big gulf created by the ontological rootedness of postcolonial literatures like Nigeria and India in a colonially convoluted state of existence, it is necessary to detangle the various strands that come together to make them up and historicise them accordingly. Furthermore, despite the material, concrete absence of former colonisers; the literary traditions of several postcolonial countries which have been infiltrated with nearly inextinguishable European bias have proven to be strongholds with which dominant, Eurocentric cultures have continued to maintain their ominous control over former colonies and their people. Thus, the question of how much of a role orientalist orientations have played in the formation of Indian Literature and whether it is right to purge the literature of its influence has been asked a lot. This question has reinforced the idea that scholarship in Indian literature is a relationship between Indologists, Anglicists and Orientalists.

Another question this raises for Indian literature and, extensively, for Nigerian literature is whether or not there were deliberate efforts to tailor literature of former colonies to cater to the aspirations, ambitions and appetite of the English colonial presence. Well, no doubt there was, as can be seen in the translational politics (translation of Sanskrit texts to English) and selectivity of literary products that went on in colonial India, a process that has been described in E.M Forster’s *A Passage to India*.⁶¹ In the same vein, the authoritative dismissal of the literary qualities of oral literary practices and the offering of validation to indigenous texts through translation have forever affected the conception of literature in Nigeria. In a rippling effect, what was considered literature in Nigeria back then has come to determine what is included and excluded in the current historiographic mapping of its literary history. It would seem then that the contrastive and conflicting diversity that informs the literature of Nigeria in its postcolonial state also manifests

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ E.M Forster, *A Passage to India* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1924).

itself in the literature of other former colonies like India. But it can be said that the partial non-conformity of Indian literature to the generational model has made the issues highlighted above to be better acknowledged and discussed.

With regards to other African countries, the generational paradigm is not nearly as strong as it is in Nigeria. Although it is generally acknowledged and loosely ascribed to writers of other Anglophone and Francophone African countries especially their novelists, it is not strictly adhered to when attempts are made to historicise their literary trajectories. As opposed to the generational model, movements and schools are often used to categorise the literary histories of other African countries. The Negritude is one such school that is associated with Francophone African countries. Also, for what would presumably be referred to as the third generation in Nigeria, the term "les enfants de la postcolonie" (children of the postcolony) has been appropriated in Francophone literature and Jacques Chevrier also coined the term "migritude" to embody writers who are from different African countries.⁶² In this sense, talking about the third generation, Adesanmi and Dunton had this to say:

Nigeria presents a singular case of several hundred writers from the same country who subscribe to the... generation identity and are conscious of that collective image within the reins and dynamics of the broader national literary self-imagining... Nigeria has the largest corpus of... generation texts that are now amenable to critical scrutiny.⁶³

The case of Cape-Verde, an archipelagic cluster of islands located off the western coast of the African continent, however presents a different, interesting example as it also uses the generational paradigm in the same way that Nigeria does. Following its 1975 independence from Portuguese and German colonists who have been said to have 'founded' the archipelago and connecting islands, Cape Verde's literary domain began to be historicised and described with the word 'generation'. As is the situation with Nigeria, its first literary generation has been called 'The Independence Generation', with a couple of writers (seven of whom are the most prominent) associated with this generation.⁶⁴ The Independence Generation is as age-conscious and nationally motivated as the

⁶² Adesanmi and Dunton, 'Nigeria's Third-Generation Literature,' 15.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Gerald M. Moser, *Changing Africa : The First Literary Generation of Independent Cape Verde* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992).

Nigerian counterpart. Gerald M. Moser has written an impressive history about the first literary generation of independent Cape Verde.

On a mutual, ‘transnational’ note, although the generational model is not *explicitly* adopted across Africa, the generational ‘system of marking developments’ has also been extended to the literature of other countries in West-Africa. For one, Dunton is of the opinion that the peculiar features characteristic of third-generation Nigerian Novel can also be found in the contemporary literary works of writers in West-African countries especially Ghana and Kenya.⁶⁵ The generalisation of literary experiences across West-Africa is often because of the similar colonial trajectories and postcolonial developments they share. Also, Nigeria’s literary scene is quite big and more popular in literary journalism, thus, discussions about it mostly tend to overshadow the literary activities of several other West-African countries.

It is not uncommon, then, to see literary critics and scholars applying the generational ‘marker’ casually in the dialectical presentation of the ‘African Novel’ whilst referencing ample texts from Nigerian writers and a few more from other West and East African countries. This I consider to be problematic because the compression of several bodies of literary texts into the phrase ‘African Novel’ inadvertently gives little or no consideration to the parallel and asynchronous literary development in South Africa where there was/is a peculiar strain of post-apartheid novel writing with a focus on crime, thrillers and dramatic infusions or even in Northern African countries like Egypt whose literary development cannot be traced without alluding to the influences of Orientalism, Arabic and Islam.

Conclusively, the continued focus on the tradition of generations in the contemporary literary history of significant places in the world is, for Stein, “the result of [the agelong] conflation between history and time”.⁶⁶ It is from this conflation that national literary histories have been birthed, canons have been carved and plurality of literary differences have been absorbed. However, as can be seen, the generational model works differently for different national literary contexts. The comparative and transnational explanation provided in this section makes this obvious. This slowly eases the way to the discussion of the distinct application of the generational

⁶⁵ Chris Dunton, “‘Wherever the Bus Is Headed’: Recent Developments in the African Novel’, *Research in African Literatures* 50, no. 4 (2019): 1–20.

⁶⁶ Stein, ‘American Literary History and Queer Temporalities,’ 857.

model in Nigerian literature, which constitutes the specific case study of this thesis. But, before getting to that, it is necessary to provide conceptual commentaries on two of the concepts around which Nigerian literary generations are framed: postcolonialism and globalisation.

1.2 Postcolonial Literature: Concept and Practice

“The period after independence”, this is the literal meaning of postcolonialism. However, it has come to be perpetually associated with looking back on the past like a Sankofa,⁶⁷ rather than a focus on an aftermath. It is, however, often theorised that, after colonialism, newly independent nation-states were overcome with a strong sense to forget the colonial experience and carve new polities out of the dregs that had been left by the colonial masters. The illusion of forgetting was so intense that it papered over the overwhelming reality of colonial relics still hanging over the new countries. Thus, unlike other posts-, the post- in postcolonialism signifies an unsuccessful attempt to institute a break from the fettered chains of a disconcerting past amidst discursive representations of the choking limboed existence of nations who are caught between past colonial legacies and present inept national political systems. In this way, postcolonialism accentuates the inevitable recurring indispensability of by-gone historical events, making a mockery of what postcolonial theorist Leela Gandhi terms as the supposed immateriality of the past.⁶⁸

Based on postcolonialism’s focus on the misalignment of past and present tenuous histories in former colonies, Gandhi sets a definition for postcolonialism. According to her, it is the “theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath.”⁶⁹ Gandhi’s emphasis on how postcolonialism is targeted at dis-membering (as opposed to remembering) the colonial past is pretty much the case with regards to the development of postcolonial literature in the Nigerian context. Indeed, Subhendu Mund was right when he noted that “coloniality does not quite end with colonialism, [it] remains alive in our psyche and in our socio-cultural life in many subterranean shapes and affects post-independence institutions in a range of ways.”⁷⁰ Relatedly,

⁶⁷ A symbolic bird associated with “Ghanaian” independence and colonialism. It is used as a totem to signify a retrospective gaze into the past.

⁶⁸ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group), 1998).

⁶⁹ Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 8.

⁷⁰ Subhendu Mund, ‘Anxieties of Post-Coloniality: Postcolonialism and Odia Literature’, *Comparative Literature Studies* 53, no. 2 (2016): 408–16, <https://doi.org/10.5325/complitstudies.53.2.0408>.

just as Bart Moore-Gilbert noted, the “desire [of writers and scholars] for [cultural and national] autochthony” leads them to give excessive attention to the former colonial strongholds in a way that attaches postcolonial endeavours to neocolonial products.⁷¹ As will be seen, this is one of the problems courted by postcolonial first generation Nigerian literature.

Speaking about its intellectual development, postcolonialism was first used in a hyphenated form to historically denote the aftermath of colonisation and the ontological beginning of the hyphenated ‘post-colonialism’ has been said to be found in T.W Allen’s *Journal of the Hellenic Studies*.⁷² Subsequently, the unhyphenated form was used in a historical context by A.R Dunlap and E.J Moyne in their journal *American Speech*; it later went on to be used as a literary concept by Justin M. van der Kroef in an article about Indonesian colonial novel(s) published within *Comparative Literature*.⁷³ Even from its beginning, it is obvious that the substantial situatedness of postcolonial studies in the realm of texts is rather incontestable.

In fact, it is due to postcolonialism’s textual dabbles that postcoloniality has been foregrounded rather than its practical political activism. For Nigerian literature, the adopted generational paradigm has been helpful in systematising and periodising postcolonial literary explorations. This periodisation has been done along thematic and temporal lines, with the first and second generations regarded as nurturing high postcolonial sensibilities. The form of postcolonialism associated with the third generation is different, given its internationalist-bent tenor and the somewhat clashing ideologies that constitute its entire orientation. Although the use of generations has been helpful in systematically mapping Nigeria’s postcolonial ‘literary school’, it has also stirred some challenges that inhibits the understanding of postcolonialism in Nigeria. This thesis lends a resonant voice to elaborating on these problematic disadvantages, especially the problem of exclusivity.

Beyond Nigeria, postcolonial literature encapsulates the currency of the political, sociocultural and literary conditions in contemporary “sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, the Arab

⁷¹ Bart Moore-Gilbert, ‘Postcolonialism: Between Nationalitarianism and Globalisation? A Response to Simon During’, *Postcolonial Studies* 1, no. 1 (1 April 1998): 49–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688799890237>.

⁷² Ato Quayson, ‘Periods versus Concepts: Space Making and the Question of Postcolonial Literary History’, *Modern Language Association (PMLA)* 127, no. 2 (2012): 342–48.

⁷³ Quayson.

world, and to lesser or different extents Latin America, Australia, Canada, Ireland, and even the United States”.⁷⁴ There is no unifying trademark of postcolonialism inscribed in all national literatures; the postcolonial disposition of each national literature differs from one formerly colonised country to another such that scholarly delineations of postcolonial orientations are geographically determined. There is, however, a common character of any literary work regarded as persistently postcolonial and, that is, the complicated placement of the western Centre and the postcolonial Periphery(ies) in narratives that vicariously reflect the multivalence of writers’ cultural and political imaginations. Aparajita Sagar, a postcolonial critic, sums up this characteristic idiosyncrasies while presenting a fine criticism of it:

In the specific colonial and postcolonial context, books likely to be overrated are those that keep the West firmly at the center, even if only as the object of critique... their instant firmability [has] something to do with the pleasure that they offer the West of hearing itself being spoken of at length and with fascination and interest by the apparently Other(?)... [This stems from] the perception of third-world writers as disorientingly angry.⁷⁵

This ‘centering of the Centre’ is a postcolonial consciousness prevalent in regions dealing with the trauma of colonisation and this has caused the literary scapes of these regions to focus on cultural renaissance, racial emancipation and political dialectics of resistance. In one word, regardless of the historical trajectories of the literary productions of countries in Asia, Africa and other former colonies, postcoloniality strongly defines the crux of their literatures. Narrowing it down to African literature, Abiola Irele posited that its value is derived from its ‘sense of historical grievance’ which is not shared by Western intellectuals.⁷⁶ This historically persistent sense of grief has imbued upon the African imagination a deep feeling of responsibility towards narrativising shared experiences with heated, emancipatory political force. What has stemmed from this is an overt series of dichotomisation between the aesthetic and political, the historical and ahistorical, the culturally relevant or realistic works against the thoroughly fictional. This dichotomisation has been rejected in recent times with scholars like Ruth Morse, Bruce Fleming and Irele narrowing in on the paradoxical interconnectedness of political and aesthetic value as they relate to postcolonial

⁷⁴ Moore-Gilbert, ‘Postcolonialism: Between Nationalitarianism and Globalisation? A Response to Simon During’, 2.

⁷⁵ Aparajita Sagar, ‘Twentieth-Century Literature in the New Century: A Symposium’, *College English* 64, no. 1 (2001): 26–27.

⁷⁶ Irele, ‘Narrative, History, and the African Imagination’.

literature; Morse even condemned attempts at political aestheticism while advocating for universalist aesthetics.⁷⁷

The politically charged sentiments occasioned by postcolonialism has stiffened the historical narrativisation of literature in African countries as more attention is given to canonising key political texts and little attention is paid to works that supposedly do not embody the African postcolonial imaginative ideals. This literary rigidity has sparked reactionary writings from critics. In the preface to *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin envisioned the development of a “distinctive discourse of the future” within the sphere of postcolonial literature which would necessitate and attract a different sort of scholarly dissection that would ensure the historical inclusion and comprehension of new, unprecedented literary works that refreshingly kick back against the rigid postcolonial apparatuses that have long since formed the bases of literary conceptualisations.⁷⁸ On the surface level, it would seem that, over the years, changes especially in postcolonial literature have been properly historicised over time with new sets of theories and original concepts coined or neologised to help with the scholastic cognisance of contemporary, socially revved works of literature. It is within this locus that such arising concepts as Afrofuturism, world literature and global literature have either been newly formed or resurged. In spite of this, Nigerian literature is, for the most part, still deemed to have a strong postcolonial texture because, just like a quarter of the world’s literary productions, it has been shaped and influenced greatly by British colonialism.

In light of all these discourses surrounding contemporary postcolonial works and writings, there have been quite a number of debates over the globalising tendency of postcolonial literature, with many scholars shrouded in the dilemma of the local yet global inclinations of postcolonial literary writings. Some of these studies address this issue with condemnatory tones, considering the broad openness of postcolonial literature to issues of a ‘monocultural’, world-ly outlook as an exhibition of colonising impulse or radical alterity deviant from the postcolonial purpose.⁷⁹ (Neo)pluralism is the word used to describe how postcolonialism has become situated in a global life-world that

⁷⁷ Lalita Pandit, ‘Introduction: Local, Global, Postcolonial’, *College Literature* 19/20, no. 3/1 (1992): 1–6.

⁷⁸ Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, New Accents (Routledge (Firm)) (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/fy042/2002068034.html>.

⁷⁹ John C. Hawley, ‘The Colonizing Impulse of Postcolonial Theory’, *Modern Fiction Studies* 56, no. 4 (2010): 769–87.

threatens the multiculturalism of independent post-colonies; this is thus regarded with suspicion because of its perceived identity construction of the Other (the Periphery) based on the contingent legitimization of the Self (the Centre).⁸⁰

Amidst these new, conflicting trends of thought, historical constructions of post-colonial literature are still stunted and repressively hobbling around colonially inclined interpretations. Just as Derek Walcott puts it, all “the muse of history” has ever made out of postcolonial creative writings is that it is a “literature of recrimination and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves or a literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters”.⁸¹ Considering this, there is a need to properly historicise evolving changes in postcolonial literature without the overbearing presuppositions that history has about postcolonialism and its literary outputs. This thesis uses the Nigerian literary sphere as a platform to project the need to flatten out the persistent rhetoric of postcolonialism built around localised narratives from post-colonial regions of the world and historically acknowledge the global trend of alternative meaning-making by contemporary writers. This conclusive remark necessarily serves as an opening for the discussion of the next concept.

1.3 Globalisation and Nigerian Literature

As can be inferred from my explanation above, one of the key markers that make the third generation stand out is its appealing inclination towards globalisation. The global quality of the third generation is often measured by the diasporic stretch of spatiality that its writers occupy, the interstitiality and liminality of works produced (liminality can easily be associated with the notion of space-time compression) as well as the genuine thematic interconnections with different parts of the world embodied in recent literary publications.⁸² On a conceptual note, globalisation is a topical issue that has attracted a lot of debates since the beginning of the 1990s.⁸³ Consequently, it has yielded a repertoire of scholarly works within which the term has become enigmatised,

⁸⁰ Daniel Goh, ‘From Colonial Pluralism to Postcolonial Multiculturalism: Race, State Formation and the Question of Cultural Diversity in Malaysia and Singapore’, *Sociology Compass* 2 (1 January 2008): 232–52.

⁸¹ Pramod Nayar, *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. (Tamil Nadu, India: Pearson Education, 2012).

⁸² Just as it is presented in Frederick Cooper's article, I believe space-time compression to mean the “annihilation of space by time”.

⁸³ Michael Lang, ‘Globalization and Its History’, *The Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 4 (December 2006): 899–931; Jim Sheffield, *Globalization: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Litchfield Pk, AZ: Emergent Publications, 2013).

mystified and even complicated. In fact, it has become a recurrent thematic preoccupation of 20th and 21st century academic scholarship. However, just like Michael Lang pointed out, there is still no singular, clear definition for the term. Instead, the characters and attitudinal manifestations that connote globality have come to inform today's understanding of what globalisation is. Despite the lack of a strict definition for the concept, it is generally agreed upon that globalisation denotes the existence of a geographically inclined network that facilitates "the stretching of social connections between the local and the distant so as to create a highly intensified worldwide scale".⁸⁴

Thus, it is geographically construed in a way that concerns the whole planet, but it also has to do with regional spatial linkages. The persistent search for global connectivity has led to the formation of diverse approaches and conceptual periodisations that allow for the study of past or present local, regional, continental, transcontinental and intercontinental spatial linkages, economic barter as well as political cohesions. The world-system approach which has to do with examining the "maximum set of societies that are significantly connected among themselves in direct and indirect ways" is one such methodology with which the history of globalisation has been analysed.⁸⁵ The approach which was formulated by early historians and sociologists like Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein focuses on circumnavigating spatial categories like mini-systems, world economies and world empires for the purpose of establishing significant connections within a set parameter.⁸⁶

There is a seeming transformative force captured within the essence of globalisation that has captivated the minds of scholars and caused them to hold onto the concept as an indicator of newness. It is perceived as a litmus test with which to measure how several epochal eras from the ancient migratory, nationalistic past (15th to 19th centuries) to the early modern period of industrial revolution (19th to late 20th century) and the contemporary 21st century period have been provoked to follow a designated path of progress and yield themselves to an interconnected unification of symbolic geographies. This understanding of globalisation as planetary, progressive and periodically persistent has heightened since the beginning of the 21st century when the concept

⁸⁴ Lang, 'Globalization and Its History', 900.

⁸⁵ Leonid Grinin and A. Korotayev, 'Origins of Globalization', 2013, 8–35.

⁸⁶ Grinin and Korotayev, 'Origins of Globalization, 13-14.

was officially underpinned as a historical process which began with the “first movement of people out of Africa into other parts of the world” as early as the 1st or 3rd millennium BC before the ‘Great Geographical Discoveries’ began.⁸⁷ Also, giving the concept of globalisation a historical trajectory has caused historians and other scholars alike to identify new features and developments that clearly illustrate shifts or complete changes in the patterns and processes of globalisation.

On a more specific note, the works of Irele, Adesanmi, Dunton and other writers of recent articles in the journal *Research in African Literature* elucidate on the global strain of Nigerian literature, especially the third generation, but I have found Frederick Cooper’s inquiry into the relevance and limitations of globalisation in the study of African history to be very useful for the understanding of globalisation as it manifests in (third-generation) written Nigerian literature-in-English. The next paragraphs are particularly dedicated to explaining the concept of ‘The Dance of the Flows and Fragments’ projected by Cooper in the article titled “What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian’s Perspective”.⁸⁸ The Dance of the Flows and Fragment is one of the three views of globalisation which Cooper elucidated on as he wrote extensively about the practical understanding of the concept of globalisation in the world. It is this view that is most applicable within the context of this thesis.

The first view of globalisation presented by Cooper is the Banker’s Boast. It is economically inclined and it explains how political world powers, corporations with branches and subsidiaries across national borders and ‘global’ economic organisations like the World Bank and IMF achieve exploitative purposes and capitalistic ends under the guise of advancing the creation of a globalised economy. The 21st century is especially regarded as a ‘progressive’ global age developing at a fast pace, and economists treat with ‘urgency’ the need for Africa to catch up with the rest of the world and integrate seamlessly into “a single system of connection — notably through capital and commodities markets, information flows, and imagined landscapes — [that] has penetrated the entire globe”.⁸⁹ The second view - The Social Democrats Lament - projects the anxieties of social(ist) advocates who consider globalisation as the bane of the nation-state, the arch-evil which

⁸⁷ Sheffield, *Globalization: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 2.

⁸⁸ Frederick Cooper, ‘What Is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian’s Perspective’, *African Affairs* 100 (2001): 189-213.

⁸⁹ Cooper, “What Is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian’s Perspective”, 189.

puts a dent on the efforts of collective societal labour and social-economic projects enacted on a national platform. For those who share this view, “globalization must therefore be fought, while, [for] others, it has already triumphed and there is little to do except lament the passing of the nation-state, of national trade union movements, of empowered citizenries.”⁹⁰

According to Cooper, the Dance of the Flows and Fragments which is the third view incorporates the perspectives and temperaments of the aforementioned, with its subscribers acknowledging how the economy has shifted considerably in reaction to a globalising mission and how the nation as a geographical and temporal scale is getting submerged in the totalising project of world homogeneity. However, within this view, there is also an avid recognition of how globalisation has come to mean a reconfiguration of local settings and spaces of existences into the ‘glocal’ - a term that has gained huge traction. This glocal is not so much a symmetric mingling and interaction between several local spatialities but a mostly tentacular flow of culturally immersive products from specific producers to consumers across national boundaries and entrails, opening channels to what Arjun Appadurai has referred to as the five scapes of globalisation: ethnoscares, technoscares, ideoscares, financescares, and mediascares.⁹¹ It is within the mediascape, the realm which accounts for the flow of media and cultural products across borders, that literary works, digital technological resources, new media and mobile “grassroots micronarratives” are foregrounded.⁹² Fielder paraphrased Appadurai’s description of these metaphorical scapes with these words:

Mediascares are produced by the mass ‘mediatic’ systems and products—such as newspapers, magazines, films, among others—which disseminate information at a global level. Technoscares are those landscapes dominated by the diffusion of both mechanical and informational technologies around the world.⁹³

In truth, pop cultural sensations, social and electronic media, the internet, internationalist art and literature have become accessible to a diverse array of populations across the world, especially in the 21st century. In Nigeria, there is a mass popularisation of several digital technological trends

⁹⁰ Cooper, “What Is the Concept of Globalization Good for?”, 193.

⁹¹ Chris Drew, ‘Appadurai’s 5 Scapes of Globalization Explained (2021)’, *Helpful Professor* (blog), accessed 13 January 2021, <https://helpfulprofessor.com/appadurai-scares/>.

⁹² Sergio Fielder, ed. Arjun Appadurai, *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 46, no. 2 (2002): 164–66.

⁹³ Sergio Fielder, ed. Arjun Appadurai, *Social Analysis*, 165.

which has made many concede to the existence of a vibrant global techno-culture and literary vibrancy in the country. This embrace of digital technology has led to not just a reconfiguration of the spatial entity of a 'globe', but it has also bred a new world whereby individuals from any part of the world can universally interact with multiple media forms, image contents and simulated realities that compete with national histories and local cultural identities. In fact, the seeming erosion of distinct national and continental societies by algorithmic filter bubbles and personalised digital communities makes one want to envision the possibility of changing the spatial dimensions of Nigeria from being a fixed country to being a network of moving images shared simultaneously but experienced differentially by anyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, or location.

Aside from Cooper and Appadurai's socio-cultural conceptions of globalisation, other scholars have easily connected globalisation to related culturalist concepts like modernity and postmodernity. Anthony Giddens used the coined notion of 'time-space distanciation' to describe how processes of industrialisation and modernity have led to a closer affinity between the local and global.⁹⁴ A clear evidence of this is the "intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events many miles away."⁹⁵ This globally construed relationship between the far and the near is both acceptably glocal and problematically complex. It is in recognition of how modernity, through symbolic gestures, bridges geographical gaps and maintains universally accepted standards of operation that it has been said that "globalisation is a dependent variable of modernity".⁹⁶ However, just like the economically oriented concept of globalisation, the socio-cultural perspective also denotatively projects the "logic of capitalism" which is market-driven, geared by tokenism, motivated by currency exchanges and which, for many scholars, have resulted "in inequality and injustice [thus necessitating] a new global ethic based on equality and justice."⁹⁷ The enunciative capitalistic tenor of the postmodern strain of globalisation is reflected through global commodity culture, which are embodied through such heavily nuanced concepts as "Disneyfication", 'McDonaldisation' and what some scholars have coined as 'Cocacolonisation'.

⁹⁴ Chandan Sengupta, 'Conceptualising Globalisation: Issues and Implications', *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 33 (2001): 3137–43.

⁹⁵ Chandan Sengupta, 'Conceptualising Globalisation: Issues and Implications', 3140.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

All these terms are used to capture the global franchising of western cultural practices like the proliferation of fast-food and soft-drink brands, the adoption of fast fashion and lifestyle traditions as well as the transmediatic expansion of material, musical, literary, and cinematic products etc. The diversification of profoundly western ideas, assets and cultural trends across localised terrains have made many scholars debate the authenticity of globalisation, with many scholars arguing that the term is simply a convenient way to describe a thorough-bred form of westernisation. Others, however, negate this opinion about cultural globalisation, noting that the pluralised, tentacular metamorphoses that seemingly globalised trends undergo dampen the argument that globalisation is tantamount to westernisation.

But, in this thesis, globalisation is not equated to westernisation; it is rather perceived as a concept that is inadequate to describe the processes of cultural and literary change in Nigeria and beyond due to its propensity to be superficial. Thus, in this thesis, one major contention is that although the current wave of cultural symbolic events denotes the presence of globalisation in Nigerian literature, there is an accentuated technological dimension to these events which strengthen the hypothesis that globalisation is altogether a façade that does not hold up to its much-weighted conceptual meaning. Thus, it should not be used as a yardstick to define what is third-generational or what constitutes 21st-century Nigerian literature. In fact, if anything, it is becoming clear that 21st-century Nigerian literature evolves rapidly in the face of constantly readjusted, unstable geopolitical, economic power play and symbolic mediatic geographies. This point is well emphasised in chapter three. But first, the next chapter, which is heavily descriptive, is important for understanding the three generations that constitute Nigerian literature and the historiographical traditions surrounding these three generations.

Chapter Two: Generations in the Literary History of Nigeria

*Time is not ours to write, but [literary] history is - Jordan Stein.*⁹⁸

2.1 Introduction

Not much has been scholarly documented about the origin of the historiographical use of the generational concept in Nigerian literature. If ever there is still any information about the details of its beginning, then, they can only be found in barely extant literary textbooks (hard copies), lesson plans of veteran literary educators, and old school curricula, all of which were inaccessible at the time of writing this thesis. Even then, the History curriculum of Nigeria's educational system is quite problematic, distorted, temporally short-sighted, and handed down to English-speaking educators on the platform of an ingrained, assimilative western consciousness, so it offers little insight into the true political trajectory of the country, just as it offers minimal knowledge about its literary history. However, like the speculations of renowned Nigerian literary critics, the generational paradigm might have been constructed only at the beginning of literary criticism and literary academic scholarship in Nigeria.⁹⁹ This means that although the concept has an ancient history, it was only adopted in Nigeria during the late 20th century modern period.

More concretely, according to Adesanmi and Dunton, the generational mode of literary historicisation in Nigeria was consolidated in the decade 1985-1995.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, the outburst of generational scholarship in Nigeria coincides with the period following the Nigerian Civil War which ended in 1970. For Sule Egeya, this is not a random coincidence; rather, this goes to show how important the civil war was to the historiographical endorsement of generations. In his words, "it was indeed after the Nigerian civil war that Nigerian writing, perhaps in all genres, witnessed a certain renaissance due to the urgent desire of writers to challenge what they saw as the worst

⁹⁸ Stein, 861.

⁹⁹ Maximillian Feldner, Harry Garuba, Pius Adesanmi, Chris Dunton, Abiola Irele etc. do not give particular details about the beginning of the literary generation but they all infer that it was adopted pretty much recently by Nigerian literary scholars. These group of scholars who are cited all through the length of this thesis are speculatively the first set to have truly given effort to historicising Nigerian literature using the generational paradigm.

¹⁰⁰ Adesanmi and Dunton, 'Nigeria's Third-Generation Writing,'.

inhumanity to hit Nigeria.”¹⁰¹ Regardless of the date of its adoption, the generational concept has come to stay when it comes to Nigerian modern literary studies and its proliferated use has been made profound by international literary journalistic efforts and in the works of Nigerian literary critics like Pius Adesanmi, Chris Dunton, Isidore Diala, Abiola Irele, Donatus Nwoga, Toyin Jegede, Funso Aiyejina, Charles Nnonim, Sule Egya and so on who welcome rising Nigerian writers at home or in the diaspora as part of an existing generation.

Going by the already presented definitions and given criteria of what constitutes a generation, Nigerian literary scholars generally believe in the trajectorial existence of three generations. Due to its contemporaneity, the third generation has received more coverage in literary studies than the first and second generations; this knowledge gap has *also* created a black hole with regards to understanding where, when and by whom the generational paradigm was adopted and first used. In fact, it is only in recent times that the first and second generations have been critically studied, but mostly in a comparative framework, i.e, as the bases of comparison for the more recent third generation Nigerian literature. One thing that is clear is that the creation of the three generations sprouted out of the national imagination and the need to connect the literary endeavours of Nigerians to the nationalistic aspirations and its closely related postcolonial preoccupations.

Overall, this problem of ontology is anchored on the weak status of literary history in Nigeria. Due to the training of Nigerian scholarly practitioners, most of the works on Nigerian literature are mainly literary criticisms, which means there is less historical research and more analytical, literary discourses. Away from the still-unsolved problem of origin, the classification of Nigerian writers into the accepted three generations have been generally based on such criteria as the writers’ “emergence, thematic concerns and stylistic predilection” as well as their connection or detachment from issues of postcolonial relevance.¹⁰² Solomon Awuzie attempted to surmise the focus of the three generations in a way that I find less than satisfying:

While the first generation pioneered the course of African narrative fiction and “brought it to limelight” (Solomon Awuzie, 13), the second generation introduced and promoted sociological and ideological literature in African narrative fiction. They wrote literature

¹⁰¹ Egya, ‘The Question of Generation’.

¹⁰² Fasan, “Mapping Nigerian Literature,” 39.

“for social equality [and] for feminism” (Nnolim, 229). The third generation in their narrative focused on the military involvement in Africa body politics and the current corrupt political activities in Africa (Sule Egya, 426).¹⁰³

This summary points to the fact that the distinctive quirks of each generation are respectively tied to these three words: cultural (first generation); national (second generation); transnational/international (third generation). The next subsections elucidate on the three generations in depth.

2.2 First Nigerian Literary Generation

From the research conducted for this thesis, it would seem that there is no one exact scholar who originated the first generation. Rather the construction of the first generation was birthed out of collective scholarship. Also, other than the fact that it is acknowledged as the Independence Generation, there is no consensus about what constitutes the first generation. It can be said that contemporary scholars have come to understand the first generation in two ways. Some see it as that Nigerian modern literary era between the 1957-1970s when Nigerian writers put effort into grappling with the colonial past and the postcolonial present in different ways. The tropes that have been pegged to this generation writers are an avid romanticisation of the distant pre-colonial temporal haven of bliss, a disavowal of the plenitude of changes that have come in the wake of postcolonialism and a summoning of nationalistic courage and assertion of patriotic cultural rebirth through literary language. These first-generation writers supposedly “address a postcoloniality of “normativity and proleptic designation in which the writer or critic speaks to, or for, or in the name of the post-independence nation state”.¹⁰⁴

Scholars who perceive the first generation in this manner often regard Chinua Achebe as the father of ‘African’ literature who, through his *Things Fall Apart*, is said to have birthed “a counter-discursive dialogue with exemplars of the Western literary tradition and a number of ongoing intra-

¹⁰³ Solomon Awuzie, “Narratives and the African Experience: The Dialectical Consideration of the Writings of First and Second Generation African Writers in Africa,” *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 11(5), April 2, 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Chris Dunton, “‘Wherever the Bus Is Headed’: Recent Developments in the African Novel,” *Research in African Literatures* 50, no. 4 (1-20): 2020.

African authorial dialogues on themes including the effects of colonialism and patriarchy, the enduring value of African spirituality, the exploitation of tradition, and the place of proverbs and orality”.¹⁰⁵ It is due to its heavy immersion in a spiritually-cultivated setting with nostalgic rural environment and ritualistic sentiments that it is considered the first of a long line of what is referred to as ‘New Yam Festival novel’. This is, however, a more internationalist-bent understanding of the first generation mostly put forward by the likes of non-Nigerian literary scholars like Chris Dunton.

While the second way of understanding the first generation is closely related to the first, it is more steeped in the understanding that the writers of this generation consciously set out to debunk and criticise the distorted travesties about Nigeria and Africa concocted by colonial administrators, travellers, ethnographers, anthropologists and literary writers who churned out standoffish, misrepresentative English writings like *African Witch* and *Mister Johnson* by Joyce Cary, *She, King Solomon’s Mines* and *Allan Quartermain* by Rider Haggard, and *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad which Achebe personally wrote an essayistic rebuttal to, titled “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’”.¹⁰⁶ Thus, rather than concretely situate the starting point of the first generation in the sophisticated production and global appeal of Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, scholars who uphold this perception also give attention to preceding groundbreaking literary publications such as Amos Tutuola’s *The Palmwine Drinkard* and other pre-independence texts written by Nigerians in English with the aim of advancing “cultural alterity, [foregrounding distinctions] between the indigenous and imported cultures of Nigeria and Europe while calling for an end to colonial rule”.¹⁰⁷

More than providing anticolonial, postcolonial and decolonial counter discourses against the myths of primitivism, racial inferiority and ahistoricity propagated by colonial writings, the second school of perception offers up the first generation as the West African equivalent of the Negritude in which precolonial Nigeria with its once ‘enviable’ culture and traditions (and ‘Africa’) is romanticised, invoked in paradisiac terms, re-enacted and nostalgically mourned on the pages of

¹⁰⁵ Podis, “Literary Lions: Chinua Achebe and Ongoing Dialogues in Modern African Literature,” *Research in African Literatures* 50, no. 4 (2020): 142, <https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafritlite.50.4.09>.

¹⁰⁶ Fasan, “Mapping Nigerian Literature,” 39.

¹⁰⁷ Fasan, 39.

books. This negritudinal attribute accorded to the first generation takes into account the immense effort of writers to not only write works set in precolonial Nigeria but to also translate oral literary works that have managed to survive the tenacious project of erasure offset in the colonial period as well as folkloric or mythic narrative poems and novels written in indigenous languages.¹⁰⁸ It is within this context that Wole Soyinka's English translation of Daniel Orowole Olorunfemi Fagunwa's *Ògbójú Ọdẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmọlẹ* (*Brave Hunter in the Forest of Demons*) translated into English as *The Forest of a Thousand Demons - A Hunter's Saga*, is much venerated.¹⁰⁹

Thus, from whichever angle it is seen, the appropriation of the bestowed writing system by Nigerian anti-colonialists earmarked the beginning of the first generation. This appropriated use of the English language in advocative writings has a backstory that revolves around the 'creation' of Nigeria and the clamour for independence by nationalists through literature. By the late 18th century, Britain had already established a presence in several West African territories through slave trade and other large-scale trading activities. However, it was not until the mid-19th century when slavery was prohibited that the colonial region that would later become Nigeria began to be carved out. After the annexation of Lagos in 1861 to the establishment of several protectorates which were first controlled by the River Niger Company, then by the British Crown in 1900, the country Nigeria was properly birthed following the Scramble for Africa earmarked by the Berlin Conference of 1884 and the 1914 amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates mandated by Governor Frederick Lugard.¹¹⁰

During the surge of this colonial reign in Nigeria and Africa at large, a particular literary space was forged by colonial administrators, western anthropologists, writers, and thinkers to project notions conceived within the discursive premise of colonialism. The assumed primitivism of colonies and their gaping socio-cultural, educational impoverishment were part of these notions propagated through doctored literary outputs meant to legitimate colonial rule and project it as a burdensome act of benevolence to indigenous peripheries. As earlier highlighted, Joseph Conrad

¹⁰⁸ Solomon Awuzie, "Narratives and the African Experience," 124.5.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel O. Fagunwa, *Forest of a Thousand Daemons*, trans. Wole Soyinka (San Francisco: City Lights Book, 2013).

¹¹⁰ Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511819711>.

and Rudyard Kipling with their heroisation of the ‘White Man’ and ambivalent ‘orientalisation’ of the historicity of Africa and South-Asia respectively through literary works serve as notable examples.

With all of these going on in the background, Anthony Enahoro, a member of the Western House of Assembly advocated for self-government. This sparked action from several anticolonial political and literary independence advocates like Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikwe, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka who pursued the decolonial cause by either forming political parties or publishing polemical fictional and non-fictional writings. Following ‘decolonisation’, the purview of literary works expanded to a site of activism; it was perceived as a prospect through which national identities dismembered and shredded within the context of colonial processes could be reclaimed; and, for the most part, this was what occurred: a determined reclamation of the prerogative to self-construct an originary, aspirational nation-ness and national patriotism through creative ventures.

Reflecting on this background information, it becomes obvious that the existence of the first generation is inextricably connected to colonialism and colonial literature. The generation seems to have literally emerged from the fine, polished sand and white granites of the literate empires of schools and churches and workspaces built by imperial Britain. And this is not the case in Nigeria alone or even ‘Africa’; places in South Asia have had to become necessarily grateful to the British for incepting the seed of written literature-in-English in their society. In fact, Rushdie, regarded as one of the greatest literary minds to come out of India, has asserted that “the prose writing created by Indian writers working in English is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 18 ‘recognised’ languages of India . . . and this still burgeoning Indo-Anglian literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books.”¹¹¹ Rushdie’s opinion is only a small fragment of a larger tapestry of knowledge production and historical narratives hiding in plain sight, which serve to reify the

¹¹¹ Amritjit Singh and Nalini Iyer, ‘Introduction: Beyond the Anglophone—Comparative South Asian Literatures’, *Comparative Literature Studies* 53, no. 2 (2016): 209–24, <https://doi.org/10.5325/complitstudies.53.2.0209>.

continuing project of making former colonies side characters in their own, supposedly reclaimed (hi)stories.

In any case, it is now necessary to categorically identify first generation writers and their acknowledged works. In a thesis written in 1967 when the generational paradigm had not been adopted in the writing of Nigerian literary history, Adrian Alan Roscoe highlighted important writers now acknowledged as first generation-ers; they include “the novelists, Achebe and [Nkem] Nwankwo, the dramatist Soyinka and the poets Segun, [Michael] Echeruo, Imoukhuede, [John] Pepper Clark and [Christopher] Okigbo.”¹¹² Another renowned first-generation writer is Chukwuemeka Ike. However, although he published his first work *Toads for Supper* in 1965, his most renowned works *The Potter’s Wheel* and *Expo ‘77* which are used for pedagogical and educational purposes were published in 1973 and 1980 respectively, which falls under the bracket of the second generation. Nnamdi Azikwe, Obi Wali, and Dennis Osadebe are also considered to be part of this generation but their works possess a more political tenor. However, from a novelistic perspective, T.M Aluko, Cyprian Ekwensi, Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka, Elechi Amadi, Flora Nwapa and Mabel Segun, are prominent novel writers associated with the first generation.

The works of the latter two who are females have, however, not been given as much attention within the historiography of the first generation as the works of the other male figures. As can be noticed, first-generation novelists are quite not much because they are mostly pacesetters who paved the way for a milieu of second generation-ers who poured into the literary scene in their plenitude. Achebe, with his literary oeuvre of more than 20 books, most of which are novels, short stories, essays, and collections of poetry is the most emblematic figure of the first generation. His works also embody the narrative of cultural nationalism and decolonisation associated with this generation. Thus, his 1958-published *Things Fall Apart* is accorded canonical seminality in the historiographical presentation of the first generation. This has been subject to debate with a lot of scholars arguing for the fact that Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm Wine Drinkard* published in 1952 is truly the first Nigerian novel to grab the attention of readers in the domestic sphere and even in the Anglo-American space despite its use of ‘young English’. Taye Awoyemi-Arayela likes to think

¹¹² Adrian Alan Roscoe, ‘Nigerian Literature in English: An Introductory Survey’ (Canada, McMaster University, 1965).

of Tutuola as the ‘Apostle’ who had to bear the brunt of his creative allegorical works being measured against fastidious, sanctimonious western standards (what I dare say was only the beginning of what has become a tradition).¹¹³

Retracing from this digression, it is indeed worth reiterating that first-generational Nigerian written literature in English acted as a counter-response to the affront that colonies especially within Africa were incapable of engaging in creative, literary enterprises. They also served as a means by which new postcolonial ideologies were represented while the debilitating, underwhelming knowledge base produced by colonial administrators about the geographical, political, economic and social nature of Africa were subverted. However, the postcolonial theatricalities and decolonial aspirations of first-generational writings were somewhat deflected by the burden of historical revisionism. Thus, their works were infused with heritage preservative perspectives and the expression of tribal quirks like rituals, rural settings, traditional customs etc., which tilted towards ethnic and cultural revivalism, as opposed to the national politikness that postcolonialism advocated for. Take *Things Fall Apart* as an example.

The story of Okonkwo, an Igbo traditionalist, farmer, wrestler and aspirational, thoroughly aspirational ‘big man’ of Umuofia, who garnered wealth in yams, wives, children and prestige through his painstaking hardwork and sheer, muscular resilience is one that every literary scholar within the terrain of African literature is familiar with.¹¹⁴ Achebe has been praised by one too many scholars not just for the profundity of the narrative, but also for the dexterity of the Igbotic, proverbial English with which it was written. The very fact that the story matches a culturally enthused description of a pre-colonial Igbo setting with the devastatingly Christianic, colonial landscape that sprouted out of it upon the arrival of Christian missionaries like the fictional Mr Brown and Reverend Smith has been lauded by many. Indeed, the tragi-comedy of Okonkwo’s rise from grass to grace and the tale of his aggressive hubris which leads to his exile to Mbanta and subsequently leads him to take his own life are mostly told against the backdrop of the British evangelical and colonial invasion into the Igbo community. Thus, there is a blend of cultural revivalism and postcolonial activism.

¹¹³ Awoyemi-Arayela, ‘Nigerian Literature In English, 31.

¹¹⁴ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

A little more analytic investigation and one finds that the contrastive symbols of the festive, ritualistic ‘yam’, kolanut, shrines, ‘Obi’ (the hut of the male family head in an Igbo compound) and the missionaries’ totems like Bibles, crosses, and Western education clash considerably in the novel. In fact, it is Okonkwo’s inability to reconcile the emblems of his cultural Igbo identity and the newly handed down white man’s totems that leads him to committing suicide. Exile, and *genealogical angst* become two motifs with which the 1890’s invasion of the colonialists into the tribal, distinctively cultured Igbo land is presented. Following Okonkwo’s seven-year exile, his power within the community of Umuofia reduces drastically and it is during this time that his psychological self-worth and control over his children begin to disintegrate. Upon returning to Umuofia, he is met with a society fast changing under the influence of white missionaries who unscrupulously demonise the culture and gods of his land; that his first son Nwoye readily embraces the gospel of the white people and join in the transference of political and judicial power from the elders to the police, administrators and other colonial apparatuses weakens his resolve to stay alive. In his suicidal death, the end of the Igbo’s once-thriving cultural glory is gruesomely mirrored.

Thus, *Things Fall Apart* evokes a sense of a well actualised depiction of a “shared common cultural project”.¹¹⁵ The cultural depth of this storied project is one that has been argued to give cadence to the notion of cultural nationalism which has more ethnic resonance than the postcolonial aspiration can ever reach.¹¹⁶ Elechi Amadi is another cultural nationalist whose works have revived the heritage of Nigerian societies in an unadulterated form that provokes nostalgia and disquietude all at once. I personally remember reading his 1966 novel *The Concubine* and feeling, at the same time, a chilling sense of pride and horror at the traditionalistic cultural and religious landscape that was portrayed in the novel.¹¹⁷ Like Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, *The Concubine* was published as part of the Heinemann African Writers Series.¹¹⁸ The novel is an unpretentious love story set in a non-colonised Igbo society in which traditional gods decide the fate of men including their

¹¹⁵ Simon Gikandi, ‘Chinua Achebe and the Invention of African Culture’, *Research in African Literatures* 32, no. 3 (2001): 3–8.

¹¹⁶ Egey, ‘The Question of Generation’.

¹¹⁷ Elechi Amadi, *The Concubine*, 1st ed., African Writers Series (London: Heinemann, 1966).

¹¹⁸ This says a lot about the kinds of institutions that informed first generational literary productions. As will be later mentioned, Heinemann featured quite significantly in publishing what has now come to be regarded as first-generation Nigerian literature. This means that they were involved in the selection and curation of what is considered publishable.

romantic affairs. Ihuoma, a woman of dignified appearance and character, loses her husband Emenike after a fistfight with Madume, with whom he was settling scores over a disputed farmland. It is somewhat inferred from an omniscient point of view that Emenike's death was caused by supernatural forces.

Seeing that Emenike is dead, Madume tries to claim the graceful, beautiful Ihuoma for himself and also lay hold on Emenike's properties. However, his eyes get blinded by a cobra and for shame of losing his eyes, he commits suicide. The fact that two men connected to Ihuoma die within the space of two years puzzles the villagers. However, no one can fault her due to her 'virtuous' character and immaculate looks. Despite Ihuoma's widowhood and the three children she has had from her marriage with Emenike, she still enamours the men of the village, the most enchanted of whom is Ekwueme. Ekwueme, a young, promising man with a feisty mother Adaku, has been in love with Ihuoma since he was a bachelor. However, he had to marry Ahurole whom he had been betrothed to. The marriage, however, turns out to be a mess as Ekwueme cannot endure Ahurole's nagging and ungraceful attitude. The failure of his marriage deepens Ekwueme's love for Ihuoma and he makes an effort to marry her. He intensifies his effort even after Anyika, the local *dibia*, makes it clear that Ihuoma is the concubine of a jealous sea-god who brings harm to any man that covets her. The novel ends with Ekwueme dying right after he has successfully wooed and married Ihuoma.

Given that *The Concubine* is set in an Igbo society yet to be invaded by Western presence, its purpose and thematic concerns baffle literary critics. The novel beatifies its traditional setting with its aesthetic qualities, yet, it presents a grim image of the Igbo gods and deities, making them seem unapologetically cruel to their human custodians. The same goes for Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which portrays several instances where the gods of the land make their worshippers do unbecoming things. The most haunting is the god's prompting of Ikemefuna's murder by his guardian Okonkwo who genuinely loved and treated him as a son. The portrayal of vilifying cultural aspects like the ones mentioned above is common with first generation works and it makes for a contradictory positionality when the first generation attribute of postcolonial activism is put into focus.

Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* follows the same thread. It tells the story of Efuru, a beautiful and prosperous woman, who uncustomarily marries her first husband Adizua only for her and her daughter to be mistreated by him after some years.¹¹⁹ Her daughter dies, and she goes back to stay in her father's house for a while. Efuru later marries the educated Gilbert who loves her but also starts to mistreat her following her inability to bear him a child. It is later said that Uhamiri, the goddess of the lake who freely gives wealth and beauty but does not give children, has chosen Efuru to be one of her worshippers. This accounts for her inability to conceive and, in turn, have a good marriage despite her good fortune. The portrayal of the marginalised female finding her individual, independent identity in a patriarchal world has made *Efuru* a good case study for the culturally conscious African feminism. However, this is achieved at the expense of tradi-religious values and cultures. *Efuru* was also published in 1966 as the 26th novel in the Heinemann African Writers Series. Through its publication, Flora Nwapa became the first African woman to be published internationally, a prestige that has earned her many awards but which also shows just how male-dominated the first generation is. Beyond the obvious male domination of this generation, it is interesting to see how much of what shaped the first literary generation came from the 'intervention' of the international, British-attuned Heinemann's publications.

T.M Aluko, and Cyprian Ekwensi who have written such novels as *People of the City* and *One Man One Wife* respectively are also cultural nationalists whose writings dwell on narrativising important aspects of Nigeria's pre-colonial and colonised cultures and accentuating the western influence on these cultures. From a novelistic point of view, Wole Soyinka should not be included in this list of first-generation writers as most of his works published within the temporal period of this generation were dramas that were adapted into plays. He only published one novel *The Interpreters* (1964) during this first generation. His other more acclaimed novel *The Season of Anomy* was published in 1972, a period that is significantly associated with the second generation. However, Wole Soyinka has always been considered to be a well-rounded prominent figure in the first generation and it will nearly be regarded as a scholarly aberration if he is not included in this generation.

¹¹⁹ Flora Nwapa, *Efuru*, 1st ed., African Writers Series (London: Heinemann, 1966).

On an institutional note, the University of Ibadan founded in 1948 has been credited to be the parent factory of literary beginnings, especially the first generation. During its early years, it was considered to be “the hive of high literary culture for Nigerian and African writers and artists.”¹²⁰ Roscoe explained how pivotal the University of Ibadan functioned as a place of origin and ascension for first generation members who have now become strong forces to reckon with. Authors like Achebe, Soyinka, Nkem Nwankwo were students at the University of Ibadan, each were involved in political and literary movements as students and they moved between departments in their search to assertivise themselves as literary and political voices of the age. Roscoe clearly pointed out that “the spurt of literary activity that has marked the past decade [the 1960s] can be traced almost entirely to the University of Ibadan and a group, or dedicated scholars attached to it.”¹²¹

The university’s Department of English, at the time, had an absorbent creative energy that attracted literary scholars with international acclaim. West Indian critic and novelist O.R Dathorne ws a notable Head of Department, at some point.¹²² The students and faculty members of the department organised, edited and published journals whose fame went beyond the school confines. *Black Orphaeus*, a Nigeria-based literary journal founded in 1957 by ‘Chief’ Hoist Ulrich Beier, a German expatriate who became assimilated into Nigerian art and living within the literary institutional landmark of the University of Ibadan, promoted the highlighted agenda, featuring several Nigerian fiction writers, poets and political critics.¹²³ Apart from *Black Orphaeus*, another popular journal was the *Horn*. Also, the Mbari Writers and Artists Club established by Ulli Beier has come to be lauded as one of the significant strands of movement that have aided the creative development of the literary generation of the 1960s.¹²⁴

Away from this, Roscoe signaled the vibrant central writing culture within the Africanly oriented setting of the University of Ibadan to be the defining difference that caused a gulf between Nigeria’s first literary generation and the Negritude movement. According to him, most

¹²⁰ Remi Raji, ‘Ibadan and the Memory of a Generation: From the Poetry Club to the Premier Circle’, *English in Africa* 32, no. 1 (2005): 21–35.

¹²¹ Roscoe, ‘Nigerian Literature in English: An Introductory Survey,’ 10.

¹²² Roscoe, 11.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Negritudinists studied and lived most of their lives in Paris, the US or other foreign locations. Thus, they actively envisioned Africa from that great far beyond. The fact that they studied and built their literary careers within the enclose of coloniality restricted their vision of Africa and led to a romantic, renaissant portrayal of Motherland. Citing examples of Soyinka who studied in Leeds only for a while but was in Nigeria for a better part of his youthful years and Pepper Clark who went away to Princeton only for a year as well as Achebe whose venture into Britain was rather very brief unlike most Negritudinists, Roscoe pointed out clearly that despite their academic roving channeled towards understanding and repurposing the English language better, “they were not cut off from the source of their experience and inspiration. Had their training taken place overseas, the whole tone and pace of Nigerian literature would be different... from the wild clamour of Negritude and the panting rhythms of South Africa.”¹²⁵

From the above paragraph, it becomes apparent that the impact of the Negritude in shaping the development of the first generation of written Nigerian literature in English was thoroughly immense. Just as Roscoe noted, there is a genuflection of Achebe’s literary prowess across Africa, and his works have been actively compared to literary productions of the Negritude movement which began much earlier. While educated Nigerians only found a bearing within the scope of literature in English at the eve of independence, Africans in former French colonies had already immersed themselves in a vehement, assertive proclamation of their detestation for European ways of life and the deliberate, systematic effort assimilate entire communities and make French black people out of Africans. Leopold Sedar Senghor from Senegal, Aime Cesaire from Martinique, David Diop, Birago Diop and others wrote poems that explicitly attacked the French attempt at culturally and intellectually dominating its colonial subject, trapping them in the deceit of acceptance and reception, when, in fact, they were only being tolerated due to their assimilated identities.¹²⁶ This birthed the Negritude movement within which Africa was romanticised and presented from a precolonial, primeval and simplistic perspective.

At the time, because of the consensual and communal agitation to sever ties with colonial oppressors, a sense of panAfricanism was birthed during the later period of colonial domination, with many creatives, activists and politicians started to work as a collective to propagate

¹²⁵ Ibid, 11.

¹²⁶ Leopold Sedar Senghor, ‘Negritude’, *Indian Literature* 17, no. 1/2 (1974): 269–73.

manifestoes that drove home the point the need for the independence of African countries. Due to this, the Nigerian literary first generation can easily be conflated with Negritudists in Francophone African countries or even other British colonies at the time. They are also all broadly classified as members of the earliest postcolonial literary school. Apart from the names that have been mentioned, other African writers that can easily belong to the class of first generation-ers include Agostinho Neto, Ousmane Soce, Efua Sutherland, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Peter Abrahams, Alex La Guma, Eskia Mphahlele, Sembene Ousmane, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Mongo Beti, and Ferdinand Oyono.¹²⁷

Interestingly, part of what has now come to be part of the first-generation literature in Nigeria, came about following the *antagonism* of Nigerian writers to the idyllic, picturesque presentation of Africa by Negritude writers. Roscoe elucidated on how Soyinka had considered the overt self-proclamation of African-ness to be sociologically inept and artistically destructive.¹²⁸ When considered closely, this makes for an interesting observation. Despite the fact that British and French colonies existed side by side and were faced with similar political and ideological problems, they developed different reactionary agenda and literary attitudes. Commenting on the side on how these catalysts of differences account for big changes in literary developments, Roscoe said that “we are sometimes too willing to ascribe an author's greatness to the age in which he lived and reluctant to give credit to the influence of people and places.”¹²⁹ As is later seen in chapter three, this perspective makes for a good criticism of the generational model.

2.3 Second Nigerian Literary Generation

The independence of Nigeria in 1960 did not grant respite to literary writers as the newly independent state was still fraught with colonial legacies and incompetencies which reared ugly heads in several military and civilian administrations. In essence, the prevalent discursive attention given to issues of national concerns by second-generationers mostly stem from the political disillusionment of writers who were emotionally dealt a heavy blow following the collapse of the incumbent governments that came after 1960, the corruption that engulfed public administration,

¹²⁷ Adesanmi and Dunton, 'Nigeria's Third-Generation Nigerian Writing,' 14.

¹²⁸ Roscoe, 7.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 10.

the seemingly unending military coup d'états, the devastatingly demoralising Nigeria-Biafra War of 1967-1970, other notable civil wars in neighbouring countries, the mismanagement of discovered oil in Niger Delta and the complicity of the grassroots with regards to issues of political importance. Unlike first-generation writers who had constantly tried to explain and justify the existence and essence of Nigeria and Africa to willfully ignorant Europeans and Americans, writers of the second generation were forced to confront and represent painstakingly the stark, visceral political and socio-economic, war-riddled realities that erupted in the wake of the independence and resurgence of nationhood in several African countries like Nigeria.

Thus, it can be said that the postcolonial thrust of Nigerian literary generational history lies in the second generation. Although first generation-ers had a postcolonial literary consciousness which they exhibited through their works, it was second generation writers that created a mightier surge of patriotic activism within the budding literary space of postcoloniality. The works of second-generation writers also opened the leeway to a new understanding of postcolonialism in Nigeria. The early form of postcolonialism emphasised convergences between different African countries based on pan-racial solidarities rather than national identities. In the second generation, however, literary expressions took on a new tenor of 'decentering', such that writers, in their works, began to project a sense of disillusionment about the possibility to acquire sustained freedom from western domination, political corruption and oppressive national governments.

Also, the second generation which has been historically periodised to be the early 1970s to the early 1990s, criticised once-prevalent discussions about romanticised pre-colonial traditions and cultures, colonial legacies, independence creeds and decolonial envisionings embodied within the early writings of first-generation writers. These rhetorics were quickly replaced with an upsurge of political realist genre and war fiction, which satirised and lamented the consecutive military dictatorships that barraged Nigeria, the gross incompetence of leaders and the cumulative event of the Nigerian Civil War which ravaged the new independent nation-state under the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon. What sprouted out of the civil war was the nationalist imagination of carving a Igbo-dominated Republic of Biafra out of Nigeria and the crushing awareness about the artificiality of Nigeria's nationalism.

On the literary end, more poetic and dramatic works were published in reaction to the historical event of the war but there were also timely novels that addressed issues revolving around the Civil War and the dissatisfying state of a post-independent Nigeria. A blogger with the alias Bookshy compiled nearly all the popular writers and literary works collocated with the second generation and the comprehensive nature of the list warrants that it is included in this thesis¹³⁰:

Second-generation **plays** include **Wale Ogunyemi's** *The Divorce* (1975), **Kole Omotoso's** *The Curse* (1976), **Femi Osofisan's** *The Chattering and the Song* (1977), and **Bode Sowande's** *A Sanctus for Women* (1979), **Tunde Fatunde's** *No More Oil Boom* (1985) and *Oga Na Thief Man* (1986), **Olu Obafemi's** *Night of the Mystical Beast* (1986);

Second-generation **poetry collections** include **Tanure Ojaide's** *Children of Iroko* (1973) and *Labyrinths of the Delta* (1986), **Odia Ofeimun's** *The Poet Lied* (1980), **Niyi Osundare's** *Songs of the Marketplace* (1983) and *Moonsong* (1988), **Femi Fatoba's** *Petals of Thoughts* (1984), **Funso Aiyejina's** *A Letter to Linda* (1988);

Second generation **novels** include **Isidore Okpewho's** *The Victims* (1970) and *Last Duty* (1976), **Eddie Iroh's** *48 Guns for the General* (1977), *Toads of War* (1979), *The Siren in the Night* (1982), **Kole Omotoso's** *The Combat* (1972) and *Just Before Dawn* (1988), **Labo Yari's** *Climate of Corruption* (1978), **Festus Iyayi's** *Violence* (1979), **Chris Abani's** *Masters of the Board* (1985), **Ken Saro-Wiwa's** *Sozaboy* (1986), **Abubakar Gimba's** *Innocent Victims* (1988).

A few points to note. First, the phenomenal Ben Okri is not included in this list because his generational placement is very ambiguous. As a novelist and poet, he had already started making a huge impact with his first novel *Flowers and Shadows* (1980) and his 1987 short story *Incidents at the Shrine* which won the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa Region). However, because his Booker-prize winning novel *The Famished Road* was published in 1991 and he has stayed relevant since then, even publishing another novel *The Freedom Artist* in 2019, he can also be regarded as a third generation-er. Furthermore, unlike the first generation, more women writers emerged in

¹³⁰ '52 Years of Nigerian Literature: The Second Generation - Bookshy', accessed 4 June 2021, <http://www.bookshybooks.com/2012/10/52-years-of-nigerian-literature-second.html>.

this generation and, most of them were novelists who also dwelt on the travails and triumphs of post-1960 Nigeria. The most popular female novelists were **Buchi Emecheta** who, during the period of the second generation, wrote *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), and *The Slave Girl* (1977) and **Zaynab Alkali** who wrote *The Stillborn* (1984) and *The Virtuous Woman* (1985). Non-novelists like the playwright Osonye Tess Onwueme with her *Trial of the Beautiful Ones* (1985) and the poet Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie's *Sew the Old Days* (1985) are also well acclaimed members of the second generation.

It has to be mentioned that several writers associated with the first and third generation writers also wrote a lot about the civil war. The earliest civil-war inspired literary work is the popular poetic sequence *Labyrinths: Path of Thunder* written by first-generation poet Christopher Okigbo between 1965-1967 before his death during the civil war. First generation novelists who later published books based on the war include Elechi Amadi - *Sunset in Biafra* (1973), Chukwuemeka Ike - *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), and Flora Nwapa - *Never Again* (1976). Later third generation civil war rhetoric are Achebe's controversial monograph *There was a Country* published in 2012, Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* published in 2006 and Adimora Akachi Ezeigbo's recent novel *Roses and Bullets* (2019).

The attention given to the civil war by writers of all three generations has heightened the significance of the war in apprehensive ways and given rise to several complications especially in light of the war's traumatic experiences and the uneasiness with framing it historically. Chidi Amuta aptly sums up this anxiety: "At the level of general theoretical poetics, we are confronted with the problem of trying to "explain" a high point in the literature of a society against the background of a traumatic experience in the life of that society".¹³¹ Apart from civil-war narratives, another peculiar genre that characterised second generation writings was petro-magical realism and Niger-Delta related narratives for which Tanure Ojaide and Ken Saro Wiwa were notable. Third generation writers like Helon Habila later came up with petro-realist works like *Oil on Water*, but it was during the second generation that these distinct genres started to gain ground.

¹³¹ Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, 'Introduction: Everything Good Is Raining: Provisional Notes on the Nigerian Novel of the Third Generation', *Research in African Literatures* 39, no. 2 (2008): VII–XII.

Also, most second-generation writings used the literary technique of *Roman à Clef*, weaving real life experiences into stories, with the purpose of satirising societal evils.

With regards to publishing, Heinemann African Writers Series can also be credited with publishing a few of the second-generation novels. For one, Iroh's first three books were part of the series. However, the distinctive publishing collection associated with the second generation is called the Pacesetter series. The series which started in 1977 was published by Macmillan under the editorship of Agbo Areo, the author who had pitched the idea to his Macmillan bosses and went on to start the series with his book titled *Director!*¹³² About 130 African novels were published on the platform of this series and some of the writers whose books were part of the series went on to become internationally acclaimed. Examples are Buchi Emecheta whose novel *Naira Power* featured in the series, Helen Obviagele who wrote *Ebvu My Love*, *Forever Yours* and *Fresh Start* for the series and Chuma Nwokolo whose first two novels *The Extortionist* (1983) and *Dangerous Inheritance* (1988) were published in the Pacesetter but who have gone on to be regarded as a third generation-er because of his subsequent novels.

The target audience of Pacesetter was young adults and teenagers, so the novels were often short, fluffy, mundane, easy to digest, romantically inclined, and they resonated with the sociopolitical experiences of an average Nigerian living in and looking for love or adventure in a disillusioned, dystopian Nigeria. The series thus introduced a less heavy handed, less politicised strain of postcolonial narrativisation. Describing the impact of the second generational Pacesetter series in the Nigerian literary scene, a netizen named obiamakaazie said:

African literature published by traditional publishers are laden with war, sorrows, rape, illiteracy, political corruption and all sorts of vile. They continue to perpetuate the myth that Africa is mediocre. I grew up in a Nigeria where family, love, education and mundaneness exists. Pacesetters worked because it depicted just the Average African experience in a literary world where to be African meant otherwise.”¹³³

¹³² Mo, 'What the Pacesetters Series Did to Nigeria's Reading Culture -Uzor Maxim Uzoatu (Guest Post)', *Literary Everything* (blog), 5 September 2018, <https://literaryeverything.com/2018/09/05/see-what-the-pacesetters-series-did-to-nigerias-reading-culture-uzor-maxim-uzoatu/>.

¹³³ Mo, 'What the Pacesetters Series Did to Nigeria's Reading Culture' -Uzor Maxim Uzoatu.

This goes to show the likability of Pacesetter amongst Nigerians. Because of the prevalence of young adult fiction published in Macmillian's Pacesetter series and by other publishing suits, most second-generational books were taught to secondary schoolers in literature classes and assigned as examination texts.¹³⁴ Iroh's last published book *Without a Silver Spoon* was especially favoured in the literary curricula of the late 20th and early 21st centuries; however, although Iroh is a part of the second generation, this book was published in 1993. The Pacesetter series came to an end in 1984 following the degeneration of the Nigerian economy.¹³⁵ Interestingly, this period coincides with the time that many literary scholars believe to be the waning of the second generation.

Before rounding off this section, it is important to touch on the importance of the University of Nsukka (UNN) to the growth and recognition of most second-generation writers as well as early third generation-ers. In fact, for all three generations, UNN was a very important landmark site that played the role of enhancing the collective movement of ideas, theories, discourses and articulated artistic endeavours. Maik Nwosu gave a trajectory of how literary greats leveraged the opportunities provided in the Department of English in UNN to advance their literary careers. In his own words, he said:

Within the university itself, the Department of English was [a] main literary nursery.... The department was structured in such a way that it allowed sub-disciplinary emphasis or specialization in one of four areas: language, literature, drama, and oral literature. The department's motto, "to refine the sensibilities of man," echoed that of the university and spoke of a core concern with literary production stretching from Aristotle to Achebe.¹³⁶

Recognising the importance of Nsukka as a shared institutional space for Nigerian generation-ers, Nwosu spoke extensively on the geographical placement of the main university campus in Nsukka (now in Imo state). He weighed in on the topographical resemblance of Nsukka to near full-blown

¹³⁴ Examination boards like the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), the National Examination Council (NECO), the General Certificate of Education Examination (GCE), and the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) often included these texts as part of their literature assessments.

¹³⁵ Mo, 'What the Pacesetters Series Did to Nigeria's Reading Culture' -Uzor Maxim Uzoatu.

¹³⁶ Maik Nwosu, 'Children of the Anthill: Nsukka and the Shaping of Nigeria's 1960s Literary Generation', *English in Africa* 32, no. 1 (2005): 37–50.

anthills; it is from this symbolic topography of Nsukka that he derived the name ‘Children of the Anthill’, a name that is proudly bestowed on the literary generations of the 1960s and 1970s.¹³⁷

Like the University of Ibadan, beyond the resurgence of creativity aided by the enlivening of academic activities by lecturers, literary goons, bookworms and fanatical artistic trainees, there were extra-curricular, creative organisations within the Faculty of Arts. Members of these organisations published journals, held spoken poetry events, invited literati to speak to students and charged the Arts theatre with full-on dramatic experiences (most renowned Nigerian universities have fully functional theatre houses where live performances are staged). One of these extra-curricular organisations was called Anthill; the arts collective set up by Gbubemi Amas and Chinenye Mba-Uzoukwu had a specifically built shrine-like structure within which live musical performances were held, poems were read, and plays were enacted.¹³⁸ According to Nwosu, the lively ambience of the Anthill with its indigenously crafted building attracted a population of established creatives like moths to flame. First and already successful second-generation writers graced the Anthill and, out of their participatory activities, emerged the written collection called the Anthill Annual.¹³⁹

On a critical note, from Nwosu’s text, it becomes clear that there are still several authorial names that existed in the 1960s - 1990s but are not captured in the popular canonical understanding of what constitutes the first and second literary generations. Isidore Diala reflected on this, using the case study of Esiaba Irobi, a poet and playwright, to explain how some writers are not included in the generational structure despite their tremendous literary activities. According to Diala, one major reason for this is the encroaching, hegemonic role of internationalist publishing houses, journalistic reports and award projects in neo-colonising the affair of literary canonisation and historicisation in Nigeria and other former colonies.¹⁴⁰ In his words, he said:

The [West’s] subtle but crucial contest to control the institutions of production, interpretation and canonisation of texts is in reality a struggle for the power to determine and sanction authorised representations of both the self and the Other; it is the cultural

¹³⁷ Nwosu, ‘Children of the Anthill’.

¹³⁸ Nwosu, 46.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Henry Obi Ajumeze, ‘Diala, Isidore: Esiaba Irobi’s Drama and the Postcolony. Theory and Practice of Postcolonial Performance’, *Anthropos* 110, no. 2 (2015): 613–14, <https://doi.org/10.5771/0257-9774-2015-2-613>.

component of the fierce context for economic and ideological dominance, all the more powerful and insidious for its capacity to disguise its implication in politics. By placing itself in a unique position to project and reward its preferred concept of African artistic excellence by publication, distribution, and award of prestigious prizes, the West exercises powers that have consequences that go beyond the cultural alone.¹⁴¹

This hold of the West on the system of literary canonisation, recognition and commodification in Nigeria became more obvious with time, such that even after the 1978 *Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree* was passed,¹⁴² Nigerian publishers and writers still had to rely heavily on western literary systems to be able to tell and sell their narratives both locally and internationally. The western domination of the literary scape of Nigeria has continued till this day and, without doubt, the literary generational system which pliantly yields to the processes of canonisations has become an apparatus with which the westernisation of Nigerian literature has continued. This situation becomes more apparent in the next section which provides descriptive information about the third generation.

2.4 Third Nigerian Literary Generation

Academic scholarship about what is now designated as third-generation Nigerian literature began fully with the inquiries of two veteran literary scholars - the late Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton - into “emergent writers who had acquired a creative identity markedly different from that of second-generation writers.”¹⁴³ In 1998, these literary scholars, alongside South African literary historiographer Stephen Gray, noticed that there was a different thread of literary development in Nigeria that was going unnoticed, and they began to engage in scholarly discussions that led them to believe that third-generation Nigerian literature had come and was here to stay. On their official historiographic institutionalisation of the third generation, Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton penned down these words:

Pius Adesanmi was then on a lecture tour of South Africa, introducing audiences to third generation Nigerian writing but unable to avail them of sustained scholarly references as

¹⁴¹ Isidore Diala, *Esiaba Irobi's Drama and the Postcolony. Theory and Practice of Postcolonial Performance* (Ibadan: KraftBooks, 2014), 26.

¹⁴² 'NEPD - Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree | AcronymAttic', accessed 16 June 2021, [https://www.acronymattic.com/Nigerian-Enterprises-Promotion-Decree-\(NEPD\).html](https://www.acronymattic.com/Nigerian-Enterprises-Promotion-Decree-(NEPD).html).

¹⁴³ Adesanmi and Dunton, 'Nigeria's Third Generation Writing', 7.

necessary... We decided that the time was ripe to embark on a project that could signal the entry of the new writing into the arena of African critical discourse... Dunton co-authored a survey of the poetry and short stories of Adewale- Gabriel while Pius Adesanmi published a broad evaluation of the possible imbrications of the new writing within the language question in African literature.¹⁴⁴

However, at the time of getting awakened to the existence of an emergent third generation, these scholars were concerned more with poetic explorations that were markedly different from the heavily postcolonial works of second-generation poets. The early third generation which was dominated by poets faced the problem of publishing. Their persistent efforts to keep producing vibrant poetic works despite the frustration of finding publishing outlets caused literary scholars to view the poetry produced within this decade as the “new Nigerian poetry”.¹⁴⁵ It was from this terminological coinage that the idea for the third generation spurred. The legitimisation of poetry as the authentic mode of literary expression by such literary boards as the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) and the popularisation of poetry prizes further foregrounded the focus on poetry at the beginning of third generational literary historiography.

Apart from this, it was hard to ignore the pioneering role of poets in steering the literary ship away from the second generation and into the third. The fact that the artistic pages of newspapers like the *Vanguard*, *Post Express Literary Supplement* etc. which operated at the time mostly accommodated poetic verses or poetry reviews was a catalyst in ensuring the conspicuous attitudinal literary changes that later came to be identified as the third generation. This has been referred to by Adesanmi and Dunton as the influence of intra-generational literary journalism.¹⁴⁶ Regardless, the first linguistic acknowledgment of emergent third generational poetic works was made by a 1988-published anthology titled *Voices from the Fringe* which was edited by Harry Garuba.¹⁴⁷

However, in 2001, there was a significant rise in the production of prose works. This caused the third generation to be later associated more with prose rather than poetry. Thus, the third generation in itself can be said to be divided into two phases. The first phase was heavily dedicated to

¹⁴⁴ Adesanmi and Dunton, 7-8.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 9.

¹⁴⁷ Harry Garuba, *Voices from the Fringe: An ANA Anthology of New Nigerian Poetry* (Lagos: Malthouse Publishing, 1988).

historicising the concentrated productions of third-generation poets. These poets include “Afam Akeh, Amatoritsero Ede, Nike Adesuyi, Kemi Atanda Ilori, Chiedu Ezeanah, Remi Raji, Kunle George, Onookome Okome, Sanya Osha, Nduka Otiono, and Sola Olorunyomi.”¹⁴⁸ The second phase which is the ongoing prosaic phase signals a massive, if not complete, scholarly transference to historically documenting and criticising literary works produced in the late 90s’ and 21st century. At this point, the third generation went from being called New Nigerian Poetry to New Nigerian Writing as denoted by the 2005-publication of essays and reviews in a volume of the same way.

Historiographically, in terms of authorship, Biyi Bandele is considered to be the forerunner of the novelistic era of the third generation. He moved to England in the early 1990s and there he published three novels which include *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams*, *The Man Who Came in from the back of Beyond* and *The Street*.¹⁴⁹ It was from then that the transnational canon system scholarly accorded to the third generation started to become manifest. In truth, like Biyi Bandele, most third-generation writers have heavy diasporic and internationalist streaks to their publishing history which continue to take new shapes and forms that are different from the first two generations. The fact that several international publication houses started to publish novels written by Nigerians and that these writers themselves began to become citizens of other countries played a big role in foregrounding the shift to novelistic explorations within the third generation. The spatial in clarity that has emerged from this has, however, complicated the process of historicising the third generation.

So, unlike the first two generations, it is even more difficult to clearly reel out names of third generation-ers. Another reason for this is that the third generation is still a continuing project and new 21st century literary developments and writers are continually added to the overflowing stockpile of third generational historiography. In any case, it would be necessary to highlight the names of some of these 3rd-Gen writers and the thematic preoccupations of their works. To start with, the few of the 3rd Gen-ers who first got recognition via local Nigerian publishing platforms before receiving internationalist attention include Chika Unigwe who debuted with a collection of poems *Teardrops* (Richardson Publishers, Enugu, 1993) but is now an international English-Dutch novelist, Adimora Akachi Ezeigbo who first authored *The Last of the Strong Ones* (Vista Books,

¹⁴⁸ Adesanmi and Dunton, ‘Nigeria’s Third Generation Writing, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

1996), Maik Nwosu known for *Invisible Chapters* (House of Malaika & Hybun 2001), Chim Newton, *Under the Cherry Tree* (K.E.B Publishers, 2003).

Then, there are Akin Adesoka whose debut novel *Roots in the Sky* (Festac Books, 2004) has become a seminal example of local postcolonial writing, Jude Dibia, author of the popular *Walking with Shadows* (BlackSands Books, 2005), Emmanuel Iduma who debuted with *Farad* (Parresia Publishers, 2012), Abubakar Adam Ibrahim popular for *Season of Crimson Blossoms* (Parresia Publishers, 2015), Eghosa Imasuen, known for his second novel *Fine Boys* (Kachifo Limited/Farafina, 2016), Toni Kan, author of *Nights of a Creaking Bed* (Cassava Republic, 2019), and Bina Nengi Ilagha whose works were locally published on the stable of Oracle Books. This compiled list is poised to already give one an idea of the national publishing outfits that have offset the literary careers of many third generation-ers. Those that are still in operation and have even become forces to reckon with internationally include Cassava Republic, Farafina Books, and Parresia Publishers. However, since 2010, online literary platforms and e-magazines are becoming embraced as viable means of publishing in the Nigerian literary scene. Some of them are OkadaBooks.com, Sentinel Nigeria, Saraba Magazine and NaijaStories.¹⁵⁰

Although there are other Nigerian 3rd Gen-ers whose careers first flourished in the local literary scene, it is necessary to turn attention to writers who published and still publish their works using international platforms, who have transnational histories of migration or who have multiple citizenships that allow them to lay claim on different shades of identities which reflect in their works. Notable writers of the two first categories (writers associated with international publishing and transnational histories of migration) include: Helon Habila who wrote *Waiting for an Angel* (2004), *Measuring Time: A Novel* (2007), *Oil on Water* (2010) etc; Chimamanda Adichie whose novelistic oeuvre comprise *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), *Americanah* (2013), *Notes on Grief* (2021); Segun Afolabi who travelled across continents during his childhood, an experience that influenced his first novel *Goodbye Lucille* (2007); Ayòbámi Adébáyò, whose debut novel *Stay With Me* (2017) published by CanonGate has left a huge imprint in the circle of Nigerian international literature.

¹⁵⁰ All these mentioned e-platforms have websites that are easily accessible on the internet.

However, from my research, it has become very clear that a greater percentage of 3rd-Gen writers, especially of the 21st century, have dual/multiple citizenships or national affinities. Due to the varying degrees of heritage familiarity, some of them choose to identify by their non-singular national identities, others stick to simply being referred to as Nigerian. In any case, the list of 3rd-Gen Nigerian writers with double or multiple nationalities seem endless but a few of them are mentioned here alongside their nationalities and the titles of their debut novels (not short stories or novellas): Karen King-Aribisala (Guyanese-Nigerian, *Kicking Tongues*, 1998); Unoma Azuah (Nigerian, American, *Sky High Flames*, 2005); Sefi Atta (American-Nigerian, *Everything Good will Come*, 2005); Nnedi Okorafor (Naijamerican, *Zahrah the Windseeker*, 2005); Uzodinma Iweala (Nigerian-American, *Beasts of No Nation*, 2005); Helen Oyeyemi (British, Nigerian, *The Icarus Girl*, 2005); Teju Cole (Nigerian-American, *Every Day is for the Thief*, 2007); Sarah Ladipo Manyika (British-Nigerian, *In Dependence*, 2008); Yewande Omotoso (Barbadian, Nigerian, South-African, *Bom Boy*, 2011); Adrian Igonibo Barrett (Nigerian, Jamaican, *Blackass*, 2015); Tochi Onyebuchi (American, Nigerian, *Beasts Made of Night*, 2017); Tomi Adeyemi (American-Nigerian, *Children of Blood and Bone*, 2018); Akwaeke Emezi (identifies as Igbo-Tamil, *Freshwater*, 2018); Tade Thompson (identifies as British-born Yoruba, *The Wormwood Trilogy*, 2018-2019); Bolu Babalola (British-Nigerian, *Love in Colour*, 2020) etc.

These and many more writers who populate the third generation consider themselves to be hybrid creatives with a genuine stake in more than one national entity. Their books mirror their painstaking efforts to navigate the far-reaching geographical scales that have come to shape their identities and personhood. Readers are drawn to their stories of migration, of childhood reminiscences, of adultish nostalgia, of belonging, of self-fashioning based on shifting bodies across time in space, and of finding home, acceptance and a community in locations other than their place of birth or permanent residence. Indeed, the navigation of Nigerians across and through migration corridors is leading to constantly reconfigured hybridities which go beyond being mere diasporan streaks to being a matter of imbued nationalities and embedded home-ness in western terrains. Consequently, in recent literary endeavors, there has been a presentation of localised narratives from ‘homelands’ such as Nigeria as the ‘new global’.

For example, in Adeyemi’s magical realist novel mentioned above, Nigeria is reconfigured as *Orisha*, a locally Yoruba nation where magic exists, goddesses are real, snow falls, and children

become top-notch Avengers, has come across to many as truly global. On the one hand, it has appealed to not just Nigerians but African Americans and African migrants in Western countries who think it addresses concerns of the Black Lives Matter movement. On the other hand, there is a widespread sense of thrill about carving highly relatable themes and a fantastical, familiar ‘Harry Potter’ trope out of West African mythology. This is what is meant by ‘global trends’ and, in a complicated way, it accentuates the current globalising leanings of contemporary postcolonial literature. The reconfiguration of spatial belongings seeps into the fabric of literary formations in so much that Nigerian writers who are considered synecdochic representations of the country on the international stage are half of some other nationalities, have a little bit of indecipherable, ancestral rootedness in a past they don’t identify with, are deemed to have idiosyncratic, eccentric identities but are considered to be every wit a citizen of the global space. Within the locus of this complex composition that makes up most Nigerian writers, one is forced to confront questions of what Nigerian literature really is and if it has, by means of engaging in a trope of novelty, joined the ranks of literary oeuvre offsetting never-before-asked global conversations.

These questions coupled with the fast-paced integration of award-winning Nigerian writers into the global literary canon makes it important, now more than ever, to reconcile artistic variability with unvarying historical research and forge a contemporaneous literary history that echoes the globalising trajectories currently ongoing in the postcolonial literary space. The role of physical and literary mobilities of Nigerian writers in the literary constructions of nation-ness and nationhood has been in the discussion since 2005 and intensified later on with the use of the term ‘transnational *book*’ by Rebecca Walkowitz to describe the “borderless, global, textual topography that invites... questions bordering on the relationship between the text and the nation-space, or the dynamics of nation and narration as it has been so famously phrased for postcolonial criticism by Homi Bhabha.”¹⁵¹

However, earliest third generation novelists (those in the 1990s) explored themes different from what 21st-century internationalist writers are now treating. To start with, earliest third-generation novelists followed the thread of writing politically enthused works with postcolonial slants. Like the second generation, they mused about the democratic instabilities plaguing Nigeria’s political

¹⁵¹ Adesanmi and Dunton, ‘Introduction: Everything Good is Raining,’ ix.

order, poverty and grassroots hardship, events surrounding the Nigerian Civil War, war crimes and other cases of insurgencies/inter-conflicts in and with neighbouring West African countries. It would *almost* (emphasis on almost) seem then that the earliest novelistic phase of the third generation was merely a continued extension of the second generation. However, it has been said that third generation-ers were distinguishable due to how they narrativised these political events from individualist perspectives.

The literary technique of Bildungsroman was especially common amongst these early third-generationers. They told stories of child soldiers trying to find redemption arcs after being weapons of war in turbulent political crises, adolescents fighting their way through political, educational, or familial problems and ‘strong’ female characters caught up in the throes of gender oppression. Examples are Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, and Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation* are notable examples in this regard. The focus on the intimate, sometimes uncomfortable perspectives of child or teen characters complicated the plots of these novels and caused them to garner attention from scholars. One of these scholars have rationalised the abundance of child characters to be due to the identity of these third-generation writers as “children of the postcolony” who seek to use the child figure as “acts of resistance, capable of unmasking the sociocultural strictures of the postcolonial space”.¹⁵²

Later, new additions to the third-generation oeuvre started to offer perspectives on rarely explored subject matters like homosexuality, incest, illegal migration, sex work (prostitution) etc. Examples are Unigwe’s *On Black Sisters Street* which explores the twisted fate of four trafficked African sex workers in Belgium as well as Dibia’s *Walking with Shadows* and *Unbridled* which respectively delve into homosexuality and the topic of incest intersected with migratory, exilic frameworks. What these third generation-ers, in fact, concern themselves is what Raymond Grew articulated about the connection between world history and microhistory: a combination of “the human details of social history (and novels) with larger historical trends.”¹⁵³ The emphasis on urbanised settings rather than rural landscapes and the deliberate play with city life as a motif for thematic development is another key literary feature of latter 3rd-Gen writings. It is paradoxical,

¹⁵² Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, “Introduction: Everything Good Is Raining,” x.

¹⁵³ Raymond Grew, “The Case for Comparing Histories,” *American Historical Review* 85 (1980): 763—778.

however, that the ‘city-ness’ normally explored by writers is spread across different geographical terrains and dystopically juxtaposed with streets in European cities, the US, especially New York, compared with popular African cities like Lagos, Entebbe, Kampala, Accra etc. Away from the themes, one striking characteristic of the latter novelistic phase of the third generation is the increasing presence of female writers and their pivotal roles in embedding feminist-oriented idiolects in larger literary discourses. This was rightly noted by Adesanmi and Dunton who noted that although there was a “masculine domination of the novelistic space” in the first and second generation, this changed “with the third generation.”¹⁵⁴

On a conclusive note, due to the changing narratives and nebulous significations that sprout up every now and then, there has been a constant revision of what constitutes the third generation, with critics and historians scrambling to fit diversely constituted sets of new novels into the third generation. What this had led to is a seemingly never-ending project of documenting third generational literature which is still regarded as the ‘New Nigerian Novel’. As posited by Dalley, critics are baffled by “the politics of affiliation implicit in the third generation’s narratives, asking whether these writers are committed to an ethics of (Nigerian) territorial belonging or whether they instead manifest an emergent cosmopolitan awareness predicated on transnational sympathies and global flows”.¹⁵⁵ This leads to the next subsection in which 21st-century developments in Nigerian literature are discussed using Cooper’s concept of the Dance of the Flows and Fragments, with a few references made to some of the texts already highlighted in this descriptive section.

2.5 21st-Century Developments: Third Generation or Not?

At this point, this thesis is departing from its heavy descriptive strain to assuming a layered critical outlook on the issues that have already been broached in previous chapters. From the above section, the shoddy, disorganised arrangement of the third generation can already be perceived. Not only are there phases within the generation, there are also different approaches to historicising it as well as divergent scholarly perceptions of its literary value, with each one far removed from the other. This is due to the development of several literary trends that have come up *after* the conventional third generation. True, some critics have identified some of these post-3rd generation

¹⁵⁴ Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton, “Introduction: Everything Good Is Raining,” x.

¹⁵⁵ Dalley, “The Idea of ‘Third Generation Nigerian Literature’, 15.

trends and even acknowledged the exploration of themes that do not play a role in the original definition of the third generation. However, both critics and historians have sustained the historiographical tradition of expanding the epistemological capacity of the third generation even in the face of identified arising changes. Before critiquing this, it is necessary to elaborate on some of the literary developments that have arisen in the 21st-century and are distinguishable from conventional third generational tropes.

Dunton summarised these developments, stating that new 3rd-Gen writers possess an “increasing willingness to explore issues and fields of experience previously marginalized or considered taboo” as well as exhibit rhetorics of Afropolitanism and metafiction.¹⁵⁶ He especially expressed fascination with how genuinely postmodern subject matters are ingrained in spatial configurations that are liminal such that they reflect a gaze at Nigeria from several elsewherees especially in Euro-America. Stephen Ogundipe also acknowledged the “practical application of the electronic media, the internet and related technological platforms as new paradigms of knowledge for African literary engagement.”¹⁵⁷ To put it in other words, new well-acclaimed 21st-century literary productions have inclined towards nascent trends of narrativisations, especially Afrofuturism, Afrofeminism and Digital Storytelling. These trends are entangled with such theoretical issues like globalisation, internationalism, cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism. Frederick Cooper's description of the third popular view of globalisation – The Dance of the Flows and Fragments – pretty much theorises how globalisation is closely related to the third generation and even to every 21st-century trend that transcends this generation. Having already explained this concept (or view) in chapter one, its application to discussing 21st-century Nigerian literary developments in the next paragraphs will be easily grasped.

To start with, based on the logic of the ‘flows’, 21st-century writers can be seen to be embracing in their works the “reality of globalization in the present and its destabilizing effect on national societies”; they are now harnessing shifting, spatio-temporal global identities to “reconfigure the local”.¹⁵⁸ This is not just evident in the treatment of emergent trends, themes and tendencies by

¹⁵⁶ Dunton, ‘Wherever the Bus is Headed,’ 1.

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Ogundipe, ‘African Literature and the Anxiety of Being in the Twenty-First Century’, in *African Literature and the Future*, ed. Gbemisola Adeoti (CODESRIA, 2015), 77, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh8qxx8.9>.

¹⁵⁸ Cooper, 193.

21st-century Nigerian literature or in the liminal intersectionality that characterise their works but also in the digitised, mediascaped popularisation of diverse literary products. However, this emergence of highly global sensibilities in 21st-century writings is often intercepted by the element of fragmentation (the dance of the fragments). According to Cooper, the exposure of people to a wide array of media products happens in a “highly fragmented” fashion such that there is a “detachment of cultural symbolism from spatial locatedness [which] paradoxically makes people realize the value of their cultural particularity”.¹⁵⁹ In my opinion, it is this cultural particularity that undermines the global-ness associated with the third generation, or should I say, this is where the third generation begins to break off, thus marking the starting point of nascent 21st-century literary developments

As it is, regardless of the ‘web-like connectivity’ that third-generation literary publications and marketisation might suggest, there is an inherent tracement to a national scale, a dire yearning to connect to particular cultural heritages amidst the entangled crisscrossing of plot structures, characterisations and themes across several geographical settings. Unlike conventional third generation-ers, emergent 21st-century writers recognise this. For example, in Adichie’s *Americanah* and Emezi’s *Freshwater*, the female protagonists Ifemelu and ‘the Ada’ respectively move from Nigeria to America, finding answers to existential questions and trying to understand themselves as they navigate new places of becoming but, after the roaming and searching, they come back to Nigeria on their own accord, with more questions but with a resolute determination to find answers in all the familiar places they once left behind.¹⁶⁰ The writers themselves also went through the conflict of identity in America and the homecoming that their fictional characters experienced.

Beyond this literal exemplification of cultural particularity, there is a way the ‘national’ is often presented and reconfigured in the works of 21st-century migrant and diasporic writers that makes it impossible to extricate the importance of territorial affiliation to the core of their books. To better capture the meaning of this statement, it is necessary to pull in references from the Ake Festival, an annual literary festival often held in Nigeria, which draws in writers, literary scholars and artists

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (New York: Anchor Books, Random House LLC, 2014); Akwaeke Emezi, *Freshwater* (London, England: Faber & Faber, 2019).

from different parts of Africa.¹⁶¹ The festival presents an occasion through which recent ‘third-generation’ writers talk about their books, the writing processes and the reasons for or inspirations behind their storied universes. Given the fact that most of the book chats and panel discussions of the 2020 edition of the Ake Festival titled *African Time* was uploaded on YouTube (all thanks to ‘global communication’), I was able to listen in on the conversations of some writers, artists, and scholars and some of their statements they made prove relevant to this argument of 21st-century national territorial affiliation presented here.

For one, the ‘global’ yet nationally confined character of 21st-century works is asserted within the discursive terrain of the festival. In one of the book chats, an author Olanrewaju Akinsola spoke extensively on an experimental book project which he and his colleagues embarked upon.¹⁶² Noticing the evolving trends of information dissemination and processing in the 21st century, he as an author and a historical scholar decided to experiment with the possibility of collecting historical information, weaving them into stories and making them available on social media. According to him, it did not seem like it would work because he had been told that “nobody is going to read history, anything that is not entertainment, anything that is not news, anything that has nothing to do with fashion and celebrities, nobody is going to read it.”¹⁶³ But, determinedly, he and his close friends started by sharing some collected historical stories on social media - on Whatsapp statuses, via blog posts - and in no time at all, the historical tales - some serious, others comical - started gaining traction on a transnational level, or in common parlance, they started going viral.¹⁶⁴ The success of sharing historical tales about contemporary people and cultural events that point the torch on past sociopolitical anomalies is what led to the publication of the book *Onigegewura - Echoes Across the Niger: Historical Tales of Contemporary Events*. These historical stories situated in particular regional, cultural experiences and written by a Nigerian writer tied to the Yoruba ethnic heritage are brought to the fore through the communicative empowerment provided by globalisation. Based on the view of the dance of flows, this is a product

¹⁶¹ ‘Ake Arts & Book Festival - YouTube’, accessed 8 December 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/user/AkeFestival>.

¹⁶² ‘Echoes Across the Niger: Historical Tales of Contemporary Events | Olanrewaju Akinsola (Book Chat) - YouTube’, accessed 13 January 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60Vx3kyZG0I&t=342s>.

¹⁶³ ‘Echoes Across the Niger: Historical Tales of Contemporary Events’ | Olanrewaju Akinsola (Book Chat)

¹⁶⁴ Ake Arts & Book Festival, *Echoes Across the Niger: Historical Tales of Contemporary Events* | Olanrewaju Akinsola (Book Chat), 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60Vx3kyZG0I&t=342s>.

laced with the fabric of globalisation, but for Cooper, this conception is steeped in “totalizing pretensions and presentist periodization”.¹⁶⁵

Also, as I listened to several speakers, I discovered that there are indeed emergent 21st-century writers who have solid spatial ties to several ‘elsewheres’ and can connect their works to a global nucleus. However, their connection to a formidable Center-ed nucleus so often erases or makes unrecognisable the local, peripheral Nigerian-ness which the authors lay claim to, or which critics claim for them. Some of such writers who were interviewed during the Ake Festival include Shola von Reinhold, a Scottish-Nigerian writer with a 2020 debut novel titled *Lote* which draws attention to the erasure of Black modernist figures and attitudes from British modernist literary history, Tochi Onyebuchi, the author of *Riot Baby* and other science fiction novels that question why black people are stranded on earth while the whites travel to Mars or some other adventurous inter-planetary habitation, and then, there is Babalola’s 2020 debut collection of stories *Love in Colour* which retells popular, ancient African (especially stories of Yoruba gods and Orishas), Asian, Arabian and Greek folktales in a way that resonate with African current, pop-cultural, cosmopolitan and romantic realities. According to her, through the retellings, she hopes to decolonise the notion of love and the tropes associated with it.¹⁶⁶

Trailing these different stories by writers of Nigerian descent is a global, roaming eclecticism that can almost not be reconciled with the local network of thematic, stylistic, and contextual predilections that inform the writings of third-generation writers that are more grounded on the Nigerian soil. This validates Cooper’s claim that “the movement of people, as well as capital, reveals the lumpiness of cross-border connections, not a pattern of steadily increasing integration”.¹⁶⁷ As it is, it is impossible to establish a coherence amongst all the various third-generation writers who are Nigerians, yes, but also share spatial and psychological affinities with other parts of the world in different ways, to different degrees and in multivariate shades and gradients. Thus, for Cooper (and, for me), globalisation does not necessarily offer a lens that can provide direction for meaningfully understanding the 21st-century nascent trends within Nigerian

¹⁶⁵ Cooper, 193.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Ake Arts & Book Festival - YouTube’.

¹⁶⁷ Cooper, 194.

literature-in-English. However, globalisation as a theoretical category can help in “probing causes and processes” that have brought third-generation Nigerian literature to this point.¹⁶⁸

On the other hand, there is evidence of how the convergence of the ‘Nigerian-local’ with emergent theories has caused 21st-century Nigerian literature to break out on the global literary scene in a way that defies the neatly patterned continuum within the third generation. During the Ake Festival, this accentuated ‘Nigerian-local’ forms of writing and their connections to the very recent trend of Afrofeminism (what some scholars prefer to call Africanfeminism) was discussed. For one, Abi Dare, a Nigerian author who has lived in England for a long time, spoke of how she deliberately wrote her 2020 debut novel *Girl with the Louding Voice* from the point of view of a character whose inner thoughts and conversations are rendered in purely developmental broken English (or what has been referred to Yoruba-English).¹⁶⁹ She did this in order to identify with the struggles of the typical Nigerian female ill-educated teenager whom she can identify with despite her own diasporan identity. In attendance was also Okorafor who has a whole oeuvre of groundbreaking science fiction and fantastical works that are “directly rooted in African culture, history, mythology and point-of-view as it then branches into the Black Diaspora, and it does not privilege or center the West,” what she specifically terms Africanjujuism and Africanfuturism.¹⁷⁰ Away from participants at the festival, there are also the examples of Emezi and Adeyemi who reconfigure the local in inventive ways whilst leveraging transmediatic platforms to give their novels a global appeal.

Furthermore, the form of globalisation associated with 21st-century Nigerian literature is mostly marked by the ebullient presence of digital technology. Indeed, the popularisation of social media, fast fashion, artistic internationalism, and transnational pop cultural practices has made Nigerian literature go from being a physical, quantifiable, researchable entity to being a category of virtual transmediatic products that are highly personalised. Each individual in Nigeria or beyond have different notions of what Nigerian literature is based on the ‘selections’ available to them in the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Girl With the Louding Voice | Abi Dare (Book Chat) - YouTube’, accessed 16 June 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBkDDJ7oMds>.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Africanfuturism Defined’, accessed 4 January 2021, <http://nnedi.blogspot.com/2019/10/africanfuturism-defined.html>.

virtual space. There is thus the acknowledgment that digital technology has become a game-changer in 21st-century Nigerian literature. From these examples, it can be said that 21st-century Nigerian writings are connected to theoretical fads more than any of the three generations. These theoretical trends might have manifested in previous generational trends, but they have massively inundated the writings and activities of what is now regarded as third generation Nigerian literature. Thus, responding to Cooper's suggestion that "less sweeping, more precise" concepts which seek to "emphasize both the nature of spatial linkages and their limits" should be used in the study of African historical processes,¹⁷¹ I contend that such specific concepts as diasporism, Africanfuturism (and/or Afrofuturism, black speculative fiction - the variant namings are infinite), Afrofeminism and digital storytelling are better frameworks within which 21st-century Nigerian literary developments can be situated for precise dissection and evaluation.

Away from 21st-century transcendent locally globalised literary trends, it was mentioned that the third literary generation broke the jinx of male domination in the Nigerian literary scene. Well, since the influx of female writers into the conventional third generation, there has been even more developments with regards to the inclusion of people of different genders and sexual orientations. Writers who identify as trans, non-binary, queer, or as part of the LGBTQIA+ movement have emerged in the Nigerian literary scene. These writers have always been present in the second and third generations, but they have now come out unabashedly to create a peculiar but widespread niche for themselves. They are also consciously attacking the prevalent gender dichotomisation in Nigerian literary scene. The earlier mentioned Emezi and von Reinhold are examples of this surged trend of wider gender inclusivity.

Finally, relating what has been said so far to postcolonialism, one has to concede to the fact that the ability to use the generational paradigm as a basis for the spatial differentiation of postcolonialities and postcolonialism(s) is an advantage. Without its advantageous use in national markings of literary attributes, the rupture that came with colonial invasion would have been obvious without the middling spatial intervention of postcolonialism. However, given the highlighted 21st-century developments in Nigerian literature, the budding panAfrican legacy fostered by members of the transnationally inclined postcolonial first and second generations

¹⁷¹ Cooper, 192.

began to decrease rapidly, and individualised forms of aesthetic and literary expressions began to be produced and acknowledged not only within African regional circles but also by international stakeholders. Thus, when Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga, Uganda's Sey Wava (pseudonym Moses Isegawa) or Adichie rose to local and international fame for their debut novels - *Nervous Conditions*, *Abyssinian Chronicles*, and *Purple Hibiscus* respectively, it was for their individual artistic prowess, their national/regional affinities, the sell-ability of their novels in the diasporic settings where they lived and published their works (the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the US respectively) as well as the international awards they garnered for themselves. Thus, the transnational embroidery that laced the postcolonial quality of the first two generations of writings in Nigeria has since been replaced with individuality and specific nationality, hence, rendering the advantage of convenient national categorisation unnecessary.

Due to the above-mentioned polemics about the varied manifestation of globalisation, individual aesthetics, and other related trends in Nigerian literature, there have been genuine anxieties about how postcolonial literature is undergoing a crisis of uncertainty and losing its distinctive social responsibility to the entangled influence of postmodernism and the technological marketisation of literary aesthetics practised on a global scale. However, Gayatri Spivak strongly polemicised against the fetishisation of third world countries and other postcolonial realms as merely a social “site of resistance” with an intellectual space meant to map out political blueprints and cultural trademarks. She perceived this as a subscription to a hidden neo-imperialist agenda.¹⁷² Away from Spivak's argument, it has been clarified in this section that the presence of cultural heteroglossia and global trends in 21st-century artistic endeavours is not a monoculturalising process but an aggravation of the cultural complexity that already engulfs world literary processes and accentuates the collective belonging of writers but also impresses their individuality upon readers' minds.¹⁷³

At this point, it becomes important to introduce a term which arguably encapsulates all of the trends currently taking place in 21st-century Nigerian literature and this term is **global-postcoloniality**. This term projects an acknowledgement of the polyvalent nature of 21st century

¹⁷² Cathy Caruth and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak', *PMLA* 125, no. 4 (2010): 1020–25.

¹⁷³ Pandit, "Introduction: Local, Global, Postcolonial", 5.

Nigerian literature as well as its connectedness to a heterogeneously constructed global vibrancy that is albeit still dressed in the ilk of postcoloniality. That new global trends in current Nigerian literature still show traits of cultural particularity and national affinities is proof of this. It is safe enough to leave this hypothesis at this stage as more understanding of it has been provided in the next chapter. However, even at this point, it has become obvious that rather than add new features to the third generation, there is the need to bring the already sidelined generational historiography and historicise Nigerian literature differently. So far, this thesis has been particular about discussing the past in relation to present developments in order to prove the stagnancy of historically-oriented reports about these trendy, complicated developments. As posited by Alexander Gerschenkron, “no past experience, however rich, and no historical research, however thorough, can save the living generation the creative tasks of finding their own answers and shaping their own future”.¹⁷⁴ To answer questions and shape the future of written Nigerian literature-in-English, there is the need to find a system of historicisation that can capture all the trends that have arisen in recent times. Chapter three is dedicated to specifically criticising the generational paradigm and offering alternative frameworks for future literary historiography(ies).

¹⁷⁴ Alexander Gerschenkron: *Economic backwardness in historical perspective*, 5-30.

Chapter Three: Criticisms and Alternatives

*My point is that the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe... I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am Black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white. But I was Igbo before the white man came - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun*.¹⁷⁵*

Up to this point, this piece of writing has been descriptive, providing historiographical details about Nigerian literature and the generational method of literary historiography. However, it has, so far, been laced with criticisms of the literary generational model such that it almost seems unnecessary to enunciate further on why the model is problematic for literary historicisation in Nigeria. However, it is important to categorically outline core arguments against this concept, especially those that have, up till now, not been mentioned. The late Harry Garuba and Biodun Jeyifo are considered to be the most outspoken critics against this discussed model. These academics raised objections against the national-generational framework on the grounds that it is ambiguous, unstable, temporally reductive and uses a rudimentary age-grading system to explain away a complex literary system in which different writers are constantly churning out works of different genres and stylistic compositions at different times regardless of the generation to which they have been constricted. Drawing from their highly antagonistic outlooks, this chapter explores the disadvantageous character of the generational model by critically looking through the lens of the relational contract between Nigerian literature and different conceptual or literary phenomena.

3.1 Exclusivity and Exceptions to the Generational Paradigm

One of the most foremost criticisms of the generational paradigm is the historically limiting embargo that it places in discourses related to Nigerian literature, i.e., the problem of exclusivity. On a general note, although the use of the generational approach to frame the literary histories of geographical regions (especially on a nation-state level) is supposed to prevent scholars from

¹⁷⁵ 'Quote by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: "...My Point Is That the Only Authentic Identity..."', accessed 10 June 2021, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/297202-my-point-is-that-the-only-authentic-identity-for-the>.

falling into the trap of monolithic periodisation, it is what inevitably and unconsciously happens over time as the near-scientific neat categorisations it enables leads to unresolved ambiguities and crises of exclusion.¹⁷⁶ Also, even amongst writers who commit to writing in similar ways and have the same interests, the undulating tenors and temperaments that course through every piece of writing makes it difficult to use poetic or rhetorical convergences and spatio-temporal resemblances as a basis of classifying their oeuvres, thus increasing the chances of leaving huge chunks of untold stories out of the picture.

This issue of exclusivity of texts that are included within the three generations is framed around the notion of canonicity. What marks a canon? According to Brown, it is what gets taught.¹⁷⁷ However, institutional preferences and pedagogical references made in schools, conferences, seminars, workshops etc. do not dictate what goes on in the fast-changing world of writing, publishing, translation, and recognition. Because of the asymmetric progression of the pedagogical and the practical realm of literature, a discrepancy has arisen between academic knowledge production about the developments of Nigerian literature and the literary outputs of Nigerian novelists. This discrepancy has created a divide between what is historically documented and what truly obtains in the Nigerian literary sphere. In other words, owing to the described asymmetry, there is bound to be certain degrees of exclusivity in what has become the literary history of Nigerian literature. However, the generational model is a rather loose, non-meticulous method of historicisation, so it has made historiographical attempts to capture Nigeria's literary history even more exclusive and haphazard. Some of the extreme situations of exclusivity occasioned by the generational paradigm has been highlighted below.

As can be seen from the previous chapter, most first, second and even third generational writers have progressive legacies that have protracted and evolved based on the rhythms of their spatial location and the tenor of the times they find themselves in. The continuing literary careers of most first- and second-generation Nigerian writers need to be historiographically captured. However, given the fact that the generational model is bound by time, space and national belonging, the historical development of writers' careers has been trapped within specific time periods and/or

¹⁷⁶ Marius Hentea made this argument and I agree with it.

¹⁷⁷ Duncan Brown, 'Reimagining the "Literary" in South African Literary Studies', *English in Africa* 43, no. 3 (2016): 141–66.

national settings. Historically freezing the achievements of Nigerian writers within specific generations has made it impossible to map their changing ideologies, fads of acceptance or prominence and trajectorise the evolution of their socio-political influence in the Nigerian society. With regards to the issue of continued legacies and enjamming epochs, Egya reiterated Garuba's argument that "there is a continuum that thwarts any attempt to neatly categorise Nigerian writing into specific eras"; this makes the epoch-based model of generations more unsuitable.¹⁷⁸

Two notable examples of novelists with such continuing, encompassing literary careers are Soyinka and Okri. Soyinka is an oldie who is 86 years old, he is a first generation writer, yet, after 48 years of not publishing a single novel, he is set to release a new novel in 2021 titled *Chronicles of the Happiest People on Earth*.¹⁷⁹ From the title, this is bound to be a deeply post-colonial novel (with the hyphen) but whether its post-coloniality (reflection on the life and living of Nigerians 'after independence') should determine its postcolonial placement within the generational schema or whether this should be determined by his age and the times he now lives in is a question that will definitely become difficult to answer with time. The unabated relevance of Okri has already been explained in the previous chapter. However, it has to be reiterated that the generational model does not make room for recognising the different gradients of Okri's abiding career.

Related to this case of exclusivity is the problem of exception. Although there are some writers who are placed in the right generations going by the generational spatio-temporal criterion, they do not fit the mold of that generation in any way. Some of them are generational in-betweeners, others just don't write about issues that resonate with the thematic focus of the generation in focus and there are those like Chika Unigwe who started her career early in life, has been here and there, and has also been going against the grain since then. Unigwe's oeuvre spans the African, Dutch and American literary spaces. The writer published her first literary work titled *Teardrops* (a collection of poems) in 1993 when she was 19 and still living in Enugu, Nigeria. She continued writing and publishing poetry in Nigeria till 2005. She, however, migrated to Belgium in 1995 and published her first novel *The Phoenix* (2007) in Dutch land for which she got recognised and became well-acclaimed. It was not until the publication of her second novel *On Black Sisters Street*

¹⁷⁸ Egya, 'The Question of Generation,' 14.

¹⁷⁹ 'Wole Soyinka's First Novel in 48 Years: *Chronicles of the Happiest People on Earth*', accessed 16 June 2021, <https://brittlepaper.com/2020/10/wole-soyinkas-first-novel-in-48-years-chronicles-of-the-happiest-people-on-earth/>.

(2009) that she got recognised in the African and American literary terrains.¹⁸⁰ Based on the generational timeline, she is a third-generation writer, and she is an integral part of postcolonial literary representations. However, her transnational identity and the fact that it is well spread across different time periods, spaces, genres, and languages makes her generational placement very problematic especially in relation to her postcolonial identity.

Elleke Boehmer and Sarah De Mul present the dilemma Unigwe's works present for postcolonial literary critics when they say that "Unigwe's oeuvre is situated within multiple, interconnected literary contexts that reach beyond its immediate locale of Flanders-Belgium... [Her works point to] the permeable nature of cultural and national boundaries."¹⁸¹ Given the fact that some parts of Belgium, the Netherlands, Flanders and America where she currently resides and writes about have postcolonial heritages of their own, Unigwe's roving presence at the intersectional curve of different postcolonial legacies poses a problem when attempting to encapsulate her works within particular generations. It is good enough to say that she belongs to the third generation, but this generation does not capture the relative vastness of her literary oeuvre and the developments it has undergone over time. In the same vein, there are other female writers like Helen Oyeyemi and Mabel Segun who are acknowledged within their generations but whose vast literary impacts are dimmed due to the generational self-fashioning which favour certain books over others.

Furthermore, the non-inclusion of street literatures and local literary development is also problematic, like the exclusion of the Onitsha Market Literature. This literary epoch which was already well established by the year 1945 was grounded in a subtle rejection of colonial subjugation. Many pamphlet-like fictional works of different genres tinged with oral characteristics were sold at erected bookstalls in Onitsha, a part of Nigeria, hence, the name accorded to it. Despite its popularity, it is studied in its own right as a form of street/market literature; the method of literature distribution and the street-ness of this brand of pamphlet writing has concerned literary scholars more than its role as the earliest form of postcolonial literary resistance. The fact that it is excluded from the three generations and rather isolated as a standalone

¹⁸⁰ 'The Chika Unigwe Bibliography', accessed 6 June 2021, <http://www.cerep.ulg.ac.be/unigwe/cuintro.html>.

¹⁸¹ Elleke Boehmer and Sarah De Mul, 'Towards a Neerlandophone Postcolonial Studies', *DiGeSt. Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014): 61–72, <https://doi.org/10.11116/jdivgendstud.1.1.0061>.

form of English writing has further led to its postcolonial devaluation. Because of the lack of incorporation into the larger Nigerian literary historiographical framework, most of the writers whose works were prominent during the period when the popular market literature was in vogue are not even known; today, they are regarded as invisible.¹⁸² The exclusion of this literary tradition is even more disheartening when one considers the fact that the Onitsha bookstalls were destroyed during the civil war in Nigeria, thus it embodies a historical watershed that *should* be included as part of the history of written Nigerian literature-in-English.

Moving forward, on a level of form, a particular genre often excluded from the generational approach is children's literature. During the periods marked as first, second and third generations, there has been an influx of children's writing, but the generational paradigm does not create room for acknowledging these forms of writing. Achebe, in his lifetime, wrote four children's book - *Chike and the River* (1966), *How the Leopard Got His Claws* (with John Iroaganachi) - 1972, *The Flute* (1975), *The Drum* (1978) and, as can be seen, they were all published during the heydays of his career, within the scope of time that can be referred to as the first generation. However, the generational model does not provide space for acknowledging these books as viable materials of significance in Nigeria's literary history.

Apart from Achebe's children's texts, published young adult and children's fiction are constantly excluded from the three literary-historical generations in Nigeria on the grounds that children literature in Africa is not politically geared or concerned with the historical developments of the continent. This is especially the case with the first two generations; in fact, in these generations, YA and children literature only get attention if they are Bildungsroman text that trace the development of precocious young minds going through extraordinary challenges (this could be child-soldiery narratives like Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of no Nation* - 2005) or if they have heavy symbolic postcolonial connotations like Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), an animist realist novel, in which a spirit child Azaro relates fluidly with monstrous, amorphous spirits seeking his soul which is 'stuck' in the human world.

¹⁸² 'Historical and Literary Context · Onitsha Market Literature · KU Libraries Exhibits', accessed 6 June 2021, <https://exhibits.lib.ku.edu/exhibits/show/onitsha/historical-literary-context>.

Ernest Ermenyonu criticised this outlook, pointing out that children's literature in Africa connects to the folklorism and storytelling traditions which form the fulcrum of oral literature, and which can pose as a fertile ground for postcolonial literary subversiveness. Moreso, for him, "writers of children's stories have in their fiction exposed and condemned in various forms and manners anti-social behaviours such as child abuse, wars (especially the involvement of children in wars), child trafficking, child marriages, gender inequalities and patriarchal institutions that espouse gender inequities."¹⁸³ The non-inclusivity of children's literature also can be linked to the abandoned project of postcolonising indigenous literatures as the folkloric nature of children's stories mean that there are "massive quantities of Children's Literature have been produced in African indigenous languages throughout the continent. These need to be translated, first, into other African languages and, second, into non-indigenous African languages."¹⁸⁴ Attention on the generational framework has stunted all of these processes and this enunciates the exclusive nature of the structure and its inadequacy in representing past and present literary-historical developments in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Garuba attacks the formalistic criterion for forming generations head-on with the view that "theme and style as markers of a specific literary period are obviously inadequate especially in modern African literatures because of their strong connection to a boundless extra-literary context."¹⁸⁵ This forms the crux for another premise for the criticism against exclusivity presented in this section. Generational divisions have also strongly occurred along the lines of form, such that the form of poetry is often associated with the second generation while the third generation is often used to indicate a shift from poetry to the novel as well as the internationalisation of the novel. While this might seem unproblematic, it has given rise to a sort of obscurity and exclusivisation of genres. For the second generation, the concentration on poetry makes it difficult to incorporate the novels, short stories, drama texts etc. that were written at that period. In like manner, for the third generation, there is greater emphasis on novels and short

¹⁸³ Ernest N. Ermenyonu, 'Children's Literature in Africa:', in *ALT 33 Children's Literature & Story-Telling*, ed. Ernest N. Ermenyonu et al., NED-New edition, African Literature Today (Boydell & Brewer, 2015), 1–5, <https://doi.org/10.7722/j.ctt17mvhw8.5>.

¹⁸⁴ Ermenyonu, 'Children's Literature in Africa:', 3.

¹⁸⁵ Egeya, 'The Question of Generation,' 14.

stories, and little attention is given to the trajectorisation of the poetic form within this generation. This is a problem.

True enough, the first decade of the third generation – 1985 – 1995 – were thoroughly dedicated to an exploration of nascent poetry works but, soon after the novelistic productions erupted, the genre of poetry was mostly left unattended to within the scope of the third generation. It has been said that the “the only notable work of fiction that punctuated the flow of poetry throughout the decade was Omowumi Segun's *The Third Dimple*.”¹⁸⁶ In my opinion, a closer examination of this decade might yield a contrary opinion that opposes this information stated above. Indeed, the dogged adherence to a rigid way of text classification and interpretation such as the generational model is bound to lead to redundancy and an increasing irrelevance of literary academic perspectives.

The last point for this section concerns the failure of the generational paradigm to capture the oralistic aesthetics that coat contemporary written Nigerian literature. Garuba discussed extensively how post-independence literature began to exert new ideologies and methods to express a new form of rhetoric and create a sense of continuum between the old tradition and new modernity. In this sense, animism, animalist materialism and re-enchantment began to feature actively in literary productions of the first generation.¹⁸⁷ Despite this novelisation of orality, the structure of the three literary historiographical generations give the illusion of the absence of a traditional resource base and does not allow for a scholarly exploration of how this knowledge capital has been put to service in literary texts. More can be said about the problem of exclusivity, but it is necessary to move to the next section which offers criticism from another perspective.

3.2 The Problems of Constructing a Truly Nigerian ‘National’ Literature

The nation, nationality and nationalism are some of the most controversial and debated categories of existence in historical studies and this is so for good reason. Defining the nation in itself means inevitably confronting three epistemological enigmas which Benedict Anderson pointed out in his seminal text, *Imagined Communities* - the unsettled debate about the modernity or antiquity of the

¹⁸⁶ Adesanmi & Dunton, ‘Nigeria’s Third Generation Writing,’ 10.

¹⁸⁷ Harry Garuba, ‘Explorations in Animist Materialism: Notes on Reading/Writing African Literature, Culture, and Society’, *Public Culture* 15, no. 2 (285 261AD): 2003.

nation; ambivalent opinions about its universality or particularity as well as the struggle to deal with the political prestige the nation commands despite the philosophical incoherence of its corporeal institutionality.¹⁸⁸ For me, as for Anderson, it is difficult to stop thinking about the fact that the nation is merely an imagined entity, the illusory carving of a sense of belonging that is merely abstract and imaginarily construed. But then, to think that these abstract entities of nationness and statehood have so much of a grip on the identity politics of masses of people is mindblowing, even from an academic point of view.

The case of Nigeria is even more perplexing given that its nationality was bestowed upon it by colonial, foreign invaders who had little or no cultural or economic affinity with the ethno-political entities that later made up the country. What is more, Nigeria did not exist until 1914; what is now considered Nigeria were, in fact, large clusters of ethnic societies and empires like the Nok Kingdom, Ile-Ife, the Old Oyo empire, the modern Abeokuta, the Kanem- Borno empire, the Hausa state and its caliphates, Benin kingdom, Niger-delta state, Igala kingdom and Jukun Empire etc.¹⁸⁹ So, although Nigeria has, since the time of its independence, developed a strong sense of national identity, it is safe to say that this nationalism was artificially inseminated into the consciousness of the country's citizenry.

The development of a distinct literary language is essential to the formation of a national identity and how the peculiar literary voice of a nation is recognised within and outside its borders largely depends on how it is historiographically constructed. Knowing this, Garuba strongly posited that the generational model lacks the ability to capture the literary history of a virulent, perplexing nation like Nigeria, as it is bound to face the challenge of delimiting vast corpora of literary works plagued by “semantic, thematic, and even ideological indeterminacy” (the third generation is currently facing this much of a problem).¹⁹⁰ Even Adesanmi and Dunton, the proponents of the third generation, could not help but agree with this rhetorical argument, but they were rightly quick to add that the problems of “thematic fluidity and temporal overlaps” occasioned by the use of the

¹⁸⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised (London, New York: Verso, 1991).

¹⁸⁹ Kamoru Ahmed Iyanda and Umar Abubakar, ‘Nationalists in Nigeria from 1914 -1960’, *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review* 2, no. 5 (2019): 1–12.

¹⁹⁰ Adesanmi and Dunton, ‘Nigeria's Third Generation Writing’, 13.

generational model in historicising written Nigerian literature rests against the problematic foundation of colonialism upon which Nigeria as a nation was built.¹⁹¹

True enough, the colonisation of Nigeria has led to the ruptures that currently beset its literary generational model. To start with, writing was instituted in Nigeria as a colonial apparatus and it was groomed to represent the civilising interests of the overwhelming British presence and, by extension, engender a politics of difference amongst the different protectorates in colonial Nigeria. So, when it began to be appropriated by colonially educated nationalists, it carried the smirking arrogance of sentimentalism that allowed it to serve the purpose of anti-colonial yet ethno-divided demagogues. As Anderson stated, the newspaper serves as a cultural product psychosocially promotes the cohesion of nationalistic fragments, thus offering clarity about what a group of people consider to be ‘their’ nation.¹⁹² In the decade that led up to 1960, the newspapers produced by anti-colonial nationalists like Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsanya, Obafemi Awolowo, Anthony Enahoro, Nnamdi Azikwe (who founded the Zik Group of Newspapers) and Tafawa Balewa performed just this function but rather provide a singular, agreeable idea of what Nigeria as a nation is and where its boundaries lie, they sparked discordant, divergent ideas of what the nationhood of Nigeria truly means, their disseminated discordant opinions had the bearing of a rivalrous, polyamorous relationship.

Most of the newspapers were divided along ethnic lines and this set the standard for what would later come to be contemporary written Nigerian literature. The pervading divisive influence of nationalist press like *Daily Times of Nigeria*, *African Messenger*, *Daily Telegraph*, *West African Pilot*, the *Comet*, the *Morning Star*, *Nigerian Tribune*, and the *Nigerian Citizen* are examples.¹⁹³ The ethnicised nature of the Nigeria press during colonialism was so intense that *West African Pilot* and *Nigerian Tribune* considered Southern Nigeria where Yorubas mostly resided to be the real Nigeria; *Nigerian Citizen* associated itself with the territory of the North dominated by Hausas and Fulanis. They often antagonised themselves on paper, using these newspaper names derisively as titular metonymies with which to show which side of the nationalistic fence they belonged to.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 16, 19.

¹⁹³ Wale Adebani, ‘Nation as Grand Narrative’, in *Nation as Grand Narrative*, NED-New edition, The Nigerian Press and the Politics of Meaning (Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 3–29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt1r69zcb.5>.

A northerner was a *Citizen* while a Westerner or Southerner was a *Pilot* or belonged to the *Tribune*.¹⁹⁴ What is more, these papers were supported by political patrons on each extreme of the national spectrum. For one, the *Tribune* and the *Pilot* were *sponsored by* the Action Group and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC; later, National Council of Nigerian Citizens).¹⁹⁵ It is against this bemusing background that it becomes difficult to understand the aspiration to make a ‘grand nation’ out of Nigeria despite its underlying ethno-national, ethno-regional, and ethno-religious divisions.

Thus, through divided newspaper rhetorics in the colonial period, the artificiality of Nigerian nationalism began to first manifest itself. It was on this premise of artificial nation-ness that Sir Ahmadu Bello, the political leader of the Northern People’s Congress, clashed with Anthony Enahoro who presented the bill for Nigeria’s independence during a parliamentary meeting held in 1953. Enahoro had asked that a resolution be passed to ensure Nigeria’s full self-government in 1956, but, at the time, Bello maintained that the Nigerian nation was both a colonial invention and a bane of inter-regional unity, hence the need to only grant Nigeria independence ‘as soon as practicable’. It has been established that Alhaji Sir Bello who was the Premier of Northern Nigeria from 1954 till his death in 1966 could not envision a holistic Nigeria and rather advocated more for the interests of the Northern state, like his fellow nationalist Tafawa Balewa.

It has even been said that he “expressed distaste for the Southern (Yoruba) style of politics and had no desire for participation in the federal government.”¹⁹⁶ He was, however, only one of the many nationalists who imagined the creation of Nigeria along the lines of their ethnic belonging. Nnamdi Azikwe and Ernest Okoli were thoroughly passionate about representational politics especially as it concerns the Eastern part of Nigeria (the Igbos and other ethnic minorities) and even Obafemi Awolowo who advocated that federalism be made the abiding system of government in the new Nigeria is still referred to, till date, as Asiwaju Awon Yoruba, Omo Oodua (the leader of the Yoruba Nation, children of Oodua).

When novelistic expressions erupted in the late 90s, they began to take the path that the newspaper medium treaded during the colonial period - fiercely nationalistic yet painstakingly ethnic and

¹⁹⁴ Adebani, ‘Nation as Grand Narrative’, in *Nation as Grand Narrative*.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Iyanda and Abubakar, ‘Nationalists in Nigeria from 1914 -1960’. iyan

exclusive. The ethnic particularity of the novels of writers who began to write during the colonial period was however shrouded by the zest of decolonisation. For one, Achebe's oeuvre of works, beginning from his African Tetralogic Series - *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, and *Anthill of the Savannah* - to his biographical memoir *There was a Country*, all focus on the Igbo traditional and modern landscapes, thus placing Eastern Nigeria at the focus of his fictional nation-building. Achebe's memoir which explicates the historical trajectory of the Biafran war through personal eyes has been deemed to be deeply tribalistic and historically subjective. In the same vein, Soyinka, being a Yoruba traditionalist, built his literary scape around the Yoruba nation, placing Yoruba cosmology, its deities, rituals, customs, and culture on a high pedestal, and even using these accentuated Yoruba climates as metaphors for representing the larger Nigerian polis (a rather over-generalised metaphorisation, if I may add). His popular drama pieces and performed plays like *The Lion and the Jewel* (1959), *Dance of the Forests* (1960), *Kongi's Harvest* (1964), *Madmen and Specialists* (1970), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), *Opera Wonyosi* (1977), etc. are particularly known to focus deeply on the socio-cultural idiosyncrasies and wonderments in Yoruba tradition. But even his two old novels - *The Interpreters* (1964) and *Season of Anomy* (1972) bear all the glory of the modern Yoruba nation.

Also, literary works produced by Hausa writers and many others from minor ethnic groups are hardly considered to be part of Nigerian literature. It is often argued that English-written literary works hardly came from these regions but even the few that were indeed published following post-independence were and are still swamped in the messy drudgery of ethnicised literary politics. In a sense, apart from the third generation whose literary boundaries have become even more ambiguous and messier, what used to exist at the outset of post-independence was Igbo English literature and Yoruba English literature. The generational model does not, however, cater for the depiction and historical representation of the botched nature of the ethno-denationalised parallel trajectory of Nigerian literature.

Apart from the inherently divisive political structure of Nigeria and how it has affected its literary sphere, literary institutions of prominence also promote a de-nationalised understanding of Nigerian literature which has affected how its history has been written. For one, the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) is one institution within which Nigerian writers of several generations cultivated their writings and gained public recognition. However, with the promotion of the poetic

genre by the association and with the proliferation of ANA branches across the country's universities, there came a form of ethnicised and genre-related 'privileging' that caused an abundant influx of works to be lost to time and historical documentation. ANA branches in such tertiary institutions as the University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University and, subsequently, the University of Lagos as well as some schools in the north and west of Nigeria, the popularisation of some writers, especially Yorubas, above others became inevitable. The fact that the association organises some key award programs which offer platforms for authorial respectability has made it a stronghold in which some writers have received appraisal over others. Given the fact that the generational model was postulated by modern literary scholars teaching in tertiary institutions, it is evident that writers who have gained popularity by means of the influence of ANA and other such institutions have been factored more into the generations, whilst less popular authors have been left to remain in obscurity.

Furthermore, the notion of literary influence (what Hentea calls the 'anxiety of influence') has become an ideological statement with which scholars discussing Nigerian literature defend the irresistible appeal to the generational trend to explain the connection between 20th-century and 21st-century writings. This is tied to the larger assumption that what constitutes authentic Nigerian literature is its vehement authorial embodiment of political activism, a conscious rhetoric of resistance and fictive backlashes against sociopolitical obscenities. It is this pervading scholarly perception about Nigerian literature that has egged on efforts to symmetrically connect novels who, by means of networked forms of influences, have been written at different points of the spasmodic historical trajectory of Nigeria. However, this attribute of influence paradoxically plays a negative role when it comes to how Nigerian literary history is written. Influence does not just happen on an institutional level as with the case of ANA, but also on the level of individuality.

For one, due to Adichie's constant reference to first-generation author Achebe, literary scholars have compared them with each other, placing them in a linearly adjacent thread of development. Their concretely defined literary and personal connections which many scholars write about profoundly have been bolstered by what Daria Tunca referred to as a "genealogical metaphor, whereby Achebe is cast into the role of the "father of African literature" and Adichie into that of

his “literary daughter”.¹⁹⁷ Rejecting this line of thought, Tunca noted the rebelliousness that occupies Adichie’s own writings and breaks the supposed notion of linear connectivity between her and Achebe. Although Adichie’s affinity with Achebe is deeply rooted in her childhood memories of living in the same university building that the literary veteran once lived while teaching at the University of Nsukka as well as her love for his stylistic authenticity, the level of connection she shares with him on a literary level has been debated, with Tunca positing that Adichie and Achebe identify as political writers, but they contextualise their literary-political participation in different ways. Unlike Achebe who unapologetically moulded his works into modes of political advocacy regardless of their internationalist nature, Adichie reject the political prescriptivism the West accords to African literature:

Whatever I write, somebody is somehow going to find a way to show that I’m really writing about political oppression in Africa. Often I’m asked, “Were you trying to use that as a metaphor for the politics of your country?” And I think, “Well, no. No, it was a story about a woman and a man. It was not about bloody political oppression.” (“Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A Conversation with James Mustich”)¹⁹⁸

What is more, as noted by Boehmer and many scholars, the generational casting of Achebe as the father of African literature has put a dent on the literary legacies of several writers - novelists, playwrights, poets - who wrote brilliant works before his internationally acclaimed *Things Fall Apart*.¹⁹⁹ For one, the seminality of Amos Tutuola’s novels have largely not been acknowledged within the scope of the historicised generations.

What these reveal so far is the dependency of the literature of any country on constructed national institutions, systems and influences. Thus, challenging the generational paradigm used in Nigerian literary history is tantamount to unraveling the national foundation on which it has been built. This warrants an examination of important touchstones of literary academia like the question of national and transnational identity influences, domestic and international literary journalism, the dynamics of readership and translation, locational politics and, most importantly, literary historiographical endeavours. True, these are difficult issues to tackle, but still, if the generational model cannot, at

¹⁹⁷ Daria Tunca, ‘Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as Chinua Achebe’s (Unruly) Literary Daughter: The Past, Present, and Future of “Adichebean” Criticism’, *Research in African Literatures* 49, no. 4 (2018): 107–26, <https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafrit.49.4.08>.

¹⁹⁸ Tunca, ‘Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as Chinua Achebe’s (Unruly) Literary Daughter’, 111.

¹⁹⁹ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature : Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford : Oxford university press, 1995), <http://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:000458908>.

least, acknowledge these prickly yet unavoidable elements that shape (the writing of) Nigeria's literary history, then, it does not hold so much value as a method of literary historicisation.

Furthermore, the relevance of engaging with the notion of literary periodisation is anchored on its importance to the formulation of a canonised literary structure which serves as one of the major elements of what comes to represent the collective identity and memory of a nation. The functionality of the generational model for the purpose of convenient canonisation seemingly serves as a good justification for sticking with it because canonisation is indeed necessary within the context of national literary values. Thus, to imagine a literary history that does not use the generational model is tantamount to envisioning a non-national literary history. Although it seems difficult to think of the possibility of comprehending a nation's literature in non-national terms, the idea has been fostered by literary scholars, with many of them like Stephen Greenblatt and Arnold Dwight Culler problematising the authenticity and integrity of literary nationalism. The duo have questioned the model of nationalising literary studies and hierarchising them on an implicit, programmatic spectrum. Apart from the fact that it subjectivises history and overdetermines what is considered to be 'national', it also promotes the prejudicial sovereignty of specific national literatures, like Greek and American literatures. Interestingly, amidst casting doubt on this problematic approach to literary inquiries, he noteworthyly mentioned that American literature has become "fractured into pieces that no longer fit together into a traditional model of a national culture."²⁰⁰ If Nigerian literature is properly delineated from a historical point of view, it can be said that this phenomenon of embodied fractured literary histories also applies to it.

In his defence of patriotic cosmopolitanism, African philosopher Kwame Appiah emphasised this phenomenon of the ambiguity of national culture in several parts of the world. According to him, America is a paradigmatic exemplar of a country pillared not on a common, national culture but on a political culture that thrives on voluntary patriotism and colossal multiethnic nationness.²⁰¹ He then categorised Africa as a coliseum where the ambivalence of nationness manifests itself in full force; according to him, most African countries like Nigeria only operate on the level of statehood, given that they are made up of multiethnic structures that come together under the contractual umbrella of an autonomous, civil, sovereign arrangement rather than collectivised

²⁰⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, 'What Is the History of Literature?', *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (1997): 460–81.

²⁰¹ Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Cosmopolitan Patriots', *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (1997): 617–39.

shared identities. Thus, nationness is reserved only for ‘imagined communities’ with a ‘common culture’, a shared body of beliefs and ideologies. Thus, while the Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo people might, in the ‘political expression’ of their ‘tribal fantasy’, be called a nation, Nigeria is, in fact, a state.²⁰²

As Appiah maintained, it is not necessarily debasing to refer to Nigeria as a state because the highest, purest form of patriotism can sprout from a state formed out of an idea or a variety of divergent common cultures. However, confronting the truth that Nigeria is a state with different strands of existence leads to the realisation that Nigerian literature can only qualify as the term used to describe the oeuvre of work produced by people of a sovereign state. These voiced thoughts represent the foundation of what can be considered a lack of true faith in national literature, and it is on this wing of faithlessness that the possibility of adopting a paradigmatic model of historically representing Nigerian literature from a non-national point of view can be envisioned. This section surely offers a lot to take in but there are even other criticisms that must also be highlighted; the remaining two sections below do justice to presenting these criticisms.

3.3 The Ambiguities of Postcolonial and Global Literary Spaces

Just as Garuba specifically indicated, the scope of the influence of scholars who construct and study generational mappings is determined by their spatial situatedness.²⁰³ Whilst in Africa, scholars like Irele are aware that their discussions of African literature are nationally inclined and thus they offer local contextualisations that are culturally relevant to the institutionalisation of national literary norms and deviations. However, upon moving their teaching and scholarly activities to the US, UK and other international settings, they are faced with the realisation that African literature is marginalised and treated as secondary references or comparative materials. This causes them to adopt specific narratives or modes of presentation that spur polemics about the decentredness of the African literary oeuvre or simply grant their discourses about African literature a global appeal. Postcolonialism being a fashionable topic that has a greater level of awareness in the West has caused scholars in different universities and colleges in international

²⁰² Appiah, ‘Cosmopolitan Patriots’, 623–26.

²⁰³ Harry Garuba, ‘The African Imagination: Postcolonial Studies, Canons, and Stigmatization’, *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 4 (2003): 145–49.

regions to tilt their literary explorations towards the unveiling of the postcoloniality of all things African literature.

It is no wonder that the first and second Nigerian literary generations are designed in ways that heuristically place emphasis on the national and political resistance of the writers while the third generation (especially the latter stage) is nationally depoliticised yet has a globally-enthused postcolonial character in its mode of existence. In light of Irele's own professional journey, Garuba argued that there is a locational politics which serves as an important undertone in the programmatic development of generations. According to him, "difference in location usually translates to a change in perspective, an adjustment in the direction of professional practice, critical, and research agenda that has significant implications for the African literary scholarship and pedagogy."²⁰⁴

Against this backdrop, the current influx of academic discussions about recent African literary products, offerings and dynamics by African literary scholars living in the Global North (especially the US and the UK) should not be taken with a sleight of hand (which seems to be the case now), it should be factorised as a political fact that will shape what comes to be considered as the handwriting on the wall in future generations of African literature (if ever there will be any). This is even more important because many scholars currently writing and theorising from the West once had an 'Africa phase'. The Africa phase of the lives of most Nigerian scholars has also reflected on the nature of the generations, giving each one of the generations an animated exuberance of spatially and temporally configured discursive performances which climax into a third generational phase and begins to wane in a less-dramatic fashion with the 21st century.

Interestingly, given the tenuous situation out of which Nigerian literature was born, writers have always pitted their works as ever so countercanonical on the domestic and international front. A literary comradeship was embraced amongst Nigerian and mostly West African writers, with the likes of supposed first-generation writers - Soyinka, wa Thiong'o, Achebe, Amadi and others - recognising their collective authorial attempts to criticise the arising political anomalies in nationally independent African states whilst still challenging the role of the imperial Centre in destabilising African socio-political and religious structures. Hence, the first generation writers

²⁰⁴ Garuba, 'The African Imagination: Postcolonial Studies, Canons, and Stigmatization', 145-6.

tried to keep their works outside the bracket of domestic and international acceptability in order to propagate their ideological and national dissatisfaction. However, given that the works of these early Nigerian and African writers have mostly received validation and critical appraisals within the discursive terrain of the West, they have shifted from the original intention of being counter-canonical to actually being parts of an established postcolonial canon.

Because postcoloniality is more concerned about the relation of the Center to the peripheries, the inward-looking, nationally oriented rhetoric of first generation works have been largely de-emphasised. In pointing this problem out, Garuba, alongside Irele and Saleh Hassan, mentioned Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a typical example. As explained in chapter two, the 1958-published novel is a critical delineation of the effects of Christian missionary activities, colonialism, imperialism and capitalism in the intimate lives of the colonised and 'converted'. However, the above-mentioned scholars observed that it presents a fine literary rhetoric that fits nationalist agenda through its close-up examination of a representative Igbo community whose fractured sociopolitical, religious systems were already crumbling at the rims even before the arrival of the Whites.²⁰⁵ Irele theorised about the underlying message of indigenous disconnectedness that lies beneath Achebe's persistent effort to represent a community that he was not so much a part of.²⁰⁶ Being a scholar that had gone through colonial education and traveled beyond the breadth of his Igbo hometown, Achebe's concentration on a pre-colonial indigenous community indeed seems to signal his search for a bridge that connects his reality in an already turbulent pre-independent Nigeria with a past indigenous, homely community which, at the surface, seemed peaceful but was brewing with political and religious turmoil that was aggravated upon the arrival of colonial emissaries.

However, the latter observation in *Things Fall Apart* has not so much been critically studied because of the 'westernness' of its reception. Thus, it is the outsider postcolonial respectability accorded to *Things Fall Apart* that has earned the book and its writer their significant place in the canonical ordering of Nigerian literary works, but it is also this respectability that has limited its possibilities for critical analyses that are indigenous, nationalist and intra-political. The paradox presented by the example of *Things Fall Apart* shows that the spatial situatedness of canonical

²⁰⁵ Garuba, 'The African Imagination: Postcolonial Studies, Canons, and Stigmatization'.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

gatekeepers, who range from literary critics to literary historians and literary journalists, is important in determining if a work is canonised and/or generationalised as well as what canon or generation it belongs to. No doubt, this presents a problem that goes even beyond the generational model.

More so, this example nearly validates the hypothesis that what was identified as Nigeria's postcolonial first literary generation was only an extension of the western literary milieu. Apart from being schooled with the very education that they were trying to subvert, the reactionary prose that emerged from the agitation of first generation-ers over colonialism, racism, imperialism etc. seemed to have reified the global aspirations of their colonial masters. The colonial ambition of cosmopolitan exposure was initially realised through their angry but well-articulated English-written narratives. In a way, their overt 'confrontational' acknowledgment of the British and American colonial 'masters' gave their works a pseudo-varsity outlook and a quasi-global appraisal that ran deep enough to earn Wole Soyinka the 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Along this line of thought, it is important to make recourse to the last section of chapter two in which Cooper's concept of the Dance of the Flows and Fragments was used to dissect the discursive theory of globalisation often associated with third generational written Nigerian literature-in-English. While it has been proven that Nigeria's third literary generation is truly globally inclined, it has also been revealed in this thesis that its globalness is not as simple as it looks on face value. Globalisation, like any historical process or concept that studies relations across and within scales of existence, is asymmetrical in its configuration, "it is filled with lumps, places where power coalesces surrounded by those where it does not, where social relations become dense amidst others that are diffuse".²⁰⁷ It also has crumbs of glocality, indigeneity and entangled spatial realities. This shows that there is a limiting caveat on the extent of global-ness in third generation Nigerian literature. But it reveals even more interesting facts. Hence, hinging on the knowledge provided in that section, it becomes necessary to further explore how spatial ambiguities have caused all three generations of Nigerian literature to have some semblance of global-ness, thus complicating the generational paradigm.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

To start with, Cooper reflected on the practice of speaking about or writing history backwards which puts past histories into jeopardy in the process of documenting colonial experiences or theoretical knowledge. In relation to globalisation, Cooper said that African historicisation generally suffers from the ‘habit’ of “taking an idealized version of the ‘globalized present’ and working backwards to show either how everything led up to it (‘proto-globalization’) or how everything, up to the arrival of the global age itself, deviated from it.”²⁰⁸ Considering this, it is no surprise that the first and second generations are often presented as backdrops against which to determine the globalising changes or continued local traditions that have come with the third generation. Situating dynamic ‘trans- or ‘inter-’ changes in the 21st century due to the currency and perceived globalness of the age, as opposed to the supposed temporal outdatedness of past generations, blurs the fact that the thrust of any kind of history lies in continuity, such that the past is not merely a stagnant, fixated period in time but is also moving and shifting considerably each time the present is being acted upon across spaces.

In fact, Giles Gunn opined that this appendaging of ‘present’ literary histories with pseudo-ist global qualities can do nothing other than merely add yet another layer of fabrication to literary historical trajectories.²⁰⁹ Thus, the treatment of each Nigerian literary generation as concrete literary developments, publications and events frozen in time against which to study globality has an ahistorical ring to it that makes it all too easy to gloss over the mechanisms of historically-mobile, connective threads that make for globalisation. In my opinion, every generation, period or shade of literary development in Nigeria or anywhere else has its own strain and brand of globalness which should be considered in itself, within the particular context it occurs.

It is against this backdrop that the transnational linkages of the precolonial and colonial past should not be ignored. In precolonial times, Nigeria was a geographical mass of entangled networks characterised by interconnections amongst ethnic communities, empires and territories that were later forcibly ‘straightened’ out by colonial interlopers who invented a country out of already existing transnational entities by amalgamating far-reaching protectorates for the sake of imperial prosperity. While it almost seems unthinkable to now conceive of Nigeria as nothing but one whole

²⁰⁸ Frederick Cooper, 205.

²⁰⁹ Giles Gunn, ‘Introduction: Globalizing Literary Studies’, *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001): 16–31.

national entity, it is, in reality, a conglomeration of several pre-colonial societies whose sovereignty, nation-ness and statehood were located in inextricable ethnic identities and complex, distinctive political systems. Thus, Nigeria is in itself a transnational network incidentally converged into a single scale. This explains the various irreconcilable shards of literary strands and divergent ways of practicing and understanding literature within Nigeria itself.

Along this line of thought, Nigerian oral literature is constituted by the independent cultural products of pre-colonial ethnic societies; when considered as a whole, it exudes a sense of oral transnationality that connotes the transmission of oral forms from society to society and person to person. Finnegan elucidated on these processes in her seminal textbook, *Oral Literature in Africa*.²¹⁰ For the obvious reasons of slavery and colonialism, the transnationality and ancient-globality present during this period wilted away and led to a cul de sac, having no space to grow into a recognisable, sustainable brand of globalisation that finds resonance with present realities. This example is a testament of how transnational or global processes need not develop into flourishing networks but can shrivel somewhere along the line “producing dead ends as well as pathways leading somewhere [else], creating conditions and contingencies in which actors made decisions, mobilized other people, and took actions which both opened up and constrained future possibilities”.²¹¹

Relatedly, even the Nigeria that existed during colonialism had a peculiar pattern of linkages and spatial interconnections with other former colonies in what later came to be West Africa; these transnational networks were ensured and sustained by the shared animosity for one common Master. There were literary and artistic exchanges amongst writers, politicians *cum* philosophers in Nigeria, Kenya, Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), the British and French Togoland (present day Togo, part of which now belongs to Ghana), Senegal and even Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania). This colonial transnationalism has been shown to be more genuine and profound than the transnational character of the 21st-century, thus showing that Nigerian literary history is rife with elements of globality and proving the non-distinctiveness of global affinities in the third generation. It can be said that what is different about the third generation is that the pattern of

²¹⁰ Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*.

²¹¹ Cooper, 205.

linkages and tide of global processes have shifted northward; nodes of connection are now drawn not amongst several African countries but between the Global South and the Global North.

Admittedly, the fact that these differently configured modes of globalisation are not all brought to the fore in Nigerian literary studies is because, unlike the case of Europe whose historical continuity is traceable for most part, the old and the new Nigeria; the precolonial, colonial and the postcolonial can hardly be reconciled due to the shifting and totally altering dynamics by which each new phase of history in Nigeria and Africa as a whole operates. Cooper neatly explains the difficulty of fitting any African-related notion, concept or area of study (like the one being examined) into tidy historiographical boxes:

Africanists, I shall argue, should be particularly sensitive to the time-depth of cross-territorial processes, for the very notion of ‘Africa’ has itself been shaped for centuries by linkages within the continent and across oceans and deserts — by the Atlantic slave trade, by the movement of pilgrims, religious networks, and ideas associated with Islam, by cultural and economic connections across the Indian Ocean. The concept cannot, I will also argue, be salvaged by pushing it backwards in time, for the histories of the slave trade, colonizing, and decolonization, as well as the travails of the era of structural adjustment fit poorly any narrative of globalization.²¹²

This is related to the much larger problem of how such migratory status-quo like diasporism, internationalism, global citizenship are, in fact, products of colonialism, especially within the contexts of postcolonial states. This has already been explained above but it is also useful to point out that even in the thick plots of heavy diasporic, Nigerian-American writings that transcend topics of national temperaments and find resonance with racial, gender, and climate issues collectively shared by the whole of humanity, the imperial nation-state(s) still doggedly survives, like lingering resentment that refuses to dissipate. It is because of this that, in literary journalism, third-generation Nigerian literary products of seemingly global orientation are still woven around the theoretical fabrics of postcolonialism and decolonisation.

Spatial limitation in literary historiography also manifests itself in the most basic form of geographical scalability. Due to the vastness of the world, the African continent, or Nigeria as a

²¹² Frederick Cooper, 190.

country, there is only so much spatial linkage that can be incorporated when engaging in literary writing or literary-historical studies. However, the generational approach to historicising Nigerian literature has made more obvious the confined spatial panning that frames what has come to be considered literature in Nigeria. Having shown how the ambiguities of spatio-temporal linkages can create ambivalences when used in the classification of literary works, this thesis pushes the claim that postcolonial literature has always had a global character which was suppressed by the historical conditions that heralded post-independent African nation-states, but this character has resurged through new global-postcolonial aesthetics that can no longer be ignored.

Moving forward, in this critical section, it is important to extend the category of spatiality to 21st-century author-reader dynamics as it concerns their non-coeval relationship with the internet and social media. With the integration of digital technology and the internet into worldwide economic, political and sociocultural frameworks, the *modus operandi* of virtually all thinkable institutional apparatuses have changed; the Nigerian literary sphere is not exempted. In fact, the digital virtual space has become a viable and existing locative terrain within which Nigerian writers of different cultural and racial configurations are finding a place for themselves and even re-defining in many ways the spatial landmarks around which African literary products are constructed. Claims made by literary scholar Stephanie Newell about the psychogeographical recalibration of spaces to convey the ideals of Afropolitanism capture the realities of new internet-aided politics of location as it concerns Nigerian literature.²¹³

For one, the internet has opened up a global space for projecting the works of several millennials and Gen Zers to a large readership base; it has also aided the marketisation and distribution of new West African narratives as well as influenced African writers to creatively produce stories that embody their cosmopolitan, diasporic identities while bearing the torch of their rootedness in Africa. Amidst all these though, the internet has become an apparatus with which to reify the neocolonial agenda and reveal the cracks underlying the current positionality of several West African established authors and aspiring writers. On an exemplary note, there is a growing community of Nigerian writers on Twitter who might still be a viable part of traditional publishing

²¹³ Stephanie Newell, *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

processes but who have created new rules alien to the conventional mode of literature in Nigeria and Africa.

The global visibility afforded by the internet combined with the cosmopolitan character of these new generation writers have allowed for infinite possibilities with regards to the negotiation of individual and national identities. Thus, it has become damaging to offer a definition of who a Nigerian writer is by simply referring to their spatial rootedness in a West African country by means of birth, citizenship, descent, residential presence or literary plot preferences. The fluid nature of the identity politics on the internet makes it possible for one to be a Nigerian writer from a distance. Therefore, it is by extending their narrative ideologies from the enclose of their books to social media platforms, personal websites, uploaded videos etc., that Nigerian writers who come from and live in different parts of the world have come to define what they consider to be their locations and spatial zones of operation within the scope of their narrativisations and even without. The reconfiguration of space in this way makes the generational paradigm redundant especially for capturing the histories of 21st-century Nigerian writers.

This connects to the co-opting of multimediality in the telling of narratives; what has come to be known as digital storytelling. The waning dependence on words written in English language and the arising appeal to alternative modes of narrativisations truly opens a path for telling ‘authentic’ stories that mirror the diverse and wide array of African-ness that exists within the planetary network of national relations that has been heralded by the 21st century. Also, the growing acceptance of audiobooks and podcasts by the world’s reading population is opening new doors for writers to not only produce stories in a differently configured audio-virtual terrain, but also offer a feeling of virtual and visceral homeliness through the reading aloud of stories in voices and accents that retain the cultural and spatial cadence of the narratives. Relatedly, Newell posited that the increment in the exchange of films and literature through internet-related portals have shifted the terrain of literary activities so much that the production, publishing and transmediatic reception of African narratives are no longer dependent on the available writers in one’s area of dwelling or scale of presence but, rather, on marketisation strategies and consumerist cultures promoted on the internet.²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Stephanie Newell, *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading*.

With regards to readership, amidst the humdrums of shared posts by authors and impulsive, opinionative, succinct but poignant remarks about Africa and its literary productions, social media, especially Twitter, is proving to be a knowledge base for literary enthusiasts interested in West African literature. While this has proven to be a good thing, the disadvantage has been the flowy, uninterrupted passage of distorted information and literary-historical ‘facts’ about what Nigerian literature is about. An example is how Adichie is considered to be the perfect ‘ambassador’ of Nigerian literature. Following her TED speeches - “We Should all be Feminists” and “The Danger of a Single Story” - which went viral on the internet through social media,²¹⁵ Adichie has been distortedly placed on a pedestal of an ideal Nigerian literary icon, with many enthusiasts failing to realise that, in terms of representation, her works are merely small gradients on a Nigerian literary spectrum that stretches infinitely. Like what has been noted above, Adichie might be Nigerian, but she is also many other things and the vagaries of her experiences and multiplicities of her identity shape her narratives.

On a conclusive note, the dynamics of 21st-century readership is bound to affect future national-generational projects. A book is a cultural product; the possibility to read books from anywhere which the internet offers makes the books created by Nigerians a product of global belonging. In most cases, however, these books are better accessed in the Global North where the internet works better, and several modes of accessibility are in existence. Although the internet readily grants access to books, other socio-political and economic conditions like electricity stability (or not), broadband availability, and financial resources affect who will, in fact, eventually read the books, when, where, how, and whose books they will read. Similarly, the jagged lines along which the readership of Nigerian literature is patterned favours individualistic, corporate efforts to sell books and personal stories rather than collectivised national narratives. Thus, even if the national-generational tradition of historicising Nigerian literature continues, it will not reflect how and what books are being read by Nigerians and non-Nigerians respectively as each demographic population mostly come to be familiar with books that they access on both legal and illegal online platforms. These books which are often vastly non-canonical and of little scholarly or national recognition

²¹⁵ ‘Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: We Should All Be Feminists | TED Talk’, accessed 16 June 2021, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists; ‘Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story | TED Talk’, accessed 16 June 2021, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.

offer different kinds of Nigerian-ness that do not holistically add up to a single ‘generational’ image.

3.4 Generations, Local Multilingualism and the English Language Question

To start with, it is disturbing to think that literature written in Nigerian indigenous languages are classified as having a separate, parallel literary strain of existence whose trajectory need not be mapped alongside historical developments in contemporary written Nigerian literature-in-English. Since Nigeria’s independence in 1960, there have been replete works written in Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and other ethnic languages in Nigeria. To not include them in the process of creating generations is to erase them from an interconnected, constantly-shifting historical experiences and processes. This above-presented argument is related to the problem of exclusivity but it deserves to be mentioned here as it connects to the agelong scholarly crisis of the language question.

More so, the exclusion of post-1960 written literatures of the indigenous territories of Nigeria from the widely accepted national-generational literary historical paradigm has caused them not to be placed under the lens of postcolonialism. The literature that has come to be a subject matter for postcolonial scholars is the one written in English in former colonies. Mund also noticed this problem with Indian literature. He questioned the postcolonial criticism accorded to the literatures written in English, which is not extended to the literatures of post-colonies written in other languages (the literatures in the bhashas).²¹⁶ Mund registered his disappointment at the devaluation of non-English works that are ‘postcolonial’ in orientation, either in the temporal or theoretical sense of the word. According to him, “an impressive corpus of postcolonial writing in languages other than English has in fact remained virtually untouched by critical or scholarly explorations” despite the overarching claim that postcolonialism encompasses all cultures affected by imperialism and colonialism.²¹⁷

Another consequence of excluvising indigenous written literatures from a commonly acknowledged historical narrative is the reification of terms like ‘vernacular literature’ which is used to refer to works in indigenous languages. This term is a retained colonial, Eurocentric legacy

²¹⁶ Mund, ‘Anxieties of Post-Coloniality: Postcolonialism and Odia Literature’.

²¹⁷ Mund, 409.

and it has influenced how literary studies is approached in Nigeria. Amritjit Singh and Nalini Iyer pointed at the colonial undertone beneath the descriptive use of the term ‘vernacular’ to qualify literatures written in indigenous languages. According to them, “vernacular” is etymologically from the Latin word, *vernae*, which means domestic slaves, hence, it “reminds us of its condescending connotation in British colonial history that implicitly obviated the substantive literary trajectory of the subcontinent’s regional languages.”²¹⁸ Also, periodising Nigerian literature along the lines of colonial history in a way that extricates pre-colonial and post-colonial written indigenous literary legacies reifies the myth of ahistoricity associated with Africa as it suggests that the beginnings of any form of history in Nigeria (and Africa) has much more to do with Euro-American interventions than with already existing indigenous praxes, people and places.

What is even more disconcerting is that most writers of former colonies like Rushdie strongly opine that works written in the English language are the authentic expressions of postcolonial and are thus more deserving of postcolonial treatment. Only a few like Emenyonu and wa Thiong’o have maintained that the true nature of Nigerian and African literature lies in the indigenous, non-Anglicised or Francophonic written strips of work cultivated within each society.²¹⁹ Implicationally, the essence of Nigerian literature, for them, is contained in texts that are written in any language that is *native or local* to the readers and writers. The argument is extended to include the premise that “every Nigerian who writes fiction in English today has his foundation in the oral heritage of his ethnic group”.²²⁰ Thus, they call for the appreciation and authentication of the rich, non-colonially affined literary history of Nigeria through a more profound historicisation of indigenous written literatures.

Also, wa Thiong’o polemicised about the importance of exposing works written in indigenous languages to the postcolonial lens. The Kenyan writer, political activist and academic who himself veered from writing in English to writing in Gikuyu did not think it scholarly appropriate to set the grounds for a liberatory practice of African literary studies through postcolonial theories, but tenaciously cling to the standards, prescriptions and language (including linguistic preferences) of the colonial past. Most Nigerian scholars and writers like Soyinka and Achebe are ambivalent

²¹⁸ Singh and Iyer, ‘Introduction: Beyond the Anglophone—Comparative South Asian Literatures’, 209.

²¹⁹ Fasan, 36.

²²⁰ Ibid.

about the treatment of literatures with a postcolonial context; they are less interested in the expressiveness of native languages and more concerned about the neologistic, African ways in which English has been appropriated and creolised.

For one, Soyinka translated *Forest of a Thousand Demons* which was originally written in 1938 to English in 1968. The fact that the book is regarded as the first novel to be written in Yoruba language is very contentious; but what is even more disturbing is that it is perceived as a magical-realist novel with all the elements of the supernatural, superstitious and spiritual; it is given less credit as a writing that can give insights into the perception and metaphorical translations of the historical processes of the colonial presence of Britain in Nigeria at the time. The fact that it was originally written in Yoruba stunted its critical appeal with the context of postcolonialism and generational historicity. A reader who commented on Goodreads noticed this while comparing the book to Tutuola's works:

Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard & My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, in their richly-imagined record of the Yoruba spirit world running alongside modern life, seemed totally unprecedented and fresh when they appeared in the 50s. But Tutuola had an advantage - he wrote in English and quickly noticed and brought it to international attention. But he has a clear forerunner - D.O. Fagunwa, who was channeling Yoruba myth into gorgeous novels as early as 1938... Because it was composed in Yoruba and translated in 1968, after his death, his renown seems to have lagged behind Tutuola's, but his style is much more refined... Note that, however wonderful, Tutuola was not the first to take on this world, and D.O. Fagunwa is at least equally, if not more, worthy of your attention.²²¹

The issues of accessibility and readership are connected to the language question. Scholars have speculated that one of the reasons for the overt preference given to literatures written in Englishes (standard or appropriated forms) is the fact that they pervade the literary market and are more accessible and readable to Nigerians given the fact that the country's lingua franca is English. However, having studied Yoruba both at the secondary and tertiary levels and having been exposed to some literary products written in the language, this argument can be contested by me. There are replete indigenous materials which span different spatio-temporal, thematic and historical landscapes and have a solid readership base.

²²¹ 'Nate D's Review of Forest of a Thousand Daemons', accessed 20 May 2021, <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show/1955917195>.

But these books have been relegated to the position of ‘nativity’ and, thus, they are studied in specialised fields of expertise rather than incorporated holistically into the generational curriculum like the English counterpart. The emphasis on gaining international acclaim and globalising Nigerian literature has eroded interest in the critical assessment and postcolonial study of works that cannot immediately be broadcast and made accessible to European and American audiences and Western literary juggernauts who determine what awards are won by who, where and in what year. Thus, the importance of the readers is weighted and weighed in the consideration of what is made accessible in a literary and critical sense. As Singh and Iyer argued, this “speak[s] to the continued hegemony of English and raise[s] concerns about the persistence of colonial legacies and attitudes.”²²²

Other scholars have argued that postcolonial scholarship and its adherents have mostly been trained with the English pedagogy, defending this argument with the claim that English is not, in fact, a foreign language but a unifying means of communication that aligns with the cosmopolitan outlook of former colonies since their independence. However, a counter argument to these tilts towards an attitudinal angle; there has, so far, been little willingness to outperform the current scope of scholarship and integrate a wider, indigenous literary base. This restrictive scholarly perimeter undermines the purpose of postcolonialism and postcolonial theories which are supposed to be poised to subvert standards and established norms associated with coloniality. Language, being one of the apparatuses of colonialism, should also be subverted not just internally by means of appropriation or creolisation, but externally by the broadening of literary scholarships and such historical narratives as the national-generational paradigm to include indigenous works. The current absence of this is part of what makes it difficult to take the current generational model of Nigerian historicisation seriously.

As a combative measure to deal with the language question and the implicational parallel literary historicisation of postcolonial literatures like Nigeria’s, literary scholars have encouraged historians to give priority to the method of cross-fertilisation, with which they can historically morph local/regional literatures and internationally recognised English literary works. The need for a ‘middle ground’ outweighs the “anxiety to prove the authenticity of a particular regional

²²² Singh and Iyer, ‘Introduction: Beyond the Anglophone—Comparative South Asian Literatures’ 212.

literature”, a trap that has led many historians to “misread the history of literature in every language”.²²³ To approach these literatures and their diverse languages from a cross-fertilised point of view would offer historians a way to avoid overstretching the “autonomy [of regional literatures and acting upon] the stimulus [regional] literature(s) may have received from neighboring languages and literatures.”²²⁴ In the last section of this chapter, I suggest other alternative frameworks that can substitute the literary generational model and, thus, help with getting rid of or, at least, acknowledging some of the criticisms that have been made.

3.5 Alternative Frameworks

From the criticisms, it becomes clear that the first and the second generations are less problematic than the third generation. In giving the reason for this, Ogunidipe states that “the first two generations of African writers have responded positively in terms of recovering Africa’s lost humanity and projecting African personality in their writings. But there remains the need to articulate how contemporary African literature has expressed the fears and challenges of living in Africa in the twenty-first century.”²²⁵ Based on this knowledge, a good suggestion would be to restrict the concept of postcolonialism to the first and second generations within whose contexts it seems apt.

Thus, since it has been settled that the first and second generations are deeply ingrained in the postcolonial creed, but the third generation has taken on new configurations that lack the nationalistic and deeply politicised attributes that postcolonialism embodies, it might be helpful to limit the discussion of authentic postcolonialism to these latter generations and only view postcoloniality as a tiny fragment of what constitutes third generation writings. Another related suggestion is to leave the first and second generations as they are but totally dismantle what is considered to be Nigeria’s literary third generation and reconstruct it, using a different method of historicisation that properly captures late 20th -century literary rhetorics and current discursive trends. If this is done, historiographical endeavours will better reflect the idiosyncrasies of writers from post-colonial regions rather than collectivise them as literary ambassadors of

²²³ Sujit Mukherji and Sujit Mukherjee, ‘Modern Indian Literature in English Translation’, *Indian Literature* 15, no. 3 (1972): 45–51.

²²⁴ Amritjit Singh and Nalini Iyer, 213.

²²⁵ Ogunidipe, ‘African Literature and the Anxiety of Being in the Twenty-First Century’, 77.

postcolonialism. If this forward-thinking suggestion is to be taken up, then, there will be the need to pay attention to replacing the third generation with another historical narrative that will not give rise to the problem of conflated periodised epochs.

Furthermore, one alternative framework that might not solve the problem of ‘over-postcolonialising’ the generations but would prove to be a good way to turn away from the emblematic artificial national burdens dragged about by the already cumbersome generational model is to appeal to a model borrowed by Greenblatt, alongside other literary critics, from anthropologists. This approach is called ‘local knowledge’ production and historicisation. It involves the “highlighting regional and ethnic affinity” in the process of literary historicisation such that attention is paid more to the documentation of “shared speech patterns, communal stories, and collective obsessions, often transmitted across generational and geographic boundaries.”²²⁶ Admittedly, the local knowledge approach has its paradoxes and inhibitions, but it solves a bulk of the national dilemmas prompted by the national-generational model. Adopting this approach would mean steering the generational paradigm away from the big, wide, turbulent ocean of the invented, Nigerian colonially-centred imagination and focusing more on smaller lakes of ethnic belongings and tribal identities. This would inevitably help literary scholars confront and find solutions to the language politics bedeviling Nigerian literature. Closely related to this is what is called border literature. It is specifically oppositional to national literature, presenting each country as a ‘site of difference’ with different experiences expressed subjectively through art, literature and scholarly engagements. Thus, border literature can lend itself as a useful approach for challenging generational dogmatism and replacing it altogether.

In addition, the nature of history itself opposes the generational paradigm. As proposed by Hayden White and further put forward by Stein, history evokes narrativisation as its main mode of projecting itself; it connotes a “modality of sequential narrative” that flexibly incorporates different forms of temporalities in remembering, rendering, revisioning and recovering events, everyday experiences, and encounters of people across space. Narratives, in this context, are tied to Michel Foucault’s notion of a discourse. The power of a discourse lies in its string of representations which can both have individual and collective connotations. The generational

²²⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, ‘Racial Memory and Literary History’, *PMLA* 116, no. 1 (2001): 48–63.

mode often collectivises discourses that have their own nuanced expressive string of representations. Each literary work needs to be treated as such, thus the need to politicise each work in its own accord. This narrative nature of history is why poststructuralists like Jacques Derrida advocate for a metafictional approach to literary historiography.

A metafictional way of narrativising Nigeria's literary history could be through network analysis. Such a theoretical approach as network analysis developed within the field of digital humanities serves as a good middle ground to collect facts about literary texts that can lead to the "establishment of highly generalised historical laws" with regards to contemporary Nigerian literature while, at the same time, contextualising the sources as individual works of art.²²⁷ In this regard, the approach guarantees the most expansive coverage possible of Nigerian texts. Network analysis can be applied in two contrasting ways: by adopting a broad, bird's eye view method that offers a wider, less focused understanding of thematic, structural and textual trends that thread multiple novels by multiple authors across a wide span of time, and then, there is the single, author-centred approach which gives attention to the novelistic inputs of particular popular authors within particular spaces and confronted with specific literary conditions. Both approaches run the risk of producing over-generalised conclusions and sweeping claims about emergent developments in the new Nigerian novel. To avoid or, at the least, contain this pitfall, there is the need to apply both methods in a conscious, self-reflexive way aimed not at getting a perfect picture of exact developments in the last five to ten of Nigerian literary productions but at revealing the fragilities of the national-generational paradigm by exposing the thin, yet dispersed threads of engagements submerged in the restrictive system of periodisation.

Network analysis is a quantitative method of analysis. The fraught nature of quantitative literary analysis is receiving attention in digital times due to the proliferated use of digital databases and automated information retrieval processes. Franco Moretti, one of the important literary scholars, who prescribes the use of quantitative methods in such large-scale literary analysis as this defines a network theory as one that "studies connections within large groups of objects: the objects can be just about anything – banks, neurons, film actors, research papers, friends... – and are usually called nodes or vertices; their connections are usually called edges."²²⁸ It is clearly derived from

²²⁷ Wellek and Warren, *Theory of Literature*, 18.

²²⁸ Franco Moretti, 'Network Theory, Plot Analysis', *Literary Lab Pamphlet*, 2011, 1-42.

the denotative meaning of network as the *interdependency* of “complex, interlocking system.”²²⁹ Through several network analyses done by Moretti and other scholars, the possibility of creating networks out of literary plots have been asserted.

On a paradigmatic level, nodes are meant to have attributes that are tentacular to them - a book can have such attributes as title, genre, year of publication, publisher; the author-node can have similar or different attributes. A network can have one node (single mode), two nodes (bimodal, bipartite) or three or more nodes (multimodal). The common practice is to connect nodes and their attributes together by finding ties and determined relationships which act as premises on which they can be compared and analysed. One can decide that the relationship one seeks to explore is based on authorship or genre. The established criteria can be one-directional (outlines of a single character’s interactions with others) or multidirectional. Networks can be graphed manually with the researcher drawing connections between nodes by studying them closely and seeing if they can be edged together given the established guidelines, but this can only be done for “small networks, where intuition can still play a role.”²³⁰ More advanced forms of network analysis have to be done using digital tools. For humanistic subjects such as this, creating hypergraphs, multigraphs or Research Description Frameworks that can fully represent and capture different shades of meaning and complex systems of connections are most suitable.

Beyond the possibility of using network analysis to solve the issue of literary periodisation in Nigeria, New historicism also presents itself as a viable solution. It allows for every text to be put into sociopolitical, historical, and authorial contexts. Literary scholars Godfrey Meintjes and Greenblatt have advocated for this alternative model of historicising literature.²³¹ Also, current literary practices in Nigeria need a reader-centred approach to critiquing, evaluating, and historicising texts. Given the fact that there is hardly a single method with which meaning in a text can be deduced, it is necessary to factor in external perceptions and the role of readership in literary appreciation and historicisation. This calls into the picture the notion of rereading advocated by

²²⁹ ‘Demystifying Networks, Parts I & II Journal of Digital Humanities’, accessed 10 June 2021, <http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/1-1/demystifying-networks-by-scott-weingart/>.

²³⁰ Moretti, ‘Network Theory, Plot Analysis’, 3.

²³¹ Godfrey Meintjes, ‘The Reviled and the Revered’, in *Narratives of Low Countries History and Culture*, ed. Jane Fenoulhet and Lesley Gilbert, Reframing the Past (UCL Press, 2016), 184–91, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1hd18bd.23>.

Roland Barthes and connected to Louis Montrose's notion of the historicity of texts and the textuality of history.²³²

Lastly, Ion Bogdan Lefter's suggested alternative cannot but be mentioned. According to him, texts and not writers should be accorded primacy if at all a literary generation needs to be formulated. For him, the "true generation community cannot exist in literature before the homogeneity of the creation proper... Therefore, I consider the literary generation firstly a generation of texts... in whose interstices both the creative personality who brought them to life and the socio-cultural data accompanying/determining their production are sublimed."²³³ At the moment, it is difficult to conceive of a Nigeran literary history that does not favour generational ordering due to the undeniability of its 'heuristic value'. But building generations around a teeming population of diversely configured writers based on their dynamically shifting spatio-temporal placement and participation in the scheme of historical events has, so far, been problematic. Hence, there is the need to, at least, modify the way in which the generational concept is appropriated in the Nigerian literary context.

²³² Roland Barthes, 'The Discourse of History', in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 127–140.

²³³ Ichim Laurențiu, 'Theories and Theorists of the Literary Generation Concept. Contemporary Semantic Re-Evaluations and Their Socio-Cultural Impact', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 63 (1 October 2012): 283–87, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.10.040>.

Conclusion

In retrospect, what this thesis has done is to describe the national-generational model used in the discussion and periodisation Nigeria's literature and then point out the faultlines of this perspectival approach, whilst elucidating on how the concepts of postcolonialism and globalisation have positively and negatively shaped the content of the three generations that make up Nigeria's literary history. The end goal of the research has been to prod for a re-evaluation of the generational approach and show that it needs to be recalibrated to not just reflect literary historical 'flows, linearities, progressions' (in Cooper's words) but also national problematics, spatio-temporal (mis)alignments, authorial contingencies, local multilingualism, aesthetic cul-de-sacs and fractured mobilities. The thesis started with a short general explanation of the importance of literary periodisation for national collective memory. Then, for the benefit of readers with little to no knowledge about Nigerian literature and literary history, short backgrounds into Nigeria's literary sphere were given. Although the first two chapters are heavy on the descriptive and conceptual side, they offered detailed historiographical information about Nigerian literature that have yet to be put together in one single text (not even in pedagogical textbooks about Nigerian literature).

In chapter one, the widely used concepts of postcolonialism and globalisation were 'Nigerianised' in a way that resonated with the distinctness of Nigerian literature. Also, for the first time in Nigerian literary scholarship, significant effort was made to comprehensively define the literary generation, conceptualise it extensively and even present a comparative study of how it is appropriated in other national literary traditions. The case of the UK, Spain, Brazil, India, and other African countries were examined. What further enriched this transnational examination of the literary generation was the discussion about the historically epochal Negritude movement and how it relates directly and indirectly to Nigeria's first and second literary generations. Chapter two offered detailed descriptions of the three generations all in one place, by putting together the dispersed historiographies, thoughts, and arguments about the generations. The highlight of the discussion of the generations is contained in the inclusion of institutional narratives, publishing histories, textual references, and authorial biographies. However, the most outstanding quality of the chapter resides in the last chapter in which nascent 21st-century developments in Nigeria

literature were outlined. This section was poised to establish where Nigerian literature currently stands in the world as a geographic creative minefield. An interesting thing that sprung from the chapter was the use of the term ‘global-postcoloniality’ to discuss the constantly evolving trends that manifest in 21st-century Nigerian literature. However, in order to avoid digression, this term could not be comprehensively elucidated on.

Also, the third chapter achieved the aim of challenging the patterns of stereotypification and exclusivity that characterise the Nigerian literary generational phases. Following this, there was a thorough delineation of how the artificiality of Nigeria’s nation(alism), its ethnicised literary forerunners and overdetermined neocolonial productions put the generational paradigm at a disadvantage. And who says national literatures are so indispensable in the first place? Well, definitely not Appiah and Greenblatt. Through their arguments about patriotic cosmopolitanism and new modes of literary engagements, they envisioned the possibility of de-nationalising literary histories. In chapter three, their ideas and hypotheses were echoed.

Spatiality, in all its different configurations and ramifications, was also used as a category with which to prove that the generational model is short-handed when it comes to capturing the mobile histories of Nigerian literature. Then, there was a rhetorical denunciation of the parallel historical trajectory accorded to indigenous written literatures in Nigeria. The fact that this neglected, separated historicisation deprives this important component of Nigeria’s literary space postcolonial scrutinisation and historical authenticity. Admittedly, more questions have been asked and only few answers have been provided in form of a brief recommendation of different alternative frameworks and solutions to moderate the many dilemmas that the historical narratives of Nigeria’s literary generations give rise to. It must, however, be said that most of the proffered suggestions are hypothetical and the viability or effectiveness of applying them to the historicisation of Nigeria’s literature can and should be discussed in a different research study.

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