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## **CULTURAL (IM)BALANCES: TOWARDS SELF- DISCOVERY IN CHIKA UNIGWE'S NIGHT DANCER**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This work, entitled, “Cultural Imbalances: Towards Self-Discovery in Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer*,” examines the disparity between conflicting cultures. It proceeds to investigate how the ability to discern cultures leads to the definition of true self. The work equally highlights the fact that most cultures in the world have been altered as a result of colonisation and imperialism. It further shows how a text on cultures can bring about integration in the language classroom. The work as well proposes a platform for examining differences in the ESL/EFL classroom. The work operates on the assumption that, comprehending conflicting cultures is a base towards self-realisation. Informed by Postcolonialism, New Historicism and Gender Criticism, the work concludes that, the best way to live in a society with different cultural ideologies is to develop a positive hybridity. Also, individuals in a multicultural context should develop the spirit of cultural tolerance as a means of accommodating others.

## RESUME

Ce travail intitulé: “les déséquilibres culturels vers la découverte de soi dans *Night Dancer*”, explore les différences entre les cultures conflictuelles. Elle procède en définition de soi à travers la capacité de discernement des cultures. Cette étude met aussi en relief le fait que plusieurs cultures dans le monde ont été détruites par la colonisation et l’impérialisme. Elle présente aussi comment un œuvre sur les cultures aide en situation-classe. Ce travail s’appuie sur l’hypothèse selon laquelle la bonne explication des conflits de cultures constitue le socle de l’affirmation de soi. Guidé par la théorie postcoloniale, le nouveau historicisme, et la théorie du genre, ce travail conclut que la meilleure façon de vivre dans une société avec des idéologies culturelles différentes, et de développer un mélange positive. En outre, les individus dans un contexte multiculturel doivent développer des valeurs telles que l’esprit de tolérance comme un moyen d’acceptation des autres.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work my grandmother Caroline Momha of blessed memory.

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## **CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this work, entitled “Cultural Imbalances: Towards Self-Discovery In Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer*,” was carried out by Carole Momha Ateba in view of obtaining a Postgraduate Teacher’s Diploma (DIPES II) in the Department of English, ENS Yaounde.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
RESUME.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
CERTIFICATION.....	v
GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE NOTION OF CULTURE AND TRADITION.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: CULTURAL DISCERNMENT.....	23
CHAPTER THREE: RE-INVENTING THE SELF.....	33
CHAPTER FOUR: PEDAGOGIC RELEVANCE OF <i>NIGHT DANCER</i> .....	43
CONCLUSION.....	62
WORKS CITED.....	65



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Before the advent of colonisation, Africa was made of different ethnic groups with different languages. These differences gave birth to the different cultural identities flaunted before us today. The reality is that these groups amid their uniqueness in many spheres of life, share many things. This can be seen in the set of rules, belief laws, customs, traditions, myths, and other cultural values which bound them together. Imperialism brought about separation, and the idea of domination dismantled the uniqueness of these cultures and created new forms of identity. The Western culture was introduced as a means of eradicating what the Europeans called barbaric and uncivilized as perceived in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. This imposed culture blindfolded Africans and paved the way for exploitation and the implementation of European Administration in Africa. Many African countries then suffered from imperialism. Although some reasons have been given for the colonisation of Africa, New Historicists believe that causes of events are usually multiple, complex and difficult to analyse (Critical Theory Today 234). That is, the causes of events are not easily interpreted from the effects.

The present day Nigeria is the outcome of the colonial encounter. Britain colonised Nigeria and inculcated the British system of government and education. The British culture and values were used to denigrate the culture, morals, and even physical appearance of Africans. A negative picture was painted of Nigeria and other African countries by Europeans who happened to have visited these places. This is the image that Chinua Achebe and other Afrocentric writers (Molefe K. Asante) refer to when they talk of educating the audience and replacing the despise history of Africans with more suitable representations. Nigerians were left with a psychological inheritance of a negative self-image and alienation from their own indigenous cultures, which had been denigrated for long. It is as a result of this that critics think that Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer* exposes the shortcomings of both the modern and the traditional culture in Nigeria. She also calls for a reassessment of cultures in order to determine the causes of cultural alienation and how these cultures confront each other. From this perspective, one is obliged to ask the following questions:

- In what way is culture projected as unique and how is it exhibited?
- How possible is it for the postcolonialist to objectively judge the different cultures flaunted before him / her today?
- What role does culture play in defining the self?

- How can a text on culture like *Night Dancer* be used in an ESL/EFL classroom following the CBA?

The above questions are answered in the course of the work.

This work examines the disparity between conflicting cultures which result to identity crisis in Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. It further looks at how the ability to discern cultures lead to self- reassertion. Finally, the work proposes a framework for tackling differences in cultural ideologies in an ESL/EFL classroom. This work focuses on Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. However, references are made to other fictional and critical material relevant to the topic in question.

The present work is important in that it looks into the different interpretations of culture and shows how these interpretations rather create a rift than bridge differences in cultures. It is also important in that it analyses personality, as a result of the rejection of ones culture. The work also point out the fact that both the individual and the society have a role to play in defining the self. From a pedagogic perspective, the work is significant in that it promotes cultural integration and tolerance in a multicultural classroom.

In view of the above, the work is based on the contention that comprehending conflicting cultures is a base towards Self- realisation. Thus, issues of acculturation can be resolved in ESL/EFL classroom through exploitation of excerpts from representational material drawn from texts written with the intention of bridging cultures.

To proceed, it is appropriate to define some key terms which constitute the nucleus of this work. These terms include: imbalance, culture, self, and cultural imbalance.

The term "imbalance" is not new to the human language because the world right from creation has been filled with different forms of inequalities. However, the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines imbalance as a situation whereby two or more things are not of equal size or are treated differently in a way that is unfair or may cause problems. Espousing this definition, it can be rightly said that the society today is full of different forms of unfairness. These unfairness are exhibited in cultural and traditional values, educational systems, political systems, the judiciary, sex, and gender issues.

Be it modern or traditional, most forms of imbalances emerge from the society which lay down certain norms for its members. This arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, manners, religion, and scholarly pursuits. The inability to follow the norms and the creation of what does not go according to the norm turns to create instability in the whole

system.

The term culture as a concept first appeared in Europe around the 17<sup>th</sup> Century alluding to the refinement of individuals, especially through education. As years went by, culture was now seen as a common reference point of a whole set of people. Parson T. in *Essay in Sociological Theory* sees culture as “those patterns relative to behavior and the products of human action which may be inherited, independently of the biological genes” (8). According to him, culture is transmission, and it is what determines the behavior of the people of a particular society. This definition makes man a product of his culture. Linton, R. in *The Cultural Background of Personality* on his part views culture as “a configuration of learned behaviors” (32). He thinks that “the component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society” (32). This implies that elements of culture can be handed from one generation to another.

Espousing Edward B. Taylor, an English anthropologist, Djockoua posits that “culture or civilization taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (6). Culture to Manyaka Djockoua in *Culture, History, and Comparative Literature: John Steinbeck and Rene Philombe* therefore, includes every aspect of man and the interaction with his society. The sense of a culture is not its artifacts tools or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of a particular group perceive, interpret, and use them (6).

For Lederack J.P. in *Preparing for Peace Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, culture helps in interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around us. The way, situations are interpreted by individuals depending on a particular culture and tradition but personal responses or reactions to defined situations are laid solely on the self (9).

Culture in the work refers to all those traditional rules and principles that govern the lives of people in a particular milieu. These rules are handed down from one generation to another. People who fail to abide by such rules are considered as nonconformists, and are regarded with a lot of scorn by the other members of that particular milieu. Culture in this context cannot go without tradition because a people’s tradition is part of their culture.

The self is a person’s essential being that distinguishes them from others. That is, the person that someone normally or truly is. *Merriam Webster* defines the self as “the personality or character that makes a person different from other people: the combination of emotions,

thoughts, and feelings that make a person different from others”. Because no sets of experiences are the same, subtle differences lead to individual identities. Self-discovery, therefore, has to do with the ability to assert and create an identity for oneself. In a situation of a clash between cultures, especially those with conflicting ideologies, discovering individual identities become problematic. This is due to the fact that other aspects like sex, gender, age group, social status and level of education come into play. Quoting Harding, Amy S. Wharton in *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Research*, posits that “in virtually every culture, gender difference is a pivotal way in which humans identify themselves as persons, organize social relations and symbolise meaningful natural and social events and processes” (18).

As far as this work is concerned, Cultural imbalance refers to a situation where cultures overlap. In a multicultural situation there is always a problem of which culture dominates the other, and in the novel in question, Chika Unigwe portrays two conflicting cultures, the modern or Western culture and the traditional Igbo and Hausa culture. She tries to reveal the cultural imbalances that have relegated the female gender to the background and shows this through her protagonist, who later reconciles both cultures as a means of creating an identity of her own.

Chika Nina Unigwe was born in Enugu Nigeria in 1974. She is the sixth in a family of seven and a holder of a BA degree from one of the first class Universities of Nigeria. She published her first collection of poems, entitled *Tear Drop* in 1993, which marked the beginning of a long writing career and the beginning of sorrowful stories. She got married two years later to a foreigner and immigrated to Belgium where she obtained a PhD in Literature (Igbo Women’s Writing) in 2004 from the University of Leiden in Netherlands. While in Belgium, Chika found a lot of difficulties integrating the new culture which made her suffered from a lot of solitude (losing her voice). This explains why her works are characterized by displacement and sorrow. Her début novel *De Feniks* was published in 2005 in Amsterdam and Antwerp, and was shortlisted for the *Vrouw en Cultuur de buutprij*’s for the best first novel by a female writer. Since then, she has published two children books, short fiction in several anthologies, journals and magazines. Chika is also a winner of numerous prizes with the latest being the Nigerian Prize for Literature in 2012, for the novel *On Black Sister’s Street*. *Night Dancer* was published in 2012, a novel in which Chika sees her voice coming to redemption. She is a vehement supporter of the Nigerian women and an outspoken critic of the Nigerian Government in both fiction and articles written for the *Guardian* and the *Nigerian Daily Times*. She is engaged in social justice that is why she says of her work in “Losing my Voice”: “I write from a place of

anger, frustration, perhaps being a woman, I write to foreground our experiences. Having said that, I also write from a place of passion.”

This research endeavor is informed by three literary approaches. These theories include: The Postcolonial theory, Gender Criticism, and New Historicism. To begin with, the Postcolonial Theory stems from the fields of Marxism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and Deconstruction. This theory emerged as a powerful force in literary studies in early 1990s although Postcolonial Studies have been gaining prominence since the 1970s. The term “postcolonial” is used to refer to those nations that have undergone colonial influence. This extends from the period of colonisation till date. Postcolonial studies seek to investigate how colonial powers are able to gain control over so large a portion of non Western World. These studies question how the traces left by colonial education in postcolonial societies affect decisions about modernization and development in post colonies. Also, they seek to know if there were any forms of resistance against colonial controls, and how the culture and identity of the colonised have been influenced by imperialism.

The Postcolonial Theory on its part deals with literary works produced by people who have undergone colonial influence. It does not limit itself to literature produced in the ex-colonies, but to those produced by these people wherever they find themselves. These works remove the colonised from an object position to a subject position. That is, the colonised becomes the subject matter of literature. This theory questions the operation of cultural differences, the way in which race, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, cultural beliefs, and customs combined to form the text and how this text suggests that resistance can be achieved and sustained by an individual or group. These views have been supported by proponents of the postcolonial theory like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, and Gayatri Spivak.

Bill Ashcroft in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* discusses marginality as one of the ills and results of colonial influence. Marginality deals with the centre and the periphery or self and other. That is, a situation where the West sees itself as the ‘centre’ and the colonised the other. In *The postcolonial Theory Today*, he observes that “the coloniser saw themselves as the embodiment of what a human being should be, the proper ‘self’, native people were considered ‘other’, different, and therefore inferior to the point of being less than fully human” (419). The next Postcolonial tenet relevant to this work is subalternity raised by Gayatri Spivaks in “Can the Subaltern Speaks?” The term subaltern is used by Gayatri Spivaks to refer to the colonized

working classes, blacks and women. Because the subaltern has been voiceless, she argues that in this postcolonial era, the subaltern should occupy their rightful position and speak for themselves in their own voices. By so doing, they will produce discourse which is intellectual alternative to the imbalance relationship of the binary social realism between the West and the East. Also, this theory seeks to denounce the situation of women who have been subjugated for centuries by patriarchy because of their sex and social roles. Postcolonial criticism seeks to denounce this subjugation and call for the subaltern to occupy their rightful space.

The coexistence of conflicting cultures, especially the African traditional and the western culture, can pose a problem of hybridity. Hybridity is a concept raised by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, which is a European cultural tradition and a way of referring to the East as 'other' and the west as superior to the East. Said's "Orientalism" divides the world into two opposing sides where the oriental is seen as cruel, sneaky evil, cunning, dishonest, given to sexual promiscuity and perversion. The West thus, contrasts itself with the east (oriental). The orient thus had as a duty to mimic the Western cultures. In orientalism, Said believes that "texts exist in context" (13). This points to the role of intertextuality in literary creation. In the case of Nigeria, Anglo-European Culture was believed to be civilized, sophisticated and the standard to follow by those exposed to it. This imitation led to identity problems as is the case with Chika Unigwe's Mma who is caught between two cultures.

The Postcolonial theory is apt for the analysis of this work because the theory aimed at investigating the effect of colonisation on indigenous cultures. It gives us an insight on how the Western culture was transported and implanted in Nigeria. It also permits us to look at identity crisis as the result of acculturation, and to propose hybridity as a solution to the problems faced by Chika Unigwe's characters.

Gender criticism is another critical approach used in this work. This approach like many others emanated from the fields of Marxism, which focuses on the socio economic considerations that underlie human behavior. Although the term Gender is widely used today, there is no common understanding of its meaning amongst scholars. Gender theorists extend to the fields of theories like Feminism, Marxism, Cultural Theory and the postcolonial theory. They treat issues of sex (maleness and femaleness), marginality, culture, language, class, identity crisis, interactional and institutional approaches to gender, place and space, feminist features and women's social role. Proponents of this theory include: Jacqueline Jones Royster, Anne Marie Mann Simpkins, Amy Wharton and Mary Eagleton.

Gender used to be seen as the psychological, social, and cultural aspects of maleness and femaleness. Amy S. Wharton in *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Research* defines gender as “a system of social practices, this system creates and maintains gender distinctions and it organizes relations of inequality on the basis of (these distinctions)” (7). This definition claims that most, if not all forms of inequalities come from the society which creates distinctions between the two sexes. These biases touch all aspects of life and because of this, sex is placed at the centre and the other at the margin. The notions of “Centre and Margin”, which are borrowed from post colonialism put a particular group which is superior in terms of ideologies, educational level, physical strength, social functions at the centre while the ‘other’ is placed at the periphery.

Espousing Bell Hooks, Jacqueline Jones Royster in *Calling Cards: Theory and Practice in the Study of Race, Gender and Culture*, posits that “to be the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body” (2). This implies that the “other” is the irrelevant member of the whole. In the world in general and African in particular, the female gender has always been relegated to the background because of the role she plays in the society.

Mary Eagleton, in *Gender a Concise Companion to Feminist Theory*, comes up with the concepts of place and space, context and location, and location and locality. Eagleton argues that an attachment to a particular place, whether voluntary or chosen, retains its significance for life chances, ways of living, access to resources and cultural identities. The idea of place and space, context and location stresses the importance of the socio-cultural environment to the different gender roles. It further suggests that the female gender needs a space of her own in which she can express herself. The fact that they do not own resources or wealth restrains them from attaining their full potentials thus, preventing them from discovering their real self.

This approach is vital to this work in the sense that it does not limit itself to a feminist judgment of cultures, but shows the influence on both sexes. It stresses on the importance of context in the interpretation of cultures. That is, the way cultures are interpreted in the Nigerian context. The gender theory equally helps in the evaluation of the different gender roles.

Another theory used in this work is New Historicism. This theory developed during the 1980s largely in reaction to the text-based approach pursued by formalist New Critics. New Historicists, like formalist critics acknowledge the importance of literary text, but they only analyze the text with an eye to history. They are both intertwined as they influence each other. This theory has its proponents amongst which are: Louis Montrose, Stephen Greenblatt and the

French anthropologist, Michel Foucault. New Historicist unlike older historical critics believed that criticism should incorporate diverse discourses; these discourses include amongst others post structuralism and reader response theory of the 1970s, Feminism, Cultural and Marxist criticism which in the 1980s were all new. New historicist critics assume that works of literature both influences and are influenced by historical reality, and they share a belief in referentiality, that is, literature both refers and is referred to by things outside itself. Within the ranks of New Historicism, literature is considered to be one of the social forces that contribute to the making of individuals.

New Historicists believe that, literature is historical. This means that, “literature is not primarily the record of one minds attempt to solve certain formal problems, to understand it, therefore, is through the culture and society that produce it. Literature must be assimilated to history because history is a series of “ruptures” between ages and men. The historian is trapped in his own historicity...” (G.D. Myers *The Literary Project* 6). It is in line with the above that new historicist interpret that history is not viewed as the cause or the source of a work of art, instead the relationship between history and literature is seen as dialectic: the literary text is interpreted as product and producer, end and source of history. Foucault refused to see history as an evolutionary process, a continue development toward the present. For Foucault, no historical event is tied into a vast Web of economic, social and political factors. He sees literature as historically “situated” (242). What Foucault really means is that Historians cannot have a complete vision of the facts or thoughts of an era because they are removed from that period. Their judgments cannot therefore be objective. It is subjective because they see the past with the eye of the future. Like Karl Max, Foucault sees history in terms of “power... not as a repressive force or a tool of conspiracy of what happens” (Ross Murfin 242). In line with the above, we shall look at Unigwe’s work as a reflection of the past and at the same time chronicles the present.

New Historicism looks at literature from the historical context. The theory tends to interrogate the relationship between history and literature. Its greatest advocate is Stephen Greenblatt who coined the term in his *Introduction to a special issue of the journal Genre*. He once wrote that “history cannot be divorced from Textuality” (4). Therefore, new historicism involves a study of the historical period in which the work was written as it helps reveal the spirit of the age. Literature could never be interpreted to mean anything that history did not authorize. New Historicism rejects both traditional historicism and marginalization of literature.



Thus, the new historicist approach to literature has to do with the re-conception of history and the historicity of literature. This approach is very relevant to the understanding of Unigwe's text within the context of the history that produced her and the impact she has in re-enacting that identity, history, and memory. It is relevant to note that the novel under study reflects the complex history of Nigeria in General and the Igbos in particular.

New Historicists believe that a work of art is the result of a particular ideological context that had an impact on the writer's sensitivity. Consequently, the quality and nature of the reflection depends greatly on the mindset and attitude of the literary artist. Born in postcolonial Nigeria, Chika Unigwe themes reflect that multicultural context which inspired her writings. Nigeria has a mixture of various cultures among which the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba which were the main cultures before British colonization. The introduction of the Western culture distorted the traditional cultures and led to a form of hybridity or acculturation.

The three theories discussed are relevant to the work under study as they expose the different cultures in Nigeria, bringing out the history and the influence of patriarchy on the female gender. These theories complement than contradict each other as they all try to give a voice to the voiceless. The theories show the injustices brought about by cultural discrimination and also the desire for the marginalized to create a space for the self.

Much has not been said on Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*. However, some researchers and critics have found the text interesting and have looked at it from varied perspectives. Helen Thompson in "Single Motherhood", reiterates the fact that both of Unigwe's novels focus on the lives of Nigerian women, the limited choices they have in terms of making a decent living and developing the ability to live life on their own terms. She also makes mention of the fact that Chika Unigwe's female characters are involve in the sex trade and she feels the focus here is on the trade and the cost of prostitution on the characters. The novel *On Black Sister's Street*, for her, examines the decision of four Nigerian prostitutes to make a living through sex work. Coping in this new business becomes difficult because of the insurmountable debt and constant threats of violence received from their male counterparts. However, Unigwe gives her characters the opportunity to tell their stories in a way that offer a degree of home to them.

Helene Thompson on her part points out that *On Black Sister's Street* and *Night Dancer* "takes the reader into a painful territory of women's limited choices" (1). The main female characters are ready to relinquish their reputation in order to make a living. This is the case of Ezi who becomes a prostitute in order to avoid living with a husband who has compromised her

family. The term Negro Feminism is best described through her works. Thompson argues that *Night Dancer* provides a different trajectory for examining Nigerian women's marginal identities. She calls Unigwe an "adept story teller" (1). This is because she delves in Mma's emotional journey to discover who she is before revealing the story of how Ezi ends up in such marginal state.

Unlike the above critics, Bernadine Evaristo in "The Independent" sees Chika Unigwe as one of the "most probing thought provoking writers of the recent renaissance in African fiction." (1) He affirms that many of these writers bring in to the limelight submerged stories about African Women. Just like Thompson, she says Unigwe's novel goes beyond the scenes of the sex industry to explore the motivations of the four African prostitutes. The novel brings into the limelight the many reasons why African women move from their homeland and find themselves in shameful practices giving them a scene to tell their stories.

Similarly, Daria Tunca in "Redressing the Narrative Balance: Subjection and Subjectivity in Chika Unigwe's Text" reiterates the fact that Unigwe recounts the experiences of African women through female protagonists. However, she differs from Thompson and Evaristo in that she makes mention of the fact that the story told by the sex workers debunks any idea of a typical example of African prostitutes. She further reiterates that Unigwe's work brings out societal issues and the pressure placed on the weaker members of the society.

On her part, Patria Bastida Rodriguez's "The Invisible Flaneuse: European Cities and the African Sex Worker in Chika Unigwe's Works", sees the work as "the experiences of undocumented African immigrants in the Flemish city of Antwerp who must survive as sex workers in order to pay the human trafficking network that brought them to Europe(1).Rodriguez does not only see the work as a testimony of African women just like the other critics; but she argues that the work explore the notion of urban space, urban movement, and subjectivity in contemporary European cities. Her article further notes that:

The intersection between the protagonists' use of urban space, their social status as prostitutes, and the emotion circulation about them in the city, since they will lead to relevant insights about contemporary urban movement and Its literary representation." (1)

This brings in to the limelight the situation of women who in an endeavour to create a space for themselves end up making the wrong choices. Prostitution is seen in *On Black Sisters' Street*

and *Night Dancer* as the only option left for these women. Thus, these novels give an insight in to what causes women to move from their homes into a world of uncertainty.

Salome Ntimenziah Aminkeng in her unpublished dissertation, entitled “Gender Inequality in Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer*,” examines the political and socio –cultural factors that orchestrates social inequality in Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dance*. She further looks at the roles played by the different gender groups in the offshoot of inequality and brings out the effect of structural violence on the individual and the society. Ntimenziah argues that the fight against social inequality lead to discrimination and alienation.

From the foregoing review, it is quite clear that most critics have written on the novel’s representation of gender, and the different forms of social injustice. This work, just like that of Ntimenziah, examines aspects of social inequality. However, it differs from hers and other critics in that, it focuses on the interpretation of cultures at the different levels of the society and how characters struggle to redefine the self. It also proposes a pedagogic framework for the topic in question.

This work is divided into an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The introduction handles the background to the study, the research problem, research questions, and purpose of the study, hypothesis, motivation, theoretical frameworks and review of related literature. Chapter One, entitled the “The Notions of Culture and Tradition”, examines the different conceptions of these notions (culture and tradition) and their ideological differences. Chapter Two, captioned “Cultural Discernment”, x-rays the delicate discrimination between existing cultures and highlights its impacts. Chapter Three, labeled “Re-inventing the Self”, probes into the reconciliation of both ideologies which results in a new self. Lastly, Chapter Four entitled “The Pedagogic Relevance of *Night Dancer*”, states how a text like *Night Dancer* can be used in a language classroom under the Competency-Based Approach. The conclusion recapitulates the major arguments raised in the study, brings out findings and recommendations, and suggests possible areas for further research.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE NOTION OF CULTURE AND TRADITION

The world today is made up of different cultures with different ideologies. The plurality of cultures and cultural differences has led to the great importance attached to the words, and the study of world cultures. Edward Brunett Tylor in *Primitive Culture* sees culture as knowledge, belief, moral, custom, law and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. This proves that apart from being a social being, man is also a cultural being: “He belongs to the culture of mankind” as Bhabha puts it in “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences” (207). The influence of colonization and geographical location has led to cultural domination. That is, a situation whereby some cultures (especially those found in the West) are placed at the center while others are at the margin or are considered subaltern cultures. The desire to break free from cultural constraints has resulted to mimicry and acculturation. The term Tradition is discussed alongside culture. This is because tradition implies a spontaneous assimilation of time honored customs by people of a particular society, which makes it similar to culture. Owing to the multiplicity of cultures in the Nigerian society, it is important for us to look at how Chika Unigwe presents Tradition and Culture in this chapter.

Kroeber. A.L. and Kluckhohn,C. in *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* states that “culture is historically derived” (47). They are historically created designs for living and mankind’s primary adaptive mechanism. Thus culture is part of tradition, developed from a way of thinking, behaving, or doing things accepted not on critical grounds but merely because things have always been so. Although the term became popular only in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the world right from creation had been made up of people with different traditions and cultures. These cultures vary according to time, locality and location. Chika Unigwe’s conception of tradition and culture in *Night Dancer* takes into consideration the cultural ideologies of the Igbo and Hausa people in Nigeria before and during the year 2000s. These people believe in traditional values that governs their socio-cultural, political, religious and moral lives. Rapu comes from a very poor home where Echewa cannot provide for his family. His faith in tradition makes him believe in Ajofia’s prophecy that their daughter has found favour with the gods: “When God creates an itch, he creates the fingernails with which to scratch it” (142). Echewa later on treats his daughter like a boy child because she is destined to make a fortune for the family. Rapu eats the middle part of the yam and the head of the fish

reserved for honoured guests. Her father encourages her to abandon school as he asks: “what does a girl need school for? My sons are eating all the education this family needs” (143).

The concepts of time, context, and location have given rise to cultural diversity and cultural differences in the world. Homi Bhabha states in “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences that, “cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural ‘contents’ and custom, held in a time-frame of relativism: it gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange, or humanity” (206). He sees cultural differences as a situation whereby cultures differentiate and discriminate which sometimes lead to the application of force. This diversity has resulted to cultural differences. Some cultures which are considered superior are placed at the center while others are at the margin. Thus the notion of ‘otherness’ becomes the division between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ The western culture is seen as highly advanced and uncontaminated, while the other is backward, low-class and has as a duty to copy the superior culture. In *Night Dancer*, the traditional Igbo and Hausa cultures are seen as backward to Ezi, Madam Gold and Mma. Madam Gold remains unmarried because she does not want to be tied down by tradition, which limits the chances of female emancipation. Ezi reflects the modern or western culture as she thinks an educated woman can always make it without a man. She abandons her husband and moves to Enugu where she goes to a bank to borrow some money with which to start a business. She turns to prostitution when the bank refuses to lend her some money because she has no man to stand for her. Ezi believes her parents are still backward to insist that she stays with a man who has compromised her family. She tries to inculcate this enlighten culture in to her daughter, who ends up being caught at the crossroad of cultures.

Ezi who thinks she is culturally superior to her parents, mother-in-law, Rapu and the other female characters in the text, turns out to be treated as the other. Jacqueline Jones Royster in *Calling Cards: Theory and Practice in the Study of Race, Gender and Culture* argues that, “When ideologies are against the grain of traditional values, they are deemed problematic, contentious, or even ‘un’-natural” (14). This citation explains the reason why Ezi who considers herself and her ‘baby-baby’ as civilized and enlightened is treated as the other and pushed to the margin. As a baby, no woman want to nurse her and when she grows older, she is called, “ada ashawo,” meaning, whores daughter by other children on her way to school. She creates her own center in this margin. Ezi’s constant repetition of words like “I was jolly jolly” (82), “come dance dance with mummy-mummy” (77) is done to emphasise her superiority over the other women. Ezi is seen through this as a nonconformist and a contrast to the others. Madam Gold

warns Mma after Ezi's death that "we women are little people. Your mother forgot that" (10). Thus, she assumes the marginal position culture gives her.

The fact that some cultures are seen as superior makes them to dominate other cultures. New Historicists argue that a culture's perception of itself influences its political, legal, and social policies and customs, and how power circulates in a given culture. The Anglo-European culture was seen as highly advanced, civilized and sophisticated as postcolonial critics put it "metropolitan." This led to the creation of boundaries by the occident where every other culture out of this boundary was considered as oriental. Edward Said says in *Orientalism* that the 'oriental' is "shown to be gullible, devoid of energy and initiative, much given to fulsome flattery, intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals" (38). The orient was understood based on texts written about the orient by the occident. The European conception about the orient only changed with the writing back of black artists. These writings appropriated the beauty of the orient which made the orient to be seen as the "powerful other".

Most of the problems faced by Unigwe's characters are as a result of imperialism. The people of Nigeria had been introduced to the imperial culture through colonisation. Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* observes that

Imperialism was the theory, colonization the practice of changing the uselessly unoccupied territories of the world into useful new versions of the European metropolitan society. Everything in those territories that suggested waste, disorder, unaccounted resources, was converted into productivity, order, taxable, potentially developed wealth. (78)

The main idea behind this is that, the occident needed to extend what it called its civilised culture to some barbaric people who happened to inhabit the earth. Enugu and Kaduna has become a replica of European cities where we have different settlements for the masses, middle class, and the world-to-do. Ezi and Mma live in Uwani in a flat that makes it difficult for them to carry on with their personal lives. Ezi says: "And not if you lived in a block of flats where everything was shared: kitchen, bathroom, toilet, personal business" (80). They cannot avoid neighbors probing into their personal lives as Ezi notes:

When they asked you personal questions, you couldn't complain because if you did, you were told that you should have married a rich man who had enough

money to buy you a duplex in Independence Layout or GRA, where people lived in isolation like Europeans and everyone minded their own business and where a young woman with a child and no wedding ring on her finger could move in and did not invite rumours. (80)

This situation is different from what existed before colonisation. Before the imperialists came to Africa with their separationist policies, the masses build their own houses and they did not pay rents and taxes. Ezi uses the money she gets from the house bought by a married man to buy a plot in New Heavens and two duplexes in Trans Ekulu where bank workers live. Said further says imperialism was set to get rid of the unproductive, unaccounted and offending humans. While the rest had to be confined to compounds and native homelands where they can easily be controlled, taxed and used. Ezi's family and Rapu's family are considered as those who have remained in the homeland to be used. When Rapu's brothers announce to their father that they have been given a scholarship, Echewa says: "Nobody ever gives out anything for nothing. What will gofment want after you have finished? Cows? Your wives? Your lives? What?" (170). The government is an imperialist institution. Echewa knows that although they are self-governed since 1960, the leaders have just stepped into the shoes of the imperialists. What Frantz Fanon calls "Black Skin White Mask" in "*Black Skin White Mask*" (19). Quoting Antonio Gramsci in *Lettere dal Carcere*, Djockoua states that "intellectuals elaborate a set of beliefs and socio-political relationships which the ruled masses unconsciously adhere to" (5). Here domination continues through ideas and culture.

Eurocentricism was used as a standard to suppress alien cultures. In *Critical Theory Today*, it is observed that "Eurocentricism was used to inculcate British culture and values in the indigenous peoples and thereby forestall rebellion" (421). Ezi lives and behaves like the educated lady she is which amazes Rapu who is still attached to traditions. She lives in a well-furnished house, wears good clothes and does not bother to cook or serve her husband. Rapu is surprise at such a living style as she intimates: "Really such laziness, such indolence, was unimaginable, even if one did have a maid", and she thinks "a lazy woman only left holes through which her husband could be snatched away from her" (165). Eurocentricism led to mimicry as the 'alter ego' is trained to be a copy of the imperialist. Ezi's desire is to have a duplex in New Heavens, where she intends to put up a "sprawling bungalow with a swimming pool, I want one shaped like an egg" (91). She does not do this because she needs one or

because she can swim, but just because she thinks all good houses have one. People like Madam Gold try to emulate the western culture through living standards and names. She calls herself “Madam Gold” because she sells gold jewelries. There is a contrast between these characters and the others in the text who have stick to their traditions.

The crisis in *Night Dancer* is as a result of the existence of different cultures. Stephen Greenblatt argues that “works of art, however intensely marked by creative intelligence and private obsession of the individual, are products of collective negotiations and exchange” (Qtd, *A Guide to Literary Criticism* 54). Britain colonized Nigeria in 1922 and brought together the Biafrans and the Hausas who had different and conflicting cultures. The British system of government and culture was introduced as a way of governing the people which brought into existence the modern and traditional culture in Nigeria. The Biafra war was fought between May 1967 and January 1970 to prevent the Igbos (Biafra) secession from Nigeria. Nigerian culture and tradition has been greatly influenced by the implementation of ‘sharia law’ and the Kaduna riots. Islam had been implemented as a culture in the northern part of Nigeria before colonization, so the introduction of Christianity brought about religious conflicts. When the first riots broke out in the year 2000, Mike’s supermarket is burn down because it is seen as a “symbol of Igbo success in Hausa land” (232). He does not leave Kaduna shouting slogans like the other Biafrans because he has made Kaduna his home. He says, “You move to a place, you move to its heart!” (233)

In *Night Dancer*, Unigwe talks of the Miss World Riot as the result of conflicting ideologies. Titi Salaam in “A Brief Analysis on the Situation of Women in Nigeria” makes mention of the fact that, “the riot was as a result of Isioma Daniel’s blasphemous article in a Christian newspaper” (1). During this beauty pageant, the models are seen half necked which goes against the sharia law. This is seen as a bad example to the youths because of the Islamic view on women. An example is Chioma and Chinedu who get so excited about the contest and the idea of meeting the famous Agbani. They dream of becoming like their idol and even talk of people who have mistaken them for Agbani’s relatives.

Unigwe does not only limit her work to current issues like the riot, but also adopts Chinua Achebe’s idea of educating the audience and helping them to reclaim what has been taken away from them. Artists have to emulate historians by “replacing short garbled despised history with more sympathetic account” (4). He thinks it is time to correct the prejudices which generations of directors created about the Negro. Achebe is not totally in support with the idea



that literature should be about contemporary issues like politics and recent coup d'états. Instead, he thinks the artist-writer should write to valorise what he has as heritage. Chinua Achebe in *New Perspectives* states that,

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry, and above all they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this that they must now regain. (4)

This quotation shows that Africans have abandoned their culture because this culture has been misinterpreted for centuries. Achebe wants Africans to reclaim what rightly belong to them. African writers should not write for writing sake but should write to show certain realities. This view point is supported by Eustace Palmer in *The Growth of the African Novel* when he says, “The African writer in contemporary time must be usually committed and involve, and he must be prepared to expose the shortcomings and suggest alternative scales of values” (24). This implies that writers from African origin should not write fantasy stories that do not reflect the society in which they live. They should mirror some inconsistencies in the society. Palmer thinks they should not limit their works to exposing these irregularities but they should propose a way forward. Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer* is seen as an example of such works.

Chika Unigwe uses writing to fight against the stereotypical image given to the female for centuries by male dominated cultures. Unigwe was born in Nigeria which means that she has lived in this country and has witness the way women are treated by the different cultures in Nigeria. Patriarchal cultures have always treated them as subordinates, inferior and subservient human being. Unigwe finds a similar situation when she travels to Belgium. She is not only marginalised in Belgium because she is a woman, but also because she is black. Calvin Hernton in *The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers* observes that Writing for them is a weapon to fight against all forms of marginalization and objectification of women. Overturning stereotypes, their novels set a new standard of complex, a nuance presentation of black female characters (139). This implies that Unigwe’s writings (especially *Night Dancer* and *On Black Sisters’ Street*) denounce the marginalisation and objectification of women by cultures. Her main characters are women who try to fight against this marginal position despite the limited

choices they have. Thus, her work is aimed at reversing the stereotypical image that culture has passed on the weaker members of the society.

Tradition and culture is not gender neutral. The Nigerian society just like many others is patriarchal in nature. Titi Salaam posits that, “Tradition or culture and religion have dictated men and women relationship for centuries entrenched male domination into the structure of social organization and institutions at all levels of leadership” (1). Women in patriarchal societies are constrained by culture and society in order to be submissive. The woman is treated as the ‘other’, an inferior being who needs a man in order to be complete. Ezi’s mother begs her not to leave her husband because it will make her lose her identity. She believes a woman is nobody without a man to own her. Mma finds it difficult to get married in the absence of a man to stand for her. Men abandon her because she is the child of a single mother. She proposes to go with Obi, her boyfriend to his cousins wedding since they cannot spend the holiday together but he refuses saying, “Don’t be silly, Mma. Who would I say you were?” (27). Obi cannot take Mma to his family because according to the African culture, a child belongs to the family, and since she does not have a family, she cannot be given an identity.

The roles given to the different gender groups help in marginalising the woman. Army Wharton in *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* argues that, “The constraints imposed by sex come primarily from the different reproductive roles of women and men” (23). The woman in *Night Dancer* is viewed as a house keeper, cook, mother, baby maker and a whore. On meeting Ezi for the first time, Mike’s mother says: “And with those child bearing hips of yours, you’ll soon be filling the house with babies!” (97) This implies that Ezi has to play the role of a baby-marker in her son’s house, most especially that of making male children. Unigwe later on presents Ezi as a whore, a sex object for the rich men in Enugu. Rapu and Anwuli are being presented as maids. Rapu is brought to Mike’s house to work money so that her parents can sponsor her brothers in school. Also, Echewa’s mother-in-law prevents him from helping his wife with the cooking after Rapu’s birth because she thinks it is a woman’s work. The image given to the woman by patriarchal cultures is also supported by Godiya Allanana Makama in *Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria; The Way Forward* when he says, “In Nigeria, it is observed that the womanhood is reduced to a mere infidel and a second-class citizen, hence, there is the commonality of general belief system that the best for women is in the kitchen” (1). The role of an infidel given to the woman in the Nigerian society is not only interpreted as one who does not believe in religion but also the lack of belief in cultural

principles. When Ezi suspects that Rapu, her maid, is pregnant, she asks Rapu to undress in front of her. According to their culture, it is not proper for a woman to ask another to undress in her presence. It reads:

Rapu did not want to undress when Aunty Ezi asked her to. Why should she, What sort of a woman stood over another woman and asked them to remove their clothes while they watched, So when she was asked she said, 'No.' After all, what power did this woman have that she did not have. (205)

Ezi goes against the traditional principles of the Igbo people when she asks Rapu to undress in front of her. She does not conform to their traditions, thereby confirming her nonconformity. Their tradition permits a woman to expose her nudity only in front of a man who is her husband because they need some intimacy. However, this cannot exist between two women, so there is no need for a woman to ask another to do so. From another angle, this act can be interpreted as the pains perpetuated on women by their peers. Rapu decides to fight back by refusing to execute Ezi's orders.

Night Dancer shows that tradition makes the woman a second-class citizen. When Mike talks of the fact that Obi has to obey the rules of tradition, Mma finds the idea of tradition absurd. She thinks tradition had pushed her mother away. The central position she occupied has been given to another woman and this same tradition demands that she makes reparation for her mother's mistakes. She finds it odd that her grandfather and later, her father should think that she has sought them out to make reparation. Madam Gold tells her not to be stubborn. "It's the way things are done here. You do not have to say sorry, ndo. Your actions say it for you, so let them" (28). Madam Gold tells her not to dispute with her mouth what can be deduced from her action.

Quoting Foucault, Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak" posits that "to make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognized as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value" (28). Spivak makes us to understand that the subaltern can change her marginal position by creating her own center. That is, creating a center at the periphery. Ezi creates her own center by moving to Enugu where she makes a living for herself and her daughter. She refuses to stay in Mike's house with a co-wife where she will be given a second-class treatment as the mother of a girl child. Ezi develops a superiority complex which angers

the other women in Enugu. When Mma's classmates laugh at her shoes which are out of fashion, Ezi tells her:

Be a leader, not a follower. No child of mine is going to be a cow. Be the herdsman. Who decides what's fashionable? Who has the right to tell you what is trend? Your classmates? The media? You are not stylish if you follow the herd. You stand out. Create your own style, then you will be truly stylish. (71)

The above quotation shows Ezi's determination to maintain a certain living standard. She does not follow the crowd but tries to set herself apart. She fights back by creating some sort of envy in her neighbours through her fashionable clothes and shoes. Through this, Unigwe thinks that a woman should not let herself be dominated by others. She should define herself and not let others do that for her.

Another factor that affects cultures is the issue of globalization. Globalisation is seen as the new economic order. This is a situation whereby strong nations in the west seek to control all other nations through trade and technology. The reason behind this they say is to make the modern world a global village. Yeboah Kwame in "The Impact of Globalisation on African Culture" defines globalization as "a process of linking the regions and / or nations of the world which is facilitated by information flow (communication) including changes in the pre-existing socio-cultural, political, economic structure and systems of nations and people" (2). Globalisation seeks to connect the world through modern technologies. There is a desire to make the world one cultural village. There is therefore need to suppress the cultures of those nations that are deemed inferior or unfit for the new village. All other social institutions are suppressed in an attempt for the West to continue dominating the East. Kwame thinks that if culture means a "collective mode of life, or a repertoire of beliefs, style, values and symbols, then we can only speak of cultures, never just culture," (4). This implies that the world can never talk of a global culture. It will be very difficult to put these cultures into a melting pot so that they become one. Different cultures mean different cultural ideologies. The contexts in which these cultures are found make it practically impossible for them to be interpreted by foreigners.

Jeremy .S in "Localising Cultures," talks of the impact of globalisation on the indigenous cultures. He reiterates that, "globalisation makes all cultures local. It eclipses, or at least subordinates all previous ways of answering needs and of dealing with vicissitudes of

human life. All other ways of life are diminished and marginalized at a stroke” (6). Globalisation leads to the interaction between different cultures. In this interaction, the mainstream cultures turn to marginalise all other cultures. They set standards in the domain of economy, law, politics, and ways of life for local cultures to adhere to. Many cultures are destroyed at the expense of others. Some are altered as they acquire negative values from others through these interactions. Globalisation does not permit the weaker cultures to resist the influence of western cultures. This is because the West controls world economy and politics, while the East lacks the economic and political strength to fight back. However, Gayatri Spivak in “Can the Subaltern Speak” thinks that, “the oppressed, if given the chance and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics can speak and know their conditions” (25). This implies that, these nations can fight to prevent the adulteration of their cultures if chance is given them.

The coexistence of different cultural ideologies can lead to a situation of acculturation. Acculturation is similar to assimilation, and it is the result of minor cultures coming in contact with a dominant culture. The traditional Igbo and Hausa culture are considered the peripheral cultures, which have come in contact with a central Western culture. This culture clash leads to what Bhabha calls “a third space”. This third space is a hybridized space, and it poses identity problems. Mma finds herself in an “antre” as a result of a modern culture and education given to her by her mother. Mma does not have contact with family members, and she is not very much exposed to the Igbo culture. To compensate for this, Ezi makes her feel she is superior to other kids by telling her she does not need them: “my baby-baby. If they don’t want you, we don’t want them...” (67). However, this meets up with her when she becomes an adult. Mma finds it difficult to relate with her father and her maternal family. Her heart is not moved when Izu’s father talks of making sacrifices because Unigwe says: “It was this sense of tradition, of loyalty to family that was keeping her lonely now”. Mma finds it difficult to understand what she has not been given the opportunity to feel.

To deal with the problem of acculturation, most postcolonial writers like Chinua Achebe, Molefi Kete Asante, and Isidore Okpewho call for appropriation and authenticity in the representation of African cultures. By appropriation, we mean using the imperialist’s language to write back authentic texts. Authenticity implies that, the cultures be sold in the world market in their unadulterated forms. Maryam Navidi in “Foregrounding Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* Study” (12) makes mention that Achebe talks of the Igbo traditional village life and custom before British colonization. He brings out the Igbo ancient rites as parts of a viable, well-

ordered culture which is destroyed by the coming of imperialism, and the chaos that results from a failure to resist against the cultural, social and historical changes. Okpewho also showcases the Yoruba oral and written culture in *Call Me by My Rightful Name*. He talks of the belief in reincarnation, ancestral rites and cultural performances. In the text, Otis the protagonist cannot regain his real identity until when the authentic text of the “oriki” is produced.

This chapter set out to examine the world view of tradition and culture. It looked at cultural diversities and differences, bringing out concepts that help in understanding cultural ideologies. In the course of the analyses, we discovered that colonization and imperialism are the ways through which western culture was transported and transplanted in African societies. This western culture was considered superior while other cultures were marginalised and considered subaltern. Unigwe’s *Night Dancer* proves that gender is influenced by culture and history also has a great role to play here. The next chapter handles issues of cultural discernment.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CULTURAL DISCERNMENT

The quality and nature of culture as a particular form or storage of civilisation of a certain nation depends extensively on the mindset of the people. In a multicultural context, people are tempted to glue themselves to a particular culture without making a critical judgment of what they uphold as virtues. There is therefore need for sagacity when dealing with a multicultural context since each culture has something to offer. Unigwe brings out the different facets of the modern and traditional culture in Nigeria. While the previous chapter had a general view of tradition and culture, This chapter introduces the reader to the rift between modernism and traditionalism in *Night Dancer*. It also exposes characters' inability to make wise judgments.

Cultural discernment can be seen as the ability to understand a particular culture and to judge it from the basis of right and wrong. The ability to show good judgment can only be obtained by living in the culture in question. New Historicists argue that the quality and nature of the reflection depends greatly on the mindset and attitude of the literary artist. Unigwe's manner of presenting the different cultures is influenced by her own experiences in Nigeria, and later in Belgium. This view is further strengthened by proponents of the Gender theory and the Postcolonial theory. These theorists talk of the significance of location, context and time in the interpretation of cultures.

C. Klukhohn, and W.H. Kelly, in *The Concept of Culture* state that "By culture we mean all those historically created designs for living, explicit and implicit rational, irrational, and non rational, which exist at any given time as potential guide for the behavior of men"(1). The notions of rationality, irrationality, and non rationality make this definition interesting and important to this chapter. This is because it indicates that there should be some sort of acumen in dealing with cultures. This explains why Chika Unigwe in *Night Dancer* discusses the traditional Igbo culture and the modern culture with a lot of shrewd.

Unigwe presents a multicultural society and places the characters to discriminate between the different cultures. The term multiculturalism first entered public discourse in the 1970s to determine the state of Canada. Multiculturalism according to *Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia* refers to "the historical evolution of cultural diversity with a jurisdiction, incarnated by its selection policies and institutionalised by its settlement policies." This definition implies a co-existence of diverse cultures in societies as in the case of Nigeria.

Cultural diversity is manifested in the custom, behaviour, cultural assumptions and values, pattern of thinking and communicative style.

In order to understand and appreciate cultures, New Historicists talk of the history of these cultures. Nigeria in 2002 was a multicultural society composed of 36 states and many tribal groups and languages among which Igbo and Hausa were more influential. The two main groups with traditional cultures that overlap had religion as a point of divergence. These cultures have been greatly influence by the Muslim and Christian religions. Mike tells Mma about the riot over the introduction of “Sharia Law” in the year 2000. Sharia law had been instituted and accepted as a culture by the Hausa Muslims. Mike’s Supermarket which is considered a symbol of Igbo success in Hausa land is burnt down. This brings into the limelight a rift between both groups.

In the midst of this cultural multiplicity was the British culture, introduced during colonisation. Eurocentricism made the British culture the life style of the people and this was experience especially after independence in 1960. People like Madam Gold rejects her Igbo identity when she tells Ezi to call her “Madam Gold” since she now deal with gold. Ezi spits on tradition that encourages polygamy when she decides to live in the city in an individualistic manner. The fact that Mma carries heavy braids on her hair is a form of rejecting traditional hair styles. The little Mma desires a pet in order to live like an English child. She begs her mother to let her have a dog, a chicken, a snake or a cat. She imagines herself feeding the pet just like the English children in her story book. Although Ezi claims to be too modern, she is able to dismiss the foreign idea of keeping pets. She tells Mma: “Snake are dangerous creatures,” “chicken you eat, you don’t walk them”. “Only witches keep cats. Next thing you’ll be wanting a long broom to fly on” (17-18).

The Postcolonial theorist Giyatri Spivak in his article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” states that “...a figure of woman is at issue one whose minimal predication as indeterminate is already available to the phallogocentric tradition” (28). This is because most cultures in the world are patriarchal. Gender becomes an important way in which people create identities, organise social relations and events. The traditional cultures favour male dominance and relegate the female gender to the margin. The man is seen as the active partner while the woman is passive. Although Ezi is qualified and can easily pick up a job; Mike will not let her do so. Even when she insists on the matter, Mike reiterates:

Is there anything you need I’m not giving you? It’s not a bout that. Then



what is about? Have you ever had to ask for anything? Have you ever gone hungry for one day in this house? You're my woman, my wife. It's my duty to work and provide for us, and yours to look after us. (189)

Mike's behavior is typical of a society where the man is seen as the sole provider of the family, while the woman has to look after the family. Ezi is given a subaltern position, which prevents her from attaining her full potentials. Because Mike is glued to the Igbo culture, he fails to understand that Ezi has to practice what she has studied. Furthermore, a woman has no identity of her own. She only takes that of a wife or a daughter. Ezi loses hers when she decides to leave Mike. Without Mike, Ezi cannot get a loan and she is treated poorly by her neighbours. They say this of her: "she has roving eyes... Don't you see how they shine? Those eyes!" (82). She is seen as a woman who needs a man, and is ready to Snatch their husbands. They call her names like Jezebel and daughter of Satan, and say loudly to each other that they have to protect their husbands from her. Mma on her part finds it difficult to keep friends because she does not know her father. No mother will allow her child play with her. Even when they do, they keep a close watch over their children. Mma becomes a victim of an institution that belittles the woman.

Ezi's failure to conform to the Igbo culture does not only affect Mma but also her entire family. She becomes an outcast in her father's house. Amy S. Wharton in *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Research* states that "only by moving away from the purely subjective can we understand the broader social forces that shape our lives" (6). Our action are regulated by societal norm and man can only come to self realisation by breaking free from societal constraints. Ezi only discovers the importance of family ties when she leaves Mike. She regrets haven ruined Kelechi's chances of getting married. This is because their tradition forbids a wife from deserting her home. Once it is done, the other girls in her family are seen as women who cannot stay in a man's house.

Social events like the "Miss World Contest" are given a negative interpretation by the Hausa Muslims. This is because of the way the woman is viewed in this culture. It is observed that the woman is reduced to a mere infidel and a second class citizen. The woman in this culture does not have a voice, and she is not to be seen in public places. She is supposed to keep her hair veiled and her body covered. The beauty contest violates the Islamic culture of female purity. The beauty queens appear almost naked, which makes them bad example to the youths. Ezi is also considered a bad example to the young ladies who work for her.

Social relations are based on family ties, friendship and good neighbourliness.

According to *The Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender Man and Woman in the World's Cultures*, “Biological and cultural influences are not always clearly separable because in most societies parents start treating boy and girl babies differently from the moment of birth” (1). Traditional ideologies hold that the boy child has a more important role to play once an adult than a female child. Parents are very careful with their daughters’ acquaintances. They question Ezi about the whereabouts of Mma’s father to make sure they are at the right place. Ezi knows why these women accompany their daughters as she says:

With sons you could afford to be complacent, but not with daughters. You held your daughters close to your chest, you stifled any desire they might show, you straitjacketed them in sensible brassieres and you kept a close watch on the relationships they formed. (65-66)

The above excerpt shows that the boy child can mingle easily while the girl child has to be kept at eyesight. The only true friend Ezi has is Madam Gold. Madam Gold does not judge her like the others because she knows what Ezi has gone through in the hands of tradition.

Furthermore, Carol R .Ember and Melvin Ember in “Development of Gender Roles and Stereotypes” writes:

Even though biological factors may impose pre-dispositions and restrictions on development, sociocultural factors have important effects. Culture prescribe how babies are delivered, how children are socialized and dressed, what tasks children are taught, and what roles adult men and women adopt. (52)

This implies that culture has an important role to play in the life of an individual. Children are brought up according to the norms of their culture. Whatsoever Rapu does is in accordance with the culture in which she is brought up. Also, the birth of Prince is celebrated by Mike’s mother and her entire family as their culture demands. He is accepted with ease as an important member of the family. With this confidence, a child can socialise easily with other members of the society.

The traditional culture encourages inequality in the way wealth is obtained and the way it is allocated. Amy S. Wharton in *The Society of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and*

*Research*, posits that, “as a principle of social organisation gender is one critical dimension upon which social resources are distributed” (7). The idea here is that, the society or societal institutions determine who is eligible to own certain resources like money, land, and property. The level of eligibility depends on the person’s sex. Men are likely to be favoured more than women in patriarchal cultures. In the Igbo and Hausa cultures, men are considered as the rightful owners of wealth. They can either inherit wealth from family members or obtain it through hard work. The woman who is an inferior being in these cultures is not given the opportunity to inherit wealth since she has to get married. Getting married means a change of family, and since wealth cannot be transferred from one family to another, she is left empty handed. Mma cannot inherit anything from Mike because she is a girl child. Preference is given to Prince, and he grows up with authority because he is sure of his place in his father’s home. Parents do not work hard for the future of girl children because instead of providing them with wealth, girl children are expected to bring wealth into the family. This is seen in the way Echewa treats her daughter Rapu. Rapu is favoured in this case not because she is more than her brothers, but because she is a source of wealth. Patriarchal culture thus keeps the woman in a dependent state.

In “Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward,” Godiya Allanana Makama submits that, “there is a tremendous misrepresentation of woman right at the level of the family down to the circular society” (1). This right includes the right to own land, financial wealth and even the right to obtain loans. Ezi is discriminated upon when she gets to the bank to get a loan. Getting a loan in a bank is a modern system of obtaining wealth since money and banks are European invention. She later goes to Goody Goody and his wife for a loan so that she can invest in an oven. Her culture makes her a victim to Goody Goody who is famous for some sort of occultism. In the midst of this dilemma, Ezi has no choice but to find a means to save her daughter from the hands of Goody Goody. Prostitution becomes the only option for her since she needs money to kick-start her business. The same culture that pushes the woman into shameful acts turns to judge and condemn her. The traditional culture prevents Ezi from attaining her full potentials as it tries to keep her in a subject position.

Culture plays a great role in constructing the different views on education. The importance attached to a child’s education differs according to the different cultures. On the one hand, the modern culture is more liberal when it comes to the way a child should be educated. Mixed sex education is encouraged although Titi Salaam in “A Brief Analysis on the Situation

of Woman in Nigeria” submits that there are “gender stereotype in the school curriculum and academic streaming process” (2). This is because the educational system has been influenced by the different cultures that give more importance to a particular sex. On the other hand, indigenous cultures mostly focus on informal education. That is the type of education a child acquires at home before being exposed to the outside world. When it comes to formal education, Salaam holds that, “female education is considered as secondary to that of boys” (2). Rapu’s parents concentrate on their sons’ education. Echewa permits the boys to go as far as they can, while Rapu has to abandon school and work some money for her brother’s school needs. Salaam also argues that this behaviour generates from the culture of the people because according to the indigenous culture, “investing in a girl’s education is seen or regarded as investing for the benefit of the family she will eventually marry into” (2). This is seen in the way Mike treats his children. He has great plans for his son, Prince, and even encourages him to study neurosurgery, which he thinks is the most importance branch in medicine. Courses like Theatre Arts are seen as that reserve for girls like Mma because they lack the brain for more challenging courses. Ezi’s mother also thinks that women should “become nurses or teachers- professions that encourage the virtue of nurturing and caring the perfect profession for a wife” (184).

New Historicism consider the literary text as a cultural artifact that has something to say about the interplay of discourses, the web of social meaning operating in the time and place in which those texts were written. The way an idea is understood or interpreted depends on the period in history, and the culture and tradition of the place. Unigwe presents marriage not as an agreement between two people but as that between families. Marriage is not only based on love or physical attraction but on a collection of negotiations between the individuals and the various families. Mike has to present Ezi first to his mother in order to get her opinion of the woman he is to marry. Mike’s mother’s reaction towards Ezi and the words she says proves that she has rejected other girls before Ezi. Mike only goes ahead with the wedding plans because his family has accepted Ezi. This aspect of culture is however not always positive as it creates conflict among the youths (those ready for marriage). Mma is dated and dumped by her boyfriends because she does not have a father to play this important role in her life. The importance of a family in marriage issues is stressed when a boyfriend tells Mma that, “it is just your mother. And we are not Oyibo, oo, (white men) we are not white people, for whom love is enough” (9). Mma thinks that he is right, and supports him when she says: “everyone knew that marriage

here was not an intimate affair between two people like it was with the Oyibos” (9). This implies that the way marriage is interpreted in the Igbo culture is different from the western interpretation.

Marriage is also seen in the Igbo culture as the most important aspect in the life of a woman. Mothers prepare their girl children for marriage right from childhood. Mma is not considered a suitable candidate for marriage because she lacks this base. Unigwe thinks that a woman in this setting will do anything in order to belong to a man. They even go up to the extent of bearing the unbearable. Ezi’s mother thinks that education is good but comes secondary to a husband. She feels that going to the University should be to find husbands and not for the sake of getting a job. The way she valorizes marriage makes her accept her subaltern position in her husband’s home. She tries to inculcate this traditional value in her daughter. According to her, Mike’s infidelity is a minor issue provided Ezi stays in her husband’s home. The author says:

And when Ezi told her, told of her world ending, her mother held her and said simply, “there is nothing the eyes would see that would ever make them bleed. You hear me?... You scared me! I thought someone had died.” (210)

From the above excerpt, Unigwe actually shows the extent to which women in the traditional society can go for the sake of keeping a man. Losing a husband is worse than death. However, Unigwe reiterates that there is an extent to what one should bear in the name of tradition. This is because the traditional cultures make the woman a stooge in her husband’s home. Creating the character of Ezi is her own way of exposing the ills in these cultures.

Quoting Foucault, Spivak posits that,

To make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a Layer of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognised as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value.(28)

According to Spivak people can change their situation through constructive actions. The traditional cultures use marriage as a means to marginalise the woman. Unigwe thinks that the

woman can upgrade herself to a level that impact the way she is treated by her culture. Ezi decides to live a single life because the traditional culture gives a lot of liberty to the husband while the wife has none. She is expected to remain faithful to her husband even if she suspects him of having an affair with another woman. The Igbo culture allows men to get out of wedlock what they cannot get in their marriages. Madam Gold confirms this when she says: “Not event a man carved out of stone would turn away a son when his wife had only been able to give him a daughter. ... They would have planted their seeds in many places, hoping that at least one would sprout” (6). This implies that a man’s infidelity is not questioned in the Igbo culture. Unigwe uses Ezi to debunk the traditional interpretation of marriage.

Marriage according to the modern culture is not only based on love but to a greater extent on wealth. Modern women go in for men with heavy pockets. Marriage for them is a way to change their social and financial status. Ezi who has adopted the modern culture does not believe in love. She thinks Mma should marry a rich man, so that she can maintain the extravagant lifestyle in which she has been brought up. She intimates:

“Love disappoints,” she said to Mma several times. “He who trusts in love is a big fool.”... Ezi scoffed at love. “Love-Love nonsense never does anyone any good.”... “That’s what you get for loving. Next time, try using your head. Look out for number one. Look out for a man who’d take you as you are. (95)

Unigwe therefore presents the lack of seriousness in the modern interpretation of marriage. The reader is given the opportunity to judge both cultures and create a balance between them. Characters in *Night Dancer* find it difficult or fail to judge wisely between both cultures.

Gender theorists think it is important to look at more personal, less formally organised areas of life such as parenthood and family in order to understand how discourses operate. It is important to look at how the concept of family and parenthood is understood by the two conflicting cultures. Parenthood is a very important stage in all African cultures. This is because parents have a lot to offer to the children they raise. The future of a child depends on the type of values he or she has acquired at home. Rapu’s stable personality is a result of her upbringing. She constantly talks of her mother and the values she receives from her. Mma has nothing of the sort to boast of because she is brought up in total mistrust. Ezi teaches Mma never to trust the poor, not to fall in love and never to show any sign of shame. There is no cordial relationship

between mother and daughter. Refusing her mother a befitting burial is her own way of taking revenge. *Night Dancer* gives the impression that there is a certain form of hybridity or the adoption of foreign cultures that destroys family ties. Ezi becomes so hard because of her life experiences that she fails to inculcate in her daughter the right values.

Chika Unigwe is not wholly against both cultures. This is seen in the characters she depicts in her novel. On the one hand she uses characters like Rapu, Anwuli and Mgboji's mother to represent the traditional culture. These Africans fight to preserve what is left of their culture and traditions. This is because much of the indigenous culture has been lost in favour of the modern culture. Mgboji's mother tries to preserve the little that is left of this culture when she complains about Echewa trying to help his wife in the kitchen. Echewa does this to help his wife who has just given birth to their "fortune bringer." He thinks he has the right as the head of his family to decide what to do in his home, but Mgboji's mother is not of this opinion. The omniscient narrator notes that:

In a fit of ecstasy, he insisted-on cooking the yam porridge his wife must eat to warm her stomach. 'What nonsense is this' she grumbled as she watched him slice the yam and soak the white slice in water, ...'How can I be here and you do the cooking for Mgboji. How does it reflect on me?' He ignored her, and reached for the palm oil. 'What man cooks for his wife? This is a woman's job. (133-134)

The fact that Echewa insists on helping his wife is a positive point about the traditional culture. Although there are some positive aspects about this culture, Unigwe thinks that the traditional culture estranges the people. It is against this backdrop that she portrays other characters that depict the modern culture to criticise the indigenous traditions. Unigwe argues that one positive thing about the modern culture is the fact that it allows people to make their own choices. She is conversely against the idea that people should be cut off from their culture. The fact that she reconciles both cultures at the end of the text shows that she is for a positive blend of cultures.

In sum, cultural discernment exposed the different cultures and the shortcomings of these cultures. The chapter proposed a more suitable interpretation of culture and cultural discernment. Aspects like social relationships, social event, education, and gender roles are being treated from both a traditional and modern point of view with the help of the three

theories mentioned in the work. The traditional culture marginalises the woman while the modern culture is seen in this chapter as that which permits the woman to create a space for herself. Institution like marriage and the family are given different values depending on what individuals benefit from them. While the traditional culture valorises marriage and family ties, modernism banalises them. The chapter summarises that, because no culture is completely bad, people should be able to evaluate cultures and get what is useful from each culture.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RE-INVENTING THE SELF

Humanity creates cultures which differ from one another. When these cultures come in contact with each other in a particular context, the ability to judge correctly becomes necessary. The previous chapter focused on the interpretation of the different cultures and characters' ability to discern cultures and traditions. However, this is not the only problem characters face because multiculturalism leads to double consciousness and the division between 'us' and 'them'. The feeling of being caught between cultures results to what Homi Bhabha and others called "unhomeliness." The fact that characters become psychological refugees develops in them a need to discover the true self. That is, the personality or character that makes a person different from other people. Thus Unigwe's characters have to embark in a physical and psychological journey to discover their true identity.

Postcolonial theorists often describe the colonial subject as having a "double consciousness" or "double vision." This refers to a type of consciousness or a way of perceiving the world that is divided between two antagonistic cultures. In our present context, we have the western or modern culture and the traditional culture in Nigeria. This double consciousness develops as a result of the indigenes trying to mimic western cultures. Ezi tries to imitate the western mode of life through her dressing and manners. She gives herself into singing and dancing while leaving all the house chores to Rapu her maid. She develops a double consciousness when she feels that tradition keeps her in chains. Her life experiences make her to turn to the modern culture. This is because Ezi thinks that the western culture is more liberal. She brings up her daughter in the modern way thereby forgoing her culture and traditions. This produces an unstable sense of "self" in Mma.

The "self" is defined by *Merriam-Webster* as "the person that someone normally or truly is". This can be what a person thinks he is which is in accordance with what others can see in the person. Rapu's family knows who she is and the value she has for the family. Rapu is destined to redeem her family from poverty although Echewa does not know how the prophesy will come to pass. She assumes this identity as the author says: "Rapu always knew that whatever the gods had fated, they found a way to bring to pass" (201). This quotation brings in to the limelight a very important aspect of African cultures which is the belief in many gods. She also thinks that she is a smart person and cannot repeat Ezi's mistake of abandoning her

home to Mma: “She, Rapu was smarter. Her mother had taught her well” (223). She defines herself through her actions and convictions thereby creating a central position for her herself. Rapu changes her identity from a servant girl to a wife when she gives Mike a son.

The fact that Unigwe’s main characters try to change from what they are to what they think they need to be result in identity crisis. The psychologist Erick Erikson in *The Columbia Encyclopedia* uses the term identity to designate a sense of self that develops in the course of the man’s life, and that both relates him to and sets growth results from the manner he deals with eight conflictual stages he has to go through before attending selfhood. This has to do with the desire for self acceptance and the assuredness of being recognised by those around us. Identity crisis therefore is a period in one’s life characterised by uncertainty and confusion. This is a stage where a person’s sense of identity becomes insecure, typically due to a change in his expected aims or role in society. Mma’s problem arises from her pertaining to an incomplete family. She encounters a lot of difficulty as she grows up. The first appears when she is separated from her father, and is later rejected by the society as the child of a single parent. Mma expects her neighbours to accept her just like any other child in the neighbourhood, but what she receives are insults about her mother’s lifestyle which traumatizes her. Female neighbours refuse to nurse her and let her suck their dry nipples as they do to other children. She feels frustrated when other children avoid her, and this makes her to live a life of uncertainty.

Johnson.O.Oladele in *Educational Psychology* argues that many factors can contribute in the personality development of an individual. Among these factors are the home and school. He states that “The home is the foundation of one’s identity and personality. The extent to which the child (individual) comes in the contact with the family and others, is likely to provide the most powerful of an individual (116). According to Oladele, the home provides the base for any future personality. The problems encountered by the individual at home will determine his or her reactions to what he or she encounters in the society. Mma lacks this base. She has no father with whom she can identify herself, and she does not even know where her mother comes from. Mma has never known what fatherly love is all about. The happiness she gets from her mother’s suitor is short-lived. Although she is used to seeing men come and go in her mother’s house, she only relates to this man because of what he offers to her mother and not like a daughter. He sleeps in the house frequently and does not tiptoe early in

the morning like the other men who visited Ezi's house. The absence of a father creates a void in her life and makes it difficult for her to relate with her biological father.

Also, the relationship between Mma and her mother Ezi is such that does not permit her to be what she naturally has to be. Ezi want Mma to be a replica of her mother. That is, Mma is not supposed to listen or pay attention to what is happening around her. She is supposed to see her mother lifestyle not as bad but as a means to live a better life. Ezi wants Mma to live like a modern woman who does not know what shame is and to remain "jolly jolly" (always joyful) even when things are going wrong. On the contrary, she fears growing up to be like her mother. They look so much alike that women in their neighbourhood turn to suggest that Ezi "must have simply spat her out" (70). Mma grows up to feel some degree of kinship with the suffering. She lives her entire life in embarrassment, which influences the way she sees herself. She develops self pity. The relationship between Mma and Ezi becomes so terse that she dreams of the day she will have to live the house in order to define her own life.

The home here also has to do with the surrounding. The way an individual relates with neighbours and friends can also determine the way the individual sees his or herself. Mma is treated as the other, and is constantly being pushed to the margin because she does not belong to a defined background. The absence of a "mamannukwu" and a "papannukwu" in her life makes her to be different from other children like Ogochukwu-from-downstairs. Neighbours find pleasure eminding her of her lack of an identity. In an attempt to discover where she comes from, Mma asks her mother about her grandmother:

When is my mamannukwu visiting? "It's just the two of us, baby-baby" Her mother replied, interrupting her dance to give her daughter a quick hug. "Just baby- baby and her mummy – mummy. No mamannukwu. (75)

Oladele also talks of the role played by the school in building identity. He posits that, "The school...plays an important role in providing a relatively objective basis from which the child (or individual) can find bearing and assess his potential growth . . ." (118).

In *Night Dancer*, the school helps in giving Mma a negative self image. Her classmates do not relate with her so well and some of the lessons only help in exposing her lack. When asked to describe her father in class one, she finds it difficult because she has no one she can call a father. She wished she had a father in order to describe his physical appearance and occupation

like Mmeri and Binachi who boast of their fathers in the “Show and Tell Exercise”. Oladele thinks the child’s personality can also be influenced by the teacher. A teacher who does not take into account the personal needs of the learners can end up frustrating them. He should be democratic, friendly, considerate and impartial.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said holds that “texts exist in context” (13). This implies that a work of art should be interpreted according to a particular context. Identity in the Nigerian context has to do with a person’s background. That is you are defined based on where you come from more than what you have become. A bad tree is said to produce only bad fruits. Ezi’s behaviour and lifestyle makes her a nonconformist. In the context in which they find themselves, it is abnormal for a woman to live without a man or to be entertaining different men. The society defines her from a context specific perspective. As a result, Mma inherits the same identity of a prostitute. The narrator points out that

Bad homes stank and they did not want to stink. They wanted to attract the right sort of man and the right sort of man did not turn up at Ezi’s door. Enugu was too small for girls to be seen in a house of ill repute. Mma tried not to blame them. She knew they feared what she would become. She was, after all, her mother’s daughter. And as everyone knew, prostitution, like crime, was often hereditary. (68)

Thus no matter how much Mma struggles to differ from Ezi, she is viewed as the daughter of a prostitute. Since a prostitute cannot produce a saint, neighbours believe that Mma is bound to be a prostitute. They also think Mma will not make a good wife, and as such, should not be seen with their daughters.

According to New Historicists, the quality of literature depends on the mindset of the literary artist. Just like her characters, Unigwe is caught between cultures. She travels to Belgium where she finds a culture that rejects her as an outsider. Unigwe finds difficulties creating a space for herself in the Belgium. So, writing becomes a way for her to express herself. Her desire to combat unhomeliness and to redefine herself in this strange culture is depicted in *Night Dancer* and *On Black Sister’s Street*. Ezi and Mma are not comfortable in a society that tries to give them an identity which differs from what they know about themselves. Outsiders make no effort to understand the motives behind their actions. At the end of the text,

Mma undertakes a journey to Kaduna in order to prove to the world that she is not what they think she is. Said argues that unhomeliness is different from being homeless. That is to be 'unhome' means to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself. It is failure to create a balance within oneself which come as a result of inability to reconcile cultures. No matter what Ezi does to make her daughter live a happy life, Mma keeps feeling like a stranger in her mother's house. Ezi sells her body so that Mma can leave a comfortable life. She takes Mma out frequently and makes sure that she has the best things so that she does not miss anything. All these neither makes Mma a happy child nor gives her a clue of who she is. She says she would have preferred not to have all the comfort in her childhood provided she had a father and grandparents. She screams: "no amount of cupcakes, of picnics, of bottles of squash will ever make up for your meanness to me!" (78) This makes the adult Mma to nurture the idea of creating a balance within her by becoming a Pentecostal pastor who is valued for her religious work. Thus, Mma sees religion as a weapon to fight her marginal position and to create a center in the lives of the Christians.

Alienation can be seen as a step toward self-realization. That is a complex situation where one isolates himself from the society or is isolated by the society. Ezi finds herself in a situation she can do nothing about. She is not only avoided by the women around her but she also isolates herself in order to avoid any verbal aggression. These verbal aggressions push Mma to the wall. The term alienation is defined in *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* as:

'the unhappy consciousness' typical of philosophical skepticism as an soul which is conscious of itself as a divided being or a divided and contradictory being whose aspiration towards university has been frustrated. (123)

The use of the expression 'the unhappy consciousness' gives an insight to what alienation entails. An alienated person is a social misfit. That is he cannot mix freely with the other members of the society because he or she does not agree with some social happenings. However, alienation is not only seen as a person living apart from others out of his own free will but also a situation whereby the society refuses to interact with the individual. The home is the first factor that builds a person's personality and this same home can make the worst of a person. Ezi is the first reason why Mma start keeping herself in her bedroom and directing her

attention to a doll. As a child, the little Mma is inquisitive like all the children around her. She tries to inquire why she lives with her mother and not with both parents like her mates. Ezi keeps frustrating Mma by the way she reacts to her questions. This makes Mma to seek refuge in her bedroom or in the lonely yard.

The society also acts as a cause of alienation. This is a case whereby the individual is being rejected by the society or is given a marginal position. People who do not conform to the norms of a particular society are not fully considered as members of the society in question. That is, if the society demands for example that a person should be well educated; should not have premarital sex or children out of wedlock; that a lady is not supposed to entertain numerous men in her home in the absence of a husband ; any person who goes against these norms become an outsider. Since there is the fear of contamination, they are forced to alienate themselves from such people. Spivak thinks that the other is misrepresented in such a way that produces a kind of power and desire in the subject. Neighbours avoid Ezi and her daughter. The people of Uwani and even Neni Street avoid having close contact with Ezi and her daughter. They think any contact with a soiled person will ruined their reputations. These women will say “who knows what lurked in the heat of a wayward woman’s daughter? Even a girl with innocent eyes lied. Everyone knew that” (64). Thus the people create a center for themselves and defined Mma and Ezi as the other. The narrator states that

These women were prepared to defer to their landlady but there were limits. Their daughter morality was at stake. One could never be too careful. Once your reputation was gone, that was it. They could kiss suitable marriages goodbye. And those mothers had plans for their daughters: raise them well and hope a fine young man with a good job snapped them up. They wanted to be mother-in-laws to men who would appreciate the job they had done on their daughters.... What was the point of having a daughter if you let another woman spoil her for you? (65)

This further reiterates the fact that in the Igbo culture, female children are prepared for marriage right from childhood. For these women, having a bad daughter is equal to not having a daughter at all. They think men will judge them from what their daughters have become. This because they believe the identity of a child depends on the home from which she comes from.

To an extent, these neighbours pretend not to see Ezi and her daughter. Those who must have contact with them because they are her tenants or are Mma's school mates approach them with a lot of care. Ralph Ellison in his book, entitled *Invisible Man*, reiterates that

I am invisible, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodies heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, ...When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or fragments of their imaginations, indeed, everything and anything except me. (52)

Ralph Ellison in this quotation thinks he is invisible not because he does not exist, but because the people define him based on what they think he should be. Mma, just like Ellison questions herself about who she is and the way people see her. These people do not see her as the little innocent girl she is. They identify her as an extension of Ezi. She becomes a point of focus for those who wait impatiently for any visible sign in order for them to confirm their suspicions. Neighbours and school mates define Mma according to their own standards or that of their culture. Johnson Oladele in *Educational Psychology* thinks that crisis like this one play a role in building the personality of an individual, especially a child.

The New Historicists on this note believe that the relationship between individual identity and society is mutually constitutive: on the whole, human beings are never merely victims of a society that oppresses them, for they find various ways to oppose authority in their personal and public lives. The idea here is that, apart from the fact that the society can determinate ones identity, the individual can reclaim agency by defining himself. Mma and Ezi find a way to create a center for themselves despite what people think about them. Mike tries to give Ezi the position of a co-wife when he gets Rapu pregnant, but Ezi rejects this position and abandons her home. Ezi violate the tradition that permits a man to have more than one wife, and that which forbids a woman from bringing up a child single handedly. Tradition is seen as the authority that control or regulate the lives of the characters. Ezi's loud laughter and constant dancing is a way of liberating herself. She is sure that if her neighbours are not envious of her lifestyle, they are at least of her beauty and wealth. She rejects anything that might make her a victim like love, marriage and poverty. This supports the opinion that individual identity is not merely a product of society.

Amy S. Wharton in *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Research* upholds that, "gender organises our identity and self-concepts structure our interactions and is

one basic upon which power and resources are allocated” (9). The idea here is that, gender determinates who we are and how others see us. Gender plays a prime role in forming individual identity through self-perception and the way we relate to others. In a patriarchal society like the one under study, it is obvious that the male sex finds it easier to define the self than her female counterpart. Most at time the woman is define as a subordinate to the man. She is given a subaltern position in the society because of the role she plays. This position makes her feel inferior and develops in her a low self-esteem. Gender strongly influences how peoples like Mma, Ezi, and Rapu are treated by others and the society as a whole. Mike make Rapu do the entire house chore because apart from being a maid, she is a woman. She has come to accept herself as that object that has to be used at will. Ezi’s behaviour is considered a scandal because she is a woman. The society calls her a whore but the same society has no terminology for a man who sleeps with many women. Also, if Mma were a boy, she would have found it easier to cope with the situation in which she finds herself. Defining herself becomes difficult because she belongs to the marginalized sex. This strengthens Wharton’s idea that “Gender matters shape the identities and behavioural disposition of individuals.” (9)

Unigwe uses her female characters to show the influence a place can have on ones identity. An attachment to a particular place can influence who a person is and a movement out of this place can alter ones self-image. In order to better understand the personality crisis in which Mma finds herself, Gender theorist insist on the importance of analysing the concept of place and space. This is because these aspects can determine the type of behaviour that will be perceived. The importance Ezi attaches to her husband’s home makes it difficult for her to accept the idea of an intruder. Rapu distorts Ezi’s self-image by usurping her home. Mma finds it difficult to come to terms with her because of the place where she finds herself. She is not comfortable in her mother’s home because of Ezi’s hostile behaviour. She only discovers who she is when she moves to Mike’s home in Kaduna. Unigwe talks of Prince’s voice as that which is sure of the space it occupies when she say: “He had a deep voices, A voice sure of its place and its power.” (246). Mma would have loved to have this same assurance, but her voice has always been overshadowed by Ezi’s loud laughter.

Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth holds that “identity is not just a process, it is in processes.” She further state that “its singularity exists in the unique and unrepeatabe sequence of a life, but not in some essential subject.” Finding ones true identity is not just like going on a journey but also has to do with the different stages one has to pass through to arrive at a particular result. One of



these stages as earlier mentioned is that which the individual alienates himself. He does this because of some intimates desires which cannot be expressed or which some factors hinder from attaining satisfaction. The result of such repression can be very frustrating and can later lead to a troubled mind. Mma's quest for her identity has been unsuccessful up to the point where she decides to meet her grandfather and later her father. Mma first attempts to find out who she is when she discovers that all her mates have fathers or at least pictures of their fathers. This quest continues through out her childhood and adolescence. At each level, she lives a situation which strengthens her desire for an identity.

Many psychologists have looked into the various stages through which a person has to go in order to develop into a rational being. This is because most identity problems stem from some psychological matter that has not yet been resolved. Erik Erikson, one of the famous psychologists who studied the developing human being views development as a series of psychosocial "crises" requiring resolution if an individual is to successfully move from one period to the next. The individual can be rational or have a well integrated identity if and only if the crises are well treated at the right stages. Quoted in Bame Nsamenang's *Developmental Psychology: Search for a Diversity Paradigm*, Erikson talks of a saying that hangs in a cowboys bar in the US: "I ain't what I ought to be, I ain't what I'm going to be, but I ain't what I was" (94). This quotation better reflects the situation in which Mma finds herself. She is neither certain about her present nor what the future looks like and she finds it difficult to make a decision that might change her life. One thing she is certain about is the fact that she does not want to live a life similar to that of her mother. In the stage of "Initiative Versus Guilt," that is, at the age of five, Erikson thinks that "overburdening the child with guilt can result in the child's suppressing wishes and plans and eventually becoming a self-righteous, self-appointed guardian of other" (93). Mma turns to protect the few friends she can make like Errine and when her mother finds faults in others, Mma considers them as qualities. The inability to adopt a positive identity during her teenage age gives her the desire to take her mother's life with "Otapiapia" a famous rat poison.

The three theories mentioned in this work talk of the importance of going back to ones history and culture in order to understand why lives are the way they are. At the point where it becomes obvious that getting in touch with her true self is the only way through which she can live a fulfilled life, Mma decides to undertake the journey which marks a turning point in her life. She is guided partly by her mother's memoirs which informs her about Ezi's family and

Mike's whereabouts. Madam Gold becomes an important character as she encourages Mma to get to her roots. The meeting with her grandfather does not only place Mma in contact with this family, but it also reveals her mother's identity. Mma's life is given a different meaning when she meets Mike and her Siblings. Kaduna is where Mma life began, and also where she comes in terms with her true self. The importance of the concept of "place" as a defining factor is stressed here when Unigwe says that,

She wondered, not for the first time, how it must have felt to have grown up here. This was the sort of silence Mma had imagined she wanted when her mother lived. S is for silence. Silence in which to think. In which to re-imagine her life, to revise her history. There are different kinds of silences. And the silence covering this house was the kind in which her guilt shouted in her ears. (239)

The above quotation shows that Ezi's home could not give Mma the possibility to revise the marginal identity that has been given to her by the society. Mma finally discovers who she is although this is not without pains. The pains she feels are as a result of the fact that she has learned the truth about her mother and the motives behind her behaviour.

This chapter aimed as studying the cause of identity crises in a multicultural context. In the course of the analysis, we discussed the different stages characters go through in order to discover the self. We found out that re-inventing the self is both a physical journey (seen through Mma's journey to Kaduna) and a psychological journey (as she had to re-evaluate her life). However, no matter the amount of effort made by the individual, certain factors like home, society and culture always act as either hindrance or a propelling factor to self-realisation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PEDAGOGIC RELEVANCE OF *NIGHT DANCER*

Literature has been used in the past years to teach the English language in many school curriculums all over the world. Many excerpts have been taken from works of literature to draw the syllabus and scheme of work for Cameroonian secondary schools. Although this has been implemented as a method in teaching the English Language to both second and foreign language learners, there is still the problem of what should be used in teaching the English language. With the advent of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) emphasis has been laid on the use of authentic material in teaching the English Language. This chapter therefore examines the pedagogic relevance of *Night Dancer*. It also discusses the importance of literature in teaching the English Language, and how a work like the one under study can use in a language classroom. Finally, the chapter proposes a sample lesson plan following the Competency-Based Approach.

Pedagogy according to Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia is “the discipline that deals with the theory and practice of education; it thus concern the study and practice of how best to teach” (1). This has to do with the art and science of teaching. When we talk about the art of teaching, we mean the teaching activity itself while the science refers to a combination of strategies in the classroom. Some strategies are better suited to certain skills and fields of knowledge than others, because of this, effective pedagogy becomes very necessary. Effective pedagogy has to do with incorporating an array of teaching strategies that support intellectual engagement and connectedness to a wider world.

Pedagogic relevance refers to what is related to the activity of educating and teaching or instructing. In this case, it is what is pertinent to the text and the present work. This has to do with the importance of Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer* and how a text on cultures can be used as reliable material in an English Language classroom. In order to measure the pedagogic relevance of this work, we are going to look at the subject matter, the author’s style and use of language.

The Competency-Based Approach seeks to establish competences in learners so that they can apply what has been acquired in the classroom in real life situations. Richard J. and Rodgers T. in *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* define the CBA as “an educational movement that focuses on the outcome or output of learning in the development of

language programs” (5). According to Richard and Rodgers, the focus of this approach is on outputs rather than inputs. The fact that it is outcome based makes it adaptive to the needs of student, instructors, and the community. Tasks are given to the learners that require them to do something with the language. This is because students get more involved when they know what is done in the classroom is meaningful and relevant to their lives out of the classroom. With this approach, there is a shift of focus from the teacher to the learner. The teacher becomes a facilitator who has to provide the necessary aids to make the learners active participants. The teacher and the learners become partners in the learning process.

In the past, more time was spent teaching grammatical and lexical components of language. This was done following the prescribe text books which demanded the teacher to focus more on aspects of grammar. This teaching style did not permit learners to acquire communicative competence. Oxana Dema and Aleidine Moeller in “Teaching Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Language Classroom” state that “According to research, classroom activities that are not contextualised and attached to real life issues, activities and concern do not help the students learn to use L2” (77). This weakness has made researchers on language teaching to revise the methods use in teaching the English Language. Oxana and Aleidine further states that

Second language learning has been reconceptualised over the last decades as a participatory process, in which a learner is not only a learner of new ways of expressing ideas but rather the learner becomes a learner of new ways of thinking, behaving, and living in an L2 community. (77)

The participatory process makes learners the centre of learning. In this learning process, the students do not only learn the grammar and lexical components of the language, but there is also a change of behaviour.

Literature can be used as an authentic material in a language classroom. Works of art are not created out of a void but they have something to do about the society in which the literary artist lives. They reflect a certain facet of the author’s society and are directed to a particular audience (reader). It also gives an insight of the culture that produces the work. According to Gillian Lazar in *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers*,

literature provides wonderful source material for eliciting strong emotional responses from our students. Using literature in the classroom is a fruitful

way of involving the learner as a whole person, and provides excellent opportunities for the learners to express their personal opinions, reactions and feelings. (3)

What can be deduced from this quotation is that literature sometimes discusses controversial issues that may arouse discussion of opposing opinions in the classroom. These discussions can be done in many ways to vary classroom activities. Students can take turns in talking or discuss their views in pair or groups. This gives an opportunity for more student talk and less teacher talk because each learner has something to say.

Involving real life situations in the classroom is looking for texts that are authentic. A text like the one under study is rich in content and form. The subject matter reflects the situation in many African societies. *Night Dancer* exposes the Nigerian cultures which is the way of life of the people. These cultures and traditions are similar to what is found in most parts of Africa. Books like *Snow White* and other fairy tales which were used in the past to come up with some language units have been criticized by advocates of the Competency-Based Approach. This is because these stories are not true to life and cannot help the learners out of their immediate environment. Teachers should choose excerpts from texts that are culturally accessible to the learners than those that are farfetched from the learners' culture. Instead of using texts that do not reflect the reality of the learners' environment, a book like *Night Dancer* will better suite our context.

Also, Rob Pope in *The English Studies Book: An Introduction to Language, Literature and Culture* talks of the fact that the learning of language cannot be done without involving culture. Literature is considered as a better way to learn about cultures. Rob Pope states that

There can be no learning of language in a full sense without some grasp of culture in general and literature in particular (this last often representing language and culture at full stretch). Conversely, there can be no learning of literature in a full sense without some grasp of culture in general and language in particular (the resources of which literature draws upon). (11)

The above quotation shows that we cannot dissociate literature from language. Language is used to write literature and most reading texts in the course books come from literature. When teaching these texts, the teacher is indirectly teaching the culture that produced the work.

Teaching language with a text on cultures promote students' understanding of cultures. It can also help in combating ethnocentrism in the classroom. The fact that the classroom is made up of learners from different cultural backgrounds means they come to class with different cultural ideologies. Sometimes, these learners find it difficult to tolerate those from different cultures. There is always a tendency to judge others based on our own standards. A text like *Night Dancer* helps to promote cultural tolerance among learners because of its transcultural nature. It also helps students to understand some of the behavioural patterns of their mates.

Literature presents students with interesting and sometimes complex themes. This text is relevant to our learning context because it treats contemporary themes like culture, love, marriage, parenthood, modernity to name a few. These themes are either what learners have come across or may have to face in future. The way culture is presented in the text brings out both the positive and negative aspects of the modern and traditional cultures. Students will come to realise that most cultures are patriarchal and that women are not only marginalised in their individual cultures but also in most African cultures. Ezi's situation is a clear case of the odds women have to go through in order to create a space for themselves in a patriarchal culture. Echewa's mother-in-law's reaction to his behaviour when he tries to cook for his wife is considered normal in a male-dominated culture. This is because there are certain chores reserved for men who are considered as family heads. Students learn the language simultaneously with the culture that produces it. This provides a good context to elicit a debate on cultural inequalities in order to encourage speaking. These themes can also be reproduced through summaries and easy writing.

Bernadine Evaristo in "The Independent" reiterates that Unigwe's work is "dotted by fantastic satire, irony and colourful proverbs" (2). The narrative strategy is not only limited to those mentioned by Evaristo. Chika Unigwe also makes use of flashback, contrast, suspense, conflict, and the epistolary device through her memoirs. These devices do not only enrich the students' knowledge of representational language but also improve on their vocabulary. The focus here is not on the devices per say but on how ideas have been arranged and also on the use of language.

Proverbs provide learners with varied ways of using the English Language. They are seen as phrases expressing basic truths which may be applied to common situations. They are wise sayings and may sometimes sound odd especially to foreign learners. This is because most African proverbs are direct translations from the indigenous languages thus presenting varying

structural patterns. Proverbs are used in Africa as a means of instructing the younger generation. The use of proverbs in an English Language class introduces new sentence structures and also improves on the learners' vocabulary. Madam Gold says: "it is only the fly without guidance that follows the corpse into the ground." (109) She says this to warn Mma about her stubbornness. The teacher can give the other version found in books that is, "the stubborn fly follows the corpse to the grave". Not only will learners get the moral in the proverb when introduced in a reading passage but they will also learn the pragmatics of the language. Here the teacher has to make the learners know that the change of words in proverbs do not alter meaning. There is nothing fictional about proverbs and they create a mental picture in the minds of learners. This may serve as authentic language in a CBA classroom.

The numerous flashbacks and the fact that the story is told in the third person narrative provides reliable material for a language lesson. The story is told in the simple past tense. Unigwe says:

Rapu was certain that Uncle Mike had a woman outside. All men did but wise women kept their eyes sharp and their tongues warm and they saw and they lured their men back home before things got out of control. 'Men are like palm wine,' her mother told her when she was old enough to know. (172)

A text like this taken from *Night Dancer* can be used to teach language in context. Instead of isolating grammar units as it has been the case with the old language teaching methods. The past tense can be presented in a passage or a dialogue. This will encourage learners to learn through interesting examples. With this, they can easily come out with grammar rules. Excerpts drawn from texts like this can be used at the level of practice and evaluation, wherein learners can pick out the verbs that have been conjugated in the required tense. Students can restructure or complete stories in a required tense following the examples that have been provided to them.

Literature provides sufficient material for teaching speaking and writing especially at the lower levels. Speaking cannot be taught in a void. Learners need something to prompt them to talk in the classroom. Sometimes pictures, dialogues or short stories are presented to learners in order to make them take part in speaking activities. These materials have to be true to the learners' culture or contain themes that are relevant to their society in order to stimulate their imagination. Learners might even go out of the story to bring out ideas not included in the text

because the situation is familiar with what they come across daily. The use of contrast in *Night Dancer* serves as a context for teaching the arrangement of ideas in a piece of writing. Unigwe brings out situations where the two cultures fail to agree. Marriage, love, education and parenthood are manifested differently in the two cultures. We can also find some contrast between the female characters like Ezi and Rapu, Mma and Oguchuku-from-downstairs. This provides authentic material for comparing and contrasting cultures. This can be done orally or through a writing exercise. Learners can use information from the text to present a debate in the classroom. This permits students to respond personally to the themes in the text and develop confidence in expressing their ideas in the target language.

Literature provides meaningful contexts for acquiring and interpreting new language. Texts written in the English Language expose learners to the different usages of language. Also, vocabulary and grammar are acquired in the genres of literature. Poetry, drama, and prose provide learners with new words which can sometimes be understood in context. Learner can look up words in their dictionaries when the meaning of new words cannot be obtained in context. Since there is limited time, texts should be chosen with limited vocabulary that will need learners to look up meaning in dictionaries. That is, majority of the new words should be deduced by the learners within the context of the passage or society. *Night Dancer* provides a rich context for the study of words related to culture and gender. The text equips learners with appropriate vocabulary for writing exercises, classroom discussion, and debates.

Also, “The Thinking Exercise” (15) introduced by Mma’s headmistress is an interesting activity for forming new words and practices sounds. Learners can practice using new vocabulary and completing lists of words starting with the same sound. In the text we can find structures like “G is for guilt and for go.” S is for silly. S is for stupid” (85). Poetry and other literary forms provide a good context for practicing pronunciation. Practicing excerpts like this one help in the articulation of some sounds. “L is for love, it’s lifting the tongue and placing it gently against the roof of your mouth L is gentle, like softly saying, la la la” (94). This game also provides a good exercise for classes of words like “sacrifice, scarify, sacrificial.” The exercise does not only provide a context for teaching vocabulary, but also brings a little bit of fun into the classroom.

Although the CBA seeks to change the classroom situation from teacher centered to student centered, the teacher still has a great role to play. The teacher has to make sure the objective for which the text is chosen in the language class is obtained. A text on culture is a



very good material for a participatory class, but it can have a negative impact on the learners if it is bias. This is because most classrooms are situated in multicultural context; wherein learners come from different cultural backgrounds. Some of the learners might not have come across their indigenous cultures and traditions. Thus introducing a text on such cultures may appear odd to them. The teacher has to make sure he or she handles the lesson in a way that does not frustrate the learners. In order to have an exciting lesson, the teacher should involve the students. This can be done by taking into account their various opinions through classroom discussions or debates. The teacher has to be careful to provide the right feedback.

Furthermore, Gillian Lazar states that, “literary texts have a powerful function in raising moral and ethical concerns in the classroom” (3). Chika Unigwe’s novel is concern with the problem of cultural imbalances and the marginal position given to the woman by the traditional cultures. It also exposes how a failure to reconcile the modern and traditional culture can lead to identity crisis. The text should not only be used to teach some aspect of language but it has to inculcate in the learners the right values. Gillian thinks that the tasks and activities devised to exploit literature in a language classroom should encourage students to explore these concerns and connect them with the struggle for a better society.

There is also the danger of introducing the wrong language model when integrating literature in an English Language classroom. This is because writers sometimes make use of special and unusual forms of language. This makes the language of literature different from other discourse genres. Although there are some critics who think that the language of literature does not constitute a particular type of language in itself, there is always the desire for writers to give their own personal touch to their works. Evaristo thinks that the use of letters to introduce words as in ‘M is for Mamanukwu’ and ‘P is for Papanukwu’ (103) does not add any stylistic presupposition to the work. Also, the constant repetition of words may seem an interesting style in literature but it does not appear to be a usual use of language. Unigwe uses structures like ‘that was big-big’ and ‘just because-because which happen to be ungrammatical. The danger here is that when structures like these are presented to learners as model language, they turn to use it out of the classroom. The teacher should help the learners to make a distinction between the writer’s style and the appropriate use of language. However, these innovations, which might be seen as bad English sometimes introduces learners, especially ESL/EFL learners into the different varieties of English in the world.

Although the text might be complex and too long for the lower levels, it provides good

excerpts for the teaching of reading comprehension. According to the English Language Program of Study from the Inspectorate General of Education, a text like this one falls under the module on “Culture” and that of “Family Life and Relationship”. This is because it treats cultural practices and also the relationship between members of a family. The aim of these modules is to guide and direct learning towards achieving a particular competence. Providing reading from an authentic text makes reading purposeful because learners can talk about what they have just read and relate it to their own experiences. More so, the use of relevant and appealing materials promotes involvement, student response, and an actual integration between language and literature. In this case, they will learn more about cultures and traditions through the text and will be able to adopt a spirit of discernment.

Before teaching reading comprehension, the teacher has to take into account some contributing previous competence. That is, what the learners already know about the subject matter of the chosen excerpt. This is done by providing some thinking activities that can trigger learners to respond to the text. From this, they can suggest what will be the lesson of the day. Contrary to what some educationists think, the first reading is done aloud to provide the model. It is during this reading that the teacher takes care of issues like stress and pronunciation. When the excerpt is made available to the students, it is crucial for the teacher to pre-teach the difficult words that can hinder understanding. Learners are then given while-reading and post-reading questions to answer after a second reading which is done silently. The practice and evaluation questions require students to give their own interpretation of the excerpt and answer questions related to the chosen excerpt. This is illustrated below with an excerpt from *Night Dancer* page 210-211 (Line 19-55).

Teacher's Name	Carole Momha Ateba
School	G.B.H.S. Mendong
Class	Form 1 SBEP
Number on Roll	61
Sex	Mixed
Average Age	12
Subject	English Language
Lesson	Reading Comprehension
Title of Module	Module 5: Discovering Multicultural Practices
Category of Action	Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing
Attitude	Awareness and tolerance
Time	8:25-9:20
Duration	55 Minutes
Date	Wednesday, 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2016
Expected Outcome	By the end of this lesson, students are expected to answer questions related to the text and talk about some aspects of culture freely.
Contributing Previous Knowledge	Students already have an idea about some aspects of culture and they can talk about cultures using appropriate vocabulary.
Teaching Aids	Picture, handouts, chalk board
References	Unigwe, Chika. <i>Night Dancer</i> . London: Jonathan Cape, 2012.  <i>Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

STAGES	INTER-ACTION	SUBJECT MATTER	PROCEDURE		RATIONALE
			TEACHER'S ACTIVITIES	STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES	
INTRODUCTION	<p><b>T-S</b></p> <p><b>S-T</b></p> <p><b>T-S</b></p>	<p><b>Lead- In task</b></p> <p>A picture of a man sending away his wife and daughters.</p> <p>-Study the picture on the board.</p> <p>-I want you to describe what you can see in the picture.</p> <p>Ans: There is a man chasing a woman and her daughters out of the house.</p> <p>Q-Who do you think these people are to the man?</p> <p>Ans: They are his family.</p> <p>Q- Why is he sending away the woman?</p> <p>Ans: He is sending her away because she has only girl children.</p> <p>Q-Is this scene permitted in your culture?</p> <p>Alternative answers</p> <p>Q-What other solution is there in your culture apart from sending the woman away?</p> <p>Ans: The man can get married to another wife.</p> <p>-Someone should propose what our lesson for today is.</p>	<p>The teacher puts up a picture.</p> <p>The teacher asks students to study the picture and describe it.</p> <p>The teacher asks some questions in order to lead the students into the lesson.</p> <p>The teacher asks students to propose a title for</p>	<p>The students study the picture and describe it.</p> <p>The students answer the teacher's questions.</p> <p>The students</p>	<p>This is done to prepare their minds for the new lesson.</p>

	<b>S-T</b>		the lesson.	propose a title for the lesson.	This is to make the students active participants.
<b>PRESENTATION</b>	<b>T-S</b>	<p align="center"><b>Reading Comprehension</b></p> <p>Excerpt from <i>Night Dancer</i>  Page 210-211 (line 19-55)  ‘What’s wrong?’ her mother asked, taking in her tears, her crazed look.</p> <p>And when Ezi told her, told of her world ending, her mother held her and said simply, ‘There is nothing the eyes would see that would ever make them bleed. You hear me? You scared me! I thought someone had died.’</p> <p>She held her daughter and let her cry. ‘Ndo. Ndo. Don’t cry. Your daughter needs you. Ndo. Stop.’</p>	The teacher writes the topic on the chalkboard and asks students to read it.	The students read the title and they copy it in their exercise books.	This is done to present the lesson.

	T-S	<p>‘I wish I was dead,’ Mma snorted through her tears.</p> <p>‘No, no. Don’t ever say that. Do not invoke death by careless words. Of course you’re hurt. I understand that. But that’s no reason to call death upon yourself, my daughter.’</p> <p>Mama! He slept with Rapu, Mama! Rapu my maid!’</p> <p>‘Yes. He’s betrayed you. Stop. ‘And she has his baby!’</p> <p>‘His son! His son! And that, my dear, makes all that differences. You do not want to anger him, ooo, do not anger him because at this moment you’re standing only with one leg inside the house. This Rapu has landed on both feet. You’re upset now. You’re angry but, my dear, after the anger, you’ll have to think of how to hang on to him.’</p> <p>Ezi wriggled out of her mother’s embrace. Her mother might have accepted that behaviour from her own husband but she was a modern woman. Times had moved on.</p> <p>‘Hang on to him? I’m leaving him. There’s no way I can stay.’</p> <p>Her mother laughed. ‘Leaving him to go where? That’s the problem with you girls with too much book</p>	The teacher distributes the handouts.	The students collect the handouts.	
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	T-S	<p>knowledge. Where will you go with a baby this young?</p> <p>‘I can. I can come back and live at home for a while until I find my feet again.</p> <p>‘But where is home? This, here, this is home. Do not make a laughing stock of us, please.</p> <p><b>Pre-teaching vocabulary</b></p> <p>Before we read, I would like us to look at the meaning of the following words.</p> <p>-bleed: to lose blood, especially from a wound or an injury</p> <p>-snorted: to make a loud sound by breathing air out noisily through the nose</p> <p>-invoke: mention or call for something</p> <p>-wiggled: to twist and turn your body or part of it with quick short movements</p> <p>I would like one student to stand up and read the text aloud.</p> <p><u>While-reading questions</u></p> <p>1-Where is the scene taking place?</p> <p>Ans: in Ezi’s husband’s house</p> <p>2-What aspect of culture is mentioned in the text?</p>	<p>The teacher pre-teaches vocabulary.</p> <p>The teacher writes some words on the board and asks</p>	<p>The students suggest the meaning of</p>	<p>To facilitate understanding</p>
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	S-T	<p>Ans: preference for male children -polygamy</p> <p>Read the text silently this time and answer the questions that follow.</p>	<p>students to suggest their meanings.</p> <p>The teacher writes some questions on the board.</p>	<p>the words.</p> <p>The students answer the questions.</p>	<p>To skin the text for gist.</p>
<b>GUIDED PRACTICE</b>	T-S  S-T	<p><b>Oral Exercise</b></p> <p><u>Answer the following questions with information from the text.</u></p> <p>1) In what way are modern women different from traditional women? -Traditional women accept their husband's infidelity while modern women do not.</p> <p>2) How is Ezi's character different from that of her mother? -Ezi is unforgiving and impulsive while her mother is forgiving and submissive.</p>	<p>The teacher puts up an exercise for students to do orally.</p> <p>The teacher guides the students and provides necessary feedback.</p>	<p>The students do the exercise orally.</p> <p>The students correct their answers.</p> <p>The students</p>	<p>This is to check understanding and analyse some literary aspects.</p> <p>To encourage student talk.</p>



		<p>3) Identify the proverb in the text and give its meaning.</p> <p>-‘There is nothing the eye would see that would ever make them bleed.’</p> <p>This means that there is no situation we can not handle.</p>	<p>The teacher writes the answers on the board.</p>	<p>copy the answers in their books.</p>	
<p><b>FREE PRACTICE</b></p>	<p>T-S</p> <p>S-S</p> <p>S-T</p>	<p><b>Exercise</b></p> <p><u>Do the following exercise in groups of three.</u></p> <p>1)What does Ezi’s mother mean when she says Ezi is standing on one leg, while Rapu has landed on both feet? Ex: This means that in case of any trouble caused by Ezi, Rapu is in a better position to stay in the house because she has given birth to a male child. This is because male children are valued in this culture more than female children.</p> <p>2) What according to your culture can make a husband prefer a wife to another? Ex: when she is the youngest, if she cooks better than the –when she cooks better than the others</p>	<p>The teacher writes an exercise on the chalkboard and asks students to work in groups.</p> <p>The teacher corrects with the help of students</p>	<p>The students follow instructions and work in groups.</p> <p>The students read their works.</p>	<p>. This is to encourage pair-tutoring and student-student talk.</p>



			answers on the board.  The teacher asks students to mark the books.	answers on the board.  The students mark the exercise books.	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	T-S	<b>Homework</b>  Write down five other ways through which your culture disfavours women.	The teacher writes the homework on the chalkboard.	The students copy the homework in their exercise books.	This is for continuous practice at home.

This chapter discussed the pedagogic relevance of the text. It looked at the text (being a literature text) as a good material for teaching the English Language in an ESL/EFL classroom. The chapter brought into the limelight the new approach in language teaching in Cameroon. The Competency-Based Approach is seen as an approach that advocates for the use of authentic material in the classroom. That is, taking real life situations into the classroom to prepare learners for future challenges. It further looked at how the writer's style and use of language can be useful in a language classroom to enable the learners acquire both linguistic and communicative competences. Finally, it proposed a sample lesson for the teaching of reading comprehension with an excerpt from *Night Dancer*.

## CONCLUSION

This research endeavour set out to exploit the notion of tradition and culture and the influence of culture contact in the lives of Chika Unigwe's characters. It portrayed how the introduction of a new culture in a society that already had its own culture led to a situation of cultural conflict. Based on the assumption that, understanding cultures is a base towards self-realisation, the work probed into how characters try to blend the two cultures in order to define the self. This work was informed by the Postcolonial Theory, Gender Theory, and New Historicism.

The three theories used in the work helped us to better understand the notion of culture. Through the use of the Postcolonial theory, tenets like marginality, otherness, and subalternity were used to interpret the influence of traditional and modern cultures on characters. The Postcolonial theory claimed that traditional cultures have been given a second-class position by the colonisers. Characters like Mma and Ezi who try to emulate the western culture are treated as the "other" by those who valorise the native culture and traditions. This theory calls for the people to reclaim their lost identity. The Gender theory talked of interpreting cultures base on the context and location of these cultures. This theory also provided the platform in which the male and female genders are seen in the different cultures, depending on the predetermined gender roles. This orchestrates the woman to reassert herself by breaking free from cultural chains that prevent her from attaining her full potentials. The use of New Historicism in this work highlighted the importance of going back to the history of Nigeria in order to understand why cultures with different ideologies exist in the same context.

From a New Historicism perspective, we discovered that the modern culture (Western culture) was introduced in Nigeria through colonisation. Before colonisation, Nigeria had the Igbos and the Hausas with similar cultures, but for religion which created a rift between them. The western culture was introduced and implemented in order to dominate the natives. Western education was used as a means to brainwash the natives. This led to the educated trying to deviate from their culture in favour of a foreign culture. In the discussion, we also realised that imperialism brought about conflicts and separation. These conflicts include that between the different social and educational status, families and generational conflict.

The work provided different interpretations of the notion of culture and tradition. We discovered that the term culture which came into existence in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe has been

given different interpretations over the years. Although critics and writers have defined it in different ways, they all accept the fact that culture entails a set of rules that governs the lives of people in a particular context. This made us to match it with tradition. Colonisation and Eurocentricism influenced the value given to some cultures which are considered inferior by western cultures. Also, globalisation has been introduced as a means to eradicate all native cultures and to group the world into a single village with the same political and economic ambitions. This has led to the loss of most indigenous cultural values. For Africans to maintain the cultural values they have inherited from their ancestors, writers should produce authentic texts that valorise the beauty of the orient.

It was also realized that, most conflicts caused by cultures with conflicting ideologies results from the inability to discern cultures. Above all, characters in *Night Dancer* fail to judge wisely the different cultures in Nigeria. Those who are glued to the traditional ways of life find it difficult to see anything beyond that and vice versa. Characters suffer different forms of marginalisation because they fail to conform to some cultural norms. Some aspects like love, marriage, parenthood, education, and social ties are understood differently in both cultures. This makes some characters to prefer modern culture over traditional culture because they think later has a lot of constrains, especially for women. However, we equally found out that each culture has its shortcomings, and it will be better for people to get what is good in each culture.

The work further delved into the issue of identity and characters' struggle to the re-invention of the self. Identity in the Nigerian context is seen as who a person really is, and this is determined by a person's background. The failure to reconcile the past and the present leads to identity crisis. This situation is caused by the society, school and the home because they help in the definition of the individual. The way a person is defined also depends on the individual's sex. Women find it more difficult to define the self than men because they are either identified as daughters or wives. This results to alienation whereby the individual either alienates himself from others or is avoided by those around him. Thus, the best way for Africans to define themselves is by not letting others define them. They have to do this by returning to their roots and asserting their individual culture and tradition.

*Night Dancer* was discussed as a relevant and authentic material in teaching the English Language to ESL/EFL learners. This is because the Competency-Based Approach which has been introduced as the new approach in language teaching in Cameroon places the learners at the centre of learning. Language learning has progressed from the teaching of grammatical and

lexical items to teaching competences. The novel was seen as an interesting material, not only because of its style and use of language, but also because it treats contemporary themes. However, it was discovered that the text can also provide wrong language models if the distinction between the writer's style and conventional usage is not made clear to learners. Also, we found out that a text like *Night Dancer* can be used to bridge cultural barriers in a language classroom.

By way of contributing to scholarship, the work has x-rayed the influence of culture clash on the postcolonial mind. It has also highlighted the problem of acculturation and hybridity, and concluded that positive hybridity is a solution to identity problems caused by conflicting cultural ideologies. Also, it called for people to develop the spirit of tolerance so that every member of the society can feel at home where he or she is.

Finally, it is appropriate to say that the present work has not explored every aspect of the novel. Thus, the novel gives room for other researchers to look at aspects like parenthood in Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*.

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