**Criticism (6)**

**Fourth Year**

This is a chapter of a book entitled *The Empire Writes Back*. It is about the post colonial writings of the margins or the colonized people. The centre is England or Europe, and the margins are in Africa, Australia or India. It is the opposite of the two other articles. The other articles are writing about how the center is writing about the colonized people. In this article the colonized people are writing about themselves.

The language is power. When you use a certain language you make it more powerful. The more you are using a language, the more power you are giving this language.

The people, who come from the margins can choose, either write in their language, or they write in English because, many people know how to read English. If I write in the English language, I am going to be read by a large number of people.

This article is written in the language of the centre or the metropolis; the English language or the metropolitan English or imperial English (the English of the empire) or central English (coming from the centre).

The writers, who write in the English language, make this choice because they want people to read them, but when they do this, they make the English stronger and more powerful, although they want to decrease the power of the English and make it weaker.

Those writers say that we will take the English, to be understood by many people, but we will not choose it as it is, we will change it to something they call english with small e.

The English is the language of the centre, but they will write in the english which is the English language that people can read but it is different from the English of the metropolis. It is still English but it is a different sort of language.

The English with E is only one, the English of the metropolis, but the English with e, there are many, because you can have something in india, and Australia, Africa and many other places, so we are talking about englishes.

There is a double usage here; you are making use of the sameness of English as they write in the English language, and also they are making use of the difference of English, as those who write from the margins like Chinua Achebe, you will find that their English is different, the way of having the sentence structure is a bite different, in the middle of the sentence, he is using untranslated words, taking from the language of his own people and he does not give us the meaning of the word and we suppose to guess the meaning from the content of the topic. Sometimes while he is writing in English, he is writing some kind of fairy tales, the proverbs, or songs taken from his own culture. Actually he wants you to feel that his english is different from the other English of the center. He wants you to feel that it is a different novel. It is the same because it is in English but it is different because the English in which it is written is not the same one that is used by the English writers or the central writers.

It is a very clever tool, even Achebe said the language of my people and Nigeria itself, does not have one language; as there are many tribes and each tribe has it is own language. Achebe`s tribe is called the Igbo. He said if I write in the language of my tribe, then nobody will read me except the Igbo even the other Nigerians will not be able to read me, so my readers will be very limited. So he said , I make use of the English of the colonizers but I will not use it as it is, because if I used it like it is, I will make it more stronger, so I will take it and use it with a difference and make it my own english, the one that carries the culture of my own people, and the one that speaks about the experience of Nigeria under the British empire.

There are two terms: abrogation, appropriation.

*Abrogation* is *the refuse or denying the English language of the centre and its superiority.* You said that the language of the centre is not better than my language and that that English is not more correct than the english.

*Appropriation*: totake the English language of the centre and make it yours, and deal with it in any way you like to reflect your own experience. So you are appropriating it and saying that it is mine. you change it from the English to the english to reflect your own experience. They change the structure of the sentence, the grammar rules, the vocabulary, the meaning of the words, and we can change anything in it because it is mine.

The two processes occur in post colonial writings. Abrogation comes first, then after it appropriation comes.

Re-placing language= it is hyphenated because he want to focus that we are taking the English from one place which is England for example, and we are putting it in another place. Here he means the geographical place or the location. You take from England and put it in Africa or Australia or any other place.

*Textual strategies in post colonial writings*= he is talking about the strategies. Abrogation and appropriation are textual strategies.

This what the writers are doing when they are writing from the margins, they are doing abrogation and appropriation.

*“The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post colonial writing, defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place.”*

*\* Language as a medium of power.*

\* I go and seize and take the language of the centre then I replace it in another place to reflect the experience of the colonized people. This is the topic of the chapter.

*“There are two distinct processes by which it does this. The first, the abrogation or denial of the privilege of ‘English’ involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication.”*

The first process or strategy is abrogation; you deny the privilege of the English of the centre, saying you are not better than me. Then you take it and replace it and make it your own medium of power.

*“The second, the appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre, the process of capturing and remolding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege.”*

He is repeating different words with the same meaning.

*Seizing or capturing* is the same thing. You seize something or make it your own,.

Remolding or reconstitution or reshaping= have the same meaning. You take something and make it new in a different shape.

Then he is going about the first step abrogation:

*“Abrogation is a refusal of categories of the imperial culture, its esthetics, it elluser standard or normated or correct usage and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning inscribed in the words”.*

If I abrogate something= I refuse that the English language is the only correct way of using English.

*“It is a vital moment in the de-colonizing of the language and in the writing of the english but without the process of appropriation, the moment of abrogation may not extend beyond a reversal of the assumptions of privilege, the normal and correct inscription, all of which can be simply taken over and maintained by the new usage.”*

He says abrogation is a very important moment. It is like a moment not an extended time. I choose to write in English but I refuse the English.

*Abrogation is necessary but not enough*= Abrogation is an essential and important moment but it is not enough. It is an initial or a primary moment or a first step when you want to refuse English and to have your own english language, but it is not enough. So, you have to follow it by the process of appropriation, which is a long process.

Then he will give us very interesting definitions about appropriations.

*“Appropriation is the process by which the language is taken and made to bare the burden of one`s own cultural experience.”*

For example: you are Nigerian like Achebe. You have a cultural experience in Nigeria, the culture of Igbo people but you take the English language and appropriated and used it to bare or carry the burden of your experience, as if the experience is the burden (something heavy) that you have to be carrying, but you will take the English language and change it into the other english language. Then you tell the English language that you are going to carry the bare and carry the weight of my experience.

\* Another definition by an Indian critic called old Raga ray.

*“To appropriate means to convey in a language that it is not one`s own, the spirit that is one`s own.”*

Appropriation means to take a language that it is not your own, such as the English language, and use it to convey or communicate or carry to your readers the spirit and the culture that are your own. Even if you are perfect in English but it is not your mother tongue/ it is a second language, like Achebe, but you do not use the perfect English, I want the people who read my novel, to know that it is a novel of different experience that I use as a tool or instrument to carry my cultural experience, I want the reader to know about it, so I change that language.

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*Practice and theory:*

\* They seem to be a bite opposite. In general the theory comes first then the practice.

\* But in the post colonial marginal writings, the theory does not come first, but it is the practice that comes first.

For example, the practice comes first, as every talented writer from any place of the margins and wants to use English and he abrogate the superiority of the English and they want to have another english and appropriate it and make it carry the burdens. Then a critic comes read the practice or the writings of all those talented writer and he discovers the theory behind these writings.

*“It is in the practice of post colonial writing, rather than in the development of linguistics theories, that the abrogation of authenticity and Athens most often takes place.”*

There is not a theory telling you if you want to abrogate do this, and if you want to appropriate do that, but it is the practice that comes first and then we study what they are doing.

*“Post colonial writing abrogates the privilege centrality of English by using language to signify difference while employing the sameness which allows it to be understood*.”

* *The sameness and the difference:*

The sameness, because everybody who knows English can read them, and they are using the difference because their english is different from the English that people use, because the english of the post colonial writers reflect their own culture.

* *How it is different?*

It is different in many ways,

1: sometimes he uses untranslated and strange words from his own culture; he wants you to guess the meaning of the word from the context.

2: By using difficult words from his own culture and giving their meaning in the English language in the glossary.

So he can make us feel the difference by using any of these two ways.

\* *Power words* = the words that are in the middle of the English language. They weaken the English language and empower the new english language and the new culture.

\* *The power syntax:*

Some of the sentences have a syntax or a grammar structure which is different from the ordinary own. This syntax is called power syntax as it makes us feel that there is not one correct grammar, but there are a number of correct grammars. For example the Igbo or Indian people can have their own syntax and they can reflect it in English.

\* *Power rhythm:*

I am reading a novel, but sometimes I feel that there is a rhythm. He sometimes wants to reflect the African drum sound and he wants you to fell the rhythm of his own culture.

\*\* There things; power word, power syntax and power rhythm, help to empower or to add to the power of the marginal culture and to decrease the power of the metropolitan or central culture.

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*“Power words, power syntax and power rhythm, which reproduce the culture by some processes of embodiment.”*

These words embody the culture of the marginal places.

*“Such language use seems to be keeping faith with the local culture and transporting it into the new medium.”*

This means I take the local culture of the Igbo and use it in a new medium which is the English, but my culture is carried there.

* *The function of the untranslated words:*

*“Such uses of language as untranslated words do have an important function in inscribing difference.”*

This means that when I am using the untranslated words, the reader feels that this is a different novel, it is about a different culture, and about a different experience.

*“They signify a certain cultural experience and they cannot cop to reproduce it, but with difference is validated by the new situation.”*

Can I totally convey the Igbo culture, for example, in my writings through using the power words or the untranslated words?

No, because I am using a foreign language, even though it is english but it is not Igbo, but it is English. So I will not be able totally to convey that culture but I will make the reader feel the strangeness or the difference.

For example, if Achebe cannot give the other people who do not know Igbo, my whole experience as it is, then at least I can try and use an english and put the power words, syntax and rhythm and they can feel the strange experience, so they can know something about my culture.

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* *Appropriation and the strategies of appropriation:*

*“Strategies of appropriation then seize the language, replace it in a specific cultural location had yet maintain the integrity of that otherness which historically has been employed to keep the post colonial at the margins of power of authenticity and even of reality itself.”*

He says that historically, if you goes back to the eighteenth and the nineteenth century at the great times of empire, the writers of empire or the centre were putting the other people at the margins of everything: the margins of reality, they are at the centre of the earth and they are at the margins of the earth, they are at the centre of the power and we are at the margins of power, so we are powerful and you are very weak. You are the margins of writings and language as, you do not know how to write and nobody is reading you, but we are writing you.

So the central writers put themselves in the centre and all the rest of the world are at the margins.

\* Now, when you are reversing this and abrogating and appropriating, this means that you are saying no, we do not need to be the margins. We can be the side of power and say our own story and we can preserve our otherness and differences. We are not trying to imitate you or to be like you, we are Nigerians and you are English but even this does not mean that we are marginal. If you imitate someone, you are no further equal.

The post colonial writers of Africa and Asia and the rest of the colonized world did not want to be imitators but they want to place themselves at the centre when they are writing a story and they want to preserve their otherness. We are different, but we are equal.

Presentation:

* The presentation includes Chenua Achebe as an author his style, his point of view, his language, plot and the role of Christian missionaries.

He was born in 1930. He is a Nigerian novelist, poet, professor and critic. He is best known for his first novel and magnum opus *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which is the most widely read book in modern African literature.

He became fascinated with religion and the tradition African culture. He began writing story as a university student. After graduation he worked for Nigerian Broadcasting service then he moved to Lagos (the capital of Nigeria). He became worldwide known for his ***Things Fall Apart***. His name was Albert Chinua Achebe when he converted to Christianity. The missionary effort converted him to Christianity. He left his African religion and became a Christian as a young boy. His father and his mother were not Christians and they were living with him in the same place. Chinua is the African name and Albert is the Christian name.

He writes his novels in English. He is also a critic. He was writing criticism about Heart of Darkness, and he considered Conrad as a racist, the one who discriminates between black and white. He was one of those who attacked Conrad calling him as a bloody racist.

Achebe`s novels focused on the traditions of the Igbo society. His style relies heavily on the Igbo oral tradition. He used folk stories, songs and proverbs as part of the novel to show the Igbo culture (appropriation).

He also published a number of short stories judging book and essay collections. He worked as a professor in the United States.

***His style:***

His style is divided into oral tradition and the use of English.

\*\* He uses oral tradition as part of his style when he writes a novel. He writes in different kind of English.

Oral= his people of Igbo had a great oral tradition by word of mouth, not written. As there was no any written texts, English people in England says that they are savages. They do not have any novels or plays or anything written.

The interesting story about the God of earth and the God of sky, one of them is male and the other is female.

\*\* The second part of his style is his own english after he changed the English of the centre.

***The plot:***

The novel is written in three parts. Each part is significant and different from each other. The first part is the longest. It is before the arrival of the English peoples. He wants to show us that they had a culture before the English arrival.

* The first part took place in okonkwo`s village.

We can consider the names of the places and characters as power words; such as okonkwo and umuofia, as they are different from the ordinary English known.

The audience are introduced to the main character who is the okonkwo, who is well respected, then to other characters are introduced such as okonkow`s families and his friends. Then he shows the everyday life of the Ibgo and their spiritual customs that the Igbo people follow. In this section okonwo accidently kills a man and exiled from the village for a period of seven years.

The first part of the story is important as it shows how important and respected okonkwo but also, he makes mistakes in life that he has to pay the price of for committing them.

The first part is also significant, it leads to okonkwo leaves the village.

This novel is written at the moment of colonization when the English arrived to and ruled Nigeria. He describes to you how life was before they came, and how when they came, they disturbed everything and things fell apart, and how in the end, he is so hopeless that he commit suicide.

The longest part is the first one before their arrival, why it is longer? Because he wants to prove something and to say we are a people of culture and we have our own laws and customs but they are different from the laws of England and that does not mean that we are savages.

We also have democracy but it is different from this of England.

Europe was saying that they are animals and they savages who eat human flesh, here Achebe shows the opposite saying that we are not only a nation with our laws but we are even a democratic nation. We do not have one ruler but a group of rulers. Even if we do not know the meaning of the word democracy but we are practicing it in our lives.

He is respected and in the novel, he tells you that he is not the son of the great man or the leader, but his father had many faults and he does not have very good terms with his father. It is because the okonkwo himself was great, he can reach the power. The word used for this is meritocracy: it is a country where people are not judging you because you are the relative of so and so, no, they are judging you according who you are, if you are good, you can reach the top most place.

Meritocracy comes from the word merit.

May be there are many democratic countries, but meritocracies are very rare and the society of the Igbo is one of those rare places. Here he is drawing a completely different picture.

* The second part took place in Ezeuda, his mother`s village, where he is spending his seven years exile. It is when the Europeans arrivals and the tension rise.

The people were living peacefully and then the English suddenly arrived and tensions arising everywhere. They do not arrive by weapons and arms, but they arrived with the missionaries. The first English people who arrive there were people of religion. The other Igbo people were saying they are very strange, because of their white skin and thought that they are cannibals or ghosts. Each race is thinking this about the other.

* The third part: okonkwo and his family returns to Umuofia. Many things have changed by the arrival of the whites men, many people have joined the Christianity, and the word government was set up. Okonkwo tried to struggle against the white men and asks his village to stand up for themselves. He killed one of the messengers, because he thinks that his village will be led by him and attacked the others, however they simply watch and let the other messengers escaped. Okonkwo feels desperate and finally hanged himself.

This part is significant because it is the story climax.

\* The story is related to colonization at the moment.

\* The colonizers always say we build and bring culture, the novelist say the opposite. They break the system of the people, the civilization and the culture. All these things fell apart when the British arrived.

The story is like the tragedies and the downfall of the tragic hero. If any part of these three parts missing, the story would not be as powerful as it is now.

* ***Diction: the language in the novel:***

Achebe says in one of his critical essays that language is a weapon and we are using this weapon when we write. I have to use this weapon which is the English language but I can change it.

\* He is referring to the many myths in the novel which have a purpose. The novel itself is like a modern myth.

\* He uses the English language to infiltrating the ranks of the enemy. I am using their own language and from inside I destroy and change it, make it another english.

\* This metaphor as if we are in two armies.

\* He says “it does not matter what language you write in, as long as you write it good.

\* When okonkwo was still young, one of his playmates tells him that his father is agabala. We are reading this and we do not know it, then he explains it as a man with no title.

\* At the human level, it is very interesting. A father and his son and how there is relations between them. Even okonkwo has his own sons and his relations with his son were very interesting.

The novel tells you about the whole colonial situation.

* ***Different native sayings or proverbs:***

There are people who care about clearness. We have a proverb about if a child washed his hands, he will eat with kings as long as his hands are clean. Also they are using it metaphorically; like to wash your hands of someone= to have nothing to do with him. If I just clean my father and become a new man, I will be judged on my own merits.

\* Nigeria can be equal to Britain if they just remove the corruption and reform themselves.

\* He also uses a proverb; a man that makes troubles for others, also makes troubles for himself. Through the use of proverbs, he is providing evidences that we have religion, morals, customs and a whole civilization.

\* Achebe was the first to develop an African style of writing.

\* Through his novel things fall apart, he was called the father of African literature. He used his literature as a tool to show the Europeans that they are wrong.

\* Through this novel Achebe highlights the influence of missionary on the pre- colonial Africa. To embark the question whether it is justified to one culture to impose their beliefs upon another just because they have a different morals and values?

\* The other culture was full of traditions, religion, before the missionaries came to convert them to Christianity, yet they suffered from the stereotype to be savages.

\* The Christian missionaries overlook that culture richness, believed that they are morally superior to the native people. It is not clear that the missionaries motives were depending on lands. They resist and trying to transform the Igbo people to something more European is the reason that things fall apart. They are not here to build or improve the Igbo civilization, but they fake this reason.

Achebe`s motivation in many of his novels is to convince his readers that there were values on the Africans civilization long before the missionaries come to save them.

He is troubled by Africa is being depicted as the heart of darkness as there is no civilization.

\* The missionary has the concept of being superior and the Africans are inferior, they believe that they can go to a country and erase everything the build it as a new country to imitate the western style. This is actually is not practical as it leads to the destroying of the country.

\* In this novel, he asks the reader to decide whether the missionaries benefited Africa and its people or have a bad effect on African culture.

\* You should not put European morals as the standard and you measure everyone and everything by this standard.

\* Missionaries have both secular and non secular reasons for converting the Igbo people to Christians.

**End …**