MODULATIONS OF HYBRIDITY IN ABODUNRIN’S *IT WOULD TAKE TIME: A CONVERSATION WITH LIVING ANCESTORS; BRATHWAITE’S MASKS, NGUGI’S MATIGARI AND MVONA’S AN ARROW FROM MARAKA*

by

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DEDICATION

For you the living and the dead: Steria, Faith and Nyaplate, and Pyton, Anwell, Mama Nyasoko, Dada H. E. Zimba and Watson Bobby, respectively.
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ABSTRACT

In this study I identify and argue for hybridity as a common feature in four postcolonial texts, namely Femi Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time*, Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s *Masks*, Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Matigari* and Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka*. The study advances that when two or more cultures encounter one another hybridity affects the new emergent culture socially, linguistically, historically and politically. Employing Homi Bhabha’s interrelated terms, notably ambivalence, mimicry, liminality, the third space, in-between space and interstitial space—all of which gesture towards the concept of hybridity, the study explains the emergence of corresponding and equally complex identities in the postcolonial world. With a specific reference to Africa, the study establishes that postcolonial discourse is not as transparent because hybridity does not necessarily mean coming up with completely new aspects of Africa but it implies coming up with mixed cultures since different histories and cultures affect each other in order to come up with a new brand. As such the study concludes that hybridity is opposed to cultural purity and the assumed status quo. In this dissertation I therefore argue for hybridity as a solution to identity crisis because the new personality displays different traces which, in the words of Homi Bhabha, are called “transcultural identities” and such a plurality of identities leads to the production of hybrid personalities and cultures. Such transcultural forms within the contact zone, which Bhabha calls the “in-between space,” carry the burden and meaning of the new cultures that emerge in the postcolonial condition.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Bill Ashcroft et al (1989) have observed perceptively that “[m]ore than three quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism” (p. 1). This state of affairs has spawned all manners of views and perceptions amongst the people who inhabit the formerly colonized world, particularly with regard to their current cultures and identities. Considering that “[l]iterature offers one of the most important ways in which these new perceptions of people are expressed” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 1), this study seeks to examine the complexities of identity reflected in the following postcolonial texts: Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, Brathwaite’s *Masks*, Ngugi’s *Matigari* and Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka*. Though written at different times, it is argued here that the texts being examined display common characteristics not just across genres but also across space and time.

Apart from showcasing historical perspectives of the African landscape, Chapter Two which is centred on Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* displays angry outbursts against sell-outs and colonialists. These outbursts ultimately lead to the creation of peculiar experiences that have never been seen before in print - that rebuke those who had all along been taking their privileged position for granted. It seems that with the publication of *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* in 1980, Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike hoped that many scholars and theorists would embark on their self-discovery by freeing themselves from Eurocentric approaches of writing literary works in order to reclaim the past. *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* could be viewed as one of the texts borne out of such agitation.
for self-discovery and freedom because it represents poetry of protest against social, cultural, economic, and political oppression at family, village, national and international level.

The epic entitled *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* starts with an introductory essay and epigraphs that announce significance of the text to be born. The epigraphs the author has included at the beginning of the introductory essay serve to elucidate the fact that Africans were not backward and primitive as claimed by some critics. The persona feels that the West deliberately exaggerates the African conflicts for their own motives.

Considering the coexistence of different languages in the epic, Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time* could be viewed as a deliberate effort to do away with the colonizers’ language. Since, in some sections, the whole stanza is in vernacular language, it becomes possible that the two languages are used interchangeably, hence bringing the colonized language at equal footing with the colonizer’s language. Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time*, as a text, shows both features of the colonizer and the colonized. Apart from the content and language in which the text is written, the form or style of the text also shows ambivalent characteristics; it has features of a prose fiction, drama and poetry. This ambivalence explains why Raji argues that Abodunrin’s text has “blurred boundaries” (2002: 104).

Abodunrin argues that “*It Would Take Time* is engaged in what should be the simultaneous act of eliciting from history, mythology, and literature, for the benefit of both genuine aliens and alienated Africans” (2002: 16). For example, in the same epic, the poet includes some historical
figures such as C L R James, Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Cheikh Anta Diop, Walter Rodney, Malik Yusufu El-Shabbaz, and Martin Luther-King Jr because they played a great role in initiating the decolonization process of Africans in Africa as well as in the Diaspora. Despite the wonderful literary works and movements initiated by the named great sons of Africa, the epic records that Africans remain not confident in themselves. This lack of confidence explains why the persona acknowledges that it would take time for poets to discover their shortfalls. According to him, poets are not creative enough to address the African problems that have been marred by foreign ideologies.

Basically, Chapter Three deals with modulations of hybridity in Brathwaite’s *Masks*. Through *Masks*, Brathwaite retells the Caribbean story from the time of colonial intrusion to the time of the publication of the volume. The text also epitomises linguistic plurality and identity crises. Mostly, the poet uses poetry to rewrite their history based on his theory that is encapsulated in *History of the Voice*. This approach by both Abodunrin and Brathwaite would lead to political and historical hybridity because these writers mix the native sentiments with that of the new order.

Brathwaite’s *Masks* is divided into five sections, namely “Libation”, “Path-finders”, “Limits”, “The Return”, and “Crossing the River”. “Libation”, a reference to the cultural act or prayer discusses the drums involved in the prayers and kingdoms connected with ‘the prayers to masks’. “Path-finders” is the second section in *Masks* in which the persona seeks his/her roots. This section has the following poems: “Mmenson,” “Axum,” “Ougadougou,” “Chad,” “Timbuktu,” and
“Volta” which deal with a cross section of acts as the persona searches for his/her roots. For example, “Mmenson” is a “mobilization campaign” in readiness for the search of his/her roots.

The third section is entitled “Limits”. In this section, poems show that now the “path-finder’ has found his roots. This section is an exposition of different physical features of the persona’s home. For example, the first poem in “Limits”, “The Forest,” is an exposition of the green vegetation while “The White River”, the fourth poem in “Limits,” seems to be referring to a huge body of water that separates Africa from the Caribbean. After mentioning several features in the Caribbean Islands that have been given African names, it appears the persona starts moving towards Africa until he is barred from continuing this journey by The White River, a reference to the Atlantic Ocean, whose horizons are inaccessible.

“The Return”, the fourth section in Masks, is a collection of poems that discuss the physical features in this part of Africa. Apart from discussing Takoradi, a port in Ghana, the first poem in this section, “The New Ships” encapsulates what happened to many Africans who attempted to come back to Africa.

Just like Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time, Brathwaite’s Masks also blurs the boundaries between genres as a means of resisting Western definitions of a poem, a play or a short story. It should also be understood that a mask is like a veil. In the same way, Brathwaite’s Masks evokes a mental picture of a veiled being that does not show his true colours. Mask therefore shows ambivalent traits of the persona. Similar to Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors, a text written in a unique style using a quasi-foreign language, Brathwaite’s Masks
presents ideological protest against poor portrayal of Africans and African culture. In the following paragraphs, it will be shown that writing in a different way creates a new forum and breaks new grounds for the creation of new texts with a new voice, leading to the creation of hybrid cultures that belongs to the “in-between” spaces.

Brathwaite’s *Masks*, like literary works of the Black Arts movements, is not an art work for the sake of art. It is meant to be used for revolutionary purposes. To borrow Maulana Karenga’s words, literary works of the Black Arts movements were meant to be functional, collective and committing. Just like artists of the Black Arts movements, Brathwaite turned to Africa for inspiration and a sense of black origins in which to construct “the way of the world” (Gates Jr & McKay, 1997: 1797). Unfortunately, Brathwaite experienced the same alienation when he came and worked in Africa for some time. He discovered that he did not fit well among the Africans because the people he found in Africa had changed in cultural orientations. Likewise, he has also changed in many ways because of his long period of time spent in the Diaspora.

Chapter Four discusses shades of hybridity in Ngugi’s *Matigari*. Ngugi wrote *Matigari* in 1987 during independence period. The storyline traces Matigari, one of the patriots who had been fighting settler Howard Williams and John Boy in the bush. After years of struggles and fighting in the forests, Matigari finally decides to go back home. Firstly, he hides his AK 47 and other weapons (pistol and belt of bullets) near a huge mugumo tree. He tears a strip of bark from a tree and girds himself with a belt of peace. He intends to go back to his house and rebuild his home. Although Matigari has defeated the colonialists, things have not really changed. When he reaches
home he finds that his house has been occupied by the colonialist’s son and his loyalists. Furthermore, his home is polarized: the group that has assumed superior status oppresses the other. Some of the notable personalities in the superior group include the state president, His Excellency Ole Excellence; the minister for Truth and Justice; settler Howard Williams’ son, Robert Williams; John Boy’s son, John Boy Jr; and the police. The oppressed group includes Muriuki and other street urchins, Ngaruro wa Kiriro and other factory workers, and Guthera. Through this novel, Ngugi satirizes disillusionment with independence. Most characters in the leadership positions are corrupted by power and become so selfish that they do not consider the plight of the marginalized. Matigari’s attempts to take over the ownership of the house leads to his imprisonment. His desire to seek truth and justice is frustrated by the institutions and individuals that have been instituted to uphold truth and justice.

The ruling elites in the country are Black Kenyans but they are as oppressive as the former colonialists. This shows that Ngugi’s *Matigari* is a mirror of an independent Kenya with a lot of socio-economic problems caused by hybrid leaders. Situated within the cultural context of independent Kenya, Ngugi’s *Matigari* displays characters that can speak more than one language. The inclusion of radio announcements in the narration shows that the author has adopted a different “flashback style” that moves the story. This shows that the novel displays a variety of stylistic, linguistic, cultural, political and socio-economic aspects.

Characters in Matigari are hybrids of Western civilization and African culture due to colonial intrusion. [They] “represent that ambivalent turn of the discriminated subjects into the terrifying,
exorbitant objects of paranoid classification – a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority” (Bhabha, 1994: 113). For example, as an ambivalent character, Matigari represents disillusioned Kenyans who felt cheated after driving out the colonialists.

Chapter Five discusses modulations of hybridity based on *An Arrow from Maraka*, one of the most recent novels written by Sambalikagwa Mvona. The novel traces a series of actions that follow a homicide that is committed at the very beginning of the novel. Bwan’noni Kunde sends Mayaka Kandulu to kill Nomusa’s husband, a convict serving his jail term at Maula Prison. Kunde would like to have Nomusa’s husband eliminated so that he should be moving out with the convict’s wife freely. The story gets more complicated as two dwarfs secretly kill Kunde before he could meet Kandulu to give the latter the remaining balance for a job well done on Nomusa’s husband. As the search for the killers of Kunde and the prisoner is launched, Mwene Masamba, Senior Commissioner of Prisons and Wamwayi Mulaha, Commissioner of Police in-charge of Homicide Department could not agree on inquiries about Kunde’s death because Masamba accuses Mulaha of being not grateful since Kunde has contributed a lot to the police reforms and promotions.

As the homicide department continues with inquiries into circumstances surrounding the two deaths, Mulaha and the chief telephone operator of the Post Office Exchange Control are kidnapped by the same mysterious dwarfs. Kandulu is arrested but is mysteriously killed in the police cell before he could testify about the two deaths. At the same time, Masamba receives two anonymous letters, the first one warning him about the impending danger and the other one calling him to go to Lake Mtunduwatha to get wealth. As he sets on the journey to get wealth, he finds himself in Mtunduwatha Town where he puts up for a night.
Both Masamba and Mulaha from the same duty station are missing from their work place, causing a lot of fear and speculation among the people of Lipeto City. Mysterious deaths and disappearance of senior police officers force the police to hunt for the thugs that are believed to be behind such unrests. Meanwhile, it has been learnt that the criminals that have moved out of Lipeto City and have relocated to the Eastern Region town so the police launch a serious search for the two dwarfs in Mtunduwatha Town. The police manage to locate the thugs and their hostages: Mulaha and the Chief Exchange Officer. Masamba is still in the same town but on a different mission: to get wealth from Maraka, a lake island. After several struggles and hardships Masamba manages to reach Maraka. While in Maraka Kingdom, he marries the only Chief’s daughter, Nana. Masamba goes back to Lipeto with Nana as his wife and the latter becomes the president of The United Kingdom of Lipeto and Maraka.

Though written in 2011, the novel displays hybrid traits similar to those identified in Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, Brathwaite’s *Masks*, and Ngugi’s *Matigari*. For example, in *An Arrow from Maraka*, the author has artistically combined several aspects as such the text displays linguistic, cultural, racial, political and stylistic hybridity through code-switching, code-mixing, the mixing of cultural practices and use of substandard varieties side by side with standard varieties.

**Theoretical Framework**
The study revolves around the postcolonial concept of hybridity in its variation or modulations. The core of my argument is that the various representations of identity in the texts under study points to the hybrid nature of identity or identities in the postcolonial world. Thus, among other things, the study demonstrates that the notion of hybridity (in its various modulations) is a common thread which runs through the chosen texts under study. According to Croft and Cross, “[postcolonial literatures] are inevitably complex mixtures” (2000:39) such that “[a] ‘pure’ form of the original culture cannot be recreated just as the influence of the power that has dominated it cannot be entirely erased” (ibid: 39). Croft and Cross shows that hybridity blurs seeming boundaries between cultures. Furthermore, postcolonial literatures are known by context, writer’s position and viewpoint, identity and power relations, and sometimes they may be written in “many varieties and non-standard forms of English” (Croft and Cross, 2000: 39). Such issues announce the complex nature of hybrid texts.

Hybridity as a theoretical term has been defined by different scholars in different ways. And these scholars have changed their views on the definition of the term so considerably that the concept of hybridity seems elusive and complicated. I am aware that hybridity has changed its meaning several times. Some of the variations of the term shall be analysed in the following paragraphs but the discussion does not exhaust all facets of the definition. In this research, I will limit my explanation of the term hybridity to designate ‘a characteristic feature of postcolonial literature’ as put forward by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2000 & 1989) and other contemporary postcolonial theorists.
Hybridity, one of the major characteristics or enduring features of postcolonial literature, by definition, “refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft et al, 2000: 118). Due to the complexity of hybridity, Bhabha argues:

Cultures come to be represented by virtue of the processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are very vicariously addressed to – through – an Other. This erases any essentialist claims for the inherent authenticity or purity of cultures ...” (1994: 58).

Here, Bhabha means that there is no fixed culture; the product of the resultant culture is full of features of other cultures. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity is based on Bakhtin’s concept of hybridization which is defined as follows:

It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consiousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor (Holquist, 1981: 358).

For Bakhtin, hybridity delineates the way in which language, even within a single sentence, can be double-voiced. Ashcroft et al reveal that “hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, and racial, [just to mention a few]” (2000: 118). Ashcroft et al add that “Linguistic examples include pidgin and creole languages” (2000: 118). Hybridity could also be either organic or intentional. For example, Bakhtin argues that Black cultural politics both organic and intentional
hybridization, processes of emerging and of dialogization of ethnic and cultural differences set critically against each other. Hybridization, like creolization, involves mixing different languages. The creation of a new form which can be set against the old form, of which it is partly made up, is a raceless disorder. The new entity does not produce any new stable form but rather something closer to Bhabha’s restless, uneasy, interstitial hybridity.

Here, it implies that hybridity involves subversion of forms; the old forms are replaced by the new and yet the new one is not completely new but a mixture of old and new. Furthermore, hybridity implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things, grafting them into one entity, hence making difference into sameness. Hybridity should therefore be described as the joining of two distinct things into one so that it becomes impossible for the eye to points out or to detect different aspects that have been used to form the new entity.

Considering the fact that language is a subtle tool through which people appreciate and understand the world, Ashcroft et al argue, “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 re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place” (1989: 35). This means that postcolonial literature displays a language that is different from colonizing nations because hybridity describes the condition of language’s fundamental ability to be simultaneously the same but different. For Bakhtin, hybridity describes the process of the authorial unmasking of another’s speech, through a language that is ‘double-accented’ and ‘double-styled’:

[A] hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactical) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two
utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two ‘languages’, two semantic and axiological belief systems . . . There is no formal – compositional and syntactic – boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a single sentence. . . . [E]ven one and the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction [such that ] the word has two contradictory meanings, two accents (Holquist, 1981:304).

Here, Holquist outlines different aspects of hybridity that involves different ways through which language fulfills its obligations. Ashcroft et al (1989) identify abrogation and appropriation as the two distinct processes through which postcolonial writing defines itself. Ashcroft et al define abrogation as the “denial of the privilege of ‘English’ [which] involves a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication and a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in the words” ((1989: 37). This means that, among other things, lexical items pragmatically and stylistically adopt other meanings.

Ashcroft et al add: Abrogation refers to the rejection by post-colonial writers of the normative concept about ‘correct’ or ‘standard’ English used by certain classes or groups, and of corresponding concepts of inferior ‘dialects’ or ‘marginal variants’ (2000: 5). Here, Ashcroft et al imply that postcolonial literature uses words in strange environments such that the language produced is quite different from the one used in the colonizing nations. “It is a vital moment in the
de-colonizing of the language and the writing of ‘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” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 37-8). Here, Ashcroft et al mean that abrogation and appropriation are complementary. Appropriation involves “reconstitution of the language of the centre, and [that] the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 37) because the “language is adopted as a tool and utilized in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 38). This means that through appropriation, English language is used differently. Ashcroft et al describe appropriation as the process of English adaptation itself.

Based on Ashcroft et al’s argument that “[a]ppropriation is the process by which the language is taken and made to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural experience” (1989: 38), Achebe warns:

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience (1994: 433).

The argument above foregrounds peculiar language use which is one of the major aspects of hybridity. Language use relates or is tantamount to mimicry that shows how the colonized uses the
colonizer’s language. Mimicry is “a sign of the inappropriate” [language usage] that reveals the limitations of liberty (Bhabha, 1994: 86). Bhabha’s arguments imply that mimicry involves subversion of the original meanings and assumptions. This means that forcing the colonized to use the colonizers’ language affects both the colonized and the colonizer. “Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’ and ‘reality’ become established” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 7), but in this case, both parties benefit from the same language use.

Bhabha plays around with the definition of the contact zone that precipitates the production of hybrid cultures using other different terminologies such as stairwell, in-between space, split-space, Third Space and liminal space. These terminologies are based on different functions of the contact zone. For instance, Bhabha argues that “[t]he stairwell as a liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white” (1994: 4). Bhabha argues that hybridity includes forms of counter-authority called a ‘Third Space’, a form of cultural difference itself. Bhabha identifies the Third Space as an imaginary zone of cultural interaction or exchange – an interplay which leads to the production of a hybrid culture.

Since postcolonial literature tends to go against the grain of ‘pure’ cultures, such postcolonial literary works have been described as counter-hegemonic because they are writings that comprise works not from the centre but from the periphery. This explains why most postcolonial writing is a process which involves writing back to the centre. It is therefore not surprising that hybridity
continually negates notions of nativism or purity of cultures, traditions and languages. Ashcroft et al summarise hybrid nature of Wilson Harris’ literary text entitled The Womb of Space (1983) as follows:

Mixing past, present, future, and imperial and colonial cultures within his own fiction, Harris deliberately strives after a new language and a new way of seeing the world . . . rejects the apparently inescapable polarities of language and deploys the destructive energies of European in the service of a future community in which division and categorization are no longer the bases of perception (1989: 34).

Wilson Harris suggests that literary texts can be read in a radical way in order to draw multicultural impulses that are inevitably present below the apparently antagonistic surface structures of such texts. This experience illustrates the futility of avoiding the past because “[i]n [Wilson] Harris’s formulation, hybridity in the present is constantly struggling to free itself from a past which stressed ancestry, and which valued the ‘pure’ over its threatening opposite, the ‘composite” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 34). This position underscores the fact that the past cannot be completely forgotten and yet it cannot be wholesomely retrieved.

Concurring with Fanon’s argument about the distortion of natives’ psyche due to colonialism, Bhabha contends: “For Fanon, the liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of hybridity” (1994:38). Bhabha adds: “[liberatory people] are caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation, in the sense
in which I have been contemplating to recast these words” (ibid, 38). This interaction leads to the production of a hybrid culture. As a result identity crisis develops.

Bhabha argues that cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, which for him makes any simplistic claim to hierarchical purity of cultures untenable. Here, Bhabha evokes intertextuality and hybridity of the texts that could also harbour mimicry. Adapting Samuel Weber’s ideas, Bhabha argues: “[C]olonial mimicry is the desire for reformed, recognizable Other as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994: 86). Here, Bhabha implies that colonial literature undermines the purity of both colonial discourse and postcolonial literatures. A hybrid product, according to Bhabha’s explanation, is neither for the past cultures nor the present; does not resemble the West or the native. Bhabha’s explanation evokes one of the causes of ambivalence. He argues that “[e]pistemological visibility disavows the metonymy of colonial moment, because its narrative of ambivalent, hybrid, cultural knowledges – neither ‘one’ nor ‘other’ – is ethnocentrically elided in the search for cultural commensuability . . .” (Bhabha, 1994: 127). This implies that cultural products are bound to display varied and ambivalent epistemological orientations due to variations in study of the nature of knowledge, in particular its foundations, scope, and validity. As such, the ambivalent nature of a hybrid product leads to identity crisis as one is faced with a daunting task of choosing which culture to follow. This is why Bhabha argues that: “A contingent, borderline experience opens up in-between colonizer and colonized. This is a space of cultural and interpretive undecidability produced in the ‘present’ of the colonial moment” (Bhabha, 1994: 206). Here, Bhabha’s argument is evocative of the plurality and ambivalent nature of the hybrid which involves resisting the usual arrangement because there are a variety of options to choose from.
Ambivalence is also evocative of double-voicedness. For example, in *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates Jr ironizes double voiced ‘trickster’ discourse of Black literary tradition in which one point of view is self-consciously layered on and against another. Because of its ambivalent nature, Bhabha considers hybridity as an entity that is also antagonistic. For instance, Bhabha stresses that the historical movement of hybridity functions as a symbolic camouflage or symbolic contesting and antagonistic agency which is a space in-between the rules of engagement (Bhabha, 1994: 193). This implies that hybridity is not only flexible but also antagonistic.

The production of hybrid cultures seems to be an endless process. This assertion is based on what happens in the contact zones during moments of political panic. Bhabha reveals,

> The margin of hybridity, where cultural differences ‘contingently’ and conflictually touch, becomes the moment of [political] panic which reveals the borderline experiences. It resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups (1994: 207).

According to Bhabha, the political panic is a movement that breaks down the cultural product inside/outside thereby “revea[ling] the contingent process of the inside turning into the outside and producing another hybrid site or sign” (ibid, 207). The endless and elusive nature of hybridity is further explained as follows:
Assignations of social differences [due to class, gender or race] – where difference is neither One nor Other but something else besides, in between – find their agency in a form of the ‘future’ where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is . . . an interstitial future, that emerges in-between the claims of the past and the needs of the present (Bhabha, 1994: 219).

Bhabha implies that culture perpetuates social differences and yet it (culture) is never static. It is made up of the present practices and the past ones, the native and the foreign. Although “[h]ybridity is a sign of the productivity of colonial power . . . [and] a revaluation of the assumptions of colonial identity (Bhabha, 1994: 112), and a repression of native traditions, it sometimes undermines the centre. “Hybridity reverses the formal process of disavowal so that the violent dislocation of the act of colonization becomes the conditionality of the colonial discourse” (Bhabha, 1994: 114). Bhabha suggests that, as a subtle process, the rejection of the colonialists’ linguistic and cultural intrusion works underground. As a result, the presence of colonialist authority is no longer immediately visible. Actually, Bhabha views hybridity as “the migrant’s dream of survival: an initiatory interstice; an empowering condition of hybridity” (1994: 227). Bhabha implies that without the hybrid space, both the colonizer and the colonized would not survive; they would be without power. Hybridity is therefore a subtle way of dismantling the centre and empowering the margin and centre. This realization is best summarized as follows:

The post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms. Both literary theorists and cultural historians are
beginning to recognize cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group ‘purity’, and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilized (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 35).

This shows that there is no clear-cut explanation and description of the postcolonial hybridity – only its inflections or modulations. It is an endless process and, much as it tries to run away from the past, it does not rely only on the present but fuses with the very past practices. The term hybridity is multifaceted and unstable as it keeps changing its scope and focus in respect of time and space. For instance, in an interview with Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham, Homi Bhabha makes the following critical remarks:

[W]hat was some people’s modernity was somebody else’s colonialism . . . [W]hat we think of as the politics of difference, what we think of multiculturalism, what we think of as politics of new social movements do not allow us to think the subject of any one of those margins – race, gender, class, culture, geopolitical location, or generation – exclusively.¹

That is, cultural location is always an articulation of various intersecting and often contesting positions. Hence, Bhabha argues that “essentializing difference or isolating it from other

“positionality” is counterproductive because race, class, gender and other forms of difference are always being “constituted and negotiated in a cross-boundary process.” Here, Bhabha demystifies any claims that race, class, and gender could be possible causes for any type of difference.

According to Bhabha, if cultural difference is accepted to exist, it becomes a site of “contestation, abuse, insult, and discrimination” and “something [that] challeng[es] power or authority.” However, in the same interview with Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham, Bhabha warns that cultural difference becomes problematic when it becomes linked with “the redistribution of goods between cultures, or the funding of cultures, or the emergence of minorities or immigrants in a situation of resources.” Bhabha tells Olson and Worsham that it is only at this point of the redistribution of goods between cultures or the funding of cultures that cultural difference is produced, and that difference leads to politics of discrimination. In the same interview, Olson and Lynn Worsham quotes Bhabha’s argument on hybridity saying that when racial minorities “seep in, disseminate in, and change and translate what is seen to be the dominant lines of transmission of the cultural tradition,” it immediately becomes a threat. Here, Bhabha means that hybridity destabilizes any racial, linguistic and cultural superiority which incidentally initiates mutual respect between and among different races, languages and cultures. Once the hybrid space displays respect for each and every race, ethnicity, culture, and language, eventually a conducive environment for the development and growth of a tolerant social and political atmosphere also emerges.
Common features identifiable in postcolonial texts include cultural designation, political orientation and racial mixing, and stylistic dimensions, especially in the way each one resonates with the idea of hybridity. The argument here is that the creation of a new order ineluctably gives way to the birth of a totally different, and hence hybrid culture. Bhabha claims that this culture belongs to the “in-between” spaces. In other words, the desire to set up post-colonial cultures, ones which are free of any foreign influences, is a forlorn hope because such a process inescapably leads to the creation of hybrid cultures.

Contemporary poets are at liberty to include issues that concern their societies. These issues could be Afrocentric and/or Eurocentric. Furthermore, postcolonial authors are flexible in their style of presentation. Although the recovery and revitalization of various aspects of the African culture is not possible, the poets’ creativity leads to the process of rewriting African history and culture. Such a process leads to hybridity because the product of the rewriting process, owing to the inbuilt ambivalence, carries with it aspects of subversion of language and, by extension, identity.

Through the rewriting process, the hybrid nature of the postcolonial texts creates new and multiple identities as well as an enabling environment for protest literature against both imperialists/colonialists and African dictators. The study therefore advances that hybridity is a solution to identity crisis because the new personality displays different traces which, in the words of Homi Bhabha, are called “transcultural identities” and such a plurality of identities leads to the production of hybrid personalities and cultures. Such transcultural forms are formed within the contact zone, which Bhabha calls the “in-between space,” and these forms carry the burden and meaning of the new culture. Hybridity also stands for the interrogative languages of minority cultures. Irrespective of the model of hybridity that is employed, hybridity as a cultural description
will always carry with it an implicit politics of heterosexuality, which may be a further reason for contesting its contemporary pre-eminence. Hybridity in particular shows connections between the racial categories of the past and contemporary cultural discourse.

Hybridity is therefore an intertwined phenomenon that permeates the border lines of different races, languages and cultures thereby subverting traditional privileged positions. The discussion above illustrates that hybridity affects both the colonized and the colonizer politically, linguistically, socially, and culturally. The following chapters shall discuss various facets of hybridity in the texts under study.
CHAPTER 2: HYBRIDITY IN FEMI ABODUNRIN’S IT WOULD TAKE TIME

This chapter discusses hybridity in Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time: Conversation with Ancestors. The discussion involves identifying aspects of hybridity that the text lends itself to in the context of post-colonial discourse. The argument in this chapter is that in an attempt to respond to Afrocentric aspirations initiated in Towards the Decolonization of African Literature – a text which was written by Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemmie and Ihechukwu Madubuike in 1980 in which the authors challenged Eurocentric notions of literary texts, the above text provides various approaches to and strategies of the process of decolonization.

Although the poet concedes that “it would take time” to reclaim the past, in the course of the study it shall be revealed that there is no culture that can be reclaimed because cultures are dynamic. The epic looks like a series of short stories and yet in some cases the collection of poems appears as if it is a drama script. In fact, the poet tactfully blurs boundaries between genres ostensibly as a means of resisting Western definitions of a poem, a play or a short story. In terms of language use, the poet also oscillates between Yoruba and other languages such as German, French and English, without actually breaking the flow of the poetic pieces. All these aspects constitute a unique form of hybridity, and some of them shall be discussed in details in the paragraphs that follow.

Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors seems to be one of the so many texts that display decolonization strategies and ideologies which were initiated in Towards the Decolonization of African Literature that shows different shades of hybridity. Before
Abodunrin starts writing his epic entitled *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, he creates an introductory essay to help him justify the importance of the text to be born. The significance of the text is announced right at the very beginning. In fact, Steven Brown’s remarks quoted on the blurb of the text reveal to the reader that to appreciate the beauty of the text and easily follow the reading of the collection of poems in Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, it is advisable that the readers first read the introductory essay entitled “Iconography2 of Order and Disorder”. The coexistence of Steven Brown’s remarks and Abodunrin’s text is not by accident. This brings in one of the aspects of hybridity: “intertextuality.”

Cuddon (1991) defines intertextuality as follows:

> A term that was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 to denote the interdependence of literary texts; the interdependence of any one literary text with all those that have gone before it. Her contention was that a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon but is made up of mosaic of quotations and that any text is the absorption and transformation of the other” (1991: 454).

The quotation above implies that texts are not homogenous entities. Therefore, as a literary text, *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* is also a hybrid of several texts.

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2 Iconography is a combination of two parts ‘icono’ and ‘graphy’. Icono refers to criticism of popular beliefs or established customs and ideas; ‘graphy’ refers to something written down or a form of writing. Therefore, iconography refers to the critique, so the introductory essay is the critique of Order and disorder.
Furthermore, on the blurb of Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, Stewart Brown reveals that

Femi Abodunrin’s introductory essay ‘Iconography of Order and Disorder’ sets the scene for a reading of his poem . . . Abodunrin engages with notions of personal and cultural identity from the perspective of one who has travelled ‘out’ both physically and intellectually and has now regained a sense of psychological grounding through his extended ‘conversation with living ancestors’.

“Conversation,” as a dialogic process, assumes the presence of a speaker and the listener, which in the end entails exchange of ideas. Conversation is an aspect of hybridization because, according to Bakhtin in Holquist (1981), it (hybridization) “is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance” (p. 358).

The persona in *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* wants to justify the current position he has taken – that he would “go to the labour room – the abattoir” (p. 24) after travelling the world and he promises not to rest until he sees “the discursive bottom of the matter” (p. 25). The persona means that he intends to engage a theoretical journey in which he wants to find out the best possible way of solving the clash of culture caused by colonialism. This is why the persona wishes that “the boat of our common destiny might / capsize so I could metamorphose into a racial Jonah / and seek solace in the belly of a fish” (p. 25). The above quotation serves to explain change of attitude in the persona which would help in responding to the call for Africans
to redress the problem of the clash of culture just as Jonah in the Bible miraculously goes to Nineveh. It shows that the persona used to resist the call to redress the African problem but has realised the futility of his past position. The discussion above shows that most educated Africans refuse to be the agents of change in their societies but he wishes to be sent wherever there would be need.

The situation above could be true of any person who goes abroad for further education. The expectation is that an educated person would come back more ‘deformed’ than before, hating his culture and traditions. But the persona in the poem is different. Further education has either awakened or sharpened his consciousness. Therefore, this time he has changed his stance; he wants to act now. This transformation is similar to what happens in Soyinka’s play entitled *Death and the King’s Horseman* in which Jane and Simon Pilking (a white couple) are shocked to see that Olunde, an educated young African, who is expected to denounce primitive African culture, is the one who vigorously encourages and defends “primitive” practices. In the play, the young man is shocked to find out that his father, Elesin, who is the king’s horseman, is not killed as per custom. Such educated Africans, according to the persona, would help revive, defend and promote the African culture. The persona’s expectation is that educated Africans should come back to Africa and promote their cultures instead of denouncing them or staying away in Europe or North America after acquiring Western education. The persona presupposes that there is a certain culture

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3 The place Jonah resisted going to is the place where God wanted him to preach the Gospel. In fact, he stays in the fish’s belly for three days and three nights and his body gets deposited on the shores of Nineveh (Jonah 1 & 2).  
4 The drama in the play heightens when the community blames Elesin as much as Pilkins, accusing the former of being too attached to the earth to fulfill his spiritual obligations. Events lead to tragedy when Elesin’s son, Olunde, who has returned to Nigeria from studying medicine in Europe, takes on the responsibility of his father and commits ritual suicide in his place so as to restore the honour of his family and the order of the universe. Consequently, Elesin kills himself, condemning his soul to a degraded existence in the next world.
that is definite, fixed and complete that needs to be preserved and defended from foreign influences.

Another decolonization strategy that the poet suggests involves understanding how the English language operates. The poet realizes that it (the English language) is just a tool for textually constructing the world so that the English culture eventually emerges as the only yardstick for defining one’s identity. Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* is a deliberate effort to do away with the colonizers’ language. This is in reaction to the old debate about the language to be used in African literature. According to Ngugi wa Thiong’o, African writers should stop writing in foreign languages. In *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Languages in African Literature*, Ngugi (1968) does not understand why African writers should keep writing in foreign languages.

Why, we may ask, should an African writer, or any writer, become so obsessed by taking from his mother-tongue to enrich other tongues? Why should he see it as his particular mission? We never asked ourselves: how can we enrich our languages? How can we ‘prey’ on the rich humanist and democratic heritage in the struggles of other peoples in other times and other places to enrich our own? (p. 8)

With such Afrocentric ideas, many Africans have tried to include African languages in their literary works that would have been wholly presented in foreign languages. In this regard, Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* is not an exception. Since,
in some sections, the whole stanza is in vernacular language, it becomes possible that the two languages should be used interchangeably, hence bringing the colonized language on a par with the colonizer’s language. According to Ngugi wa Thiong’o, if African writers can ‘sell’ their native languages in this way eventually a number of ethnic languages would find spaces in the written text intertwined with English language. However, this arrangement might take some time. Perhaps this is why Abodunrin thinks that it would take time to achieve such a status.

The persona would like to find out why the foreign language was ‘nationalized’ or ‘universalized’. S/he thinks that the foreign language has complicated colonialism/federation as observed in the following lines below:

The other time you tested my raw anger
over what you termed my hypersensitivity
towards matters like snowflakes
burning my soul-but which to
your creative mind are simply ephemeral

I cited Nietzsche to convince you that
we have to cease to think if we refuse
to do so in the prison-house of language
You knew where I was headed and you called me names;

‘which language, whose prison, in whose house?’ you blurted!

‘In My Father’s House ...!’ you fumed. (Abodunrin, 2002: 20)

In the excerpt above, the persona hates foreign culture and ideologies and he complains that some accuse him of being “hypersensitive,” that is, being very sensitive to very simple issues like snowflakes burning his soul. The persona compares “forced” lessons of foreign languages to a prison. Since these lessons are taken while in Africa, his homeland, he calls this situation “prison-house of language in his father’s house”. The epic records this situation as a clash of cultures. Because of prejudices, one is forced to stay in the prison-house of the language, that is, one is forced to use a foreign language while in his homeland.

Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time*, as a text, shows both features of ‘the colonizer and the colonized’. Partly it is pro-European for it is mostly written in a foreign language but the issues being explored make it a pro-African text. Apart from the content and language in which the text is written, the form or style of the text also shows ambivalent characteristics. The text does not belong to either of the genres. The text is a hybrid of different cultures. This explains why Raji (2002) argues that Abodunrin’s text has “blurred boundaries” (p. 104).

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5 Part I of Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* starts with Albert Memmi’s quotation found in *The Coloniser and the Colonised* in which the author says: “I was a sort of half-breed of colonisation, understanding everyone because I belonged completely to no one.” This reflects the ambivalent nature of the colonized subjects which Homi Bhabha calls transcultural identities that occupies the third space.
The persona therefore attacks the Western critics whom he calls “literary purists” for being against the mixing of genres. The excerpt below highlights such outbursts:

I say why not the Nation-language so that
the hurricane can rumble? or why not depoliticize
this speech so that the harmattan can testify eloquently
to the rape of our confluence-oriented landscape?

(Abodunrin, 2002, p. 20)

The persona calls for coexistence of several languages in a single utterance rather than one, similar to a solution Edward Kamau Brathwaite\(^6\) brings to his linguistically heterogeneous society in the Caribbean Islands. In the excerpt above, the national language would induce the rumbling of the hurricane and that once the speech has been depoliticised, “the harmattan [shall] testify eloquently to the rape of our confluence-oriented landscape.” The phrase “confluence-oriented landscape” implies a heterogeneous society. The persona implies that the use of the national language would set free the speaker in a linguistically heterogeneous society and allow him to express himself fully. Likewise, once foreigners stop politicizing the language, the speakers will be able to use it competently. In the process, oppressive tendencies shall be unveiled.

The persona compares himself to the Kenyan novelist, Ngugi wa Thiong’o who mixes the boundaries of genres by writing *Matigari*, a novel that has some traces of poetry too and the discussion on the mixing of genres in Ngugi’s *Matigari* shall be presented in chapter four. *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* is, therefore, expected to be a combination of genres, and not purely poetry as it would have been the case. Abodunrin seems to suggest that, in his attempt to rewrite the African history, the author needs to free himself from the convention of writing a play or poem. It is, therefore, not surprising to find out that the collection of poems in *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* has some features of a drama script.

Drama scripts are normally written for the theatre, radio or television. Though the text is mainly a collection of poems, Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* displays several aspects of a drama script. For instance, the poet calls the second section of his masterpiece, ‘The drama of consolation.’ Section IV of ‘The drama of consolation’ is duly rendered as a drama script. The poem reads:

Act One: Scene One

Simply called *The drama of consolation or Our Redeemers-*

the first act of the play we are told:

Takes place at Igbo-Igbale,

A fearful forest in the Baluban society… (Abodunrin, 2002: 36)
The opening lines of the poem suggest that it is written in the format of a play script. ‘Act One: Scene One’ can easily be associated with Shakespearean plays which are thrown into five acts with a minimum of five scenes in each act. Just like any “metalanguage”, ‘Act One: Scene’ is a play about a play. Instead of writing ‘direction’ words, such aspects are found inside the actual lines to be memorized and delivered by a performer. The setting is, therefore, not described as it is the case with play scripts. The poem tells the setting as Igbo-Igbale, a fearful forest in the Baluban society.

Whenever a new culture is born there is bound to be mixed reaction. In *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, some personalities call for a return to the remote past while others remain sceptical about the new culture being ushered in. As such adherents of tradition feel confused and alienated due to the clash of cultures. Following the clash of cultures, Africans are brainwashed and believe that their culture is inferior to that of Europe. The persona laments:

> But how can we escape the thrust of the monologic discourse
> or extricate their monologue from ours – do I need this
> recrimination about elemental fire to calm this unborn
> farting in my womb? This sacrilegious nymph
> which an uncle has called, not uncritically, mind you;

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7 Metalanguage refers to “the language used to analyse or describe a language” (Richards et al, 2005 :227). It is the type of language about language.
The persona implies that he would like to find means of avoiding influence of this foreign culture. The persona is aware that the monologic discourse (foreign culture) and African culture have become inseparable. As such s/he would like to find out how the two could be separated. The new culture is being referred to as a sacrilegious nymph that is farting in the womb. However, the new culture has been born “not uncritically”. In other words, it was inevitable for the new culture to be born. The unborn nymph is one of the beautiful ones that the persona ‘dares not born,’ an allusion to Ayi Kwei Armah’s “The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born”\(^8\). The persona above is crying over spilt milk because once a hybrid culture has been born there is no way the former culture could be reclaimed.

The epic touches on a variety of spheres such as cultural, historical, social and political. For example, he actually attacks this false democracy because people are not free to explore their cultural values that would ultimately give them the human integrity and self-worth. According to the persona, real democracy would be meaningful “… if, and only if, / [t]hey choose not to forget who they really are / for deceivers from across the great sea ... had trapped bodies and souls in trillion isms!” (p. 34). The persona means that Africans were brainwashed by the Western ideologies and ultimately forgot their self-worth.

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\(^8\) Ayi Kwei Armah wrote a novel entitled *The Beautyful Ones That Are Not Yet Born* in which he explains his frustrations with post-independence corruption.
The persona acknowledges that the people call this work of art entitled *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, also referred to as “magnum-opus,” an instance of a dialogic imagination (p. 34). In this work of art, the persona attacks the brand of democracy in his home country. To him, it is but pretence – fake democratic dispensation. People are not free at all. Therefore, this epic is not an idle indulgence; it is an attack on the fake democratic ideals. The persona therefore calls adherents "to the foreign cultures “grovel[1]ing idiots” who praise the invading traditions and make unkind laughter or remarks which show that they think African culture is ridiculous and worthless. Consequently, these grovelling idiots “proclaimed the death of African Tradition and shrieked dementedly, long – live theirs!” (p. 35) The persona reveals that his feeling of anxiety and worry about social and cultural decadence is directed at those of his “lineage who desecrated the land” (p. 35). This argument implies that cultural freedom is useless where there is no political freedom.

There have always been divisions among Africans and the colonialists have used such divisions to dominate the colonized people. For example, if it were not for the divisions among the Igbo people, the white man would have not settled in Umuofia in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Likewise, in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Matigari*, Settler Williams collaborates with John Boy in his quest to plunder the native resources. Such divisions will not end soon; Abodunrin thinks “it would take time” to end such divisions. Africans start fighting and killing each other because they adhere to different ideologies.
By accepting the foreign gods and ideologies, Batola says that his fellow country-men have brought about contradictions in their lives and hopes that they will solve these contradictions themselves. Whatever Batola explains shows that educated men have become ambivalent. They have become diverse in their ideological orientation. The situation above concurs with Dangarembga (2003:23) who argues that “When an original culture is superimposed with a colonial or dominant culture through education, it produces a nervous condition of ambivalence, uncertainty, a blurring of cultural boundaries, inside and outside, an otherness within.”

Apart from ideological differences, the persona, who is the main narrator of the epic attacks Mosunmola for adhering to a different style of presentation. The persona laments as follows:

That was no parody

no matter the prosaic conclusions your

generation of formless egberes have reached

concerning the drama of consolation!

Mosunmola, your vituperations are as

irreverent as your abusive associations–

your confusion of content with form

suddens me – in this age of pasiparo.
Like Lagbaja wife of Ologbeni

Form is in content – content-in-form! (p. 44)

In the excerpt above, the persona laments that the problem with Mosunmola is that she confuses content with form. According to the persona, form contains content. This is a reference to the criticism against those who adhere to form at the expense of the content or message. The discussion above shows that if Abodunrin had adhered to the form of writing poetry, he could not have included the dramatic dialogue, let alone the chorus. To break the Eurocentric monopoly of creating poems, the persona suggest that writers should not stick to the conventions of poetry writing which leads to the creation of hybrid form and content.

In The Politics and Poetics of Transgression quoted in Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time, (2002:45), Stallybrass and White acknowledge that from the sixteenth century, the fair’s ‘monsters’ were supplemented with a display of the exotic that entails the marketable wonders of the world. This shows that the two authors are aware of the co-existence of different cultures of the world due to colonialism. Therefore, the mixing of genres in It Would Take Time is not a new phenomenon at all. Furthermore, in Bakhtin’s Rebelais and His World quoted in It Would Take Time, the author acknowledges that laughter and its forms represent the least scrutinized sphere of the people’s creation. Typical of Bakhtin, this quotation serves to uplift the status of the carnival and his laughter, and this, in essence, uplifts the status of Africans. Different texts have added their
voices to texts which shows dialogic nature that announces intertextuality of *It Would Take Time*, one of the features of a hybrid text.

Another aspect of intertextuality of discourse is in “Conversation with living ancestors,” a poem that is full of praises for the African ancestors. For example, in Section I of “Conversation with living ancestors,” the persona praises the ancestors for the bravery shown in ‘emancipation’ war against the invading enemies using traditional tools and implements. The persona argues that many ancestors shall be remembered for their “solid personal achievements” (p. 46). This is a reference to Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* in which Okonkwo is said to have started off his fame based “on his solid personal achievement” (Achebe, 1958: 1). The persona seems not happy that his forefather let the foreigners’ cultures clash with their culture.

These young ones want to find out if old critics have any moral mandate to correct the wrongs committed in the past when in fact they accepted to become cultural and political prostitutes. This means that to argue meaningfully and competently for the African cause both the youth who are knowledgeable about the clash of cultures and the older critics should lead the way.

Those imbibed with the new ideologies have replaced the colonial master but they are not any better. The persona gives an example of A-butcher, a “son of a sacrilegious nincompoop” (p. 50) who is goaded towards kingly throne by the renowned personalities that would have better protected the kingship. The persona is now worried as to who will be courageous enough to tell A-butcher to stop desecrating the throne. This personality, A-butcher, should be a reference to
“Sani Abacha”, a Nigerian dictator. The persona laments over the failure by the critics or advocates of culture who do not confront A-butcher on cultural issues.

While African states suffer from autocratic leadership, Western civilization has its own unique problems. Latosa, one of the pro-African critics, describe it (Western civilization) as a bag of confusion as observed in the following lines:

I call it a paradox of consciousness,

an ambivalence of the soul–

a double edge sword–

a creative destruction,

an instruction of intrigue for the strong,

fascinating death for those who seek to be controlled by it! (p.71).

The persona implies that Western civilization is complex and has unique challenges. The persona calls the union of different cultures a paradox of consciousness perhaps because of the ambivalent nature of the hybrid culture that is born in the” liminal” or “in-between space” of the two or more

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9 According to Paul Nugent’s Africa Since Independence (2004: pp. 424-5), Sani Abacha was one of the worst dictators that ruled Nigeria.
conflicting cultures. The hybrid culture that is formed in the “in-between space” is also described as “a double edged sword” because it displays characteristics of both foreign and native cultures. Most Africans in the Diaspora who had been exposed to Western education are blamed for displaying the clash of cultures. Therefore, Morenike calls for a homecoming of the Africans that had mentally gone un-African way. She says, “… [T]his play is about Our Redeemers Who Changed their Minds.” This is a reference to educated Africans who, after getting their education, did not go back to serve the interest of the Africans; they started toeing the Western line.

Cultural clash comes with linguistic and political hybridization. For example, the persona considers Lokoja a very important place (because it is where the union of the states was declared). It is a place where African (Nigerian) land was dispossessed. Not only did the new administration bring new administrative hierarchy but also new cultural and linguistic dimension. Different languages were uttered, in some cases, by a single individual. For example, in the lines below the persona shows the compatibility of languages: English, French, Latin and German:

The scene of our depossession du monde, my renaissance brother…
	heir war cry over our heads – Ecclesia semper reformandal

as they create the poor in their own image?

we are merely victims of their weltanschauung (p. 22)
Linguistic plurality shown above signals the presence of ambivalent aspects of a people’s culture. Although nativists could claim that the example above serves to indicate that Africans have forsaken their language and culture and have embraced Western cultures/languages which they can use interchangeably, in reality this linguistic plurality shows that languages do speak to each other to make some words meaningful. With time, such dialogism of languages or texts would ultimately lead to a new African culture.

To regain identity and integrity, the persona strongly believes that an African should go back to their roots. The persona asks why Africans have become ambivalent: they save two gods at the same time; some have forsaken their gods at the expense of foreign ones. For example, the persona laments:

‘BY WHOSE NAME! BY WHOSE NAME

- must I swear?’

‘God’s name or by the name of your idol’ he was told

‘I MYSELF AM GOD I’M GOD!’

Orisa lo’ba, Orisa lo’ba!’

The ranting of a sinecure miscreant? or an apostate

Who has been called too many names in his own lifetime?
Orisa lo’ba, Orisa lo’ba – Igba keji oba lo’risa

It was never Alagemo’s fault – so goes the beguiling discourse (2002: 22)

The persona is shocked to see the double-dealings of an African who serves the Western cultures and yet he says: “Orisa lo’ba, Orisa lo’ba – Igba keji Orisa” (p. 22). This line is translated as “The king is a god – the king is second-in-command to the gods” (p. 22). If indeed his king is the second in command to the gods, why is he serving foreign gods? Why is he serving Western cultures? This behaviour is an aspect of ambivalence.

The persona compares Ladugbolu, one of the converts to the new religion, to a feudal ogre (monster). He argues that it takes time for someone to become a full-blown feudal ogre just as it took time for a poet to conceive an epic like ‘It Would Take Time’ in which the latter explains the postemperialist debasement. The persona gives an example of Ladugbolu who shouts at his brother Eshumbayi Eleko (who underrates African religion). One aspect that stands out in Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors is the continuous co-existence of English and Yoruba languages in the course of expressing the feelings and thoughts about ‘It Would Take Time’ as observed in the example above and in other proceeding poems. An important aspect that is exposed in the above quotation is that the poet freely mixes the two languages without disturbing the flow of the poem’s message. In some cases the same poem completely frees itself from the ‘bondage’ of the English Language as evident in part III, first stanza:
Abodunrin, the author of the collection was, as expected, not willing to give the English translation as it would not give the intended meaning and possibly because it would lead to the author’s self-defeat in his efforts to resist Western literature which Homi Bhabha (1994) calls literature of the “third space.” It is expected that Abodunrin is aware of the fact that the style of leaving the words untranslated is a political act. Its English equivalent was therefore given, though reluctantly, as follows:

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10 Homi Bhabha calls literatures or subjects that do not qualify as Western and yet they are not African as belonging to transcultural identities. So they belong to the liminal or third space or in-between space.
The stilt-dancer

Stilt!

Folks come with me

Stilt

As we come to mutual contact

Stilt

Contact with wealth, contact with children

Stilt!

Pa–Pa–Pa!

Stilt!¹¹

Just as expected by the author, the poem above does not capture the exact meaning that was intended. Such works occupy “the third space.”

Furthermore, the persona calls the federation “rape of our confluence-oriented landscape” (p. 23). Rape implies sexual intercourse by force. This fact shows that the persona and the rest of his kind were forced to accept the terms in this political arrangement. He blames those who encouraged other Africans to join the federation. He wishes to come up with an epic so as to dialogue and fight

¹¹ Femi reluctantly gave translation of his Yoruba part of the epic in March 2008 after several attempts by the researcher to have the lines translated.
back enemies of their race. The persona uplifts the epic above the sonnet because he argues that the latter has some limitations. Flexibility of the epic makes it possible to mix genres, so writers of the African epic should not be ‘attacked’ for writing in a strange way. The nature of the epic permits or gives freedom to the writer to mix genres.

The persona acknowledges that, historically, forcing the European culture on the African land led to the clash of cultures. The persona calls whoever assisted in the European settlement in Africa the “[Biblical] Iscariots” (p. 24), the disciple who betrayed Jesus Christ. These traitors, the persona claims, wanted to create the poor in their own image. This is an inversion of the Biblical verse: “And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and will resemble us.”12 This shows that colonisation of Africa was a well-planned scheme that deliberately aimed at annihilation of the African culture, values and traditions. However, what has actually happened is quite different: both African and European cultures have been affected. We do not have an exclusively African or European language or culture. Hybridity is the order of the day.

As has been demonstrated in this dissertation, hybridity manifests itself in various forms, notably linguistic, cultural or political dimensions. Hybridity could either be linguistic, cultural or political. To achieve some of these hybrid forms, sometimes artists create a new style of presentation. For example, Femi Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time* removes the boundaries between poetry and drama, and between prose and poetry. If the poet had maintained boundaries, it would have been very difficult to express himself in the way he has done. Consequently, *It Would Take Time*

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12Good News Bible, Genesis 1: 26.
provides several shades of hybridity. One of the hybridization strategies that the poet has employed is that of the code-mixing and code-switching. Just like earlier African artists such as Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savanna* (1987) and Ama Atta Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* has chosen to mix genres so as to evade Eurocentric definitions of a poem, drama or short story.

As observed earlier in the preceding discussions, rewriting history equips the author as well as the critic with a standpoint regarding the decolonization process since decolonization relies upon the understanding of African history which was disturbed by colonial intrusion. Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time* includes an explanation about how Africa lost her land and authority to the foreign powers. Using actors in a drama script, Abodunrin argues that Africa was divided and the enemy took advantage of the division to dominate Africans and, unfortunately, critics also remained quiet; they did not correct or rebuke wrong-doers until it was too late which led to the clash of cultures. Some notable figures within the cultural setting, who would have helped in fighting the alien culture, were in the forefront giving foreign culture the green light to sink roots in Africa. Therefore, the only suggested way out is to rewrite history so that Africans correct their past mistakes. This fact is also true with the Caribbean poetry, which is discussed in details in the next chapter.

In particular, Abodunrin (2002) claims that Africans were fooled, if not tricked, to dispose of their people (during slavery) and their cultures (during colonialism). The problem is that colonialists proposed that the African culture is inferior to the Western culture, and the Africans [themselves]
disposed of their cultures. Unfortunately, in their hurry to catch up with the rest of the world, Africans “rush to modernize the relative pseudo-scientific outlook of African cultures” (Abodunrin, 2002: 8). In their hurry to shed the slough of traditionalism, they started begging, borrowing or stealing scientific and technological knowledge from the West and they lost or discarded their culture, their identity. In this argument, Abodunrin implies that Africans should not hurry up in getting modernized. He, however, does not completely rule out the possibility of getting modernized amidst maintenance of historical and cultural heritage only that he claims it is likely to take time to achieve such a status. Abodunrin’s argument underscores the strength of hybridity, implying that even if Africans reject Western influences today, they shall eventually be modernized in the near future. This observation is possible because of the power wielded by globalization. There is no part of the world that wants to be isolated and the price nations pay in this yearning for belonging to the global village is the shedding of some cloaks of nativism in exchange for a common understanding, a global culture.

Due to the clash of cultures, the people caught in-between the two cultures display ambivalent traits. These people exhibit political, cultural and linguistic hybridity. The poet has blurred the boundaries between different genres. Although the poet’s main agenda was to write a text that would help advance decolonization process, the issues being tackled in the epic show that decolonization is not possible. When two languages meet, whether one seems to be superior to the other, the product is a hybrid culture. In this case, the colonizing culture is influenced by the colonized culture and vice versa. Therefore, there is no culture that is pure. Hybridity leads to cultural impurity, which seems to negate a definite identity. The next chapter shall continue the
debate on hybridity of post-colonial texts with a special focus on *Masks*, a collection of poems written by Edward Kamau Brathwaite.
CHAPTER 3: HYBRIDITY IN BRATHWAITE’S MIGHTS

This chapter discusses how the notion of hybridity is reflected in Brathwaite’s Masks, a text which epitomizes and encapsulates different traces of linguistic plurality and the resultant identity crises. Typical of a mask, Brathwaite’s Mask hides a lot of information behind some symbols. Thus what we see on the surface is not what is implied in the poems. Put differently, what the poet evokes in his poems is more profound and multilayered than is implied on the first reading which conveys the surface meaning. While Brathwaite’s Masks may be viewed as a deliberate effort to assert and extol the integrity and importance of a black African and his culture, the text also gives voice to the various hybrid identities that other readings of the text suggest. It includes aspects of hybridity such as unique poetic forms, oral traditions, and a mixture of languages. As alluded to in Chapter 1, Brathwaite proposes the use of a unique dialect in the Caribbean landscape called nation language. To understand his poetry, it is essential to describe this type of language.

Just like Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors, Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s Masks encapsulates the deep–rooted relationship that exists between the uprooted people in the Diaspora and their African roots. In the course of articulating this relationship, Brathwaite subverts the colonial discourse. For example, African aspects that were condemned, ridiculed, underrated and labelled as uncivilized are the same aspects that are being praised by Brathwaite. This subversion involves re-fashioning of the poetic pieces. The language used by Brathwaite in Masks also speaks volumes about subversion. It is not the English language one finds among Western poets. It is the type of English language that Achebe (1994) advocates for in “The African Writer and the English Language.” Brathwaite’s arbitrary cutting of words creates new words that lead to their ambiguous interpretation. For example, in one of his poems entitled
“Adowa,” the poet explores poetic licence to break lexical items that would have otherwise been independent words, creating “morphemes” such as “-ly”, “cer-” and “-ocks” (p. 117) that have never been seen in the English before. This breaking of lexical items would be a wild strategy of coming up with a new poetic form; after all Brathwaite advocates the use of a neutral language called nation language.

Brathwaite gets inspiration from ancient kingdoms of Africa, and African ancestral spirits and cultural aspects. It is therefore not surprising that, apart from using a neutral language, Brathwaite continuously promotes the co-existence between Africans and their ancestral spirits; he shows great yearning for a spiritual or physical journey back to his home, Africa. Unfortunately, going back to Africa is also problematic, whether spiritually or physically. For example, Ngugi wa Thiong’o in “A Kind of Homecoming”, an essay in the collection entitled Homecoming, gives several examples of individuals who had ended up being disappointed after attempting to get connected to Africa. In Brathwaite’s case, Ngugi observes that after he had arrived in Africa, he “underwent a small but significant crisis” (1972: 82). When he arrived in Africa, he did not find the Africans he was looking for, so he ended up embracing the whole African continent as his home. The main reason why he could not find those he was looking for is that, just like a river, Africa is never stationary. No human being is permanent on earth and culture is never static either, and so are the infrastructural, social, and political dimensions. This observation is the reason why Femi Abodunrin feels that all problems surrounding Africa may be sorted out by time. In It Would Take Time, the poet provides a prophetic solution to Africa’s problems, arguing that it would take some time before solutions to these problems are found. Since the remote past cannot be
revitalized, hybridization remains the only ultimate solution to the problem that Abodunrin think will take time to be solved.

Based on the foregoing debate, it can be asserted that Brathwaite’s *Masks* seek to rewrite the African history so as to subvert European history in Africa and the Caribbean Islands. As an invocation of the uprootedness of those in the Diaspora, through *Masks*, Brathwaite tries to re-establish his links with some of the major ancient kingdoms of Africa which are peculiar to the Caribbean landscape. Using his literary works, Brathwaite wishes to give back to Africa the beauty he has discovered in the black majority for his poetry is, according to Gates and McKay “experimental, musical, and vernacularly in harmony with the dream life of the masses” (1997: 1803). This observation is a clear indication of identity crisis because the poet is in the Caribbean Islands and yet he identifies himself with Africa. Though written far away from Africa, the poet goes further to highlight specific activities that the Black people are known for when they are making and beating the African drum. For instance, the poem entitled “The Making of the Drum” explores the stages in the making or formation of the drum which includes the two curved sticks and gourds and rattles. Brathwaite invokes and displays Bhabha’s theory of ambivalence. According to Ashcroft *et al* (2000:13), Bhabha’s theory of ambivalence “disrupts any simple relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.” By advocating and writing in a neutral language, Brathwaite seeks to disrupt any clear-cut authority of colonial domination through colonial discourse.
According to Brathwaite (1984), a nation language has several distinct features. One of them is that it ignores the pentametre. Secondly, it is influenced very strongly by the African model. For example, although it has English lexical features, its contours, rhythm, timbre and sound explosions disqualify the nation language from turning into English. It means that the nation language depicts semantic, morphological and phonological hybridity. According to Brathwaite a nation language is

an English which is not the standard, imported, educated English, but that of the submerged, surrealist experience and sensibility, which has always been there and which is now increasingly coming to the surface and influencing the perception of contemporary Caribbean people (1984: 13).

In this case, this nation language displays aspects of hybridity as it has features of both English and native languages. Some critics consider dialect bad English but Brathwaite is quick to point out that a nation language is not a dialect, arguing that:

Dialect is the language used when you want to make fun of someone. Caricature speaks in dialect. Dialect has a long history coming from the plantation where people’s dignity is distorted through their language and the descriptions which the dialect gave them. (1984: 13)
Brathwaite (1984) seems to be pointing towards what Ashcroft et al (1989: 118) describe as “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.” This zone is what Fanon (1967:8) calls “a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval can be born.” In this case, the contact zones are the Caribbean Islands and the African states where authentic upheavals are likely to be born, the African aspects of the New World/Caribbean heritage.

There are several strategies to be used if an upheaval is to be precipitated. One of the strategies to be used in order to undermine authoritative discourses such as foreign literatures and/or languages is the creation of a nation language which does not belong to either side; it is a neutral language. According to the decolonization process, the creation of a neutral language weakens the importance of the colonial languages and in the long run the colonial discourse is weakened as well. Fanon (1990: 28) describes decolonization as follows: “The last shall be the first and the first the last.” This means that decolonization involves subversion of the status quo. Decolonization leads to hybrid cultures. Hybridity is, nevertheless, a very complex phenomenon. According to Bhabha,

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal. Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of the colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects (1994: 112).
The quotation above serves to posit that a hybrid language or culture is like a revolution as it leads to the creation of a new form that undermines the original forms. If the language cannot be fashioned, it cannot lead to subversion; hence no revolution could be staged.

A *nation language*, on the other hand, is more than a mere dialect. Brathwaite (1984:13) describes it as “the submerged area of that dialect which is much more closely allied to the African aspect of experience in the Caribbean … It is also like the blues … [and] sometimes it is English and African at the same time.” This quotation shows an aspect of ambivalence and underscores the importance of fashioning the English language as advocated by Achebe in the preceding chapters of this study. The fashioned language is flexible and therefore easily bent. To show that the *nation language* it is not a mere dialect, Brathwaite (1984) explains that writers have set out its grammar, syntax, transformation structure and all other necessary aspects befitting an independent language. However, he laments that the same writers “haven’t really been able to make any contact between the nation language and its expression in our literature” (Brathwaite, 1984: 14). One of the reasons could be neocolonialism in which colonial legacy regarding the importance of English stifles the development and growth of any neutral language.

The use of nation language in writing poetry is an announcement of hybridity. The nation language is a combination of several languages. The content therein is also an aspect of hybridity. Several ideologies such as oral traditions and practices from different parts of the world have found space in the same text. The personae in Brathwaite’s *Masks* also depict ambivalent traits: they have embraced both European and Caribbean cultures. Such ambivalent traits are to be found in
personalities of other genres as well. Just like Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time*, apart from using the *nation language*, Brathwaite’s *Masks* also blurs the boundaries between genres as a means of resisting Western definitions of a poem, a play or a short story. It should also be understood that a mask is like a veil. In the same way, Brathwaite’s *Masks* evokes a mental picture of a veiled being that does not show his true colours. *Mask* therefore shows ambivalent traits of the personae. For example, in “The Barrel of the Drum” the persona discusses the second stage in the formation of the drum. He asserts:

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For this we choose wood
of the tweneduru tree:

hard duru wood

with hollow blood

that makes a womb. (p. 95)
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The poet says that the barrel to be used is not from any other tree but *tweneduru* for its hard wood and the hollow blood that forms the womb. The poet says that he hears the “wounds of the forest” (p.95) made by the trees cut down in the formation of the drum. These voices could be that of the poets re/citing rivers of Africa. The poet says, “You dumb adom wood will be bent / will be solemnly bent / …wounded with tools” (p. 95). Here the poet means that any layperson will be fashioned and shall become a sage or a poet. The use of *tweneduru* and *duru* in the poem suggest co-existence of two languages. Untranslated words function as “interface signs [that] successfully
foreground cultural distinctions, so it would appear even more profitable to attempt to generate an ‘interculture’ by the fusion of the linguistic structures of two languages (Bill Ashcroft et al, 1989: 66). This fusion is what Bakhtin calls a novelistic hybridity. By definition,

“[A] novelistic hybrid is an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another the carving-out of a living image of another language” (Holquist, 1981:361).

Furthermore, instead of bringing in two different languages together, sometimes new words are invented. For example, Ashcroft et al observe: “Because the words to describe the new place [or objects] adequately cannot be found in the language brought with early settlers, the new terms must necessarily be invented” (2000: 74). The introduction of new words led to the birth of new terminologies such as hybridity, creolization, patois, nation language and liminal space, just to mention a few. In terms of political category, hybridity is the moment where within a single discourse one voice is able to unmask the other. This is a point where authoritative discourse is undone. According to Bakhtin, “[authoritative discourse] is by its very nature incapable of being double-voiced; it cannot enter into hybrid constructions (Holquist, 1981:344), but if it does, its single-voiced authority will immediately be undermined.

The discussion above shows that hybridity of colonial discourse reverses the structures of domination in the colonial situation. Hybridity describes a process in which the single voice of
colonial authority undermines the operation of colonial power by inscribing and disclosing the trace of the other so that it reveals itself as double-voiced.

Apart from the mixture of languages, Brathwaite displays a unique form of his poetry. Some words are split atrociously. For example, the third stage in the formation of the drum, “The Two Curved Sticks of the Drummer”, describes the nature and type of trees from which sticks are made.

There is a quick stick grows in the forest, blossoms twice yearly without leaves; bare white branches crack like lightning in the harmattan. (pp. 95-96)

The excerpt above shows arbitrary cutting of words that gives atrocious punctuation and scrambling of word order as if under the spell of “Hopkinsian infelicities.”13 The persona continues

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describing the formation of the drum. Now, the focus is on the nature of the tree which should be turned into drumming sticks. For instance, the persona reveals that a good stick should be made from a tree that blossoms twice a year but without leaves. Such a tree does not die and its wood is as hard as a stone and is as toneless as a bone. The poet implies that it is not each and every stick that we see around that could be turned into a stick of a drummer. These are special sticks, giving an allusion of special attributes for imbongis, griots or sages, the supposedly elites of African or Caribbean heritage. Just as trees for drumming sticks are identified well ahead of time, so should be the imbonji, whose voice should be as clear as possible. The discussion of the imbongis, griots and drums and drumming sticks evokes a thrust back to the remote past which is not feasible. It is therefore an intention to bring the past in to the present through the mixing of different cultures. The strange stanzaic form with some words split or joined help in formation of new ideas because the split or joined words end up forming new words and therefore new meanings.

As soon the sounding of the Gong – Gong has been heard, what follows is the beating and voicing of the drum. This is expounded in “Atumpan” the last poem in “Libation. In this poem, the persona imitates the voicing of the drum.

Kon kon kon kon
kun kun kun kun
Funtumi Akore
Tweneboa Akore
The persona produces sound that resembles the sound of a drum. The persona makes some words out of the sound. The voicing has been transcribed, forming words that points towards invocation of the drum’s spirit: a prayer for the persona’s success. The voicing of the drum is in vernacular language, creating a platform for coexistence of different languages in a single literary piece. Where vernacular languages are interspaced with foreign language such as in the following lines: “we are addressing you/ ye re kyere wo” (p. 99), the text renders itself to the notions of intertextuality. The dotted line at the end of “Atumpan’ after these words: “[L]isten / may we succeed …” (p. 99) suggests continuation of the prayer. This points towards improvisation as any other person may decide to put his own words to complete the poem. Coexistence of languages and improvisation provide a platform for introduction of hybrid aspects in the poem.
In “Path-finders,” the second section in *Masks*, the persona seeks his/her roots. Ngugi wa Thiong’o justifies the need for Africans to go back to their roots by arguing that

Africa, remember, was the dramatic scene of the cruel and bloody origin of the modern West Indies … Europeans agreed, the motive force in capitalism, was not satisfied with merely physical wrenching a whole people from their mother continent, but further stifled any possibility of a continuous culture on the part of the captives, by denying them a family life. Denied language and common culture, deprived of political and economic power, and without the corrective of an unbiased, and all-sided, educational system even after ‘freedom’ was regained, the uprooted black population looked to the white world for a pattern of life (wa Thiong’o, 1972: 81-2).

Africans in the Diasporas were made look to Africa, to their past, and even to their skin colour in shame and discomfort because before black Africans could begin to see themselves as a free and independent people, they had to clear from their minds the stigma that anything African was inherently inferior and degraded. Therefore, they ended up searching their roots by engaging political, cultural, literary and emotional involvement with Africa.

However, in “Volta,” the sixth poem in “Path-finders,” the persona exposes the fact that the “Path-finder’ or “researcher for his roots” is tired of wandering.
My lord, all this time since we left

Walata, you have led these people. Are you not
tired?

I am very tired, Munia. My head
aches, my feet
are weary; sometimes
the light seems to sing before my face.

My blood cries out for rest.

But still you won’t rest
you won’t give up. Can’t we
stop here? Have we
not traveled enough?

The young men murmur, El
Hassan; the women
long for the market
where they can chatter and laugh.

I know, I know.

Don’t you think that I too know

these things? Want these things?

Long for these soft things?

Ever since our city was destroyed

by dust, by fire; ever since our empire

fell through weakened thoughts, through

quarrelling, I have longed for

markets again, for parks

where my people may walk,

for homes where they may sleep,

for lively arenas     (p. 107)

The persona would like to lead an African life now after trying other cultures and traditions for a long time. In this poem the persona discusses the futility of foreign cultures. In the Diaspora, different people are suffering from nostalgia. For instance, young men remember one of their
ancestors, El Hassan, back home in Africa. Women on the other hand, long for markets. The difference between the Diaspora and Africa are further expounded. For example, the persona says, “I have wanted these things / But I have not found them yet/ …Here the land is dry, the bush / brown. No sweet water flows” (p. 108).

Although the persona is in the Promised Land, just as the Israelites remembered what they left behind in Egypt, Africans in the Diaspora did not let go some elements of the foreign land. The persona laments:

But the lips remember

temples, gods and pharaohs,

gold, silver ware; imagination

rose on wide unfolded wings. (p. 113)

The persona compares the returnees to Israelites who had stayed in Egypt, the land of bondage for a long and could not let go some of the precious products of Egypt. In the same way, the persona laments that the returnees still mention the gold and silver of the Diaspora. However, despite many good things people enjoy in the Diaspora, the persona is convinced that home, in this case, Africa, is the best.
Having surmounted the numerous obstacles in the Diaspora, the returnee/persona discusses the actual physical encounter with the West of Africa. “The Return”, the fourth section in *Masks* is a collection of poems that discuss the physical features in this part of Africa. The first poem in this section, “The New Ships” discusses Takoradi, a port in Ghana. It is a hot place with a language different from that of the Diaspora. The returnee is welcomed with *akwaaba* and in response he says *aye kooo*. This shows that as soon as the returnees land in Africa they learn a new language for easy communication because they come back from the physical Diaspora as strangers.

Apart from language, the persona learns other new aspects of the Ghanaian life because as the persona was away for three hundred years he has come back a total stranger since many things have changed (p. 124). A native Ghanaian welcomes the ‘stranger’ (though in his own land):

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welcome

here is a stool for

you; sit; do

you remember?

here is water

dip
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wash your hands

are you ready
to eat?

here is plantain

here is palm oil:
red staining the fingers;
good for the heat,
for the sweat.

do

you remember?

The persona recounts what happens to the immigrant, the returnee. He learns a lot of Ghanaian life as soon as he reaches Takoradi. The persona is told that people in Africa sit on the stool, eat using hands, eat plantains and drink palm oil. These foodstuffs are offered to the returnee in quick succession as such the persona experiences a cultural shock in his own homeland because he has been away for a long time. He is born from a family of the exiled predecessors who had been away for over three hundred years. He is shocked that, in Ghana, waters have no fish; his mother and father could not be found in that distant town; and that he could not hear the drum. The persona
would therefore like to find out whose ancestor he is. Like Matigari in Ngugi’s *Matigari*, the persona suffers from serious alienation, as he could not hear his children laugh and wonders whose brother he is then. The persona is shocked that what he was expecting at home is not what is happening: he does not find familiar places, faces and rituals. The persona is unfortunately taken as a dangerous stranger. His own people reject him. This rejection is the reward that the persona gets for going back to his roots. However, this rejection vindicates the claim that culture is not static but dynamic.

The poem “The New Ships” encapsulates what happened to many Africans who attempt to come back to Africa. Many Africans have suffered serious identity crises. For example, Ngugi wa Thiong’o in *Homecoming* reveals that E. R. Braithwaite, a Guyanese writer comes to Africa but cannot locate the part of Africa his ancestors came from. Many years of slavery and manumission through which his forefathers passed completely have separated him from his people. He therefore doubts if there is any part of him which has remained African after all these years of physical alienation. He ends up embracing all Africa as his original home because he belongs to a group of Africans in the physical Diaspora who believe that Africa is their original home. According to Salkey (1959), these sons and daughters of Africa in the Diaspora realize that

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Everybody is a part of slavery days, is a part of the climate – a – Africa and the feeling in the heart is Africa feelings that beating there, far down … We all come down from Ashanti people who did powerful plenty, and we have the same bad feelings that them did have (p. 151).
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The type of English above foregrounds mimicry, a persistent feature of displaced or colonized people. The assertion above was made in reaction to some Blacks living in St Thomas who denied the African presence in their blood, saying they were not related to the enslaved Africans. Such Blacks never took the trouble to search for their roots. Brathwaite’s *Masks*, like the main character in Denis William’s novel, *Other Leopards*, depicts a search for roots through a personal involvement with actual Africa. Set in Sudan, the hero in *Other Leopards* is estranged from his world and starts with the discomfort of his Christian (white) name, Lionel. He wants to find out more about his other (African) name, Lobo, which his sister had once given him.

She called me Lobo, and Lobo I became, except that Lionel remained on my birth certificate and is set to plague me like a festering conscience for the rest of my days, look of it. I became Lobo and that’s the whole trouble; I am a man, you see, plagued by these two names, and this is their history; Lionel, the [person] who I was, dealing with Lobo, the [one] who I continuously felt I ought to become (Williams, 1963: 19).

Being given a foreign name divides the personality of an individual as part of him is foreign while the other half is native. Brathwaite, apart from physically coming to Africa as E.R. Braithwaite did, also inserts “Kamau” in-between Edward and Brathwaite which immediately reveals his yearning for an African identity. This, however, brings ambiguity and absurdity of the new identity. According to Homi Bhabha’s *Location of Culture*, the new personality display different traces called transcultural identities and the problem with this situation is that plurality of identities
leads to the production of “a reformed recognized Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994: 162). Such transcultural identities produce mimic-men which shows that whenever two cultures or languages meet, mimicry is an unavoidable. This is why Brathwaite Ashcroft et al (2006: 154) lament: “Whenever the opportunity made it possible, they and their descendants rejected or disowned their own culture, becoming, like their masters, ‘mimic-men’.”

Failure by E.R. Brathwaite and Edward Kamau Brathwaite to trace their home suggests that societies change with time. Even the most dogmatic in adherence to culture do change with time such that if someone goes away for some time he is likely to come back a changed person and he would also find a slightly different culture. Arguing against essentialities of pure cultures and languages, Kwame Anthony Appiah (in “The Illusions of Race”) contends:

The classification of people into ‘races’ would be biologically interesting if both the margins and the migrations had not left behind a genetic trail. But they have, and along that trail are millions of us . . . who can be fitted into no plausible scheme at all. In a sense, trying to classify people into a few races is like trying to classify books in a library: you may use a single property – size, say – but you will get a useless classification. (Ashcroft et al, 2006: 225)

The discussion above underscores the fact that culture is never static. This is why even some minority communities respond to their environment. For example, in “There Ain’t No Black in
Union Jack”, Paul Gilroy argues that “Britain’s various black communities are no more static than the evolving social practices of all the other participants in the country’s civic order. Furthermore, Ashcroft et al contend that

“Cultural autonomy demands a norm and a residential correspondence between the ‘great’ and the ‘little’ traditions within the society. [Unfortunately,] under slavery there were two ‘great’ traditions, one in Europe, the other in Africa, and so neither was residential (2006: 154).

Since there was no tradition in the Caribbean that was residential, the situation was quite different from that of the African landscape. Caribbean Islands became linguistically heterogeneous. Apart from African languages, the islands were exposed to the following European languages: English, French, Spanish and Dutch (Brathwaite, 1984). The cultural autonomy that prevailed was that of a nation language, a creole, pidgin, or patois. Brathwaite would rather call the dominant language of the Caribbean landscape a nation language because it is a dynamic, heterogeneous and variant language which rejects the “concept of standard English [,] a construction of imperial rhetoric that constantly separates ‘centre’ from margin” (Ashcroft et al, 2000:149).

“Masks,” the second poem in “The Return,” is an example of a prayer to “masks” or gods. The person reveals that the wise are divided, and that the eyes of the elders are dead because god’s (ancestral) tree has been split by a white axe of lightning (p.130). This is a reference to the Western culture that has divided, displaced and destroyed the African cultures and philosophy. This concurs
with Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* that the white man has put a knife on things that hold Africans together as such we cannot fight as one. In the last stanza, the persona is asking for guidance and protection from the gods.

The persona through a flashback is reminded of the atrocities committed by the whites who, through the port of Elmina, came to the West coast of Africa and bought slaves or raided villages for slaves.

Back

through Elmina,

white granite stone

stalking the sun-

light the dun-

dgeon unbars. I hear

the whips of slavers

see the tears

of my daughters;

over glass
of their shattered
cries, feet

bleeding …(p. 133)

The persona argues that slavery and slave trade marked the starting point of suffering. For instance, slaves were whipped and shackled but walked on with their bleeding feet. Africa was depopulated due to slave trade, leaving behind thickets, leopards and snakes and ruins. The persona continues that “Nazarene cross / [b]ells silenced the gong-gong” (p. 134), a reference to Christianity which weakened the traditional religion. The new religion divided clans and kinsmen. Later, Government opened cocoa plantations in these desolate places where natives lived. Much as the slave trade and Christianity divided Africans, this division was not clear-cut.

The last poem in this section and of course in the whole collection Masks is titled “The Golden Stool”. Some Africans who had denounced Christianity still respected African culture. For instance, in Achebe’s Arrow of God, John Nwodika, a Christian and messenger for Winterbottom (District Officer), is not ready to reveal where Ezeulu is and takes great care of the latter because he still thinks that the Chief Priest is more powerful than the white man. This fact means that, though he is a Christian, he still cherishes some fond memories of the traditional religion. Likewise, Obierika in Things Fall Apart seems to understand and respect foreign ideologies but he remains loyal to his native tradition. This ambivalent behaviour of the natives is a clear
manifestation of hybridity of the colonized. The same ambivalent behaviour is manifested in
*Masks*. The persona says,

> When the worm’s knife cuts
> the throat of a tree, what will happen?
>
> It will die.
> When a cancer has eaten the guts
> of a man, what will surely happen?
>
> He will die.

> My people, that is the condition of the country today:
> it is sick at heart, to its bitter clay.
>
> We cannot heal it or hold it together from curses,
> because we do not believe in it. (p. 143)
The persona is addressing chiefs and people of the Asantehene, asking what would happen when the worm’s knife cuts the throat of a tree. The audience’s response is that tree will die. The persona asks again as to what would happen when cancer eats the intestines of a man. The people’s response is that that man is likely to die. The persona then draws a conclusion from the two instances that in the same way “they cannot heal or hold together from curses because they do not believe in it”. The foreign culture has eaten away the African culture that the poet is trying to uphold just as cancer eats away the man’s guts, which would automatically lead to the death of the African culture. Colonialism actually wanted to erase the African history. It was a carefully planned agenda because “imperialism as a hunter of prehistory, killed the being first spiritually and culturally, before seeking to destroy it physically” (Sertima, 1989: 162). This is why Fanon argues,

Colialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it (1990: 169).

When a people’s past is erased, people become rootless. The long period of stay in the Diaspora has made the persona rootless. His/her culture has for a long time been suppressed. Gareth Griffiths in “The Myth of Authenticity” adds that “the result of the deliberate suppression of the pre-colonial cultures, and the displacement of their people in a policy of assimilation was the creation of hybridized conditions of the colonized society” (Tiffin and Lawson, 1994: 75).
The persona reveals that before Europeans came in Africa, there was law and order, peace and tranquility. People sat before their kings and listened to their philosophy. The chief laments that his kingdom is divided, “it is sick at the heart such that it cannot be healed because they do not believe in it (p. 143). The persona therefore asks people to support and promote their culture and not the foreign ideologies. This poem shows that the persona has reached home but the people are no longer adhering to their ancestors’ cultural traditions. The persona is not the only one that has been transformed due to influences of the new culture. The only difference is that while the persona has been physically away from his home for a long time, according to Francis Bebey in Femi Abodunrin (2008), his supposedly relatives have been in mental or spiritual Diaspora for a good period of time as well.

All different aspects of cultures from different parts of the world find space in postcolonial literature by displaying cultural, linguistic, racial, political and stylistic hybridity. As such the next chapters discuss hybridity in prose fiction.
CHAPTER 4: HYBRIDITY IN NGUGI WA THIONG’O’S MATIGARI

Just like in Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors and Brathwaite’s Masks, Ngugi’s Matigari display some traces of hybridity. Ngugi’s Matigari features hybrid aspects through names of characters, places and ideas as well as through inclusion of songs in vernacular languages and coexistence of various languages.

For instance, the main character is Matigari ma Njiruungi. The author translates the name literally as “the patriots who survived bullets’ – the patriots who survived the liberation war, and their political offspring” (p. 20). Other characters with native names include Ngururo wa Kiriro, Muriuki, and Guthera. By including native names in a text that is predominantly in English, the text serves as a means of providing dialogic process between English and Gikuyu languages which in the long run renders the text to the notion of intertextuality. Through intertextuality, the “past-present” becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living (Bhabha, 1994: 7).

The novel seems to belong to what Bhabha (1994) calls the “borderline” cultures because intertextuality permeates public domains. For example, the text records an instance of coexistence of languages even on restaurant menu. The author includes a menu at Mataha Hotel Bar and Restaurant which reads as follows: “Ugali with Roast Meat and Stew; Greens with Maize and Beans . . .” (p. 230. The word “ugali” is italicized because the author is aware that it is not an English word but it has fitted very well. This inclusion of a native word in the menu announces hybridity of the text since “[t]he borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present” (Bhabha, 1994: 7).
The author also includes the voices from the juke-box from which the song “Shauri Yako” is heard. The song is in Kiswahili and it means “that is Your Problem” (p. 25). Another instance of coexistence of languages includes Matigari’s description of Guthera’s dressing. For instance, Matigari describes Guthera who is running away from the police as follows: “See how well she wears her flower – patterned lasso around her shoulders so that the flaps fall gently in soft folds over her shoulders and breasts” (p. 28). As Matigari describes Guthera, his utterance contains a single Kiswahili word “lasso” that has smartly been integrated in the English lexis. It simply means “wrapper” (p. 28). The insertion of Kiswahili words “ugali, shauri yako and lasso” implies a number of things as declared by Ashcroft et al below:

Cultural identity . . . is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformations. Far from being eternally fixed in some essential past, they are subject to continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere ‘recovery’ of the past which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (Ashcroft et al, 2006: 435).
By using Kiswahili words in a text that is predominantly in English language, the author shows that he belongs to the past Kiswahili and English cultures. However, the author is not fixed to a remote past, neither is he to the present or future. His cultural identity, though very learned, is in the process of “becoming as well as being.” The insertion of Kiswahili words in English language utterances therefore demonstrates Bhabha’s theory of ambivalence that “disrupts any simple relationship between the colonizer and the colonized” (Ashcroft et al, 2000:13).

Later, Matigari demands that the police leave Guthera but one of the policemen speaks in Kiswahili: “Wewe mwenda wazimu,” which literally means “you are crazy” (p. 32). The author further takes the trouble of translating Kiswahili sentences into English. Furthermore, when Matigari goes to the house occupied by John Boy Junior, he (Matigari) asks for keys of the house but the John Boy Junior respond in vernacular language which the author translates into English as shown in the following conversation:

“What do you need the keys for?”

“To let myself into the house. I have wandered far too many years in far too many places over the earth.”

“So you think that is a hotel?” The black man said with angry sarcasm. “Bob, come and see the bloke who claims that my house belongs to him” (p. 44).
John Boy Junior mixes two codes: English and Kiswahili. He speaks English then later on Kiswahili before he goes back to English. This is an indication of “code-switching”, an aspect of hybridity. In Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, Jack C. Richards, John Platt and Heidi Platt explain the term code switching as follows:

Code switching involves a change by the speaker (or writer) from one language or language variety to another one. Code switching can take place in a conversation when one speaker uses one language and the other speaker answers in a different language. A person may start speaking one language and then change to another one in the middle of their speech, or sometimes even in the middle of a sentence (Richards et al, 1992: 58).

Another feature of linguistic hybridity includes code-mixing which “involves mixing two languages usually without changing the topic” (Richards et al, 1992: 57). Whether authors use code-switching or code-mixing, both practices promote coexistence of two different languages in a literary text. Appel and Muysken give reasons for switching codes:

Switching can serve the referential function because it often involves lack of knowledge of one language or lack of facility in that language on a certain subject . . . Switching often serves a directive function in that it involves the hearer directly . . . Poplack (1980) in particular has stressed the expressive function of code switching. Speakers emphasize a mixed identity through the use of two languages in the same discourse (Appel and Muysken, 2005: 118-9).
The discussion above shows that code-mixing and code-switching are done on a purpose. More importantly, switching or mixing codes shows the speaker’s ambivalence and/or hybridity. The two practices show bilingual or multilingual nature of the author or characters. Both Robert William and John Boy Junior understand Kiswahili and yet they both understand English language and culture. “Such art [of code-mixing] does not merely recall the past as a social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent ‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present” (Bhabha, 1994: 7). In short, this code-mixing shows that the speaker, John Boy Junior belongs to two worlds: Kiswahili and English. The act of code-mixing is similar to hybridization described in Chapter 2 (p. 14) because both processes involve the mixture of two languages in a single utterance.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o exposes what Osundare calls “the kissing and quarrelling” of languages. He comes up with acronyms in English language that form words in Gikuyu and these words represent the behaviour or true colours of the organization as shown in the following conversation:

“I’ll give you some advice. This is my house. This house and the land around it are mine. They were sold to me by the son of Howard Williams, this one you see here.”

“Him?”

“Yes. He is the first born of Williams. He is somebody. Yes, watch out, for he is not just anybody. He is a director of Anglo-American International Conglomerate of Insurance (AICI) and Agribusiness Co-ordinating International Organisation (ACIO); and he is also
a director of the local branch of Bankers’ International Union (BIU). We are both members of the board of governors of the leather and plastic factory...” (p. 50)

To help readers understand the meaning of the acronyms formed, Ngugi offers footnotes that reveal that in Gikuyu language, Aici refers to “thieves,” Acio “those”, and Biu “thorough;” hence, “those thorough thieves”. The use of Anglo-American International Conglomerate of Insurance (AICI), Agribusiness Co-ordinating International Organisation (ACIO) and Bankers’ International Union (BIU) to form the following Gikuyu words: “Aici”, “Acio” and “Biu” is a political act. What Ngugi does in this section is tantamount to Bhabha’s notion of mimicry as supported by the following assertions:

[M]imicry is the process by which the colonized subject is reproduced as ‘almost the same, but not quite’ (Bhabha 1994:86). The copying of the colonizing culture, behaviour, manners and values by the colonized contains both mockery and a certain ‘menace’, ‘so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace’ (86). Mimicry reveals the limitation in the authority of colonial discourse, almost as though colonial authority inevitably embodies the seeds of its own destruction (Ashcroft et al, 2000: 140).

The quotation above means that Ngugi is not only involved in producing literature that resembles the Victorian literature, for example, but also uses the same forum to mock the very language that he is using by showing that, through the process of appropriation and abrogation, the very English words may mean something else. It therefore means that when Africans use European language in
articulating postcolonial issues, sometimes they do so as a strategy for disguising themselves in order to retain their cultures; so they define that foreign language as a “forced poetics” (Brathwaite, 1984: 16). This means that although Ngugi wrote Matigari in English, its message is a menace to and mockery of the colonial intrusion.

The observation above underscores the fact that the storyline, the language and cultural experiences in Ngugi’s Matigari occupy the ‘in-between’ space. Bhabha likens such a space to “[t]he hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and the passage it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities [because] [t]his interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 1994: 4). Here, Bhabha implies that the hybrid space is flexible and opens up to different linguistic and cultural orientations. Furthermore, Bhabha observes:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance . . . [T]he theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity . . . And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves (Bhabha, 1994: 38-9).
In the excerpt above, Bhabha advances that the mixing of different cultures leads to transformation of identities. Hybridity announces cultural impurity, which negates any claims to a definite identity or cultural purity. For instance, Bhabha stresses:

[our intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very act of going beyond – are unknowable, unreprentable, without a return to the ‘present’ which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced. The imaginary of spatial distance – to live somehow beyond the border of our times – throws into belief the temporal, social difference that interrupt our collusive sense of cultural contemporaneity. The present can no longer be simply envisaged as a break or a bonding with the past and the future, no longer a synchronic presence (1994: 4).

Bhabha implies that cultural impurity leads to identity crisis and that one of the major causes of identity crisis is the ambivalent nature of postcolonial culture. He says so because most subjects, forms or styles of literary production display ambivalence. Although it is recorded that colonialism divided the world strictly into neat categories such as colonizer/colonized, civilized/savage, Western/Eastern, European/African, Black/White, centre/margin and Self/Other, just to mention a few categories, and that the postcolonial world is characterized by the breakdown of such strict definitions (O’Reilly, 2001), Bhabha’s assertions above suggest contrary views. Such strict divisions were only on paper because both parties were [and still are] equally affected by the mixture of cultures. Basically, through Matigari, the author mocks international and multinational
companies operating in the country that are exploiting the natives. What is more painful is that political leaders have teamed up with company owners to exploit the land.

*Matigari* is a mixture of prose fiction and poetry such that songs, a brand of poetry, constitute a good part of the novel. There are several songs in the novel but the most common one is a praise poem in honour of Matigari which reads:

> Show me the way to a man

> Whose name is Matigari ma Njiruungi

> Who stamps his feet to the rhythm of balls.

> And the bullets jingle (p. 127).

The coexistence of poetry and prose fiction presents hybridity of the novel. Just like Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* and Brathwaite’s *Masks*, Ngugi’s *Matigari* does not respect the boundaries between poetry and prose. Mixing genres is therefore one of the strategies that the novelist has adopted to create the literary piece.

The author has also adopted the use of voices from the radio to narrate the story. In such cases italics have been used to show direct speech. For example, in Part Three, the whole of Chapter 5 reads:
This is the Voice of Truth . . . A special announcement. The Police are continuing their search for a group of madmen who escaped from a mental hospital. The policemen are also looking for a woman and a boy, who were earlier seen taking food to one of the patients. The police have appealed to the boy and woman to present themselves at the nearest police station, in order to help the police in their investigation (p. 133).

The italicized word provides continuity of the story as the police officers launch a search of Matigari, Muriuki and Guthera. The novel becomes a collection of stories with patches from different sources which is an aspect of hybridity.

The content of the radio announcement is also a matter of hybridity as well. There are news headlines for almost all countries in the word: For instance, part of the news bulletin reads:


(p. 83)

Though the news headlines are dominated by the presidents’ achievements, there are also several instances of news headlines from all parts of the word, covering a wide range of topics. Therefore,
apart from using radio announcements as a means of narrating this story, the author has mixed different ideas in the novel, which provides stylistic and ideological hybridity.

The radio announces that the government has declared that the public should not panic because of the news about the lunatic roaming in the country who claims to be Matigari, a freedom fighter, because freedom fighters returned from the mountains soon after the country got independence. The radio also announces that two university students who appeared in court yesterday on charges of possessing seditious documents were detained without trial; five other students who were arrested yesterday on charges of illegal demonstration in protest against USA and Western European support of South Africa Apartheid regime were each given a five-year sentence; students who wanted to form a national union of students have been urged to stop provoking the government for there is only party in the country. In the same news bulletin, the radio announces that the minister for Truth and Justice will be visiting the Anglo-American Leather and Plastic Factory where he will be addressing the directors and the workers at the factory premises where workers clashed with the police. The minister is interested in meeting the striking workers to silence them because these ministers and company owners are partners so they would not wish the strike to go on. This view concurs with Fanon who argues that:

Today the vultures are too numerous and too voracious in proportion to the lean spoils of the national wealth. The party, a true instrument of power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, reinforces the machine, and ensures that the people are hemmed in immobilized (1990: 138).
As a member of the ruling party, the Minister of Truth and Justice goes to the company not to listen to the strikers’ plight but to silence them. The government minister is therefore an ambivalent personality. Instead of standing up for the poor, he goes to the company as machinery for reinforcing economic hardships on the poor workers. There is coordination between company owners and government officials because the two sides share the same vision: to make more profits. The announcement also laments that workers who were on strike burnt effigies of the directors. The news bulletin concludes with an item about Matrigari that people should not heed the rumours that the Angel Gabriel let some prisoners out of their cell and that one of the prisoners was Jesus Christ. The news items are all instances of hybridity. Stories on different subjects are given in a single bulletin.

As a collection of patches from different sources, the novel contains all the ten commandment found in the Holy Bible in Exodus 20: 1- 17 or Deuteronomy 5: 1-21. As a born-again Christian, Guthera was supposed to keep the Ten Commandments which reads:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image:

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy . . .

Honor thy father and thy mother . . .

Thou shalt not kill.
Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Thou shall not covet thy neighbour’s things . . . (p. 34).

After going through the same type of formal education and running their business together for a long time, Bob Williams and John Boy Junior have become so alike in doing things. For example, the narrating character reports:

A white man and a black man sat on one side of the narrow tarmac road next to the gate. Their horses were exactly alike. Both had silky brown bodies. The riders too wore clothes of the same colour. Indeed the only difference between the two men was their skin colour. Even their postures as they sat in the middle were exactly the same. The way they held their whips and the reins – no difference. And they spoke in the same manner (p. 43)

This description shows that even if people would come from different backgrounds, due to some factors that unite them, they coexist so well. Therefore to cry for the remote past, as Chinweizu, Jenie and Madubuike do in *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* is similar to Matigari’s claims in Ngugi’s *Matigari* which is counterproductive and not feasible. African leaders (such as John Boy Junior, His Excellency Ole Excellence and his ministers) who have taken up the positions previously held by Europeans continue the legacy initiated by their colonial masters.
Such colonialist masters are what Fanon (1990) calls “colonialist bourgeoisie.” Robert Williams, as a partner of John Boy Junior and the government officials, takes a rear guard action as claimed by Fanon:

The colonialist bourgeoisie, when it realizes that it is impossible for it to maintain its domination over the colonial countries, decides to carry out a rear-guard action with regard to culture, values, techniques and so on (Fanon, 1990: 34).

Fanon implies that there is coordination between natives and colonial masters which eventually disadvantages the poor. Though in an independent state, characters in *Matigari* show that the external influences are still being exerted on the natives through their collaborators in administration of business transactions. The private companies mentioned above exert a subtle force through the same rear-guard action because they operate in poor countries, with some conditions attached, as claimed by Fanon (1990: 82): “Private companies, when asked to invest in independent countries, lay down conditions which are shown in practice to be unacceptable or unrealizable.” This argument shows that running government affairs incorporates native/indigenous as well as foreign policies. Whether directly or indirectly, both indigenous and foreign ideologies are incorporated in the policy documents for the smooth running of the affairs of independent nations.
Guthera’s absolute hatred for the police officers in Matigari has a funny background that portrays how the coming of Whites and Christianity divided the society. The author narrates the episode as follows:

Then the war broke out. People became divided. Some of them were patriots, and the others were sell-outs. The world seemed up-side down. Children turned up against their parents, parents against their children. Sister and brother swore to take each other’s lives. But the girl paid heed to two masters only: her heavenly Father and her earthly one (p 34).

However, when her earthly father had joined patriots and was found with bullets in his Bible, he was arrested. The police officer confided in her that should she let him sleep with her then her earthly father would be set free. But Guthera chose to obey her heavenly Father’s commandment which decrees “Thou shall not commit adultery.” Eventually, her father was killed. After the death of her earthly father, life at home was unbearable. Since she was the eldest child she was charged with the full responsibility to take care of her siblings. Due financial problems, she joined prostitution but had vowed not to sleep with any cop for they had killed her earthly father. This is why she is being harassed by the policemen who set a dog on her and would have been further abused if it were not for Matigari who stops the law-enforces from abusing the young lady. However, by joining prostitution, she had not obeyed both fathers. This incident shows a divided society where there is no respect for values. Characters display a hybrid culture in politics, dressing, language and their outlook on life. For example, Guthera is an ambivalent character. She wants to display Christian values but the love for her family betrays her. This is one of the incidents
that show the evils of Western ideologies. Just like in the Ngugi’s *The River Between* and Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the natives are divided because some of them have embraced Western ideologies. By carrying bullets in his Bible, Guthera’s father shows that he was putting on a mask. He is not a committed Christian because he is preoccupied with freedom fighting.

The author exposes two different extremes of people’s lives. The black man with a bottle of beer and a black woman with a soft drink in a Mercedes Benz represent great luxury while the other section of society has very poor people. Matigari remembers the hardships workers faced at the factory in the past. For instance he wonders whether the time for break at the factory is still only five minutes (p.9). This scene captures socio-economic hybridity because in the same country where people are living in abject poverty others experience great luxury. Black people have replaced white people in ill-treating their fellow Africans because they have accumulated a lot of wealth for themselves, leaving others in dire need.

To illustrate this divided society, the author narrates an incident in which Matigari follows a tractor that is carrying garbage (pp. 10-12). Street urchins follow it, rampage in the garbage, competing with dogs, vultures, rats and all sorts of scavengers for bits of leather, shoe soles, rubber bands, bread, rotten tomatoes, sugarcane chaff, banana peels, and bones. These urchins queue before they enter the garbage yard to pay for the rampaging. The money paid is shared among the two policemen, two men and a tractor driver. This situation shows that the country is divided between the rich and the poor. Unfortunately, the rich do not care about the plight of the poor as such the rich keep stealing from the poor of the poorest.
Another incident that shows polarity and ambivalence of the society takes place at the same garbage yard. The boy who is being bullied reveals that he is afraid of Matigari because the boy thinks Matigari is one of those adults who grab what they find in the garbage yard. The boy also reveals that the money they pay at the entrance to the garbage yard is supposed to be council tax that they are to pay for roaming the yard but the two men have taken it upon themselves to tax the boys. “He found the two policemen with the dog, the tractor driver and the two men who had collected money from the children in conference behind a bush near the road.” (p.12) This shows that a handful of people still profited from the suffering of the majority, the sorrow of many being the joy of a few. If the boys do not pay to them, they (the men) beat up the boys. The young boy reveals that it is difficult to report these men to the police because “the police and these bandits work together” (p.14). This revelation exposes coordination to exploit the poor at all levels. Both the tractor driver and the police show that they belong to two worlds: the world of the suffering majority and the also the ruling elite. The world is therefore divided into two: the haves and the have nots as declared by Karl Max. Economically, the street urchins could be placed in the category of the poorest but the tractor driver and police officers belong to both worlds because there is no clear dividing line between the tractor diver/police officers and company owners.

Furthermore, a bill-board that reads “Anglo-American leather and plastic work private property, No way” (p. 10) carries a lot of information. It shows that some pieces of land in this part of country belong to Americans and the English people so no one should be trespassing such premises. This bill-board shows co-existence between Americans and English people and Africans, a reflection of the post-colonial situation that come about as a result of multinational companies. These companies employ the native people to work as guards. However, these guards
are wearing uniform bearing these words. “Guard, Company Property” which implies that when a guard is working for this company, he ceases to be a human being in his own right. He becomes a company property. These guards therefore display ambivalent traits: they are both Africans and Europeans. The banner “Guard, Company Property” epitomizes hybridity as a difficult and painful history of interracial identity (Bhabha, 1994). The guards have split identity because their contact with the West makes them not fully Africans, and yet they are not Americans. The author being a postcolonial subject himself shows “the triumph of the postcolonial or the subaltern over the hegemonic” practices or the colonizing cultures by articulating African problems in a new language. Haj Yazdiha explains the dynamics of using the colonizers’ language to attack the same colonizers as follows:

[T]he use of the colonizers’ language by the colonized to speak of the crimes of colonialism is its own transgression and an act of resistance. In taking ownership of the language, changing the way that it is used, the boundaries of language as belonging to a specific place or race are dissolved (Yazdiha, 2010: 34)

Yazdiha means that the use of a foreign language should not be taken as mere imitation of a dominating culture because when it is being used it forms some sort of resistance. The use of a foreign language, in essence, removes the possible boundaries because what is being used is not a pure variety but a hybrid one.
The novel shows intertextuality between the Holy Bible and other literary works. For example, in the Holy Bible, Jesus feeds the multitude on several occasions. Likewise, Matigari feeds the inmates before he and all the other ten in-mates ‘miraculously’ get out of the prison cells. In this regard, Matigari behaves as Jesus Christ who had a lot of authority over anything when he was on earth. The doors of the prison cells open just as it happened to Paul and Silas when they were put in prison. People think/believe Matigari is the son of man prophesized about in the Bible. The justification is that Africa should not be underrated for hosting the Messiah since the eldest church is in Ethiopia and when Jesus was a baby he fled to Egypt (Part 2, Chapter 8). The inclusion of stories from the Holy Bible in Matigari makes this novel a hybrid of events from different sources.

Much as Gikuyu and Kiswahili languages are suppressed in the course of writing a literary text in English, Gareth Griffiths in Bhabha (1994) observes that “the result of the deliberate suppression of the pre-colonial cultures, and the displacement of the people in a policy of assimilation was the creation of hybridized conditions of the colonized society” (1994: 75). Similarly, in Ngugi’s Matigari, the native languages have just been suppressed and not completely annihilated. In order to produce hybrid texts, postcolonial authors suppress their native languages. This is why in Part Three of "Establishing Literary Independence: Hybridity in Zimbabwean Literature," Antwan Jefferson (1999) argues, “It is only when a writer intends to write from a non-native perspective that the cultural context is minimized, and even then few aspects are still evident in the produced literature.”

Although cultural identity is commonly defined “in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’,
which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (Ashcroft et al, 2000: 435), through an essay entitled “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Stuart Gill unveils that there is more than this definition because cultural identity is not only a matter of ‘becoming’ but also as state of ‘being.’ Ngugi displays knowledge and mastery of cultural, historical and linguistic aspects of the English culture but does not forget the native Gikuyu and Kiswahili lexical items. Although “Claude Levi-Strauss developed the term *bricolage* to describe mixed forms within narratives [and that] creolization describes the linguistic blending of dominant and sub dominant cultures” ((Yazdiha, 2010: 34), it does not follow that dominant languages have an upper hand in forming hybrids; they are equally affected by the subdominant languages. Creolization breeds conflicting identities. For example, as a postcolonial text, Ngugi’s *Matigari* is a product of conflicting identities as claimed by Fanon:

> The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the Native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements (Fanon, 1967: 25).

Since authors of literary works attended Western education, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and other educated Africans who write in foreign languages could be compared with Negroes who, for a long time, had been in the Diaspora and were returning to Africa. These returnees came back deformed as claimed by Fanon: “And the fact that the newly returned Negro adopts a language
different from that of the group into which he was born is evidence of a dislocation, a separation” (Fanon, 1967: 25). This dislocation or separation that Fanon talks about is an instance of blurred personalities since the returnees display double-consciousness, a mark of hybridity. Considering the dangers of sticking to Western cultures Fanon argues, “Insofar as he (the returnee) conceives of European culture as a means of stripping himself of his race, he becomes alienated” (Fanon, 1967: 224). Fanon’s arguments suggest that it is only the African who is affected by Western culture, which is not true because “[p]ost-colonial is the continual shedding of the old skin of Western thought and discourse and the emergence of new self-awareness, critique, and celebration” (Hayati and Amiri, Barnolipi: An Interdisciplinary Journal, p. 12). Much as the returnee seems alienated, he does not find the natives the same as already pointed out in the preceding chapters.

By writing *Matigari* in English language, Ngugi displayed his double-consciousness that is similar to that of African-Americans. According to DuBois’ *The Souls of Black Folks* an African American is born with a veil; he does not put on his/her true face.

[T]he Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world — a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two
unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife — this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face (Gates Jr. and McKay, 1997: 615).

There are a lot of lessons that can be drawn from the excerpt above. For instance, this shows that an African writer always looks at himself through the eyes of Western authors; his yardstick for measuring his achievements. He would not Africanize Europe, for Europe has too much to teach the world and Africa. Neither would he denounce his status as a Negro; it is the contradiction of double aims.

Such contradictions of double aims are portrayed in Ngugi's *Matigari*. As an ambivalent character, Matigari represents disillusioned Kenyans who felt cheated after driving out the colonialists. Therefore, as a typical post-colonial text, Ngugi's *Matigari* shows that:
Post-colonial literatures are a reflection of the changing values of a post-colonial world: criticism of the cultural assumptions of the ‘centre’, the metropolis, the need to see texts within their cultural contexts and an awareness of the importance of recognizing different, perhaps conflicting, reading of the same text (O’Reilly, 2001: 102)

It could therefore be concluded that Ngugi’s *Matigari* presents an “in-between’ space in which cultural change may occur: the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is continual process of movement and interchange between different states (Ashcroft et al, 2000:130). The novel displays ambivalent traits of the characters because they show their double-consciousness. Bhabha (1994) argues that claims to inherent originality or purity of cultures are unattainable even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. Therefore, apart from seeing texts as part of a dominant or resistant culture, this study also emphasise hybridity as an eclectic nature of post-colonial writing in terms of both content and style because hybridity is opposed to cultural purity (O’Reilly, 2001). Transcultural forms that are developed within the contact zone, which Bhabha calls the ‘in-between space,’ carry the burden and meaning of the new culture (Ashcroft et al, 2000).

As liminal spheres, Brathwaite’s *Masks* and Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, and Ngugi’s *Matigari* represent hybrid aspects that deconstruct cultural boundaries. Yazdiha tactfully describes hybrid aspects as follows:
These hybrid poetries can be viewed as a gateway to understanding those once deemed unfamiliar, and hybridity of language becomes a way by which to deconstruct and relate to collectives across cultural boundaries (Yazdiha, 2010: 34).

The aforementioned discussion on hybridity invokes the concept of *intertextuality*. Molande (2006) simplifies the notion of *intertextuality* as a situation in which texts echo each other because each text is in/formed by fragments or genes of prior texts – either oral or written. In the same way Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* and Brathwaite’s *Masks* and Ngugi’s *Matigari* consist of linguistic, cultural, historical, socio-economic and political fragments from different parts of the world. The above literary works have Afrocentric as well as Eurocentric styles and content. For example, both sets of poetry and the novel have oral traditions, an indication that they have drawn from African tradition of storytelling and poetry. Furthermore, the discussion above shows that all the authors have blurred boundaries between genres. Since the creation of the literary works is based on two traditions (African and European), revitalization or yearning for the restoration of the lost glory and the beautiful past is just ideological for it is not feasible.

Peculiar language use leads to multiple meanings of structures. Hybridity is thus intentional as well as unconscious or unintentional organic in which the mixture merges and is fused into a new language, world view or object. For example, within a single ‘pidgin’ utterance, the voice divides into two languages. Each voice unMASKS the other. Hybridity is thus a hybrid concept. As in the racial model, hybridity involves an antithetical movement of coalescence and antagonism, with
the unconscious set against the intentional. Furthermore, hybridity sets different points of view against each other in a conflictual structure, which retains a central element, organic energy and openendedness.

Hybridity defies the set orders and philosophies of both the native cultures and the foreign practices, thereby creating a forum for the birth of yet another order that has features of different cultures and literary aspects. As an on-going process, hybridity creates disorder which becomes the new order. Based on different facets of hybridity explained above, it can be concluded that hybridity is itself an example of hybridity, of a doubleness that brings together, fuses, but also maintains separation.

For Bhabha, hybridity becomes the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to the trace of the language of the other, enabling the critic to trace complex relationships within the colonial text. As such Bhabha defines hybridity as a problematic colonial representation that reverses the effects of colonialist disavowal so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority. Here, Bhabha implies that the world become better known than before because of the use of other languages or cultures. Similar to this discussion, the next chapter analyses hybridity in yet another novel.
CHAPTER 5: HYBRIDITY IN MVONA’S *AN ARROW FROM MARAKA*

This chapter discusses shades of hybridity in one of Malawi’s most current literary works, Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* (2011). After discussing hybridity in Ngugi’s *Matigari* (1987) a novel set in independent Kenya, the current chapter analyses shades of hybridity in post-multiparty Malawi. The study advances that this novel also displays the same ambivalence like those novels written during or before independence.

Just like Ngugi’s *Matigari*, Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* displays a lot of hybrid traits. As a process, “Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial etc” [and] “linguistic examples include pidgin and creole languages” (Ashcroft et al, 2000: 118). Likewise, in *An Arrow from Maraka*, the author has artistically combined several aspects as such the text displays linguistic, cultural, racial, political and stylistic hybridity. One of the features of linguistic hybridity includes code-switching and code-mixing as is the case in Ngugi’s *Matigari* which has been previously discussed (see Chapter 4). *An Arrow from Maraka* displays instances of coexistence of English and other languages. For example, the author records:

Commissioner of Police in charge of the Homicide Department, Wamwayi Mulaha was happily enjoying his dinner; a mountain of *nsima* taken with a hard ‘*yamakolo*’ fried chicken which was expertly bathed in *kazinga* cooking oil, sweat rolling down his fat cheeks (p. 43).
In the excerpt above, ‘nsima’ is a Chichewa word that stands for a hard porridge that constitute the main dish that is eaten with any type of relish. In the excerpt above, the word has been used in the same environment where English words are used without breaking the flow of the narration. In the same way, ‘yamakolo’ is another Chichewa word that means “local” or “native”. In the excerpt, ‘yamakolo’ stands for chicken that are locally bred. “Kazinga” is a Chichewa word that stands for a brand of oil by Unilever, a company that manufactures different products including cooking oil. The brand name, “kazinga”, which literally means “fry,” announces the use of the oil: for frying relish and other foodstuffs. The explanation provided above shows that Chichewa language does coexist with English language without breaking the flow of the story. The coexistence of the two languages in the same utterance does not produce pidgin or creole languages but exposes “cultural diversity” that brings “claims to hierarchical purity of cultures untenable” (Ashcroft et al, 2000: 118). This is why Hayati and Amiri, in an essay entitled “A Study of Hybridity and National Identity in the Selected Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa and David Malouf” featured in *Barnolipi: An Interdisciplinary Journal* argue, “For Bhabha, hybridity is the process by which the colonial governing authority undertakes to translate the identity of the colonized (the Other) within singular universal framework, but then fails to produc[e] something familiar but new (Papastergiadis, 1997 in Hayati and Amiri, p. 12).

There are other instances of hybridity due to coexistence between different languages. For example, the following expressions: “Lipeto were the *bwanas* and Marakas were the slaves of the Litepos” (p. 122); “These dresses ranged from traditional *chitenje* wear to the Western cut dress with that sense of sophistication . . .” (p. 187); and “The result was that Chauta had given the once
poverty-stricken island a fortune .. (p. 199) show the same coexistence between languages. In this example, “Bwana” is a Kiswahili word that means boss; chitenje is a Chichewa word that stands for “cloth” wrapper usually worn by women while Chauta is a Chichewa word for God. The examples above show that different languages coexist with English lexical items.

Speaking or writing in the colonizer’s language should never be taken as annihilation of the colonized or the colonizers’ language because of the complex nature of hybridity. Below is the analysis of the hybrid nature of postcolonial literatures as claimed by Haj Yazdiha in an article entitled “Conceptualizing Hybridity: Deconstructing Boundaries through the Hybrid” published in *Formation:*

Fanon’s theorizing addresses the power of language in the formation of identity as he says, “To speak . . . above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization” (1967: 17-18). He suggests that speaking the language of the colonizer stands in as acceptance or coercion into accepting a role in culture. Yet, in accepting a role, whether by choice or force, the meaning of culture shifts and evolves. No longer does it “belong” to the colonizer, as it relies upon the colonized to give it shape. Similarly, with the introduction of a new set of users performing a language, the language no longer exists as it was; it has shifted meaning (Yazdiha, 2010: 34).

The quotation above implies that to speak a foreign language does not necessarily mean to assume a foreign culture; neither does it imply to support the weight of a civilization as claimed by Fanon.
Rather, it implies shifting the meaning of the words because both the colonized and the colonizers’ languages are altered to suit new challenges.

Apart from mixing languages, Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* also displays cultural hybridity. As the term suggests, cultural hybridity involves the coexistence of two conflicting cultures in a single entity. In Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka*, foreign cultures coexist with native practices. For example,

> There was great jubilation among the gathering, most of them in their best evening dresses. These dresses ranged from traditional *chitenje* wear to the Western cut dress with that sense of sophistication that told it all that this was not an ordinary function since the Maraka Kingdom was founded. It showed how the people of Maraka had developed, both in mind and in dress, both in cultural norms and in modern civilization (p. 187).

The excerpt above shows that, with time, in line with changes in peoples’ lives, a number of cultural practices have also changed. People of Maraka have changed in terms of dress and ideologies. This situation concurs with Bhabha argument that “Cultural diversity is also the representation of a radical rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity” (Ashcroft et al, 2006: 155). It is a manifestation of the fact that culture is never static and that culture follows some developmental trends in a people’s life.
The novel encapsulates the shift in peoples’ perspective regarding traditional customs and practices. For example, the novel records the shift in traditional attire. While watching television, a new device that shows different cultures, the people see their traditional chief clad in western garments which mark the departure from traditional culture to alien practices as depicted in the following statements:

For the first time, the people of Maraka and those glued to the television sets saw their paramount chief wearing some garments around his huge body. The red glittering cloth covered the entire body except for the chest and the belly. From the neck, flowing right to the belly lined several beards of different colours that glittered in the bright neon lights (p. 194).

The quotation above shows that Westernization includes use of gadgets that are based on electronic discoveries. For example, the narrator records the encounter between ancestral spirits and human beings. As people are celebrating the union between Masamba and the princess of the island, a monster-like figure believed to be one of the ancestral spirits emerges and causes destruction to the artificial arrangements in the hall as recorded by the narrator below:
Midway between the ceiling and the floor, the flowers’ movement stopped, and instead, the hall was filled with crackers of different fireworks. And before long the neon lights went dim, and later the whole lighting system seemed to have been killed (p. 191).

This scene shows that the primitive practices of speaking to ancestral spirits can coexist with the modern trends of musicians and electric lights. The coexistence of modern technology and primitive practices is a mark of cultural diversity. For example, in “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences,” Homi K. Bhabha contends that “Cultural diversity may even emerge as a system of the articulation and exchange of cultural signs in certain . . . imperialist accounts of anthropology” (Ashcroft et al, 2006: 155). Since cultural diversity emerges from hybrid aspects, here Bhabha means that cultural hybridity provides illumination in the liminal spaces that displays transcultural identities.

The discussion above shows that cultures change from time to time. To illustrate that culture is never static, Yazdiha argues:

[T]he far-reaching diasporic symbols and narratives that snowball into this thing we call national culture suggests that culture is itself a traveller collecting artifacts from various locations along the way, and its walls are too insubstantial to be used as a means of exclusion (Yazdiha, 2010: 35)
Yazdiha means that symbols and narratives that are not indigenous soar the so-called national cultures. National cultures are a collection of different practices from different parts of the world and that there are several interfaces between different cultural practices. Cultures vary from place to place, and from generation to generation because people who are found in different places came to occupy those pieces of land at different times and that to occupy those places they came from different places. This means that the peoples’ cultures found in different places are also alien practices. As such there is no culture that could claim to be “absolutely native.” As such Yazdiha puts forward the following argument:

[Hybridity in postcolonial world muddles the very definitions of cultures by which notions define themselves. Given that nationalism is founded upon a collective consciousness from shared loyalty to a culture, one would assume this culture is well defined. Yet the “solid” roots of historical and cultural narratives that notions rely upon are diasporic, with mottled points of entry at various points in time. An investigation of the roots of cultural symbols like folk stories, religion, and music would reveal sources varied and wide ranging. Furthermore, culture is defined in relationship to Other cultures (Yazdiha, 2010: 35)

Yazdiha’s argument above is for the diversity in cultural orientations. African culture, for example, should not be mistaken to be implying a single definite set of practices. Likewise, Malawian culture shall not mean a definite set of practices. All practices are a blend of practices from different parts of the world. Each culture is based on a collection of historical experiences from other cultures.
Therefore, the culture depicted in Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* is simply a mixture of practices and other episodes of literary works that make the novel a hybrid one.

Most citizens in developing countries copy as much as they could from their former colonial masters. The copied aspects feature so highly in the literary works produced. Such features mark the coexistence of cultural aspects in literary works. An example that shows the coexistence of cultures is captured in the following quotation:

> On one elected platform, heavily surrounded by excessively bright neon lights with several fireworks in the background accommodated the famous Maraka Dream Orchestra in their equally bright black and red robes, playing what was termed as cock-tail traditional music. They seldom put on these famous robes, and when they did as they had done tonight, it was a clear signal that the function was of national interest.

> Paramount Chief Maraka sat on a hugely elevated chair, overlooking all the guests, his equally huge traditional dress guzzling in the eyes of the guests at the same time reflecting surrounded the hall. Queen Mebo Maraka, the chief’s second wife splashed in an expensive perfume . . . Nana, the chief’s only and beautiful daughter was perhaps in her best attire tonight. She was wearing a strikingly white bright evening wedding dress that fitted her like an angel (p. 187-8).
One of the marks of hybridity captured in quotation above is Westernisation which is synonymous with globalization and civilization. “Excessively bright neon lights with several fireworks”; “the chief’s second wife splashed in an expensive perfume” and “a strikingly white bright evening wedding dress” capture a highly industrialized society common in developed countries which means that though the story is set in Maraka Kingdom, the contents therein show that the novel is a combination of Western culture and African culture. However, what is obvious is that

. . . by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is a ’blurred copy’ of the colonizer that can be quite threatening” (Ashcroft et al, 2000: 139).

A blurred copy of the colonizer is a manifestation of mimicry which suggests that the product incorporates combinations of Western culture and African culture. Mimicry describes “the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and the colonized” (Ashcroft et al, 2000: 139). This means that hybridity does not only affect the colonized but also the colonizer as well.

Apart from mixing languages and culture, the novel incorporates images of traditional dances and practices. For example, the author includes some of the traditional dances that are commonly practised in the area as recorded in the following excerpt:
Bibi’s sons and Nana’s sons would have to be taught to play *chitambalale* and *bonkili* to take part of the ancestors’ remnant. But daughters of both camps would have to be taught those cultural practices and let suitors flicker their eyes with huge swamps of desire (p. 208).

To understand the argument presented above, the reader ought to have sound knowledge of *chitambalale* and *bonkili*. Since the two practices are in vernacular language, the reader also needs to have knowledge of Chichewa language as well. This incorporation of languages and cultural practices accommodates the notion of intertextuality.

There are several obvious instances of substandard English in the novel in the name of appropriation, a postcolonial term that refers to “the process by which the language is taken and made to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural experience” (Ashcroft et. al, 1989: 37). Like Amos Tutuola’s *Palm Wine Drinkard*, Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* displays a series of grammatical errors that ranges from wrong choice of words (diction) to poor spelling. Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* is not an illustration of Brathwaite’s *nation language*. If it were a *nation language* all ungrammatical aspects would have been tolerated because, according to Brathwaite (1984), a *nation language* “is an English which is not standard, imported, educated English, but that of the submerged, surrealist experience and sensibility . . .” (p. 311). Brathwaite (1984) contends that *the nation language* is not “bad English” for it is not to be used in caricature and parody. However, Mvona’s novel is not written in the *nation language*, nor is it written in creole or pidgin. Therefore, below are some of the areas that could be considered errors from Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka*:
The Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security accuses the police of failing to capture Commissioner Mwene Masamba who has run away from his duty. In response to such an accusation, the head of police services argues: “High profile people and half baked politicians fund these gangsters and yet when I and my troops crack down, such politicians work the opposite, frustrating our efforts” (p. 164). “I” has been inserted in the wrong position. According to the rules of grammar, the author would have written my troops and I. The author also writes: “He (President Maka Mwili) ordered an acceleration in their monthly salaries and fat allowances, just to shut down their mouth” (p. 199) instead of “just to shut up their mouths”. He also writes:

The government of Litepo condemned this and warned the islanders that if they continued listening to this blasphemy and mad talk, the island will be dis-communicated for good from the mainland and one day Litepo, using its military machinery would burn the entire island and close its chapter for good (p. 195).

In the quotation above, the author used the word “dis-communicated” instead of “excommunicated” and the possessive pronoun “its” instead of “her” (because we use she and her to refer to the land/country). In some cases the author has misplaced words because he has used a different part of speech. For example, the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security shouts at the police: “. . . if he (the president) doesn’t reshuffle his cabinet and put some orderly in the political hierarchy you’ll all go!” The word “orderly” has been misplaced. It should be replaced with the noun “order”. Likewise, the author writes: “Is it really? Is this true?” (p.
188) instead of “Is this really true” or “Is it real? Is it true?” He also writes: “It had managed to defeat an enemy vessel that had entered the Maraka zone in pursuit of Senior Mwene Masamba to prevent him from entering Maraka” (p. 177). The word “pursue’ has been wrongly used. It should be “in pursuit of Senior Mwene Masamba.” Apart from the words discussed above, the author has misplaced the following: he has written “literary” (p. 65) instead of “literally”; “tamping” (p. 31) instead of “tampering”; “drunk” (p. 40) instead of “drunkard”; “comedic” (p. 95) instead of “comic”. Although Chinweizu et al (1980) back up such ungrammatical structures based on “differences between the African and the official European notions of human society” (p. 22), it would be erroneous to accept ungrammatical structures in a novel because, more importantly, such structures are ambiguous and misleading. Although it is expected that postcolonial novelist would practise abrogation, “a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning inscribed in words” (Ashcroft et al: 2003: 37), an effort should be made to perfect on some grammatical flaws since hybridity is unavoidable in postcolonial literatures.

In an attempt to come up with a common strategy of rejecting categories of the imperial culture, delegates to the conference held in Uganda in the 1962 could not agree as to what language should be used to present African literature. Obi Wali, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and others were strongly opposed to the practice of writing African literature in foreign languages. For example, Obi Wali argues:

[U]ntil these writers and their Western midwives accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in African languages, they would be merely pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity and frustration (Wali, 1963: 16).
Obi Wali means that African literature should be written in African languages. According to his arguments, writing in African languages makes the authors more creative and motivated. However, other delegates felt there is no problem in writing African literature in English or any other foreign languages. For example, Achebe advocates peculiar language use as already alluded to in Chapter 1. Achebe challenges those who advocate the use of native languages as follows:

What I do see is a new voice coming out of African experience in a world-wide language. So my answer to the question *Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing?* is certainly yes. If on the other hand you ask: *Can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker?* I should say, I hope not. It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so. (Patrick and Chrisman, 1994: 433).

Achebe, instead, thinks that the English language, for example, shall be used differently. The above argument by Achebe sets African writers free in their use of language. Such sentiments have given birth to hybrid text because, backed up by the poetic licence, many African poets and novelists have adopted their own ways of expressing their feeling about the African problems. It is therefore not uncommon to see many African poets and novelists coming up with their own language style in their œuvre as Brathwaite, Abodunrin, Ngugi and Mvona have done. It implies that, apart from other factors, Achebe’s sentiments have given birth to the mushrooming of numerous approaches to language use. It has opened new chapters in creative writing. It appears most modern poets and
novelists are committed to fashioning out an English which is not only universal but that is also able to carry their peculiar experiences, hence code-switching and code-mixing.

The discussion above underscores the fact that hybridization involves not only integration but also disintegration of entities. Hybridization can also consist of forcing a single entity into two or more parts, a severing of a single object into two, turning sameness into difference, as in today’s hybrid shares on the stock market, although they, in the last analysis, are merely parts of a whole that will have to be re-invoked at the wind-up date. Hybridity thus makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference.

Artists have different styles of writing their poetry and prose fiction due to different historical experiences they had gone through. Mvona’s An Arrow from Maraka also displays a mixture of narrative techniques. While other novels like the Diary of Anne Frank solely relies on letters that Anne Frank writes to her imaginary friend Kitty, in An Arrow from Maraka Mvona incorporates letters, radio announcements and tales in narrating the unfolding of events. This shows that the author has employed use of letters, radio announcements and tales (myths) as narrative devices. One of the letters that the author includes in the novel is written by an anonymous person and it is addressed to the Commissioner of Prisons and it reads:

_Dear Mr. Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. M. Masamba,_
You know very well the current rate of events in this country. That is, the murder of a prisoner at Maula Prison and the mysterious death of Bwan’noni Kunde. If you are not aware by now, let me tip you now; you are the next target in the line-up.

Please take heed, look around and trust no one.

Yours faithfully

Well-wisher (p. 73).

This letter connects what Masamba did in the past to what he is about to do in future. As such most of the activities in the novel are based on the decision that Masamba makes on this anonymous letter. Masamba tries to run away from those that he suspects to be dangerous to him but to no avail. He exposes himself to enormous danger in response to another letter which reveals that he will get untold wealth from Maraka (p. 77). After Masamba has married Nana from Maraka, the elders and chiefs from Litepo are not happy and want to destroy this new marriage. To connect events and reveal motives of the elders who accuse Masamba of marrying his own daughter, the author uses the letter which reads:

Madam President,
Don’t be fooled with such false revelation. It’s only a plot organized by Bibi, Mwene’s first wife. The said kusasa fumbi girl never died and her daughter never crossed the big waters to Maraka as alleged. If you’ll wish I’ll show you where this woman and her daughter are. These chiefs are have been corrupted.

Thank you,

Chief Liwomba (p. 222)

This letter creates panic in Masamba but later it serves to reveal the motives by the group of elders who pay a visit to President Nana: they want to discourage her from marrying Masamba on condition that the latter is her father. The letter therefore acts as a flashback to connect the present events to the earlier ones.

Considering the fact that “The African novel is a hybrid out of the African oral tradition and imported literary forms of Europe” (Chinweizu et al 1984: 8), it is hereby argued that the whole novel is based on a myth, usually an imaginary story that originated in Africa's ancient times, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining natural events. The word “myth” is derived from the Greek word ‘mythos’ meaning “thought, story, or speech” (Cuddon, 1991: 562). Myths are stories that have been rooted in religion or folk beliefs of that time and such stories represent or explain how the world came to be in its natural state and natural phenomena.
that occur in the world and are usually supernatural in nature.\textsuperscript{14} A myth is usually a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon; a person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence (Cuddon, 1991). In respect of the importance of narrative devices in poetry and prose fiction, Haj Yazdiha argues:

\begin{quote}
[T]he use of indigenous metaphors, rhythms, creoles and genres allow[s] a new form of poetry [and prose fiction] that not only speaks of the violence and displacement of colonialism, but embodies it in its very form (Yazdiha, 2010: 34).
\end{quote}

Yazdiha means that when “indigenous metaphors, rhythms, creoles and genres” like myths and folk tales are used in any literary work, they form “arrows” of resistance against colonial domination in terms of literary forms. Since myths usually involve gods, heroes and humans, in various settings accomplishing supernatural feats, they could also include elaborated accounts of historical events. Myths are basically attempts to explain creation, divinity and religion; and to probe the meaning of existence and death, to account for natural phenomena and to chronicle the adventures of heroes. In An Arrow from Maraka, Masamba receives a letter that asks him to go

\textsuperscript{14} Difference between Myths and Folk Tales. Retrieved on May 1, 2013 from
http://www.differencebetween.info/difference-betwen-myths-and-folk-tales?gclid=CLLEos_897YCFUfLtAodByMARg
across the lake but the contents of the letter shows some aspects of mythological dimensions because part of the letter reads:

*What you are required to do is to travel to the port of Mtunduwatha where a patrol boat will pick you upon handing out this out this letter to the captain. You will be carried to Maraka where you will be given two leaves – NSEKESA and NKAMBALAKALE from the golden tree. The presence of such leaves will bring untold wealth as they will automatically be depositing stacks of bank notes in your compound (p. 76).*

To claim that mere leaves can produce bank notes, and that these leaves come from a golden tree that is found only on the other side of the lake, and that a person sets out to find such an important tree could best be understood if readers consider this part of the story a mythological account. This is a great mark of intertextuality because the novel is based on the African myth/tale about a man who goes across a body of waters comes back with a beautiful and rich wife who becomes the president of the land. This concurs with Chinweizu et al who claim that:

*It would follow, therefore, that even though it might be demonstrated that the novel, a written bourgeois form, did not exist in Africa before the European invasion, its oral antecedents or prototypes did. And since African novelists have utilized and modelled themselves upon these prototypes, the African novel cannot rightly be regarded as a purely borrowed narrative form without African antecedents (1980: 31-2).*
Chinweizu et al (1980) imply that a purely African novel is not possible for novelists combine European and African art forms. The novel does not exist in isolation. Apart from incorporating oral traditions, it also incorporates other voices. For example, in describing the master of ceremonies at Mtunduwatha farewell party, the novel reads: “He (DJ Matoo) was a man of the people and everyone loved him” (p. 115). The phrase “a man of the people” echoes Chinua Achebe’s novel, *A Man of the People*. Just like the personality in Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, the phrase in *An Arrow from Maraka* implies that the DJ is a popular personality. Using words from earlier literary works to explain the present events is yet another mark of intertextuality.

Just like Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time*, Brathwaite’s *Masks*, and Ngugi’s *Matigari*, Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* present identity crises of different personalities who find themselves in awkward positions having no distinct culture to call theirs. Hybridity presents a solution to identity crises because any hybridization announces an ambivalent aspect of the new culture which in turn announces novelty and new personality. Although identity crisis involves a person’s failure to identify his/her culture, the study has established that ambivalence disrupts any clear-cut authority of colonial domination as well as nativism since it disturbs any relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, and between a foreigner and a native. While personalities in Abodunrin’s *It would Take Time* grapple with mental alienation, those in Brathwaite’s *Masks* seek to resolve mental as well as physical alienation. A number of personalities in Ngugi’s *Matigari* fail to identify themselves with leaders of the new found independence. The solution to such a crisis is to choose a new and neutral language as suggested by Walcott’s “A far cry from Africa”.
Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* provides hybridity as a solution to identity crisis as long as there is mutual respect between/among people of different cultural backgrounds. Perhaps the old adage that people should not “cry over spilt milk” could help summarise the identity crises in the two collections of poetry and the two novels for hybridity is spontaneous while culture is never static. Apart from subverting orthodox forms of writing novels, Ngugi’s *Masks* and Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* present coexistence of cultures and languages. Characters show double-consciousness because of their exposure to different cultures. Therefore, hybridity provides a solution where some critics would have concluded that there is no solution to the identity crisis when people are faced with two or more cultures to choose from. The mixture of languages and cultures that result from such co-existence of different languages and cultures gives a solution to the identity crisis. Such cultures can only be located in what Bhabha (1994) calls “in-between” spaces because these spaces are free of any interference from native as well as foreign domination.

Based on modulations of hybridity advanced by Bhabha, the discussion above shows that meaning is controlled neither by the colonialists nor the colonized; it emerges in the contact zone because Ashcroft et al (2000) and Bhabha (1994) maintain that “it is the ‘in-between’ space that carries the meaning and burden of culture.” Therefore, it can be concluded perceptibly that the four chosen texts display writers’ ability to utilize whatever traditions are available to them as they “seek to account for particular linguistic, historical, and cultural features across two or more post-colonial literatures” (Ashcroft et al, 1989: 14).
Issues raised in post-colonial texts correlate with Salman Rushdie’s acknowledgement of literary influences which range from Indian myths and oral storytelling techniques to European experimental writers such as the German novelist Günter Grass (O’Reilly, 2001). The two collections of poetry and the two novels incorporate a cross section of narrative devices. Though the texts under study were written during two different centuries (twentieth century and twenty-first century, respectively), the study reveals that the issues explored and the style employed in Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time* Brathwaite’s *Masks*, Ngugi’s *Matigari* and Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* seem so similar.

Just like other texts under study, it can be concluded that Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* displays various shades of hybridity. The novel has several ungrammatical structures that make its language resemble creole, pidgin or *nation language*. Apart from being a mixture of different languages, the novel’s content is an instance of cultural and political hybridity. Therefore, just like Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, Brathwaite’s *Masks* and Ngugi’s *Matigari*, Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* displays linguistic, cultural, racial, social and political hybridity.
CHAPETR 6: CONCLUSION

As I have argued in the foregoing chapters, hybridity has been used as a cultural designation to shifting identities. The discussion above have revealed different shades of hybridity in Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors*, Brathwaite’s *Masks*, Ngugi’s *Matigari*, and Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka*. Although one aspect may feature more prominently in one text other than the other three, all the four texts display linguistic, cultural, political and racial hybridity. Different forms or variations of hybridity constitute what could be termed the ‘meeting point’ for all the four texts under study. The four chosen and examined texts show some similarities in terms of form and content, thus lending themselves to a postcolonial reading which places emphasis on the concept of hybridity as theorized by Homi Bhabha and Robert Young.

In the course of articulating postcolonial issues, Femi Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* and Edward Kamau Brathwaite’s *Masks* display both Eurocentric and Afrocentric ideologies. Both the English language and native African/Caribbean languages have been use in the two texts and, the major issues being explored are of great concern to both an African and a non-African. The foregoing discussion has revealed that even if a writer decides to write a pro-African text, an absolutely new text cannot be produced. What is produced is a hybrid text. Hybridity in the two collections of poetry includes aspects of abrogation and appropriation of the English language that leads to blurred boundaries between genres, code-mixing, and textual dialogism.
The aforementioned discussion shows that the histories and cultures produced by the two poets and two novelists do not merely articulate the remote past as the poets themselves might have claimed, and yet they do not belong to a completely new order either. They seem to belong to what Bhabha (1994) calls the “borderline” cultures. They display characteristics of both the old tissues and the new since

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as a social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent ‘in-between’ space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The ‘past-present’ becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living (Bhabha, 1994: 7).

The above discussion can best be understood to imply that whenever two histories or cultures meet, even if one of them seems to be more prominent than the other, the result is the emergence of a hybrid culture. Normally, hybridity involves “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft et al 2000: 118). The creation of transcultural forms within the contact zones would imply the development of constant overlaps between old and new forms. Therefore, rewriting African history and culture is a feasible process but the production of an entirely new history and culture, depicting the remote past is not a possible process because the rewriting process involves constant overlaps.
Blurring the boundaries of genres implies rejecting Eurocentric norms of designating correct forms of literary pieces. Therefore, having removed the Western yardsticks for designating the well-formedness of literary works, it becomes absolutely effortless to break new grounds. When new grounds have been created, a totally different culture is born. Bhabha argues that this culture belongs to the “in-between” spaces. The desire to set post-colonial cultures free of the control of Eurocentric influences leads to the creation of hybrid cultures. Contemporary poets are at liberty to include issues that concern their societies. These issues could be Afrocentric and/or Eurocentric. Furthermore, they are flexible in the style of presentation. As observed in the preceding chapters of this study, a complete revitalization of pre-colonial African culture is not possible, and that explains why the poets’ creativity leads to the rewriting process of African history and culture. The writing process creates hybrid varieties. Hybridity is therefore a product of this rewriting process and its ambivalence carries an element of protest against both Western and African influences.

The two poetry collections also display linguistic hybridity that includes the subversion of languages. For example, Brathwaite’s *Masks* and Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* contain subversion of the English language because both texts display a mixture of languages: English and indigenous languages. Apart from linguistic hybridity, Femi Abodunrin and Edward Kamau Brathwaite provide models of educated sons who stand up in defence of their cultures. For example, Abodunrin talks of metamorphosing into a racial Jonah and seeking solace in the belly of a fish (2002: 25) which implies to become a defender of the indigenous culture despite being educated since education was, in the past, used to take people away from their African cultural practices into the new creations. An educated person should not
come back more “deformed” than before, hating his culture and traditions. Further education should open his cultural eyes. However, the study has also established that going back to the remote past presupposes that there is something tangible in the past in the name of culture that should be retrieved which is not true because culture is not static. Nevertheless, there are aspects that are still extant which can be traced to the pre-colonial past and these need to be revived, albeit in a modified way which tends, invariably so, to be skewed towards the West.

Hybridity, according to the discussion in this study, would automatically lead to cultural diversity with an emphasis on respect for all cultures and languages. Hybridity promotes intertextuality and multiculturalism which lead to cultural diversity. For example, in “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences,” Homi K. Bhabha contends that

Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural ‘contents’ and customs, held in a time-frame of relativism; it gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange, or the culture of humanity. Cultural diversity is also the representation of a radical rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity. Cultural diversity may even emerge as a system of the articulation and exchange of cultural signs in certain . . . imperialist accounts of anthropology (Ashcroft et al, 2006: 155).

This study has exposed the fact that when two languages and/or cultures meet there is no one that triumphs over the other; instead, a hybrid variety is developed. When such a neutral language or
culture emerges, it undermines the authority of not only the colonized culture but also the colonizing one. Based on the theory of hybridity, the study has shown that the following post-colonial concepts: liminality, ambivalence, mimicry and “in-between” space are interlinked and expound complexities of hybridity in Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time*, Brathwaite’s *Masks*, Ngugi’s *Matigari* and Mvona’s *An Arrow from Maraka* as post-colonial texts. This hybridity affects the new culture socially, historically and politically such that efforts to reclaim the “lost” past is not possible. The colonized culture is not completely annihilated for it also undermines the colonizing culture so much so that the latter loses its original touch. In this way, hybridity does not only offer a forum for the rewriting of history and culture but it also forms a formidable force that triggers protest against any form of domination. Since hybridity rejects both colonizing and colonized cultures and creates a new culture, as observed in Chapter 1, it acts as a forum for resolving identity crisis. The “in-between” cultures that are formed in the liminal spaces act as a solution to the identity crisis because it bridges the gap between the colonizer and the colonized. The hybrid culture is neutral and incorporates features from both foreign and native cultures.

Much as the two sets of poetry address similar challenges and have similar features, it is obviously clear that they display some differences as well. Written by a poet in mainland Africa, Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* is likely to be different from Brathwaite’s *Masks*. While Brathwaite’s *Masks* shows a steady progression of a returnee’s mobility from the Diaspora to mainland Africa, Abodunrin’s *It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors* presents the desire to reclaim the past.

Just like in the poetry collection, hybridity in the two novels includes blurred boundaries between genres, code-mixing, and intertextuality. For example, Ngugi uses radio announcement in
narrating the events while Mvona uses both radio announcements and letters to narrate the story. Both Ngugi and Mvona include several languages, native and foreign, standard and substandard English, in their masterpieces. For instance, in a single utterance, Ngugi includes English, Gikuyu and Kiswahili. Likewise, Mvona includes English and Chichewa in a single utterance. In the course of the narration, Ngugi freely draws experiences from different parts of the world. For examples, apart from liberation struggles, Ngugi’s Matigari includes several Biblical allusions and world politics that involve the following countries: Soviet Union, USA, China, and Apartheid in South Africa. Mvona’s An Arrow from Maraka draws experiences from other African novels such as Achebe’s A Man of the People (1966).

The chapter also identifies similarities and differences between prose fiction and poetry in displaying various aspects of hybridity, as well as highlighting the similarities and differences between two poetry collections and the two novels. Prose fiction and poetry display similar characteristics because they are joined by hybrid elements such as blurred boundaries of these genres, abrogation and appropriation of the English language. For example, both genres incorporate some narrative devices that could be found in other genres. Abodunrin’s It Would Take Time: Conversation with Living Ancestors has incorporated drama format. While Ngugi, Abodunrin and Brathwaite have ably incorporated hybrid aspects in their literary works, in course of narrating the story, Mvona has committed a lot of grammatical errors; he has employed some substandard varieties of English and in some cases, his language use is similar to Brathwaite’s nation language. However, there is a marked distinction between prose fiction and poetry in terms of articulation of these hybrid aspects. For instance, it is easier to identify substandard English in prose fiction in the service of subversion of English language than in poetry because most poets
tend to hide behind “poetic licence.” Furthermore, poetry heavily relies on imagery; hence poets use few words when actually they mean a lot. Since hybridity rejects both colonizing and colonized cultures and creates a new culture, it acts as a forum for resolving identity crises.

Poetic licence refers to the liberty allowed to the poet to wrest the language according to his needs in the use of figurative speech, archaism, rhyme, strange syntax, etc. But this liberty depends on end justifying the means. Dryden defined it as ‘the liberty which poets have assumed to themselves in all ages of speaking things in verse, which are beyond the severity of prose. (J. A. Cuddon (1991) *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (3rd Edition) London: Penguin Books, p. 715)
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