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SHAPING IDENTITY UNDER COLONIAL SYSTEMS : A COMPARISON OF AFRICAN AND CANADIAN-MÉTIS TEXTS BY CHINUA ACHEBE, MARIA CAMPBELL, JAMES NGUGI, AND BEATRICE CULLETON

LA REMODÉLISATION DE L'IDENTITÉ SOUS LES SYSTÈMES COLONIAUX : UNE ÉTUDE COMPARATIVE DES TEXTES AFRICAINS ET CANADIEN MÉTIS PAR CHINUA ACHEBE, MARIA CAMPBELL, JAMES NGUGI ET BEATRICE CULLETON

Par

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ABSTRACT

In the present thesis I will analyse the phenomenon of the shaping of identity in African and Canadian postcolonial texts. In the world of the texts, this phenomenon occurs when colonial subjects are caught between tradition and modernity. The African texts that I will discuss are Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and James Ngugi’s *The River Between*, which I will compare to the Canadian Métis texts, Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed* and Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree*.

The primary goal of this thesis will be to compare these different texts in order to find the different methods chosen by each author in his or her representation of the space in which the colonial subject evolves and his or her reaction to the changes brought by colonisation. The methodology followed throughout the thesis will consist of a comparative and postcolonial analysis and historical contextualisation.

The thesis will consist of three main parts. The first one, the introduction, proposes a historical view of the world of each text before and during contact with colonisation in order to explore the context of identity construction. It also explores the textual construction of individual and collective identities in terms of the beginnings of postcolonial writing in Africa and Canada. Selected key concepts of postcolonialism such as hybridity and mimicry will be reviewed as well. The second part will consist of a textual analysis of *Things Fall Apart* and *Halfbreed*, which will be compared on the basis that they both portray contact between indigenous people and their colonisers, including the loss of land, miscegenation, and the struggle between tradition and modernity. The third part will compare *The River Between* and *In Search of April Raintree*, which suggest a continuation of the process of colonisation portrayed in the first two texts, by showing that contact brought changes such as in hybridity and mimicry.
RÉSUMÉ

Le présent mémoire se propose d’examiner la modélisation de l’identité telle que décrite par des textes postcoloniaux africains et canadiens. Dans le monde des œuvres, cette modélisation se déroule à un moment où les sujets coloniaux se trouvent piégés entre la tradition et la culture moderne. Les textes africains qui sont à l’étude sont *Things Fall Apart* de Chinua Achebe, et *The River Between* de James Ngugi. Ces textes seront comparés à des textes d’auteurs Métis du Canada : *Halfbreed* de Maria Campbell et *In Search of April Raintree*, de Beatrice Culleton.

Le but de ce mémoire sera de déceler les méthodes utilisées par chacun de ces auteurs pour représenter le colonisé et ses réactions face aux changements apportés par la colonisation. La méthodologie qui sera adoptée pour atteindre ce but consistera à faire une analyse comparative et postcoloniale ainsi qu’une analyse de la situation historique des textes.

Le mémoire est divisé en trois parties. La première partie, l’introduction, propose un aperçu historique de chaque texte avant et lors du contact avec les colons. Les débuts du mouvement postcoloniale chez les écrivains indigènes ainsi que certaines notions telles que l’hybridité et l’imitation y seront également examinées. La deuxième partie portera sur l’analyse textuelle de *Things Fall Apart* et *Halfbreed*, qui seront comparés car ils dressent un portrait du contact entre les colonisés et les colons tout en tenant compte du phénomène de métissage qui s’en est suivi dans certains cas. La troisième partie s’attarde sur la comparaison de *The River Between* et *In Search of April Raintree* qui semblent décrire la continuation de l’ère coloniale tout en explorant certains changements survenus lors de l’avènement de la colonisation. Ces changements sont entre autres l’hybridité et l’imitation.
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INTRODUCTION

Identity is a shifting, ambiguous, and complex notion. There is inevitably a need to reshape identity so that it can fit every situation. It is from this perspective that I propose to analyse the representation of colonised people’s identities in African and Canadian postcolonial texts in terms of individual and collective experiences.

The term identity has been greatly debated over the last few centuries. As a result, various notions of identity have emerged: social identity, cultural identity, individual identity, collective identity, and political identity. A general definition of the term “identity” consists in saying that it is first of all a process that both unites and distinguishes individuals and groups within society. Identity is not something that is stable; it calls for permanent re-structuring. That is, someone’s identity is shaped by the world that surrounds him or her and collectivities as well as personal choices and personal experiences. In other words, identity enables people to position themselves with regard to the laws and the moral order pre-established by the group. Individual and collective identities cannot be neatly separated for they are complexly intertwined and reciprocal, constructing each other as they constructed by each other. When considered in this way, identity allows the past and the present to be linked, for individuals and groups will sometimes refer to what has happened in the past in order to understand or cope with the present or the future. Thus, the development of an identity, as I will analyse in this thesis, may follow certain coherent patterns but it is a complex process, not a final product.
My intention in writing the present thesis grew from the idea that indigenous people supposedly "lost their identity" when they underwent the process of colonisation. But is it really the identity that is lost or some aspects of identity that are reshaped in an in-between space? In other words are new identities forged in the space between indigenous and colonial cultures? In order to explore this hypothesis, I have chosen to work on African and Canadian Métis texts, because indigenous people from both areas have been colonised in different ways. I will compare two African novels, Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and James Ngugi’s *The River Between*, to the Métis texts, Maria Campbell’s autobiography, *Halfbreed*, and Beatrice Culleton’s novel, *In Search of April Raintree*. More precisely, I will compare the construction of individual and collective identities under colonisation and in postcolonial cultures in these texts.

In *Things Fall Apart* published in 1958, Achebe looks back at precolonial Nigeria and colonial contact with Europeans. He represents the Ibo society in Nigeria from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Before colonisation the Ibo society was a small, democratic society with an elaborate system of political institutions where the voice of elders generally predominated, and with much scope for individual mobility. Its economy was also well structured so that everybody could benefit from the trade between different states. In fact, trade was one of the main elements that favoured the entry of British colonisers since indigenous people had already established many trade routes. Those routes enabled the first Ibo that converted to Christianity to evangelise the other tribes (Isichei 74). Until then, Ibo
identity was defined according to the respect people had for traditional rulers, elders and deities. This respect provided a certain unity in the community and with the neighbouring states. Then, with the increased power of missionaries and trade as designed by Europeans, the social behaviour of the Ibos changed. Those who opposed the Europeans saw their economy decline, their traditional customs being undermined, and their own authorities being challenged. While the old rulers declined, new groups of chiefs emerged among the partisans of the new religion and those who got a chance to be educated in the missions. Elisabeth Isichei reports in *The Ibo People and the Europeans* that the power of the Obi, or traditional chiefs, declined, to the point where they became, by the 1880s, nonentities (106). Another step reached by the different states is that now they considered each other enemies because trade had shown them other interests with regard to their individual economy. Violence replaced discussion in the resolution of conflict.

Achebe’s novel is interesting in that it represents the Ibo tribe in Nigeria in a pre-colonial period so that one may see the functioning of the society as a whole and the place of the individual in this society. Such representation is important because it allows the reader to view the advent of colonisation, and to compare the pre-colonial society and the colonial one. By the end of the novel a conflict arises between traditional and modern values. As the title of the novel suggests, with this conflict things begin to fall apart in the Ibo society. *Things Fall Apart* stands as a novel that suggests to African readers a redefinition of their identity, instead of lamenting a past that will not be recovered. I will compare this African novel to a Métis
autobiography, *Halfbreed*, in order to explore the development of identity in the in-between space of colonial contact and metissage. Why compare a novel and an autobiography? In fact, autobiography is a genre that the Métis writers favour to portray the different sufferings they have experienced since the beginning of colonisation (Petrone 114). *Halfbreed* is a classic work on Métis identity in Canada. It compares well with *Things Fall Apart* because both look back at colonisation, self, identity, and the choices individuals and the collective make under colonisation. In the autobiography we are told how Métis identity is devalued in Canada. In 1670, Charles II of England granted the Hudson’s Bay Company a monopoly on fur trading in the area that is now known as Western Canada. “Just as Canada spreads over a large area, so do the Métis. A few hundred years ago, the Métis race was born. The marriage of the Indian to the European formed an invaluable bridge in settling Canada’s West. From this union developed a race known as half-breeds, Métis or bois-brûlés” (Sealey and Lussier V). *Halfbreed* gives a brief description of the opening of the land in Canada by the Hudson Bay Company since the 1860s.

Maria Campbell’s autobiography tells about different rebellions that took place in Western Canada under Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, who were the Métis leaders. The Métis lost the fight for their rights over the land at Batoche in 1884 (Campbell 11). From then on, the Métis had to move from place to place, having no more territory on which to stay. *Halfbreed* portrays the change that takes place in the community through one individual’s life and through her relation to that community. One major change is the dispossession of the Métis’ land. The autobiographical
subject's story reflects the Métis dispossession in the following way: the dissolution and poverty of her family resulted from their lack of land (12), as did her father's imprisonment and depression more indirectly (Campbell 54-55). Indeed, her father hunts illegally in the National Park. Hunting is forbidden in this area as a direct result of the coloniser's owning the land and the nomadic, hunting rights being confined to native reserves, from which the Métis are excluded. The Métis are denied status in Canadian society because they are not pure bred, status Indians. Despite all these sufferings, *Halfbreed* is not a resentful text. It suggests to readers to learn from the errors of the past and, like *Things Fall Apart*, it shows the redefinition of colonised people's identity in a space between the colonial and the indigenous cultures. Although alike in proposing a message of reconciliation between traditional and modern values, both texts represent characters that react differently to tradition as well as to modernity. At some place the reader will meet characters that lament and protest. For example, Okonkwo the main protagonist in Achebe's novel strongly protests against colonisation, saying "We must fight these men and drive them from the land" (159). In Chapter One I will explore the self and the development of identity in *Things Fall Apart* and *Halfbreed*.

In Chapter Two I will analyse the way hybridity and mimicry are represented in *The River Between* and *In Search of April Raintree*. Hybridity and mimicry are developed in these novels as specific strategies of coping under colonisation, whereas contact, loss of land, and the conflict between modernity and tradition were the main focus of works by Achebe and Campbell. As an African novel, *The River Between*,
may be considered a later episode of *Things Fall Apart*, in terms of postcolonial literature. Indeed, the reader is presented with a picture of continuing social conflict and its effect on identity in African societies. But in Ngugi’s novel the cultural context is Kenya. The text portrays the effect that colonial education has had on the individual’s identity. The individual is confronted with the reality of cultural hybridity or we could say that he or she stands in a liminal position between cultures. Individualism in *The River Between* is shown to be one of the results of the contact between the Natives, modern education, and Christianity. The text exposes the first steps of the Kenyans (Gikuyu) in their decolonisation. In *The River Between* (1965), Ngugi sets the story between two mountain ridges as an organising conceit that dramatises the antagonism between two competing native constituencies and their seemingly irreconcilable belief structures. Because the setting, presumably the late 1940s or early 1950s, precedes the emergence of substantive attempts at decolonization, Ngugi's novel portrays not so much the conflict between “coloniser” and “colonised,” but the internal conflicts and plural ambitions of native people themselves. The novel's opening situates the narrative's broader conflicts within a Kenyan landscape that has yet to experience the effects of British colonialism.

Kenya, an East African country, does not differ a lot from Nigeria. The physical milieu was shaped with respect to pastoral and agricultural tribes' different exploitation of the land. However, since the milieu was sometimes poor and hostile to life, populations could not be concentrated in one place. This situation was not entirely negative. One positive value can be afforded to the fact that there were tribal
wars, that produced very closely-knit forms of social organisation within tribes, in which the individual was both protected and inured to warfare, and where individual weaknesses were transformed into collective strength (Meister 16). The largest tribe of Kenya, the Gikuyus, are the ones represented in *The River Between*. Before the advent of colonisation, the family group was the basic social unit that provided education for children, social control for the adults and the place of recreation and cults. All these elements were governed by tradition. Albert Meister has described this traditional order:

Tradition spoke through the voice of the elders, and the entire social organization was designed to maintain respect for ancestral customs. The elders symbolized the continuity of the group and were the living link with the founders of the tribe. They were in a sense the priests of a lay religion based on the sum of the tribes’ legends, experience, and ways of life. (19)

His description reveals the sacred character of tradition in this East African community. The individual was part of this system and was not allowed to define himself outside of it. The word “individual” is itself, however, evocative of free personality, and implies the idea of being free to break with the tribal framework. The end of traditional harmony between the individual and the tribe occurred when the Europeans began their conquest of this part of Africa. To quote Meister once again, he refers to the change as “social change.” The “social change” to modernity glorified what was new, the ability to innovate and the desire to transform the world. The individual within social change had to decide for himself or herself what could
be useful or effective if he or she wanted to get ahead in the colonial society. An interesting point that leads me to compare *The River Between* to *In Search of April Raintree* is the individual’s attempt to bring together traditional and modern values. Beatrice Culleton’s novel represents the long-term effect of denying status to the Métis, for example, the breaking up of Métis families, the placing of Métis children in foster families, and the problem of racism towards miscegenation through exaggerated attention to skin colour. The novel is a kind of representation of the author’s own life. Culleton suffered the trauma of family separation, foster homes, and the suicides of two older sisters. *In Search of April Raintree* goes deeply into the ills of poverty, alcoholism, prostitution, suicide, prejudice, and discrimination and their effects on the human spirit. It also shows the Métis individual’s craving for self-identity while lost in an urban environment. These individual struggles for identity reflect the collective struggle of the Métis people. Both Ngugi’s and Culleton’s novels seem to be engaged texts that critique the long-term effects of colonisation by dramatising hybridity and mimicry.

These African and Canadian works are worth comparing because they represent the negotiation of postcolonial identities under different forms of colonisation in settler and non-settler colonies. The comparison of African and Canadian texts shows that the African texts portray the devaluation of traditional values in front of the coloniser’s modern values, while the Canadian texts portray the racial issue as the main point. Though mixed blood people in general are regarded as impure, Métis women, as sexual objects and reproductive labourers, have to suffer the
negative discourse against the impurity of the Métis ancestry. This explains why prostitution is present in both Métis women’s texts and why women are isolated within the Métis patriarchal society. Comparison of African and Canadian texts is also interesting in that the authors expose and upset traditional male and female roles throughout their texts.

Achebe’s and Ngugi’s texts represent African countries that were non-settler colonies. In the non-settler colonies (or colonies of occupation) the indigenous people remained in the majority, but they were administered by a foreign power. The reason why Nigeria and Kenya are colonies of occupation is due to the fact that the colonisers exploited mainly the agricultural resources, such as plantations of palm trees in Nigeria, but without settling in these countries in large numbers. In Kenya, in 1903, Europeans held a fourth of the cultivable land and supplied four-fifths of the agricultural exports (Meister 29). Meanwhile, the colonisers used the natives as the main labour force. Nevertheless, when Kenya was a land of European settlements, detribalisation and proletarianization on the large plantations led the population to open revolt in what may be considered the first war of liberation on the continent. In Kenya, there are Africans, Europeans, and Asians of Indian and Pakistani origin. The settlement project was later replaced by profit motives. In the non-settler colonies there has not been a great level of mixture between Whites and natives, and the number of natives has remained higher than in the settler colonies. In Nigeria and Kenya, the form of government was the system of ‘Indirect Rule’. Indirect Rule took the form of new institutions such as native Courts, and Warrant Chiefs, and their
personnel. The Warrant Chiefs were less responsible to the community they served than to the colonial master, who alone had the power to dismiss them. They abused the natives. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, the Court messengers ask Okonkwo and his comrades to pay a fine of two hundred and fifty bags of cowries that the District Commissioner has not asked (174). This situation cultivates mimicry because select natives, who mimic the colonisers well, are hired to control the other natives. Albert Memmi argues that the first ambition of the colonised individual will be to be equal to the coloniser and this to a point where he or she melts in with the coloniser (137-38). In order to enable communication between the colonisers and the natives, the British Government hired interpreters and Court Clerks. In both the precolonial societies of Nigeria and Kenya the group or tribe used to be central to the definition of identity. The rules as they were recommended to the group gave sense to the existence of the individual. With colonisation, there was going to be another stratification of the society, this time according to European norms and the European sense of individual self.

As for Canada, it was a settler colony. The first settlers that came to Canada as explorers and fur traders did not bring their wives and, thus, often took Indian women as their sexual partners. Therefore, free unions between French or British men and Indian women took place and the result of these unions was the growth of a considerable population of mixed Euro-Indians or Métis around the fur trading posts. As time passed, the second wave of Europeans who came to Canada decided to settle down in the country, clear land, and establish towns and cities. Thus, the second
wave of European settlers brought their wives along with them to the new continent. Indian women who were "country wives" were usually abandoned by European-Canadian men. Later, the settlement policy imposed laws concerning the rights on land. As Halfbreed explains, being unable to buy and exploit the land according to the European-Canadian farming policy, the Métis were deprived of their land. In English, a person of European British or French ancestry mixed with Indian was described as a "half-breed". This term was originally used by the French-speaking population in the North-west of America to designate persons of white and Indian blood (Sealey and Lussier 1). In Canada many people use the French term "Métis". This term applies to any person of mixed white and Indian blood who is not classified as "Indian" by the government. The Métis were denied status as "pure" Indians. Two solutions for them have been either to identify with Euro-Canadians whenever their skin colour allows it or to merge into the Indian society by taking care to keep their white part as secret as possible. Beatrice Culleton's In Search of April Raintree represents this collective situation through two sisters. One of them, April, identifies with white people because her skin is lighter, and the other, Cheryl, merges with Indian culture. Both sisters experience complications and the novel shows the need to find a place between the two cultures rather than attempting to merge with one or the other.

Without land and social status in Canada, the Métis became a nation that had to struggle for identity according to the values of the dominant society. Contrary to Africans, the Métis lived in a scattered way. Their sense of community disappeared
little by little. Fortunately, as Maria Campbell represents it in her autobiography, there were still some individuals such as Maria’s grandmother who stood as the keepers of Métis traditional values and proposed their teaching to the younger generations. Beatrice Culleton contrasts two sisters; the older sister rejects Métis culture and the second engages in its protection. Both texts stand for the Métis culture as an in-between, third space. The texts are also a voice for negotiating new Métis identity between the Métis of Louis Riel’s era, the Whites and the modern Métis. Before analysing the texts in more detail, I will discuss some of the key terms that will be applied throughout the textual analysis.

As mentioned earlier, identity is a shifting and complex notion. We talk of identity when there are other people we may compare with. My identity exists because I can compare myself to the Other. In other terms, identity is a primarily unconscious process that unites personality and links the individual to the social world. There are many attributes associated with identity which in fact enable an individual to know herself and where she stands in the world. Identity may also provide a link between what one regards as essential in his life and the group’s point of view. Identity also allows the past and the present to be linked, and finally collective identity becomes a means by which people organise society.

Ruthellen Josselson argues, “Identity is continually refined. The process of individual identity formation takes place throughout the life cycle, beginning just after birth as we gradually become aware that we have a self, continuing to old age, when we come to terms with the meaning that the self has expressed in the larger
scheme of things” (12). Changes in identity are sometimes the result of the fluctuation of social roles. Indeed, while growing up, the individual is assigned a social role according to his age or the class to which he belongs. Social role and identity are closely linked. Some individuals forge an identity different from the group’s expectations, and others choose to adapt to the social role the society offers them.

Among the social forces that can lead to a shift in both individual and collective identity, colonisation provides another aspect to identity based in power relations and cultural context. Both the African and Canadian Métis characters that I discuss in this study had their identities shaped by British colonisation. Colonisation had already begun in Africa when Europeans occupied the North part of Africa, Senegal, the Gold Coast, and the Niger delta. But the Berlin Conference in 1885 marked a turning point for the relations between Africa and Europe. Before this conference the trade in slaves had dominated, but with new demands and competition from the American continent, Europeans turned towards an internal exploration of the African continent for commercial exchange. Military invasion and colonial power spread throughout many parts of the African continent. Europeans justified their actions by the fact that Africans were not able to make their way according to what Marc H. Piault called “le sacro-saint progrès” (8).

Speaking of progress, I am interested in knowing if and how it has transformed African identity. Politically, African states have acquired other norms with respect to the frontiers imposed at the Berlin Conference in 1885. Besides, their
history has changed due to the colonial policy that proposed two solutions to Africans: either they accept assimilation or they resist colonisation. From then on the political history of Africa has changed. Those, among the defenders of the old Africa, who thought they could go back to the ancient history were actually dreaming. Piault argues, despite all the transformations Africa has undergone, its very traditional foundations have kept its authenticity with regard to other continents intact (12). This can be explained by the fact that African identity does not depend uniquely on the European model. The conclusion that I can draw from this analysis is that on the political and historical level colonisation has caused a rupture between Africa and its past. These changes aimed to transform Africa in what Ibrahima Baba Kaké called “sous-Europe” (23). In fact the notion of “sous-Europe” implied that Europeans could find in Africa, the same administration, the government offices, the schools, that existed in Europe. Africa might have resembled Europe, but traditionally it has only been a parenthesis in that Africans adopted European political administration and education system as we still can find out in African countries today. I do not totally agree with Mr. Kaké in his theory of “sous-Europe” because the European authorities in those days were first of all encouraged by a desire to spread their empire and make a profit from the riches Africa could offer to their economy. Africans remained the Europeans' colonial subjects even while Europeans built schools, hospitals, trade centres, etc., in the hopes of transforming traditional culture into modernity. Colonisation in Canada took on a different form and followed a different path.
The Métis emerged in Canada a few hundred years ago. "Having been cut-off from European expansion by the accident of geography and by the deliberate policy of the Hudson's Bay Company, they developed a feeling of independence and a keen sense of their own identity" (Sealey and Lussier V). The feeling of independence and the sense of identity could be explained by the fact that the Métis got a broad knowledge of the traditional ways due to their native background and a competitive spirit, a knowledge of other ways, and often an access to the knowledge contained in books from their association with Whites.

In *The Forgotten People: Métis and Non-Status Indian Land Claims*, Harry W. Daniels reports, the amalgamation of 1821 brought considerable changes with respect to the Hudson's Bay Company's sense of justice towards its clientele, including the Métis (8). Daniels tells about the resistance from the Métis when the Company attempted to enforce its monopoly from 1821 until 1849. In fact, the Métis had established a good trade in pemmican and in buffalo robes with the American traders at St. Paul (26). This trade was not only beneficial to them, but to many other groups in the Northwest. It was, then, necessary for them to resist the European settlement policy. Their unity and their leaders like Louis Riel and others helped them begin their resistance against the occupational policies with regard to land and trade. Unfortunately, their fight for rights over land failed and they began their migration westward. From this period the Métis, who had been used to living free on the land, are going to become what Daniels calls "squatters" (29) or "Road Allowance people" as Maria Campbell calls them (13). Politically, they were to be
considered on the shadowy margins of colonial and frontier history. However, in the 1980s, people began to talk about a Métis Renaissance. Actually, expressions of Métissage range far beyond the political. In fact both Métis and non-Métis authors have brought the past and present lives of the Métis people to centre stage with varying success in literature. For example, Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed* and Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree* stand out as texts in which the Métis reconstruct their past through literature, testimony, and cultural memory.

One conclusion we can draw from both the African and Métis texts is that in the beginning these people used to live more in groups. The individual’s identity was forged mainly with regard to the religious and political structure of the rest of the group, especially the elders who ruled according to the deities’ request. But things changed with the new order; that is, one social change brought by the Europeans was in terms of the notion of self and greater individualism in the construction of identity. With the social changes and the first steps towards decolonisation, Africans and the Métis tried to give their version of colonial history. An important part of this fight is going to be waged through literature, especially postcolonial literature, because the issue of identity is often explored in this literature. The main postcolonial theories I will draw on in this study are those by Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, Mishra Vijay and Bob Hodge.

The term ‘postcolonial’ in its semantic meaning may refer to the period after colonisation. The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* use the term to cover the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the
present day (Ashcroft et al. 2). I agree with their definition because postcolonialism began the day the coloniser arrived in the future colonies. My previous descriptions of the African and the Métis identity proved that from the first day the Europeans settled in Africa and Canada, native cultures changed. Among these changes, those reflected in the texts under study show hybridity and mimicry, and a new relationship with language and the land. I am going to trace these themes in both African and Canadian texts. Bill Ashcroft et al. argue, "Post-colonial theory has been produced in all societies into which the imperial force of Europe has intruded, though not always in the formal guise of theoretical texts" (Ashcroft et al. 1995: 2).

Novels such as those under study here can theorise and testify to the colonial experience, thereby adding a postcolonial voice to those of theorists and historians. Postcolonialism can be considered to have begun at the very beginning of colonisation. The Empire would not have lasted if there had not been some collaborators among the colonised (Vijay & Hodge 400). Indeed, when the colonisers arrived in the future colonies, some members of the native populations were already predisposed to accept the colonisers' transformations. These collaborators are those who are going to wear the hybrid and mimicking 'robes' because they reflect their European masters at least on the imaginary level. However, there are some opponents to the colonial system, and those merge into an active, anti-colonial struggle against this master who imposes a new social order on them. According to the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, these different reactions already
constitute the foundation of postcolonialism at least symbolically, before native
writers and politicians emerge from the white system.

Native writers have been educated in writing according to the coloniser’s
educational system. With the rise of national consciousness among the colonised
countries, however, there is a need to assert difference from the imperial centre. One
of the few ways to assert this difference, apart from politics, is to use the text. Thus,
the native and Métis texts, written in a European language like English or French,
forms a place where the colonised can contest the Master’s version of native history.
Writing is a historical, cultural change for the colonised cultures that used to have an
oral literature. Now the colonised people’s history is going to be written down and
registered for other people who will learn a point of view other than the one
expressed in the dominant discourse. Actually the dominant discourse urges the
colonialist to state that he “knows” his natives (Ashcroft et al. 1995: 58). Knowing
the natives implies that the coloniser understands what is best for them and that the
imperial system can be justified then. I do not think colonisation can be justified this
way because before saying we know “natives,” we must be able to accept more or
less and understand the very nature of their customs and the motives behind such
customs. In the case of the Métis, the customs represent a hybrid culture, springing
from contact between natives and Europeans. Thus, writing and orality are both part
of the inferiorized culture.

Another victory of postcolonial literature is that it enables the colonised to
destabilise the barriers around the ‘French or the English literatures’ that protected
the primacy of the canon and self-evident value of European standards of literary excellence. Indeed, native writers instituted a new standard of writing: they have altered the European literary conventions so that they could fit their own discourse. New hybrid forms of postcolonial writing take into account the use of oral literature and native languages along with English. Helen Tiffin states, "Through polyphony, hybridisation, and the continual erosion of all traditional strategies of European containment, post-colonial texts liberate themselves from the historical capture and contemporary containment [...]" (179). This enables postcolonial writers to create and recover their history. Homi Bhabha argues that hybridity can serve as a form of subversive opposition since it displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination (Bhabha as quoted by Ashcroft et al. 2000: 9). Postcolonial texts by being hybrid refute the 'purity' of the European literary canon. Hybridity in literature enables colonised people to prove that literature is not only a matter of canon, but instead an evolving art that is always in the process of change. The proof is that colonised people used to have the oral form of literature that required oral skills. Oral literature was used to entertain people as well as to sensitise people about morality and the respect for life and everything that surrounded the individual. Thus, literature was to serve everybody in the community. It was not only a matter for a small, elite group.

Hybridity in the thesis will be explored mainly in Chapter Two in the context of comparing novels by Ngugi and Culleton. These authors represent the in-between space or the transcultural space in which the individual looks for an identity beyond
colonial stereotypes. Thus, postcolonial literature may constitute a proof that the coloniser knows his subject only partially and, then, only through a colonialist position. Postcolonial literature constructs subjects within a variety of cultures and hybrid, in-between positions that are complex and do not always enable outsiders to grasp them. The Empires Writes Back proposes four major models of postcolonial criticism. Those are first, national or regional models which emphasise the distinctive features of the particular national or regional cultures; second, race-based models which identify certain shared characteristics across various national literatures; third, comparative models which seek to account for particular linguistic, historical, and cultural features across two or more postcolonial literatures; fourth, more comprehensive comparative models which argue for features such as hybridity and syncreticity as constitutive elements of all postcolonial literatures (15). The fictional and autobiographical works I will explore in my thesis gather some aspects of all these models. For example, Halfbreed fits into a national model and a race-based model. By comparing it to African texts, I am submitting it to a comparative model. By looking at hybridity in the use of oral teachings in Halfbreed, I am studying it according to the fourth, more comprehensive model of postcolonial literature. I must say they even go beyond these categories of postcolonial writing in that they portray different individuals’ identities within a group. They represent the individual trying to realise himself or herself in a society where rules must be respected according to the expectations of the group as well of individuals. In order
to have an overview of those contexts and themes, I propose to look at the way postcolonialism happened in Africa and Canada.

As mentioned earlier, postcolonialism, from the point of view of some theorists, begins as soon as colonisation establishes itself somewhere. In Africa, the process of decolonisation has been going on for some time now. Indeed, African writers have been trying to create an independent identity different from the one the colonisers brought years ago. Thus, African writers choose their own metaphysical systems that they use to challenge European perspectives. In discussing African postcolonial writing, I will briefly mention Negritude. Negritude may be considered as the first step Black writers took in their search for cultural decolonisation. Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor began this school of thought in the 1920s and 1930s. The concept of Negritude was the most pronounced assertion of the distinctive qualities of Black culture and identity. It claimed to be a distinctive African view of time-space relationships, ethics, metaphysics and an aesthetics which separated itself from the supposedly "universal" values of European taste and style. Eventually, this assertion of Black consciousness continued and gave way to postcolonial theory in Africa.

Like most postcolonial writers, the two African writers I have chosen to explore in my thesis propose another reading of their culture to the rest of the world. For example, Chinua Achebe uses Ibo oral formulation and seasonal cycles against the European linear narrative. Tiffin states, still talking of Achebe, "In Things Fall Apart Western historicizing is kept at bay while the complexity and the communal
density of culture through proverbs, seasonality, festivals, rituals, multitheism and power-balancing and power-sharing are established" (174). In writing in such a hybrid style, Achebe stands against the District Commissioner’s will to capture the Ibo world in his book, *Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. One of the intentions of the District commissioner, a character representing the British Crown in *Things Fall Apart*, is to portray the Ibo society as one that is full of ignorant and savage people who need some enlightenment from the Europeans. Achebe’s aim might be to show that despite the shortcomings within this society, the main disturbance with respect to identity occurred in Africa when the colonisers arrived there. Achebe has succeeded in showing that written literature is a form of art that can be used to represent reality and to entertain readers. As a postcolonial writer he tries to appropriate the notions of self from the white man. His novel shows the development of self in the protagonist, Okonkwo, as he rises in status in the Ibo community and how his need to please other people leads him to failure.

During colonisation the real aim of Europeans was to control the colony’s wealth, but this could not be complete without mental control, for example the control of the tools of self-definition in relationship to others. Among these tools there are culture and language. Very often the language of colonised people is undervalued and replaced by the language of the colonising nations. Such a situation leads to the natives’ alienation with regard to their own culture and it also brings a sense of inferiority to those who cannot speak the colonisers’ language. This new language opens doors to school, administration, policy, written literature, and other
social privileges linked to colonisation. I will mostly talk of literature because postcolonial writers usually write in the coloniser’s language. My interest lies in the English language mainly, because the works under study are all written in English. But in many postcolonial societies it is not the language itself that is important, but writing. Being able to write confers the individual a certain power in his or her society. In *Things Fall Apart*, even if the narrator does not specifically talk of the presence of writers among the court messengers, we can suppose that they know a bit of writing to do their job. In *The River Between*, Waiyaki, the main protagonist who gets formal education, is able to build a school where other Gikuyu children will be taught how to write and read the English language. The children’s parents see in the learning of English a source of wisdom: “And mothers and fathers waited, expecting their children to come home full of learning and wisdom” (79). One can see the importance of learning English and writing since it leads to a higher social status in the future, and the future liberation of the Gikuyu people. Writing is to be praised in Africa, for the appropriation of the written word is going to become a crucial feature in the process of self assertion that African countries express through their postcolonial literature. Nevertheless, the language African writers will use in their writings is to be specific to them. This language must wear their culture, their emotions. It must be a language that will be understood by the African readers. There is going to be a kind of mixture between English and indigenous languages. Chinua Achebe states, “I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full
communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings” (as quoted by Ngugi 1986: 8). In *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe uses words like *Egwugwu* (4), *udu* (6), *ogene* (6), etc., to describe scenes that are common to the Ibo society and that do not exist in British culture. There is no English word that can offer the full expression of these African notions or objects. Trying to translate them will make these words lose their real meaning. Their presence in the text makes it a hybrid text accessible in different ways to readers who speak Ibo and English. Postcolonial literature often uses indigenous languages to mark hybrid texts and to appeal to two readerships differently.

While some African writers encourage writing in English, others believe that English will lead the African writer to be absorbed into the imperialist culture (Williams 54). Among the second group of writers, James Ngugi is one of the most radical about the question of language. During a meeting of African writers at Makere University College, Kampala, Uganda, in 1962, the question asked was “What is African literature?” The writers wanted to know whether it was a literature about Africa or African experience or literature by African writers, in an African language. Other questions were asked also. Ngugi claimed that contrary to what the proponents of English think, that English and literature in English take Africans further from themselves to other selves, from their world to other worlds (12). My understanding of Ngugi’s view is that writing in English is a way of alienating Africans. According to him language is culture in that language carries culture, and culture carries, through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which the
individual perceives himself or herself and his place in the world (16). According to Ngugi, for language to be able to carry African culture, it must be an African language. From then on, Ngugi's choice leads him to write in Gikuyu language. According to him, this choice represents a part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples (Ngugi 28). Language has been very important to postcolonial African writers. Some of them like Chinua Achebe agree to using the English language they have been given by the coloniser, as a style proper to Africans. Others, like Ngugi, think it better to use African language to convey their version of the colonial period, so that African cultural identity can be redefined. I do agree with them partially but one must remember that writing has been brought by colonialism. So, where lies the originality of African writing if it still uses a colonial means? I think it is worth using writing and colonial language in strategic ways so that there may be freedom through creation and literature.

Like Africans, indigenous people in Canada had an oral literature that was transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to another. This previous literature gathered storytelling, song, and public ceremony. The spoken word used to hold an important place in Indians' lives because it possessed the power to change reality itself (Petrone 10). The first Canadian Indian writers were those who converted to Anglicanism or Methodism. Penny Petrone lists some of them in Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present, for example, Peter Jones, George Copway, George Henry, etc (35). On the Métis side, one of the first writers was the militant patriot Howard Adams, with his In Prison of Grass: Canada
from the Native Point of View (1975). In this book Adams examines Canada’s Métis policy from earliest contact to modern times. Another example is Émile Pelletier. He wrote A Social History of the Manitoba Métis (1974). His book intends to affirm that the demand for aboriginal rights of the Métis has a strong and moral basis (Petrone 114). The modern times, especially the seventies, have seen an increase in autobiographical works by Métis writers. The style used in those writings mixed Cree, English and French languages, and the native autobiographical tradition. Petrone argues, “The life stories of natives are never told sequentially but in a loose style incorporating history, oral tale, myth, and practical advice” (114). Maria Campbell’s autobiography Halfbreed is a good illustration of the native autobiographical tradition. The opening chapter of her autobiography portrays early Métis history, when they were dispossessed of their land and came to be called “Road Allowance people” (13). The text also represents the different origins of the Métis: Scottish, English, and French among others (14-16). The reader can also find some accounts of community life, the fun-loving spirit of Métis weddings, dances, and sometimes myths as when Maria’s grandmother tells her the story of the little people (20). The autobiography does not follow the European chronological flow, but rather the story is told in a way that allows some flash backs of Maria’s grandmother from time to time.

As the Métis writers were first published by Europeans, there was a tendency to remove some native oral techniques such as repetition, pauses and stops of the narrator’s voice, etc. Fortunately, with the coming of some Métis publishers, these
difficulties became minor. Among those publishers, there are Basil H. Johnston, Eleanor Brass, Patronella Johnson, etc. Maria Campbell along with these writers of the seventies romanticise the Métis and the Indian past in their works. They sometimes include native words in their stories so that they can raise the curiosity and excitement of young native readers about their native language. Their writing expresses the Métis people's anger but rarely suggests bitterness toward the Whites. Past the seventies, a new flow of writers emerged. Those were writers like Beatrice Culleton, Tomson Highway, Daniel David Moses, Thomas King, Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, Jeannette Armstrong, and many others. They are often university trained writers who produce original works. In fact, with the change that took place in Indian life in Canada, for example the phenomenon of cities, this new generation of writers are concerned with problems of integration: stereotypes and preoccupation with skin colour and racism. Beatrice Culleton’s In Search of April Raintree represents well the different stereotypes the Métis undergo. They are accused of being great drinkers, good for nothing, prostitutes, and people that always end up committing suicide. The spiritual support and the traditional Métis life are missing from Culleton’s novel. Her Métis protagonists struggle to construct a sense of self in a modern, urban world. Culleton is among the Canadian native writers who decided to talk about the North American Indian protest movement from the sixties to the eighties.

This brief analysis of both African and Métis postcolonial literature enables me to propose the idea that postcolonial writing has emerged in quite a different way for each culture. Indeed, Africans have been more concerned with the language issue
in their writing than the Métis. The Africans deal more with political organisation of
the community, the different actions that must be taken for independence and a new
definition of the African identity. However, the Métis put the emphasis on
remembering collective identity in the past; they fight to keep the Métis cultural
values that the young generation will benefit from in the future. Actually, the fact is
that politics is an inherent part of the Métis’ lives. For example, Maria Campbell’s
text portrays some of the earliest scenes of political meetings by Métis community
activists (63-66). The Métis, as Halfbreed represents them, are deceived by
politicians (Campbell 66). The difference in both people’s strategies of
decolonisation may be explained by the fact that the Métis are in minority in a settler
colony, whereas Africans are in majority in a colony of occupation. A brief portrait
of the four writers under discussion will illustrate further differences and
commonalities among their postcolonial concerns.

Chinua Achebe was born in 1930 in Ogidi, Nigeria. He is a Nigerian writer
who has played an important role in developing a critical discourse in the
postcolonial world. He is considered as a major critic of colonialist discourse.
Among his works are, Arrow of God (1964), No Longer at Ease (1960), and A Man of
the People (1966). According to him, the dominant discourse of the coloniser must
be challenged in order to recover a truer version of African history, through the eyes
of Africans. Achebe argues that other people have decided to talk about Africa in
their own way because African critics failed in taking control of African literary
criticism (Ashcroft et al. 1995: 61). In ‘The Novelist As Teacher’ (1975), Achebe
suggests that the text in postcolonial social formations must wear a revolutionary character and recover what Europeans have captured in their colonial texts about Africa. Achebe has also been a member of the crusade for cultural nationalism in Africa. Finally, Achebe is known for his agreement to use the English language in African literature because as he used to say, he has been given a language that he intends to use. In return, this language must be a new, hybrid language so that it can carry his African experience.

Maria Campbell was born in April 1940 in Northern Saskatchewan and grew up near Prince Albert National Park. She is a Métis of Indian, French and Scottish ancestry. She has written books for children such as People of the Buffalo (1975) and Riel's People (1978). She is still writing and teaches at the University of Saskatchewan. Despite the sad experience which the Métis have had, Campbell makes a great use of humour in her text Halfbreed. I believe that she intends to tell people that humour is part of the Métis culture. The Métis people who experienced land dispossession and lived by the road side are still capable of laughter and enjoyment during weddings and cultural meetings. For example, Maria tells how the Métis always end up their parties with a fight. The text reports one of these parties, “There’s going to be a fight for sure with those Sandy Lake people here, but I paid little attention because there was never a good dance unless there was a good fight” (51). I believe that the Métis are very humorous; if not, they could not have laughed at people fighting each other. Despite the miserable living conditions of the Métis in her life story, they are still capable of enjoying life. Kate Vangen states that
Campbell is one of the native writers that makes a role and a place for their people in history (189). Maria Campbell in her autobiography has proved that it is not by pushing the Métis by the roadside that they will disappear. At least, as autobiographic subject she succeeds in remaining hopeful that things are going to change one day for her and her people.

James Ngugi was born in 1938 in Limuru, Kenya; in African literature, he is socially committed and a clear-cut anti-imperialist (Ashcroft et al. 1995: 161). Author of *Weep Not, Child*, *A Grain of Wheat*, and *The Black Hermit*, he has also taught English at University College Nairobi and at the English Department at Makerere. He is committed in creative writing as well as in essays, addresses, and anecdotes. He is also known for his political activities described in some of his writings, for example, *A Grain of Wheat* and *Petals of Blood*. But most interesting is his endeavour to use African languages in African literature. Ngugi’s interest in using African languages lies in the fact that indigenous languages must reconnect African writers to the revolutionary traditions of an organised peasantry and working class. He theorises that indigenous languages will further help in defeating imperialism and in creating a democratic and socialist system between Africans and the other people in the world (Ashcroft et al. 1995: 290).

Beatrice Culleton Mosionier was born in the St. Boniface area of Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1949 and currently resides in Toronto, Ontario. Aside from writing, she worked for a number of years at Pemmican Publications, a Manitoba publishing house. She has written works of fiction aimed at both adults and children. She has
been criticised for the simplicity of her novel, *In Search of April Raintree*. Helen Hoy exposes the point of view of some critics that consider the novel to be artless and “irritatingly naive at times” (155). However, Hoy thinks otherwise, that immediacy in truth-telling is Culleton’s guarantor of literary power (Hoy 156). Indeed, when we read Culleton’s novel, we can see how crude and simple is her way of representing the racial and violent issues that her characters live everyday. She uses simple vocabulary to portray scenes that may incite violent reactions within the reader. Whoever reads her novel does not need a sophisticated vocabulary in order to understand her story. Culleton can be categorised within the group of Canadian native writers who write literature about the margins. Her characters, April and Cheryl, speak out against marginalisation while going from one foster home to another. She can be classified among the native writers that decide to represent the Métis world as it is nowadays, and to think about the state of “in-betweeness” in which they live.

I will say that these four authors suit the label “postcolonial” well because they all describe and represent their social environment as it is and the different strategies of decolonisation their texts propose to colonised people. Their texts succeed in raising different questions about the new identity of African and the Métis people, their complicity in the establishment of colonisation in their lives, and their challenge to colonial norms.

To talk of postcolonialism in Africa and Canada, from my point of view, will be to talk of a literature written by Africans and the Métis. Writers from these parts
of the world and these communities take their responsibility in presenting their cultures and their testimony to colonisation. On the African side, writers belong for the most part to the group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery (Appiah 119). Despite their struggle to escape the West, the theories of their situation are informed by their European formation. In fact, they are able to write because they have been given tools during their passage through the European school system. This serves them later to prepare decolonisation in Africa. In this process of decolonisation African postcolonial writers use European writing techniques, but not the Western ideologies. Chinua Achebe argues, “Broadly speaking, the African novel is a response to and a record to the traumatic consequences of the impact of western capitalist colonialism on the traditional values and institutions of the African peoples” (Eustace 1979: 63).

In Canada there have been contradictions in postcolonial theory. Linda Hutcheon suggests that native culture should be considered the resisting, postcolonial voice of Canada (as quoted by Brydon 139). I agree with her in that the natives are, for the main part, those who have undergone colonisation, dispossession of land and alienation from their culture in Canada. Postcolonial literature aims at recapturing the Canadian native world so that native texts can try to recover and redefine their stories, their myths and the “authenticity” of native identity as it is conceived by natives. Canadian natives write in order to preserve the rest of native culture for the younger generation. Some critics like Agnes Grant believe that despite the fact that a lot has been said about aboriginals in Canadian literature, much more remains to be done
Native literature in Canada, as I mentioned previously, must deal with the real problems affecting Canadian Indians today. Those problems are, among others, marginalisation, violence in cities, addiction of young people to alcohol and drugs, prostitution, land claim disputes, and the fact that, although the Métis are mixed blood, their writing is usually discussed beside native writing because both peoples are colonised in similar ways. Native and Métis writers may represent their community to Canadian readers as well as to readers throughout the world. Before now, readers have had the Western version of native and Métis lives; now it is time to listen to the ones who are really living colonisation and postcolonialism.

In Africa and Canada, postcolonial literature gives the right to the intellectuals to go beyond the simple role of the interpreter. Intellectuals being caught between two cultures are different from interpreters who usually emerge from the dominant discourse. Initiated into written culture, writers consider the importance of the written word for indigenous or Métis cultures where previously the spoken word had been priviledged. But having realised that the written word has helped the coloniser spread his point of view about natives to the rest of the world, native writers are now conscious that they must use the same weapon as the coloniser to talk back to him. Postcolonial self assertion depends partly in writing back to the Empire (Ashcroft et al 1989: 5).

In their literature Africans and Canadians do not work uniquely to condemn the coloniser. They also depict the different ills and shortcomings of colonisation. In some of their texts, they present the coloniser as the one who has brought division in
their harmonious society, where everything seemed to be perfect. This will usually be part of their portrayal of the myth of the golden age. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, Umofia elders state, talking of the white man, “He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart” (160). As many critics note, Achebe’s title alludes to a poem called “Second Coming” by W. B. Yeats. In *Halfbreed* the autobiographical subject’s grandmother uses a similar metaphor for the white man’s tactics, “[...]. The white man saw that that [self-blame] was a more powerful weapon than anything else with which to beat the Halfbreeds, and he used it and still does today” (47). Maria’s grandmother also talks of other forms of complicity - how some Métis desire to own the same items as the white people.

When we read these teachings of the old woman, we may notice a certain blaming of the Métis who have themselves allowed the white man to trouble their sense of self and identity. This is also true for the protagonists in African texts. For example, James Ngugi’s *The River Between* makes the traditionalists blame Joshua for being responsible for the coming of the white men to the hills (36). One thing is sure: these texts expose the complexity of complicity in the actual fate of colonised societies.

The postcolonial works I am exploring in the present thesis assist in decolonisation by raising the issue of identity as it has been transformed by colonisation. In fact colonisation has affected native identity in that it creates a hybrid state of mind within the colonised societies. The texts also confront individuals with a new, changed group identity that stresses individualism under modernity. Real decolonisation can only happen after the colonised people have
redefined their conception of tradition, cultural hybridity, and the changes modernity has brought. As I will show in the next chapters, compromise is one of the solutions to shaping identity under colonial systems. The different characters' positions between cultures must be explored. Through showing the development of their positions, these texts break the myth of identity as a given, and prove that identity as well as decolonisation are a process and not an arrival. This process requires a continual reshaping of identity, so that people may try to better their lives and find new, adaptable identities for survival. Some characters, like Okonkwo or Cheryl, are unable to bend with changes and end up committing suicide. Those, like Waiyaki and April, who decide to forge a new identity seem to experience a "loss of identity" in that they shed traditional values only to rediscover them. Others, like the autobiographic subject in Halfbreed develop a stronger identity to help them survive. All of these characters live in a liminal position between cultures where the shaping of individual and collective identities is complex and often painful.
CHAPTER ONE:
Self and the Development of Identity
in Things Fall Apart and Halfbreed

In this chapter I propose to examine the different ways a Métis autobiography and an African novel represent characters trying to develop a sense of identity in the shadow of colonisation. These texts are placed in a colonial context, but in some places they sometimes mention periods before and after colonisation. With the advent of colonisation natives in Canada and Africa often felt they "lost" their pre-colonial identity. The different genres, a novel and an autobiography, present the theme of identity and self through different conventions. One thing is certain, however, these texts construct the self and postcolonial identity, and their representations also help realise postcolonial consciousness. Things Fall Apart, a coming-of-age novel uses a developmental strategy to represent the fate of an African leader from youth to death and the autobiography, Halfbreed, prefers retrospection to represent a mature autobiographical subject looking back at the life of a Métis woman.

I will explore the development of self-identity in these novels in two different cultural contexts: Nigeria, a non-settler colony and a high-context culture and Canada, a settler colony and a low-context culture. According to theories of interculturalism, in a high-context culture like the Ibo culture in Canada, the commitment between people is very strong and deep, and responsibility towards the other and tradition takes precedence over responsibility to oneself (Lustig et al. 110).
In a low-context culture like European Canadian culture, into which the Métis have been absorbed, relationships within the collective are not as strong and there is more individualism and tolerance for change than one can find in a high-context culture. The clash between tradition and modernity in Nigeria takes place in a society where masculine values are strongly felt through tradition. The individual in Things Fall Apart is submitted to the rules framed by male elders and the deities. The protagonist heeds tradition by responding to expectations that he act like a strong man, which is synonymous with a good leader. European colonisation as it has been represented in Halfbreed concerns all the Métis and collective identity as well as the individual identity at the center of the autobiography. The text underlines the importance of the female role in Métis society. As the patriarchal family crumbles, the women are often left to cope. In both works characters try their best to form an identity in the space between tradition and modernity.

Colonisation was according to the African novel by Chinua Achebe the "knife that made things fall apart" (Achebe 160). He shows that real problems existed in indigenous communities before European contact. Things Fall Apart is set in the Ibo society, in Nigeria, before the arrival of Europeans. The story occurs in 1958, two years before most African countries become independent. Achebe chooses to represent a pre-colonial society in order to show the negative aspects of tradition as well as modernity. The novel portraits Okonkwo, more specifically his quest for self, in the Ibo community. Since traditional Ibo culture values ostentatious manliness and associates specific behaviours and products to male behaviour, Okonkwo is shown
struggling with his male identity and his relationships with his father. To give a good
description of Okonkwo’s self, Achebe adopts a developmental strategy in which the
narrator provides a brief description of Okonkwo’s childhood, then goes on to portray
his adulthood, and finally ends with his suicide. However, the individual’s identity
struggle in this novel is clearly representative of the Ibos’ struggle for a new
collective identity under colonisation.

*Things Fall Apart* is divided into three parts: the first is the longest with
thirteen chapters. It represents Okonkwo as he grows up in Umofia. After his
father’s death, he manages to forge himself a status in a society in which a strong
sense of masculinity reigns. Actually, he seems to succeed, because despite his
young age, he is already respected by some of the greatest men in his village (8). His
different social and physical achievements help him. The second part of the novel is
shorter, consisting of five chapters. In this part Okonkwo’s problems begin. His
murder of a child he has looked after for years leads Okonkwo and his family to exile.
He begins to lose his status, and his long stay in exile does not improve the situation.
Both these parts reveal traditional life in Nigeria as a form of “internal colonisation”
of individuals in the Ibo tribe. Laws that establish a strong hierarchy within the
society govern this «internal colonisation». The sense of hierarchy is so present in
the community that it sometimes ends up oppressing the individual. The third part of
the novel will oppose the traditional hierarchy to modernity in five chapters. This
part portrays mainly the end of Okonkwo’s exile, his return to his clan, his decision to
commit suicide, and finally the adoption of Western values by the Ibo society. The
last part deals with the meeting of Ibo tradition with Western values. Through such a
development the reader is enabled to view the development of both individual and
collective identity. We see what happens in Okonkwo's mind along side the social
aspect of what people undergo in their traditional society when they come into
contact with modernity.

*Halfbreed* represents Maria Campbell struggle against racial stereotypes over
a period of time. Campbell's autobiography tells about a Métis girl in Canadian
society, fighting stereotypes and myths about racial purity while trying to integrate
into contemporary society. The text represents the adult "I" looking back at the
development of self from childhood in an autobiography which spans about twenty-
four years.

The individual life story begins with a retrospective of Métis struggles that
goes back to Louis Riel's era. If we consider the whole story of the Métis in
*Halfbreed*, it lasts about one hundred years. The story is presented in twenty-four
short chapters. I believe such subdivision allows a better analysis of each step taken
in the self-development of the autobiographical subject because each corresponds to a
year covered. Another point to underline in the organisation of this text is that the
"Introduction" presents Maria observing her birthplace, Spring River. This starting
point may help the autobiographical subject take a new departure in a place that
seemed empty of hope. She is going to be the new hope for the Métis living there
right now. In these early chapters the historical "we" reminds Maria that the Métis
lived a pleasant and peaceful life once in the past. Subsequent chapters continue with the story of Maria's childhood and her sudden entry into adulthood.

Achebe uses the form of the coming-of-age novel, which illustrates well the title of his novel, *Things Fall Apart*. Actually, the text uses psychological and social realism of a time of inner and outer turmoil happening before and during colonisation. Psychologically, the text presents a character that fears failure. On the social side, the text presents a traditional society that pressures men into a rigid role of masculinity. Men are expected to be leaders and leaders are expected to be manly. However, Okonkwo's father is considered to be unmanly. The text reports, "When Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt" (7). "He possesses neither title nor riches" (16). The description of the traditional Ibo society shows that physical strength, such as being a brave wrestler, and material achievements, for example having many wives and many barns full of yams, are valued achievements for men. Also the ability of one to deliver a speech along with proverbs is very important to the role of male leaders in traditional African society.

Okonkwo's father's failure forces Okonkwo to work his way up toward material success and for respect as a man. Okonkwo is a good portrayal of some of the characteristics of the high-context culture where the members have high levels of anxiety and are very resistant to change (Lustig et al. 118). It is from this perspective that I would like to explore Okonkwo's identity development. In high-context culture, the members of one's social and work groups are long lasting and unchanging.
First of all, the text confronts Okonkwo with a problem at the beginning of the novel: the father-son relationship. This problem originates in his father's laziness, drunkenness, and mainly his inability to forge a respected image among the other men of the village. Okonkwo's father's attitude is shameful in the Ibo society which encourages men to be strong, wise and capable of providing for the needs of their families. "Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" (7). Yet, Okonkwo decides to prove to people that he does not resemble his father. But to achieve this development of a new self, Okonkwo must distance himself from his father because he cannot realise himself unless he is different. The first impression the text gives of the father is that his son Okonkwo has no patience with him (4). In fact, Okonkwo, despite the external aspect of strength he shows, suffers internally. The narrator states, "But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness [...]. It was not external but lay deep within him. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father" (12-13). So, to hide this part of his personality Okonkwo keeps working hard and finds it difficult to be idle.

Ironically, such a state of mind helps Okonkwo rise in status. He starts his career in wrestling by age eighteen. Whenever the different villages meet, Okonkwo always manages to bring honour to his village. Despite his young age, Okonkwo wins fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. One of his famous victories occurs when he wins the fight against Amalinze the Cat, the great wrestler who has remained unbeaten for seven years (3). After that, Okonkwo's fame keeps growing in and
beyond the limits of his village. But in Umofia it is not sufficient to be a good wrestler or to be manly. One must prove that he can take care of his family regardless of the number of persons in it. On this level, Okonkwo is going to impress people once again. The text presents him as a tall and huge man who is not afraid of working. Self-realisation calls for the ability to work hard and be a good provider. In *Things Fall Apart*, these abilities are to be on the material level mostly. It is not always easy to acquire wealth because there are external parameters such as weather and the others' confidence that must be taken into account. In fact, Okonkwo builds an image that cannot but earn approval. He is a wealthy farmer, has two barns full of yams, and has just married his third wife. To crown it all he takes two titles and shows incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars (7). His young age does not prevent him from being accepted among the elders' circle.

The text represents the development of Okonkwo's identity as linked to land because most of Okonkwo's and the other villagers' riches come from land. In Umofia land is sacred. Land is considered to be the source of life. Land even has a deity that rules the lifestyle of people. With the amount of harvest one takes from the land, the Ibo man forges an identity in the society. In *Things Fall Apart*, even though people have their own portion of land, they must obey the rules that have been established with regard to the land. In fact Ibo people identify with land. The earth goddess, as the source of all fertility, is the ultimate judge of morality and conduct (33). Any offence to the land must be punished according to the intensity of the offence in order to appease the goddess' spirit. In *Things Fall Apart* land is not taken
away from inhabitants but the organisation of its different uses is taken out of the hands of the elders by the colonisers. Indeed, the colonisers decide what should be done with the different products. They even set the prices of the products.

In the beginning, things seem to work successfully for Okonkwo, but like anyone else, he is confronted with difficulties from time to time. These difficulties arise in the form of sacrificial killings. Towards the end of the first part of the novel, Okonkwo, who has until now been respected or feared by his peers, begins to decline. Out of fear of being called a weak man, he accepts to kill the child, Ikemefuna, whom he has taken care of for years, and whom he loves in his inner self. The child must die in order to pay for the death of a daughter of Umoja whom his father has killed in the past (14). However, one must ask why Okonkwo is not able to resist tradition. The novel shows that characters who blindly fulfil their duties with respect to the rules established by the elders must pay a high price. The fact is that when Okonkwo is notified that he must kill the child, he does not even take time to think about the implications of the act. What matters to him is only his reputation and he is convinced that tradition is the best thing for the Ibo people. Okonkwo shows the characteristics of the individuals of high-context culture who are resistant to change because change for them means anxiety. Anxiety is caused by the fear of failure and loss of respect from the rest of the group.

One of Okonkwo’s friends, Ezeudu, tries to sensitise him about the gravity of such an act: “That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death” (51). Is this not a wise comment? Yes, you will answer. But the developmental structure adopted
by the text cannot but result in stubbornness from Okonkwo so he will not heed his
friend. We must keep in mind that his life is governed by the fear of resembling his
father as shown at the moment of the killing:

As the man who had cleared his throat drew up and raised
his matchet, Okonkwo looked away. He heard the blow.
The pot fell and broke in the sand. He heard Ikemefuna
cry, "My father, they have killed me!" as he ran towards
him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his matchet and
cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak. (55)

Paradoxically, fear is what finally enables Okonkwo to fulfil himself and forge an
identity in the Ibo community. However, this semblance of success is only a mirage
in the eyes of others. The person concerned knows that his life is only a failure. It
seems to be Okonkwo’s fate to be a killer because, a second time in his life he kills
another young man by mistake (112). This time he is not forgiven and must flee to
Mbanta in order to save his and his family’s lives. Okonkwo’s exile constitutes the
second step in the developmental structure of the novel. Now, he is disconnected
from the events that occur in Umofia because of the distance that separates the two
places. The only connection to his native land is Obierika who remains faithful to
him. Obierika is a respectful old man that spends time analysing every event and the
validity of Ibo traditions (Achebe 60). Things are not going to be the same anymore
after the day when Okonkwo departs for his mother’s land. Now, with the white man
coming to the Ibo tribes and with the changes in tradition one can already begin to
view the spread of destruction among the Ibo (125). The reader wonders if Okonkwo
is going to remain the man who earns the people’s respect. It seems impossible,
mostly for someone who is regularly led by fear and impulsion. The pressure of tradition is too strong to bear. The text suggests that one cannot construct an identity only according to the norms established by society, whether traditional or modern. One can conclude from Okonkwo’s life and suicide that his identity is constructed by societal values more than by himself and his personal choice. In fact, he refuses to follow the group in its adoption of modern values; Okonkwo cannot but slip away. Society does not propose suicide as a solution to colonisation, but the text is perhaps suggesting that resignation may emerge when an individual fails to make choices based on his own feelings. Ulrike Schuerkens, in *La colonisation dans la littérature africaine*, argues that Okonkwo has chosen his own justice and that his death reveals the failure in a battle against the invader (178). Okonkwo’s death may be synonymous with the weakness of tradition in the face of a new order that is subtle in its way of invading the old order, that is the Ibo tradition. The narrator reports the words of Obierika about the subtlety of the coloniser, “The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one” (160).

The traditional way Okonkwo develops his identity cannot resist great changes, such as Western values that offer glittering objects like money and political power, even to those who are denied status in the Umofian community. As the text represents it later in the story, compromise must be part of self-realisation. For example, when I consider Obierika, I view him as a person living the situation of
liminality. Liminality represents a state of ambiguity, a marginal and transitional state between cultures. Bill Ashcroft et al. in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* states the importance of the liminal lies in its usefulness for describing an 'in-between' space in which cultural change may occur (130). The space is called a transcultural space in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different cultures. Indeed, Obierika questions the authority of Ibo deities as well as the authority of the West. According to him, it is foolish to desire to oppose the white man in a radical manner (127). Contrary to other people in Umofia, Okonkwo refuses compromise, which according to him is a sign of weakness. When the white men arrive in Umofia and Okonkwo hears about it, he gets nervous. Once again fear and violence justify his actions. Okonkwo reflects, "They were fools. They had been warned that danger was ahead. They should have armed themselves with their guns and their matchets even when they went to market" (127).

*Things Fall Apart* not only presents conservative reactions to change; the novel also presents people who know how to deal with change. These people are examples of the breach that already exists in tradition. They are among those who upset the traditional male-dominated society with the help of the coloniser. Actually, some of them are happy to quit their oppressive environment. Among them stands Okonkwo’s son, Nwoye, and the outcasts of Umofia (137). These people see their freedom in white colonisation. They will learn that land can bring them respect, this time through trade. From now on outcasts are going to change social status. This will be possible with the new regulation the white people bring regarding ownership
of land. This regulation lies in the rule of administrators appointed by the Queen of England. Now the Ibos experience Indirect Rule. In fact Things Fall Apart may be opposing a traditional world where fear reigns to a modern world where one may live according to his individual ideals. But this does not mean that Achebe is pro-colonisation.

The Ibos learn that the land is not only the source of food. Land can provide the financial means to obtain food and possessions in the market. In the past, cowries, an old African currency, were used mainly for the wedding in order to pay for the bride’s dowry. Colonisation brings a new importance to money and a new value to the land. Before colonial contact, land was sacred for the Ibos and any abomination, be it a murder, beating one’s wife, etc., during the Week of Peace celebrated to honour Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility, or any other day, could prevent abundance of harvest according to traditional beliefs. Hubert Deschamps argues, “Chez les Ibo du Nigeria la terre est la reine du monde souterrain et la propriétaire des hommes, vivants ou morts. Elle est en association avec les ancêtres, la source et le juge de la morale” (Mbock 45). This is not the point of view of everybody in Umofia, but mainly the elders. When the white men arrive in Abame, the oracle argues that they are locusts. Locusts constitute a danger for a country when they appear in great numbers before people bring in the harvest. Locusts can devour all the plants in few minutes causing, then, a great loss for farmers and all the population. This image suggests that the Europeans and their modern values regarding land use will deprive the population of their natural harvest.
But, contrary to what the elders think, the text shows, from the behaviour of each character and the social reasons that lead people to forge a new status under colonisation, that things fall apart because breaches already existed in the Ibo society. Infiltration by white people helps uncover these breaches in the traditional system.

One reason why missionaries succeed in Umofia is that they are able to prove that neither magic nor ancestral practices of the medicine men can overcome the white man's religion. They also take advantage of the Ibo people's ignorance with regard to modern values. As noted earlier, the elderly character who comments on the white man's coming points to the quiet way he used religion to divide the Ibo against themselves. Ironically, white people challenge the power of Umofia's god by remaining alive some days after they settle in the evil forest. Is this not amazing to know that there is something more powerful than the Ibo oracles, gods, and other religious restrictions? The white men tell them that they are all children of the one and only true God. Now, the Ibo think they are the white man's equals.

As mentioned earlier, *Things Fall Apart* shows that the rule over the land does not belong to the elders anymore after the white man arrives. Before the white man arrived, the land was given a moral value according to which the society framed its order. But with colonisation, land is imparted with commercial value. Thus, with colonisation, people learn that they can sell the harvests and make a lot of money. Money becomes then a way of becoming rich and getting a title, whereas before the coloniser arrived entitlement was based on tribal law. Farming the land and the amount of crops one draws from it in order to nourish one's family were traditional
sources of wealth and title. For example, the text shows in many places how Okonkwo is praised for his courage to work the land even when there is a lack of rain. One of the elders, Nwakibie addresses Okonkwo saying, “I have learnt to be stingy with my yams. But I can trust you. I know it as I look at you. As our fathers said, you can tell a ripe corn by its look” (20). Title from the land comes along with the number of yam barns one possesses. Speaking of Nwakibie, we learn that he is a wealthy man who has three huge barns, and that he has taken the highest but one title which a man can take in the clan (17).

Another interesting aspect of the loss of land in Things Fall Apart is the fact that the newcomers bring a new religion and a new culture that is, the government representing the Crown, etc. All this represents a threat to the deities of the place and the god of the land. From the reaction of some characters, we can see that the land is soiled now; things are not to be the same anymore. Nevertheless, the Ibos are lucky because they are not asked to leave their land or pay for it like the Métis in Maria Campbell’s autobiography. Indeed in the autobiography, the autobiographical subject tells the story of the colonial redistribution of land that leads the Halfbreds to move to the roadside and the free strips of crown land there. Because they are not even allowed to live in Indian reservations and they have no money to acquire land rights, the Métis are going to be called “Road Allowance people”. Unfortunately, this piece of land also belongs to the British Crown.

Interestingly in Things Fall Apart, those who do not have a high social status within the traditional society seem to uncover one when the white man arrives. For
example, the outcasts, the twins, poor people, or the converts that the text calls the "excrement" of the clan are going to construct a new identity and some of them will even get a status that is superior to that of title men in the future (130). Those who are called effeminate men are now partners of those who will become the new leaders of Umoafia. But those who used to be respected in the community decide that it is the white man who is right because they can testify to the power of his medicine. The Igbo construct their identities in two ways. There are those who compromise and occupy an in-between space in order to improve their social image, by following the coloniser. Okonkwo calls people who compromise "cowards" (145). Others, like Okonkwo, decide to remain on the traditional track and lose respect in front of their peers.

Goods that are basic to people's lives are going to take on a cash value now. This is a way for the gap between rich and poor to become larger under a capitalist society. The portrayal of land in Things Fall Apart gives voice to voiceless people in the Ibo society. In fact in inverting the function of land from the social to commercial order, the text enables the outcast to rise in status in the clan. Outcast people rise out of their misery by becoming the collaborators of the colonisers in converting people to the new religion (143) as well as to the new trade system (165). Meanwhile, land also leads some respected members of the group to despair and resignation. Because of the capitalist system, competition is now common in the village and the person that has no means to buy goods cannot but become economically poor: "The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the
first time palm-oil and kernel became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umofia” (161). The narrator illustrates the transition from tribal sharing to capitalism. They do not pay great attention anymore to community events, such as Okonkwo’s return from exile to Umofia (155), that in the past would have held their attention for weeks. The consequence of such behaviour is that Okonkwo, who thinks he will return to his clan and take his title again, must admit that things will never be the same because when a man leaves, people hurry to take his place. Since he is a man who refuses defeat, the only solution he sees is to commit suicide instead of facing humiliation.

Identity development may also be linked to the loss of language as well as the loss of land under colonisation. Some postcolonial writers depict, in works of fiction or accounts of their personal experiences, moments of the conflict over language that occurred during colonisation. Their objectives in doing so are to restore their own ‘truth’ about the pre-colonised societies so that they can refute the dominant discourse, or the coloniser’s discourse. In this way, they choose to write back against the Empire (Ashcroft et al 1989: 1 ). The interaction between the dominant discourse and indigenous language nourishes the development of postcolonial literatures. Many postcolonial writers decide to represent their peoples and the coloniser in the coloniser’s languages, for example, English or French, so that the coloniser will acknowledge what is thought about him. But they do not write uniquely in standard French or English. Instead, they mix indigenous and colonial languages so that the dominant discourse would be challenged through hybridity. As mentioned earlier,
postcolonial writers use the colonisers' languages, in a way that can give them a new life. And writers can at the same time explore the disabling features of the dominant languages. This hybrid language takes into account the structure of oral literature and the use of indigenous terms that portray the traditional realities. *Things Fall Apart* uses Ibo terms such *obi* (13), *eneke-nti-oba* (48), *kotma* (158), etc. These terms may be translated in English but they will lose some of their power. In order to explore the question of hybrid language in postcolonial writings, I will focus on the use of orality in Achebe's novel.

Language is a means by which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated and the medium through which conceptions of truth, order and reality become established. Simon During states that, "The question of language for postcolonialism is political, cultural and literary, not in the transcendental sense that the phrase as *differend* enables politics, but in the sense that a choice of language is a choice of identity" (as quoted in Ashcroft et al. 125-126). I do not agree totally with this statement because as we notice in both works, formal education and the English language seem to modify identity and push the children of the colonised to adopt English as their new language. The colonised, I am convinced, are sometimes used as puppets by the Crown and forced to adopt a new language. As the narrator of Achebe's novel portrays it, one of the great men, Akunna, has given one of his sons to be taught the white man's knowledge in Mr. Brown's school (162). A few months spent at school were enough, at that time, to make a court messenger or even a court clerk. Those who stayed longer became teachers (164). Meanwhile, labourers like
Okonkwo are going to work for another person. Is this not an ironical situation to quit the status of lord and become a slave? Akunna sends his son to school because he knows that a high social status may be obtained when one goes to the white man’s school.

Even though Chinua Achebe argues in 1975 that he intends to use English as a language that he has been given, he wonders all the same if it is right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else’s. According to him, still speaking of language, “It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling” (Ashcroft et al. 285). I will be exploring the use of orality and the fear that exits when one switches from his or her mother tongue to an alien language. One must understand both languages in order to avoid misunderstanding in communication.

In Things Fall Apart Ibos make fun of the white man calling them ‘buttocks’ (132). The villagers sometimes ask them if their white masters understand Ibo language. Their conclusion is that the white man cannot understand Ibo culture unless he understands their language because, according to them, language and culture are linked. For example, the narrator reports a conversation, “Does the white man understand our custom about land? How can he when he does not even speak our tongue?” As cited earlier, James Ngugi feels that English will “carry the weight” of his African experience only if it is a “new”, altered English. The new language Ngugi is talking about is going to be an English language constructed with respect to the standard of Ibo language. For the Ibo people it will be Nigerian English that will be understood by Nigerians as well as British people. For example, with the Ibo
terms Achebe uses in his novel, the Nigerian reader will be familiar with the notions of *obi*, representing a hut. As we know there is no similar hut in Britain. Achebe uses a hybrid language to show the contact of cultures and to address his own people through his literature.

Hybridity in language also occurs when orality from traditional cultures is integrated into a written text. Chinua Achebe’s novel contains a lot of proverbs and story telling. However, when people gather to exchange stories, not everyone understands. According to the author of *Sociologie des sociétés orales d’Afrique Noire*, “Formellement, le proverbe est la présentation d’une information de caractère social de façon ramassée, stylisée, souvent énigmatique, et nécessitant de ce fait un commentaire pour pouvoir être comprise et surtout utilisée à propos” (Agblemagnon 66). In Africa people who are proficient in using proverbs accurately are respected because it shows they are wise. It is said in the novel that, “Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten” (6). The image of the proverb as oil brings more wisdom and adds more substance to people’s conversation. For example, Okoye argues with Unoka, that he is about to take a title soon. His ability to use proverbs, besides other traits, will help him get the title. Whenever the elders and entitled men gather they usually introduce their meeting by using a lot of proverbs before reaching the subject that leads them to gather. Thomas H. Jackson says about Achebe’s use of proverbs, “His amusing exploitation of Ibo proverbs highlights the function of language both in Ibo life and in his novels as the formulation of enduring wisdom” (6). Charly Mbock argues in a
critique of Achebe’s work, “Tout emploi de proverbe suppose la rigueur dans la
pensée du locuteur et de l’à-propos dans ses interventions, ce mode d’expression est
une preuve de maturité”(86). Both Jackson and Mbock are discussing the ability one
must have when addressing an audience. A person who is not mature and gifted with
a certain experience of life is not capable of good argumentation and coherence in his
or her speech. The speech level of an individual depends on his or her mental
maturity. However, the art of speech does not always mean the honesty of an
individual. For example, Okonkwo’s father is very talented in conversation, but he
uses his talent to flatter people so that they may give him things since he is not
willing to work. Although colonisation, as Things Fall Apart describes it, shows a
break from the oral tradition, the novel celebrates orality. Yet by its end we see
orality cannot help people avoid the destruction of their traditional identity.

Okonkwo is the very prototype of the weakening of oral tradition under the
colonial system because his use of proverbs and oral tools are unable to overcome the
colonisers’ administration. He is among those people who wished to resist the spread
of colonial rule, but must have been dissuaded by the fate of his neighbours.
Okonkwo is a character who enables the reader to realise that there was no uniformity
in the Ibo resistance in face of the colonial conquest. Each individual reacted
according to his or her interests with regard to the new social order. However, in
Things Fall Apart there are some characters that leave their lower class to rise into the
upper class. Okonkwo’s son Nwoye is one of them. He rejects traditional values in
favour of modern values. Going to the white man’s school will afford him the tools
required for access to the modern administration; primary among them is writing. According to Nwoye, modern values are the only way to freedom from the elders and their oppressive traditions, such as killing an innocent child, Ikemefuna, who must pay for the mistake of another person, or putting twins in an earthenware pot and throwing them away in the forest (56).

Developing one’s identity, as I have tried to explore it in *Things Fall Apart*, is linked to the group. Whatever leads to an individual’s success or failure in the society depends on the group’s priorities. In collectivist cultures, decisions that juxtapose the benefits to the individual and the benefits to the group are usually based on what is best for the group, and the group to which a person belongs is the most important social unit. Thus, an individual must remain loyal to the group whatever the group decides. Okonkwo wants to remain loyal to his ancestors and to traditional customs. He forgets one thing: the elders and their successors make the customs. Since the successors have decided to change their course, he must try to submit. The fate the novel gives to him is suicide. However, those who submit to the group’s decisions to change under colonisation begin a new life. It may look as if Achebe is pro-colonisation. In fact, suicide and the decision to change represent both the individuals’ ability and inability in shaping a new identity. A sequel to the novel might reveal the progress in life of those who change under colonisation. I think that the novel’s aim is to question the individual’s self-development in a collectivist society: can an individual realise himself or construct an identity outside the group? The novel also challenges the unity of the group. Elisabeth Isichei, argues of Ibo’s
history that, "Iboland's confrontation with an alien culture, its conquest, and the experience of alien rule, created a spiritual and intellectual crisis" (180).

As a coming-of-age novel, Things Fall Apart shows the growth of Okonkwo, his development of self within the group, and finally his premature death. In an autobiography this cannot be the case because the person who tells the story must survive in order to tell what has happened in the life of his or her community. In Halfbreed, Maria Campbell reflects on her own life as a Métis in Canada and tells how she negotiated a space for her identity as a mixed blood in white society.

The autobiographical subject in Halfbreed is a woman, and to represent a society in the art of writing is not the easiest thing for a woman. Halfbreed is also an emergent work of Métis autobiography in Canadian writing. Contrary to Achebe's novel, set in an extreme patriarchal society, Campbell's autobiography depicts a society where the power relations between men and women are less uneven. The text presents women having their place and a word to say about the functioning of the family. For example, Cheechum, Qua Chich, and Grannie Dubuque have a great influence in the Campbell family. This matriarchal situation was truer for the period before the effects of colonisation shaped the Métis habits. Indeed, colonisation brought the Western patriarchal system and as the text states, white society instituted a system whereby men were treated better than women.

At one meeting I talked to the AA group about a halfway house for women. I expounded at great length that there were soup kitchens, flop houses and hostels for men throughout Canada. Furthermore, society didn't deal with men on the street as harshly as it did with women. (151)
The Métis men in cities were now given another social status of being superior to women. As the autobiographical subject in *Halfbreed* argues, Stan Daniels believes that the white system has led their men to leave their wives (145). The negative discourse on the impurity of the Métis women leads to the rejection of the female characters in the life story. If the Métis women cannot marry successfully with the Métis men or white men, they are economically and culturally disenfranchised. These Métis works show how women may prostitute themselves in order to survive economically in a male-dominated, white society. Then, they remain available sexual objects, as it had been when the white men first arrived in Canada and took native women as “country wives”. The existence of the Métis as a mixed blood people testifies to the historical fact of racial mixing between natives, a fact that many among the “purer” races wish to erase.

As mentioned earlier at the beginning of the chapter, Maria Campbell is using a retrospective strategy in the realisation of self. The “I” realises herself while regarding the collective “we”. In fact, the “I” of the autobiographical subject is shaped by her relation to the group, its history, and mostly her grandmother’s teaching about life. Doris Sommer argues about the “plural self”, “The singular represents the plural not because it replaces or subsumes the group but because the speaker is a distinguishable part of the whole” (106). Campbell’s use of retrospection can be justified because she has survived the difficult situation of the Métis. Remembering her grandmother’s teachings, she will recapitulate experiences and loss
in her life. Added to retrospection, Maria Campbell follows a native oral autobiographical model that includes, for example, oral stories and myths. The text is strewn with stories about the Métis evenings during which people gathered and told stories (34-35). Maria tells how weddings were common in their customs (52), the annual Trappers conventions in northern Saskatchewan (38), etc. To enhance the quality of this oral form of writing, and to render her text hybrid, Campbell uses from time to time some Cree words, such as Chee-pie-hoos (14), ak-ee-top (25), shnet (25), etc. These words are translated into English. The autobiographical subject informs the reader that the Métis were from French, English and Cree origins. My point of view is that Campbell uses Cree terms in order to reveal the way the Métis express their feelings. For example, note the following reaction of Cheechum when she meets with white women wearing two-piece bathing suits. The texts states, “Cheechum covered her face saying, ‘Ayee ee. Tan-sa ay se yat chich o-kik’ (39). This may show that the old woman is very shocked by the scene and that she wishes to share her judgement with insiders only. Such expressions are a good illustration of the Métis culture in the text. Said in English the Cree words would not have the same effect. Campbell’s strategy of linguistic hybridity serves as a step in the Métis cultural revival.

The autobiographical subject tells of having had a hard life in the course of which her efforts to better her life and those of her brothers end in more suffering. When she realises that an armed revolution of native people will never come about (156), she must begin a new life as, the years of searching, loneliness, and pain are
over for her (157). The autobiography is part of that new life. By testifying to Métis customs and troubles, she is reviving Métis culture through her life story.

Maria goes back to her father’s place. There is nothing left from her past. Everything has changed and people have left the place. Where can she find strength to give a new sense to her life? She is only able to summon strength by calling up her memories of the past. Julie Cairnie argues:

*Maria Campbell* functions as a representational identity, and is a person whose name and life-experiences identify her as a Halfbreed woman. This representational function is reflected in the important affinity she frequently draws between land, people, and self: “Like me the land had changed, my people were gone, and if I was to know peace I would have to search within myself. That is when I decided to write about my life”. (104)

The memories Campbell calls up mainly turn around the experiences of her family. Her new self will be built on what she learns from her grandmother’s stories about the Métis past. Campbell depicts this past, until 1860, as very pleasant. Before the 1860’s in Saskatchewan, the place where the Métis lived was a land of freedom and peace according to the text. I must say that the text does not idealise the past, but it may just be trying to represent pride in the historical “we”. Colonisation and the dispossession of the Métis were systems of control that led to poverty and rebellion. Evelyn Kallen states in “The Vertical Ethnic Mosaic: The Canadian System of Ethnic Stratification” that the control of land ownership and use is an institutionalised form of neglect that violates the fundamental economic rights of minority members by restricting their access to economic maintenance and opportunities (137-138). For
example, Maria’s father is imprisoned because he has violated the law that forbids hunting in the National Park (54). This example shows that the Métis are even denied their freedom and identity as hunters. In fact, the text states that the Métis who came to Saskatchewan were self-sufficient trappers and hunters, and unlike their Indian brothers, they were not prepared to settle down to an existence of continual hardship, scratching out a scanty living from the land (12). With no place to live anymore, where do the authorities want the Métis to hunt? Animals were becoming rare since the white settlers hunt a great amount of animals in order to sell the meat or the fur later. When the Métis were still living free on the land, they only took what was necessary for them. Having been forced to change place, and become farmers, it is normal that the Métis undergo a change in their identity. Campbell explains why the Métis lost land due to settlement policies under colonisation. Even though they had a piece of land for farming, they did not have the modern farming material or the capital to buy it that could help them increase the amount of land suitable for cultivation in the required time limit. Under land settlement policy, their land was confiscated. From then on they were going to be confined as a bird in a cage.

Aboriginal populations (Indians, Inuit, and the Métis) are found at the bottom of Canada’s ethnic hierarchy (Kallen 123). Indeed having been colonised, the Métis had to submit to the new order. They were forced to become part of the white society, sometimes through coercion, and this mostly of the children who were forced to speak English and denounce their history in white schools. The Métis were also forced to do jobs they did not like. These conditions are witnessed through *Halfbreed*
and the autobiographical subject remembers experiencing them herself. She, willing
to keep her brothers and sisters together, gets married very early to a white man. She
marries at fifteen, but it is not long after that she discovers the lies of her husband
Darrel - that he has money but in fact his sisters are the ones who provide financial
means for him (106) – who ends up leaving her with their first daughter Lisa (110).
Unfortunately, poverty, as it is for rest of the collective “we”, leads her to drugs and
prostitution. It is possible that the third space of the Métis, that is after white people
and Indians, prevents them from evolving easily. They are caught between two races
and judged impure by both. My reading of *Halfbreed* aims to look at the strategies
used by a woman to get out of misery and by a writer to tell about that struggle.
Campbell tries other forms of struggle besides collective struggle but ends up
recognising that she must try to apply her grandmother’s advice. Individualism is not
the solution, so why not try to look for some help from the group as a whole?

According to Ruthellen Josselson, “Identity is a way of judging ourselves with
respect to a typology or set of values that is meaningful to others with whom we
identify ourselves” (11). The autobiographical subject in *Halfbreed* relies on her
Cheechum’s teachings for these are values meaningful for the Métis at least in their
cultural foundation. As I mentioned previously, Maria begins her life story with a
description of the lifestyle her people used to have in the past. They enjoyed life, and
lived according to the rules of the land, that is taking only what was necessary. This
happy situation lasted until the white settlers came and took the land away from the
natives who until then lived there free. This is the period when frustration begins
within the Métis group as described in the autobiography. Indeed they were forced to live on the sides of the road because they were not able to buy land. The side of the road represents the frontier between the white people's settlements and the Indian reservation. They are not even allowed to stay on the reservation. The laws of Indian status were influenced by white patriarchy, however. If a native man married a white woman, his Métis children could stay on the reserve. But if a native woman took a white husband her Métis children were not welcomed on the reserve. For a long time the Métis were not afforded social status. They were and still are caught in a state of liminality, which reflects this lack of status and inbetweenness. They must redefine their identity in more positive ways as a means of survival.

During the Métis rebellion, frustration changed into fear, forcing them to elect Gabriel Dumont as their president with eight councillors (Campbell 9). This happened in Saskatchewan and everything seemed to work until 1880 when another group of settlers got there. After many attempts to discuss with Ottawa, they finally decided to call Louis Riel who was living in exile by this period (10). Things got worse and Riel was finally charged with treason and hanged in November of 1885 (Campbell 11). From this time on, things were going to be worse for the Métis. In describing these historical events, Maria makes a place in her story of the development of self, the "I" for this collective history of "we".

Campbell reminds the reader of what has happened in Métis history, but also claims to be part of this history because she, herself, still suffers the consequences of the changes that have occurred. If applied to *Halfbreed*, Sommer's notion of the
plural self "we" first, allows the individual "I" to learn about the Métis rebellion in the past, and, then, to tell the story of the poor people the Métis became when the white man took land from them. Maria is part of the poor "we" because she has experienced poverty and all that goes with it, for example drug, prostitution, welfare, etc. In order to show the development of an individual and plural self, *Halfbreed* goes from a general situation to a particular one. In the particular situation Maria describes how things work in her own family. This is where the text represents her grandmother and her role in the family. The old woman is the autobiographical subject's best friend and confidant. She is the one who teaches the young girl about life. In the house she has her place and she entertains the young one with stories. She usually foresees events that are going to take place in the family, such as her uncle Malcom's and one of her aunt’s deaths (21-22). She is a very central figure in the story. Among all the old people in the text she seems to be the one who stands for tradition and the need for staying in the group. Cheechum is the allegorical "we" that stands as the link between Maria and the past. She is the voice who reminds Maria about the pride the Métis used to feel in their simple and happy life (13). Then, the text gives an example of another old woman, Qua Chich, who develops the values of whites living in a low-context culture in which the sense of the individual is above the community. She prefers loneliness despite the help she brings, when asked, to the other members of her family. Is the text mentioning such a person for a purpose? Qua Chich is based on a true person. She is not just a character chosen for the text. Her presence in the life story and her contrast with Cheechum shows that Maria lived
throughout her life among two kinds of people: those who really became modern individualists and others who remained tied to the traditional community.

The representation of Maria’s self is done in three stages in the text. The first stage takes into account Maria’s early childhood until her mother’s death. The collective values are really present at this moment, but in terms of the immediate family rather than the Métis people as a whole. The second stage goes from her decision to get married and, then, continues until Cheechum’s death. The seeds of individualism are sown by this period for Maria finds herself alone to struggle for survival. Finally, the third stage consists in her return to her people and community organising, and that is where the mature self, narrating the autobiography begins. We must remind ourselves that the organising begins in the city where she really experienced the worse racial stereotypes: halfbreed as prostitute, drunk, homeless person, and so on. This last stage corresponds to Ruthellen Josselson’s idea about the self being gradually modified so that one day one may look back and realise that one has changed, but is still essentially the same (12). Despite all her efforts to change and acquire a better life, Maria ends up realising that she is still a Métis and she must follow her grandmother’s advice. The “I” she represents cannot be separate from the poor “we”. Her individual identity always reminds her that she belongs to the collective identity the Métis received from the white settlers.

Maria reports having quite a good childhood despite the difficulties her family encounters from time to time, including racism. She lives in a family rather proud of themselves despite the small amount of goods they own. The elders, Cheechum and
Maria's father refuse the leftovers and the old clothing that their white Christian neighbours brought to them at Christmas time. The text reports:

During Christmas they would drive by all Halfbreed houses and drop boxes off at each path. Dad would go out, pick up the box and burn it. I cried, because I knew it contained cakes and good things to eat, and clothing that I had seen their children wear. This was always a bad day for Dad as he would be very angry, and Mom would tell me to be very quiet and not ask questions. Our neighbours all wore this cast-off finery, and as I got older and started school I was glad Daddy had burned the clothes because the white girls would laugh when my friends wore their old dresses and say, "Mom said I should put it in the box as my Christmas duty". (28)

This brief story describes the mood of Maria's parents when faced with charity from whites. Apart from her mother, Maria's dad and grandmother reject charity and anything that has to do with white people. They only see humiliation through these people's actions. The text also reports that white people ignored the Métis customs because they thought the Métis were not as civilised as white people. A minister yelled at the old man because he was making noise with his drum during the service, while people were required to remain silent.

The men used to tell of the only time an Evangelist minister came to our part of the country to try to civilise us [...]. The minister yelled, "Ha-shoo, you son-of-a-bitch! Get the hell out of here!" The old man got up and left, and so did the rest of the congregation". (29)

This memory shows the bitterness felt by Métis people. In a settler colony where they are in minority, they must choose either to submit or develop an aversion toward the settler. Maria and her parents are in the latter group. In these times, the little
girl's self is formed in relation to her family. Though most of the time, she takes into account their wishes, at times she denounces her family out of shame and Cheechum beats her for it (47). Her grandmother helps a lot in her appreciation of the need to stay in the group. Whenever she goes away from it, the old woman calls her to order. She refuses to bow in front of white people, for she knows there is no reason for doing so. This behaviour she learns from the old woman. To a great degree, Cheechum forges Maria's identity and sense of self. But is the young girl going to keep the pride she gets from her parents? When she is confronted with life choices, she must prove her capacity as a young woman to handle adult affairs.

The second stage of Maria's life begins when she is only twelve and her mother dies suddenly, leaving the girl with a whole family to take care of. She is not prepared for such an event, but since she is the oldest one she must help her dad (69). She is given an adult role now, so she must work her way by herself. It will not be an easy task for her, since her grandmother is getting older. Her father is in another world of grief and anger; he seems to be insane and even disappears for weeks. Such a young girl left by herself has to look for ways to survive, and be an example for her brothers and sisters. In the beginning she is helped by Cheechum who teaches her how to do housework and care for the younger children. Then, one day the old woman decides to leave the family since she becomes a burden for them. Maria feels completely alone now (74). The threat of being separated from her brothers, if the welfare agency intervenes, leads Maria to leave school when they are not anymore able to hire a housekeeper. Time passes and she begins to learn about relationships
between men and women. The text states, "While Grannie was with us for those few months, I had time to be just a fourteen-year-old girl and I started to notice boys for the first time" (83). All this time Maria manages to keep her family together and they help each other. The spirit of the group is still present in her mind, but the situation does not last.

Relief people visit the Campbells one day and from this time Maria decides she must get married to whoever would like to be with her. That way she will be able to keep the young ones together. What she does not know is that married life is not as easy as she thinks. She is fifteen, then. Darrel, the man she marries, is a white man who promises her a nice life when he leads her to believe through his expensive clothes and new car that he can afford to keep her and her brothers (104). However, he will soon be out of money and begins to drink. He beats her and ends up revealing to the relief people that Maria and he have her brothers in their home and that they need the welfare to support them (107). By this time Maria is totally disillusioned, knowing that what she has always thought would be better for her and her family is not what is dictated by white society. She realises that she should have listened to her people, more exactly to her Cheechum because at least the old woman represents a source of strength and comfort (108). Maria has failed to understand that identity is a notion that takes into account the different parts of one's personality and the realities of the social world. Both these elements enable the individual to better grasp the real world. But above all, Maria's great mistake has been to believe she could be
accepted in white society. She has misinterpreted Cheechum’s words, “Go out and find what you want and take it, [...]” (86).

Actually, the text is filled with stereotypes about the Métis. Darrel’s sister asks her own daughter, whenever she makes a mistake, if she wants to end up a “good-for-nothing” like Maria (109). I think that writing this autobiography helped the young woman understand the point where her own personal identity problems began. As a mirror and testimony, Maria’s autobiography helps her witness her own loss. Halfbreed, while trying to denounce the deeds of colonisation, also tries to look at self-responsibility in one’s own sufferings. Maria is partly responsible for these sufferings because she longs to free her brothers and to discover the city, which is for her synonymous with a “better life”. However, according to the description of the Métis situation, a better life is difficult for them to find in white society. Their common lot is alcohol, prostitution and suicide. Maria goes through all these problems before she goes back home and finds some peace in her own spirit and looks for ways that may help the Métis develop a better sense of identity and confidence.

In the final chapters of Halfbreed the autobiographical subject realises that her life within her own local group of Métis is better than what she discovers in Vancouver. There are nice places in the city, but the place where her white husband leads her is Vancouver, a place full of Métis and native people living out the negative stereotypes of racial inferiority. In fact her husband has no money as he told her before Maria married him. Maria states, “Darrel said he’d be out of money soon
because his sisters were upset over our marriage, and he had to take an available job there" (106). Commenting about the city, Maria sees a form of poverty worse than what she saw at home.

The street was filthy and I shivered and felt sick as I saw people who were there. They looked poorer than anyone I'd seen at home; there were drunks, and men who walked aimlessly and seemed not to see anything or anyone; women who appeared as though they had endured so much ugliness that nothing could upset them; and pale, skinny, ragged kids with big, unfeeling eyes who looked so unloved and neglected. (114)

How can an individual realise herself in such an environment that is not hers? This part of her story represents one reason that will oblige her to return to her people. This return is inevitable if she really wants to find herself and look for better ways of fighting against the hell in which she and her peers live. Writing this autobiography helps Maria Campbell find some answers to her questions because she takes some distance from her life. She looks into it as a third person, with another person’s eyes. She says, "Going home after so long a time, I thought that I might find again the happiness and beauty I had know as a child. [. . .]. Like me the land had changed, my people were gone, and if I was to know peace I would have to search within myself" (7-8).

In Vancouver, Maria must forge herself another identity or more exactly the city, people, and manners transform Maria into another person. In this society she must struggle to survive. But this fight will not be the same as the one that her people back home are used to. Here she must set her pride aside. She identifies with those
living on the streets around her. The text reports Maria's feelings regarding her new identity, after she prostitutes herself for the first time, "I lost something this afternoon. Something inside of me died. [...] Life had played such a joke. I had married to escape from what I'd thought was an ugly world, only to find a worse one. Someday, for certain, I would leave. How, I didn't know, but until then I would do what I had to do" (116). In this new place, the individual is given little attention. When one "dies", he or she is forgotten. The present "I" now remembers a painful past "I" when she was a prostitute who sold her body in order to get money so that she could take care of her child and herself. One may think she could have stayed home and found some respectable job, such as a housekeeper, or a waitress in the city. But now she loses her personality. She is nobody in this huge town, just there to satisfy men and be profitable for her employers. To escape this hell she begins taking pills; then she becomes addicted to heroin (119). She hates what she is, and this is another characteristic of the colonial system. In the autobiography two colonial characteristics are represented: the first one is the inferiorisation of the cultural Other. It consists of making the Métis individual hate her people and think of them as "good-for-nothing" (47). The second characteristic of colonisation is the impoverishment of the cultural Other. It creates a system in which the Métis fall into a vicious world where drugs, prostitution and crimes seem the only life choices. In the second case the individual cannot realise herself because she has no economic or moral support from anyone; she is identified as a sexual object. At home, at least, Maria had someone who reminded her of her origins and her importance in the group.
Despite all these changes in life due to white society, the text creates an occasion when Maria can recall her meetings with Indians. For example, when the Métis met with their Indian relatives on the reserves, the Métis were called *awp-pee-tow-kooons* or "half-people" (26) because Indians had land and security whereas the Métis had nothing. Beside, Indians were a quiet people as compared to the Métis who liked fighting (26). The Métis attitudes made Maria hate her people. While she was in the city, she had tried to forget them because she was ashamed of her actual status as a mixed blood.

Sometimes, throughout the story, Maria tries to get out of her sad situation by resisting the negative stereotypes of the Métis and rejoining her people. Her Cheechum used to tell her that, "When the government gives you something, they take all you have in return – your pride, your dignity, all the things that make you a living soul" (137). In return her Cheechum says the white people give the Métis and the Indian a blanket to cover their shame. This shame is what Maria wears. She will decide to throw this blanket of shame off one day. With her friend's, Edith's, advice she decides to face reality and join with people who want to look for freedom and security for the Métis. She is going to understand now what her Cheechum has meant when she told her to go out and look for what she wants. The old woman's teaching through this proverb shows how orality and words are so important in traditional societies. Words are said but one must look for their significance in the different events that happen in life. In oral stories every event has its significance. Nothing happens haphazardly.
In AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) Maria meets with people who long for freedom from addiction. These recovering alcoholics are tired of wandering, and they know that they can talk freely to people who are ready to listen to them. This chapter of the group are from the same background as Maria. They are “the brothers” Cheechum talked about. They talk about their life without being ashamed of it. Maria also attends other meetings with the Métis Association of Alberta (132) and the Canadian Indian Youth Council (151). Members of these different associations usually organise trips through the country from Alberta to the United States. During one of these trips Maria has the occasion to visit her family. She tells her story to Cheechum and the old woman asks her not to let these hard moments in her life hurt her. Perhaps this explains why at the beginning of the book, she tells the reader that she is not bitter and has passed this stage (13). Her Cheechum reminds her that “since she was a baby, Maria has learned the hard way and that she was like her” (149).

Maria’s talk with her grandmother and the bad conditions in which she finds her people back home encourage her to be more active. Some men in the AA group try to discourage her, as sometimes the case in patriarchal societies. Women are not allowed to take men’s place in the fight for freedom. Fortunately, there are people who are not narrow-minded. Among them is Marie Smallface, a Blood woman from Cardston (151). She helps Maria look at things with different eyes and meet people from other places. The narrative shows here how things seem to get better and better for Maria. She learns a lot from working with other people. The time for returning
home gets nearer. In fact, Maria gets ready to return back home sometimes after her Cheechum’s death. This happens in May of 1966 (156). Looking back on all the events that occurred in the past, Maria recognises that what people need is not an armed revolution of native people. What would be more interesting is that people set aside their differences and come together as one (156). Now she is at home, she is not in search of herself. She is looking back at all the difficulties she went through, but she also learns from the mistakes. This will help her find solutions for her people as a group. The last stage of the retrospective strategy is reached in the text now. Maria can now tell people what it was like to be a Halfbreed woman and how it still is because things do not change right away.

The text in fact does not always represent the autobiographical subject realising herself in a positive way. Instead, it creates situations that plunge the subject into failure. But the subject does not sink into failure because she is able to throw away the blanket of shame white people try to put on the Métis once again (156). All her life Maria has worn this blanket and now she has realised how harmful it has been for the development of her Self and the development of community. In Maria’s case the metaphor of the blanket has been what led her to leave her community. Thanks to her Cheechum’s support Maria grows in confidence and hopes that one day the Métis will find a better life. Doris Sommer states that “autobiography is the third and culminating stage in the process of personal maturation and individuation” (122). I agree with this because Maria’s reported behaviour throughout the autobiography shows that she gets wiser by the end of the
text. Furthermore, it is the autobiographical subject’s life that has produced the autobiography. Maria Campbell does not suggest that her experience represents all Métis women, but at least she can identify with those who have suffered the same difficulties as she has. Her self identifies with “we”. In this text, I notice that the white man plays with the Métis’ minds because the Métis are told that they are inferior. That cannot be otherwise if the Whites wish to hold superior power because the Métis understand English and they live side by side with white people. Racism is one way of maintaining the “Vertical mosaic” (Kallen 137) Thus, it is important to find strategies to create new images of “halfbreeds” in order to be able to form a new identity of which the Métis can be proud. Halfbreed is part of the strategy of redefinition as cultural revival.

The exploration of texts by Achebe and Campbell in this chapter exposed the reactions of two colonised peoples with respect to colonisation. The texts showed passive and active ways to confront negative constructions of identity. They arrive at the same conclusion: that unity is needed wherever people look for freedom. Identity development does not happen in isolation. Identity is relational and people have both a collective and an individual identity. Furthermore, land and language are both important in forging collective identities. Thus, the loss of each results in a crisis of identity for colonised peoples.

In Things Fall Apart, Okonkwo, the protagonist, fails because he refuses to follow the changing ways of the group under colonisation when they forsake some elements of Ibo tradition. He is somewhat a selfish person who is obsessed with his
external image in the novel, but he desires above all to preserve tradition and the
collective values. Nonetheless, we must not condemn him alone for such because the
traditional patriarchal group is the one that forges the individual as he or she is. In
this group men must be leaders. According to Okonkwo, a compromise with modern
values would be synonymous with femininity and a loss of manhood. The text
proves Okonkwo to be wrong. The era of change has come and everyone must try to
cope with it. However, that does not mean rejecting every part of tradition.

*Halfbreed* opens with a sad story and seems to give a solution to the
autobiographical subject only to make her sink in more misery. The individual is,
despite all, open-minded. She agrees to learn from her mistakes, contrary to
Okonkwo who is a stubborn person. Individuals in *Halfbreed* decide they must unite
in order to find a solution to all the Métis problems. In the past they have
experienced some political fights that ended in the division of people, due to
individual interests. Maria has given voice to women, but not in a feminist discourse.
She has in some way reinforced the role of women in Métis culture since throughout
the autobiography men are represented as pessimistic. The men such as Maria’s
father abandon the battle before seeing its end. Maria, in attending meetings where
men are usually in great number and speaking out, may be trying to renegotiate the
place of women in decision-making power within a residual matriarchal Métis culture
within patriarchal culture (Emberley 98).
Both texts have succeeded in underlining the internal problems of colonised people and proposing solutions to inferiorisation and dispossession under colonisation, namely unity and compromise.
CHAPTER TWO:

Hybridity and Mimicry in Two Novels:

*The River Between* and *In Search of April Raintree*

In its beginnings colonialism sought to impose its view of modern life on the colonised. But fortunately for the latter, the process of colonisation produced hybrid individuals who reunited some aspects of tradition and modernity, creating, thus, writers, politicians, missionaries, who speak a hybrid discourse. Hybrid texts put into question the authenticity of both the coloniser's and the colonised people's discourse in the text. That is, the hybrid text reveals what tradition is made of, and people’s reaction to tradition (Haugo 130). For example, in *The River Between*, the hybrid characters Waiyaki and Muthoni have different reactions with regard to their responsibility in the mixing of both traditional and modern values. One is more supportive of formal education and the other thinks it is necessary to fulfil traditional demands, such as female circumcision, in order to be a real woman. Cultural hybridity raises the question of how to negotiate new identities between these modern and traditional values. Colonisation brought changes such as racial métissage and cultural métissage or hybridity, technological changes, and shifts in religious beliefs, cultural values, languages, distribution of land and goods and education. The fruit of biological hybridity, interracial marriages between white people and natives in Canada has been Métis children.
Hybridity on the level of the text allows writers to confront the dominant discourse with a traditional one. In this case, hybridity makes it possible to mix tradition and modernity through language and story. Finally, hybridity calls into question the authenticity and purity of native writing and the coloniser’s discourses by mixing languages and story styles. In *Colonial Desire: Desire in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995), Robert Young, claims the word ‘miscegenation’ was invented in 1864. Before that, the word that was conventionally used for the fertile fusion and merging of races was ‘amalgamation’ (Young 9). Brian Stross, in his essay, “The Hybrid Metaphor: From Biology to Culture”, states:

> The cultural hybrid is a metaphorical broadening of this biological definition. It can be a person who represents the blending of traits from diverse cultures or traditions, or even more broadly it can be a culture, or element of culture, derived from unlike sources; that is, something heterogeneous in origin or composition. (254)

Hybridity takes place in postcolonial societies that realise that the apparition of the colonial power has suppressed their cultures, and they must renounce their tradition and be assimilated to the new pattern. Nonetheless, contrary to what might be assumed of postcolonial writers, the fact that they write and use hybridity in literature is not a sign of weakness or assimilation, but a sign of their capacity to create a new type of art with both cultures’ means. Some writers choose to write realistic novels so that they can represent the false hope and fanciful aspirations of their characters. They also go beyond individual stories because in some way they
represent the hopes and disappointments of their societies with regard to tradition and modernity.

James Ngugi and Beatrice Culleton, in their novels, work through realism in order to achieve hybridity. They put the focus on specific characters that are made to represent what has been lived reality in the past. These characters are represented as people either opposing colonisation or being proponents of the change that accompanies it. The characters in *The River Between* are submitted to cultural hybridity, and in *In Search of April Raintree* the characters must face the outcome of being mixed-blood people, in other words biologically hybrid as well as culturally hybrid. The notion of hybridity is perceived in a different way depending on the context. For example, talking of hybridity in Kenya, one guesses at first glance that there is an original Gikuyu identity and a white one. But as we know, there is no original identity because identity is not something stable; it changes according to events and places. This calls into question the "myth of authenticity" discussed by Gareth Griffith in his essay by that title. Griffith argues that authentic or pure ethnic subjects are a myth because authenticity is very complex a notion that must take into account endless and excessive transformations of the subject positions (241). Hybridity in *In Search of April Raintree* applies more to the biological level, more precisely, intercultural mixing between European people and Indians in Canada. Here also the myth of authenticity is brought into question, but in terms of racial purity. In Culleton's novel, the construction of the Métis as inferior and impure is questioned by a new discourse valorising biological hybridity.
While considering the range of cultural hybridity, we need to note another form of hybridity known as mimicry. Mimicry is a means used by some colonised subjects in order to deny their origins, by camouflaging or passing for another: this will be mimicking the outsider. Culleton's novel represents mimicry and hybridity through the main Métis protagonist Aprii, who later takes advantage of the whiteness of her skin to integrate into white society, in other words, to "pass". The great mimicker in Ngugi's novel is Joshua. He quits the ancient rites and becomes an ally of the missionaries. The text states, "The new faith worked in him till it came to possess him wholly" (33). Joshua is so possessed that the text ends up representing him as an alien with respect to the rest of the Gikuyu people. One elder in the village says he has sold his heart to the white people (55).

Homi K. Bhabha's definition of hybridity shows that people who are concerned by this phenomenon can value cultural mixing. They can try to demonstrate that their traditional cultures and the fact of being hybrid are both important values (Robert Young 22-23). But I must say that Bhabha's definition of mimicry will not be applied directly to my discussion of texts by Culleton and Ngugi, because Bhabha's point of view applies more to postmodern postcolonial writing that uses irony, parody word play, and mockery in the texts. The texts discussed here are realist postcolonial novels that reflect lived forms of mimicry but do not invest heavily in verbal play. In order to make their novels realist, postcolonial writers may mirror their own and their people's experiences of colonisation. One aim of realist fiction is to entertain and
instruct people by describing fictively places, events, and persons that perhaps lived or are still living.

Mimicry is portrayed when certain characters choose to copy the coloniser. They then decide to mimic those with power in order to gain power themselves. Certain individuals like April are portrayed denying their origins and passing for white. In the process of mimicry, people exchange their identity, and in doing so they reject their traditional society and their culture (Ahmed 98). This is the case with certain characters in both texts. For example, in Ngugi’s novel Joshua abandons his people’s tradition and joins the colonisers because the latter bring “light” to him (33-34). Culleton’s novel represents April as she despises the Métis and tries to change the spelling of her name from Raintree to Raintry so that it can resemble an Irish name (49).

Another form of mimicry is that described by Homi Bhabha as an ironic means of imitating and appropriating the dominant discourse of the coloniser. Postcolonial writers often use mimicry in order to mock some aspect of the colonisers’ discourse, for example by using the European writing model, European languages, and European discourses on cultural values in ironic or parodic ways.

Hybridity and mimicry implies indeed that there is no more “original” identity. Since identity is always shifting and a process, it is doubtful there ever was an originally pure or fixed identity. Those hybrids that mimic may try to pass for others they consider superior. Ahmed Sara argues that:
Passing may function at the level of the intentional subject (the subject who seeks to pass in order to secure something otherwise unavailable to them), or it may function as a mis-recognition on the part of others (one may pass for something other than one’s self-identification but not seek to, or know it). (92)

So, when someone tries to “pass” for another, he or she may consciously or unconsciously mimic the manners of the other, whom he or she would like to resemble.

Both James Ngugi’s *The River Between* and Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree* dramatize the changes that took place in people’s mentalities and traditions during colonisation. Like many postcolonial writers in Africa and Canada, they explore the different ills Gikuyu and Canadian Métis societies underwent throughout the colonial period. In their works Ngugi and Culleton choose either to present these ills through characters that were proponents of tradition or others who were eager for change. Some people, like Ngugi’s characters Waiyaki and Muthoni, are helped by their open-mindedness.

James Ngugi’s *The River Between* takes place in a traditional culture where submission to elders and chiefs is compulsory. The novel represents the Gikuyu people and their meeting with colonisers and modernity in Kenya. Ngugi’s novel tells the story of a people caught between two cultures. Some of these people are moderates and others are extremists. The moderates, as the text represents them, try to pick the best parts of each culture in order to better their lives. In this group, there are Waiyaki, Muthoni, and Chege, Waiyaki’s father. The extremists are Joshua and
Kamau, extreme in that they see no compromise between Gikuyu tradition or modern ways. *In Search of April Raintree* represents two sisters who grow up in a world where alcoholism and violence dictate people’s behaviour. As the title of Culleton’s novel suggests they are involved in a search for identity. Both sisters take different ways to search for identity: mimicry and loyalty to tradition. They are the allegory for collective identity that Culleton uses in order to render the search effective; that is, one sister must find the other sister before finding herself. For example, when Cheryl dies leaving her son to April; April finds her sister in this son and she understands the importance of identifying with the Métis as a people.

Ngugi chooses a church community to represent the effect of colonisation in Kenya because Christianity has been the major means by which tradition and the West meet. Beatrice Culleton represents the dissolution of the family that seems to have been the lot of many Métis, when she chooses to focus on two Métis sisters who spend most of their time in foster families. Ngugi’s text is set in an environment where the notion of the group and religious values and traditions are still important. The individual does not exist outside the group. Beatrice Culleton’s text portrays a society in which individualism is dominant in people’s values. The characters in both novels are represented with their own hopes that impoverished colonised peoples can, with some effort and different means, such as formal education for everybody and better social status, control their lives and forge a better future and a more positive identity. Individual and collective identities are shown to be complexly linked in both novels.
The River Between (1965) portrays the conflictual relationship between two villages representing traditional Gikuyu beliefs on one hand and Christianity on the other. In this novel, a mission-educated character, Waiyaki, tries unsuccessfully to synthesise the Christian worldview with the Gikuyu one, even as he comes to understand the ultimately destructive force that Christianity will have on his own culture. Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* is the fictional account of the lives of two Métis sisters, who grow up in foster families, and who try to find a meaningful way of life in a society that is marked by prejudice, racism, and sexual violence. The main protagonist, April, gets married to a man, Bob Radcliff from a rich Torontonian family. Bob has his own wholesale furniture business, which he runs with his mother (109). Bob's mother has a great influence on her son and disagrees with him for having married a Métis girl (112). He will eventually be disinherited because of his choice to marry a Métis woman. Meanwhile the younger sister, Cheryl, develops pride in her Métis roots but is unable to achieve her goal of improving the lot of her people. Instead, she finally ends up trapped in what this text and *Halfbreed* portray as the all too 'common' and poor lot of the Métis: alcoholism, drug addiction and suicide. In the end, April separates from her husband, returns to Winnipeg, and decides to raise Cheryl's son, conscious and proud of their native heritage.

Hybridity and mimicry often result in the individual’s marginalisation because both the natives and the whites refuse his or her belonging to their groups. This is not surprising since the hybrid individual is often alienated to some extent from his or her
community. He may even be a stranger to both cultures. Ngugi uses the metaphor of
the river between named in the title of his novel to express this inbetweeness that
can result in alienation or transformation. Mimicry does not always result in loss.
Waiyaki is able to prove to the missionaries of Siriana that the fact of banishing him
from their school will not prevent him from building schools for his own people.
Both writers adapt realism and the dominant discourse in the following way: Ngugi
uses the allegory of the river in order to describe the cultural hybridity that takes
place in his novel. Waiyaki, who represents the river, shows the need for
compromise between two cultures. Culleton uses doubling; this strategy helps show
two sisters shaping new identities through difference and mimicry. Her text may be a
challenge to the belief that we always need to conform to dominant cultures in order
to shape a better identity.

As mentioned earlier, The River Between, opposes two groups of characters, the
moderates and the extremists. The extremists are Joshua and the Siriana missionaries
who cling to modernity and tradition, and the moderates are Waiyaki and Muthoni
who attempt to compromise and adapt to both. Ngugi gives a metaphor of both these
groups and their cultural values in the first chapter when he says, “The two ridges lay
side by side. One was Kameno, the other was Makuyu. Between them was a valley.
It was called the valley of life [. . .]. A river flowed through the valley of life [. . .]”
(1). The text personifies this river by Waiyaki who is trained in both tradition and
modernity, and who tries to bring new life to his community. This community is
divided into two ridges. The ridges are a metaphor used by Ngugi to represent both
types of people that live on each part of the river.

Waiyaki is a pacifist; he has settled fights between his friends since childhood
(Ngugi 6-7). At the beginning, the novel makes Waiyaki’s father foresee him as the
one who will bring hope to his people. Waiyaki, one of the protagonists in *The River
Between*, is initiated to traditional values that should enable him to enter manhood.
According to his father, Waiyaki has been chosen by the gods to bring freedom to the
Gikuyu. Waiyaki becomes a hybrid character in that his father tells him: “Arise.
Heed the prophecy. Go to the Mission place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets
of the white man. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient
rites” (24). Indeed, throughout the novel, the young boy acquires both knowledge
from the ancient rites and the white man's school. He becomes a cultural hybrid. He
is open-minded because he tries to choose a valuable element from both tradition and
modernity and he also learns that being too rigid about one’s positions can only lead
to social disaster (69). With an open mind, Waiyaki provides modern education to
the children in the village. He also agrees to become a member of the Kiama because
people are confident of him. Unfortunately, Waiyaki’s desire to help everybody leads
him to be caught between two cultures and he remains a restless person (82). Chege,
the father, thinks it is better to divulge the news of a Gikuyu saviour to none but the
right one (Ngugi 9). Chege believes Waiyaki to be the right one because the little boy
knows almost all the different paths that lead to every ridge and the hills that
surround the Gikuyu’ land (10). Waiyaki learns every thing about the environment in
which he lives. The power that comes out of his eyes when he looks at people (7) cannot but draw their attention. Both images suggest he is a natural leader. But for his influence to be effective, he must, according to tradition, undergo circumcision and initiation to manhood. His father is a good source of information from which Waiyaki gets his knowledge of tradition about the land and the tribe’s history. On the modern level, Chege sends his son to Siriana where missionaries teach the white man religion and the white man’s wisdom to children. Chege also believes that the white man cannot be avoided unless natives learn and know his ways and movement (24). Waiyaki does as his father requires and even makes quick progress, and impresses the white missionaries (25).

Waiyaki has a hybrid education; he receives traditional and modern values. With education an individual learns explanations for things he or she used to think were mystical. The young man will later discover how ignorant his people have remained for a long time. It is as if his eyes were opened, and the text represents Joshua as an extremist who condemns his own people for being the children of darkness (34), and as one of those blind people who recover sight. Ironically, Joshua believed for a long time that Gikuyu tradition such as initiation ceremonies, the worship of pagan deities Murungu, Mwenenyaga, Ngai (33), and drinking were all good practices.

Education does not help the colonised characters entirely integrate into the white man’s society since they remain the black “negro” or the “halfbreed”. Waiyaki’s father sometimes fears that he has made the wrong choice by sending the boy to the Siriana Mission. But, Waiyaki always proves he is unlikely to be contaminated by
Western values, especially religion. This hybrid education alienates him only partially because he remains faithful to his traditions. On the white side he works so much that missionaries think of him as a future brave Christian leader of the Church (Ngugi 25). What leads me to argue that he is not alienated is because the text presents Waiyaki as a person that gives importance to Gikuyu tradition. He is more interested in how mixing two cultures can help him save his people than he is in being converted and assimilated into white society. Waiyaki is indeed commanded to look for salvation for his people. He must do so because he is the river between the two ridges. Being a moderator he will try to calm down both sides of the Gikuyu land, Kameno and Makuyu, that “grow increasingly rigid in their insistence upon the righteousness of their own cause and the errors of the other group’s beliefs and traditions” (Wise 35). Such a portrayal of Waiyaki serves to question his real desire with regard to serving people or his own interest. The text represents him not as a helper, but as one who does things that he thinks will be better for his people. He does not ask people what they really want. Such behaviour reveals a traditional lack of democracy with regard to people’s welfare. People must obey the person who declares himself capable of showing them the way. Christopher Wise states that, “Waiyaki, who is the picaro hero of The River Between, serves as the vehicle by which Ngugi’s reader meditates upon, or even creatively re-experiences, the agonising crises of individuation, defined by Nietzsche as the ‘origin and primal cause of all suffering’” (37). My understanding of this comment is that Waiyaki serves to explore the individual and his personality in relation to the group, but he
also serves to show the serious consequences that an individual can provoke when he or she separates or conducts activities outside the group’s values. My exploration of *The River Between* shows how some individuals’ acts lead only to destruction and separation from the group.

What strikes the reader all the same is the fact that Waiyaki seems to lack something despite his knowledge of both cultures. Indeed, when the day comes for his circumcision, he realises that he must look for something beyond mere knowledge of tradition. He wonders whether his tribe’s tradition is relevant, since Muthoni’s death deepens the gap between the two ridges. After his circumcision he is not anymore allowed in the Siriana mission. This is now the time to confirm his place as leader.

The break with Siriana made the situation worse and inflamed the people the more. They felt the bite of injustice. Some felt the ridges had slept for too long. Chege’s warnings were now recalled and people wished they had responded to the call in the very early days. Small organisations sprouted in the hills. Waiyaki always found himself involved. Already they had come to see him as a leader and they instinctively turned to him for small things. But Waiyaki was always worried by thoughts of the ever-widening gulf between Joshua’s followers and the breakaway elements. (73)

Waiyaki is now confirmed as the leader, at least in terms of educational issues. He decides to build a school, Marioshoni, for his people. Despite the fact that modern education can be viewed as a contamination of Gikuyu tradition, Waiyaki believes it is his mission to build schools for everybody. But I think there is no
“contamination” if people remain faithful to the ways of the land, that is tradition. Sometimes, he longs to share his idea with someone who can help him see whether he has made the right choice for the people. At this time he longs for freedom, but he cannot be free since he is divided between his desire to bring knowledge to the tribe and his desire to respect the Gikuyu culture. The idea of building a school is one he makes individually, however. In order to be completely free he must make decisions with other people. The text is perhaps suggesting that one possible solution for the Gikuyu to begin the process of decolonisation is education. At least education shall give them access to some white government positions. Kamau, one of Waiyaki’s school colleagues, is an example of those people who wanders everywhere in order to get either freedom or power.

To some extent a hybrid education helps Waiyaki look for better ways to bring freedom to his people. He never intends to resemble the white man or his peers. One thing is lacking for him to succeed in his mission. He needs to take political action besides education and unity. The text portrays Waiyaki as the one who unites tradition and Western values. The text allows him to be in the *Kiama*, a traditional political party, and at the same time spread formal education throughout the land. At some point Waiyaki’s attempt to reunite the ridges only seems to enlarge the gap between them. He tells people that their union is the main thing that can help them. He even tries to marry Joshua’s daughter, Nyambura, in order to show that both factions can unite and love each other since they are from the same origins. Contrary to their hope, the one they call master is now considered a traitor. According to Wise,
events seem to confirm Waiyaki’s individuation. Will he be able to stand between both fanatical groups, being himself a product of modern education? Michael Rice comments on the river signification saying that, “Honia river is the unifying element that binds Kameno and Makuyu together despite their antagonism for one another” (Rice as quoted by Grobler 67). In fact Waiyaki has idealised his vision of education too much. This must be an irony from the author who proposes Waiyaki as a liberator and then has him, finally, unlike a river who usually brings life and peace, end by destroying his people and making his work unworthy (Nnolim as quoted by Grobler 67). Nevertheless, *The River Between* is not so pessimistic because, despite Waiyaki’s failure to unite his people, at least he brings a part of their salvation in the form of education. As we know, intellectuals are sometimes those who begin revolutionary ideas. It is a common saying that ignorance is what keeps a people in misery. Educating people will be a starting point in the battle for decolonisation that is going to be long. Waiyaki plants the seeds of decolonisation for Kenyans as well as for women in a patriarchal society. For example, Muthoni and Nyambura ignore their father Joshua’s orders to get circumcised (29) and not to marry a man who is not Christian (157). Waiyaki also learns that his goodness does not predominate in the Gikuyu community. Through this character James Ngugi depicts his own belief that changes can occur and that instead of lamenting the mistakes from the past, change should stand as a lesson.

Chege’s son is not the only educated hybrid who wants to unite tradition and modernity. Muthoni, Joshua’s daugther, wants to demonstrate to people that both
concepts can be united in the same person. Her hybridisation serves mostly her own interests. She longs to satisfy her soul and she also desires to be a woman as the Gikuyu tradition teaches it. She is taught that Christianity condemns female circumcision. Although Muthoni sees herself as a Christian, she still feels a certain emptiness in her without Gikuyu tradition. To be a real woman, who will have a husband and bear children for him, Muthoni believes that she must undergo circumcision (51).

Female circumcision or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) consists in the ritual cutting and removal of all or part of the clitoris and other external genitalia. According to “Violence Against Women” by Charlotte Bunch et al., this practice affects an estimated 85 million to 114 million girls and women in the world today. They add that genital mutilation causes pain, trauma, and frequently severe physical complications, including bleeding, infection, infertility, and even death. It also doubles the risk of maternal death during childbirth (63). A research led by UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) revealed that 50 per cent of women in Kenya were circumcised in 1994.

Tradition dictates that Muthoni must be circumcised if she wants to be a real woman. If Muthoni had not died from the effects of circumcision she would have been able to convince the Gikuyu that mixing cultures was a feasible thing. Ngugi represents Muthoni as the symbol of women’s colonisation under Kenyan tradition. He reproaches Kenyan traditionalists what they judge the coloniser for. Ruthellen Josselson states that, “Throughout history, a woman’s place has been defined by her
society. Even when these definitions are more implicit than explicit, women are susceptible to cultural definitions of how they ought to be and sensitive to social guidelines that tell them whether they are doing a good job at being women” (2). Women, like men, must have the choice to decide what they want their lives to resemble, and define their place in the community. Muthoni is presented in the text as the one who begins this emancipation. Contrary to Waiyaki, who tries to satisfy every party, she disobeys her father, Joshua, and flees to one of her aunt’s in order to accomplish her duty towards the tribe (Ngugi 42). In this way she cannot bring the two ridges together, but contributes to their separation. It could have been possible, but Muthoni dies, confirming, thus, to traditionalists and Christians that an attempt to mix cultures is going to fail. Muthoni’s hybridity raises questions about the authenticity of tradition and the effectiveness of some of its practices. Hybridity also represents a way for her to preserve the continuity of the self, linking the past and the present. People argue that Joshua’s stubbornness in rejecting tradition, by following missionaries and by forbidding his daughter to be circumcised, leads to Muthoni’s death (55). In fact, nobody apart from Waiyaki, Nyambura, and other young people in the village want to touch Muthoni. Her case gets worse and the young people finally decide to take her to the hospital. Unfortunately, it is too late for her: she dies a few hours after they arrive in Siriana (61). I think that people in the village interpret this death as a curse falling on Joshua because he has abandoned tradition.

Both Waiyaki and Muthoni seem to fail in the process of hybridisation. Is this intentionally used by Ngugi to represent his partial refusal of colonisation?
Personally, I believe that the text shows Waiyaki’s realisation that trying to stand as a moderator in society, may reveal itself to be a difficult task to achieve, mostly when one is alone in the process of combining the two cultures. The text is perhaps stating that hybridity may sometimes be conscious because in the text there are some characters that choose to remain in tradition while others choose to mimic the white man’s clan. Thus, one must examine all the facets of each culture before attempting to combine them. In addition, the community’s point of view must be taken into account. In Waiyaki’s and Muthoni’s case, they try to serve their community in their own ways. They forget that their personality or their identity is defined with respect to the choice of the group. Ngugi’s novel proposes its characters construct their identities with respect to the group. At many places, the individual shapes his or identity with regard to what will please the group. Sometimes it appears as if the character behaves out of his or her own interests, but when one looks at things more clearly, one notices that the shaping of identities is tied to either tradition or modernity. Ngugi opposes the moderates such as Waiyaki to the extremists such as Joshua.

In Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree* the characters that represent biological hybridity are Cheryl and April Raintree, two Métis sisters. From childhood, April identifies with white people despite her love for her mixed blood parents. In contrast Cheryl seeks to remain Métis and help the other Métis overcome misery. Allegorically, the novel dramatises two different paths the Métis can take in search of identity. The text describes both sisters’ origins in the following way:
My father, Henry Raintree, was of mixed blood, a little of this, a little of that and a whole lot of Indian. My sister, Cheryl, who was 18 months younger than me, had inherited his looks: black hair, dark brown eyes which turned black when angry, and brown skin. There was no doubt they were both of Indian ancestry. My mother, Alice, on the other hand, was part Irish and part Ojibway. Like her, I had pale skin, not that it made any difference when we were living as a family. (Culleton 9-10)

From April's description it can be said there is a lot of racial mixture that has taken place in the making of her family. One must not require authenticity in such a case, even if preference for identification can be found in an individual personality. As many critics have argued, to talk of "authenticity" may be an illusion or a myth (Salman Rushdie as quoted by Pipper Karen 17). Even, on a biological level, hybridity may be impossible to discern. "Hybridity is a making one of two distinct things, so that it becomes impossible for the eye to detect the hybridity of a geranium or a rose" (Young 26). April prefers to identify with and mimic white people because, according to her, they are "sophisticated" as compared to her people (100). She feels she belongs only partly to the Métis because of her parents whom she loves and to whom she wants to offer a better life when she is grown. Unfortunately, life decides otherwise.

By the age of six, April along with her sister, Cheryl, must leave their parents, who cannot take care of them anymore. Mrs Grey, the social worker tells April, "No, dear, your mother is ill and she won't be able to take care of you anymore [. . .]. Maybe if your Mommy and Daddy get well enough, you can come to live with them
again" (16). Both children are placed in foster families. April then goes to live with
the Dion family. She is well treated by this family and even begins to feel white
since the Dions treat her as their own child. Up to a point she feels at ease to call her
foster parents “Papa” and “Maman” (34). Culleton’s text helps the reader be aware
that not all European-Canadians discriminate against the Métis. The Dion family
represents mediation between cultures and tolerance towards the cultural Other.

April is so sure of her being able to be considered white that when she is
transferred to her second foster family, the Derosiers, she protests their calling her
“half-breed”. She has to leave the Dion family because Mrs Dion dies after being sick
for a period (36). In response to labelling by Mrs Derosier, April retorts: “I wasn’t a
half-breed, just a foster child, that’s all” (39). To her as well as to the Derosiers the
word “half-breed” refers to Indian blood, “good for nothing”, weak and dirty looking
(47). The fact is that one of the Derosier children says, “I heard that you half-breeds
were dirty but now I can see that it’s true” (41). April is not proud of her heritage.
Such behaviour can find its explanation in Brian Stross’ theory about hybridity, that
what is hybrid is not pure since such an element is subordinate to heterogeneity and
variation within its character and personality (258). April’s attempt to slip past
people’s guard by the fact that she is whiter than her sister Cheryl fails. For example,
she receives a message from her classmates saying “If you want a really good time,
meet me at such and such a place” (76). These kinds of comments imply that being a
Métis and racially “impure”, April can be assumed to be sexually available for any
boy at school, despite all her effort to integrate into the white children’s groups (76).
Although she denies her mixed origins and tries to mimic whites people, her cultural roots are hidden in her character. In the end she finds it difficult to deny her Métis origins, despite the whiteness of her skin.

April wants to exhibit the traits associated with white culture because it is, according to her beliefs, symbolic of softness, intelligence, the niceties, and success in life. Throughout the novel she manages to forge herself this type of personality. She decides she can pass for white but with her tanned deep, golden brown skin, it helps to tell people she is part French and part Irish (49). April tries to convince herself that her physical appearance will help her build a future different from the miserable life she is until now trying to bear. She must prove she is different from the rest of her community, even from her lovely sister, Cheryl. As mentioned earlier, April even changes the spelling of her name to “Raintry”, so that it will sound Irish. Changing names represents a new beginning for April. With such a name, she will be able to join the Whites. She believes that when she is grown, she will be rich since she will use her name to enter white society. As part of proving she belongs to white society, she marries a white man, Bob. Contrary to Halfbreed, in which a marriage with a white man is chosen in order to provide an occasion for the Métis family to remain together, marriage in In Search of April Raintree is a means of escaping from Métis society. Unfortunately, her mother-in-law reminds April of her origins when she says, “I would simply dread being grandmother to a bunch of little half-breeds!” (126).
The other focus of April's hybridisation, that is, her Métis roots, emerge when she faces the mockery of white children at home and at school. She defends her sister, Cheryl, when Mrs. Derosier punishes the latter unjustly. Sometimes she is proud of her origins, for example when she and Cheryl get better marks in class than the Derosier children. As the text states, April refers to herself as a half-breed to spite them, but she turns their prejudice against them through irony: "Hey Maggie, you told us that half-breeds were stupid. Well, if we're stupid, you must lack brains altogether" (57).

April, like Waiyaki and Muthoni, fails in her development toward modern values because she leaves the others behind. She does not invite Cheryl to take part in her decisions with respect to integration within white society. She claims that their parents are those who put them in trouble because "they were liars, weaklings, and drunkards" (119). All her attempts to hide her past fail and she ends up agreeing with Cheryl that, it would be better for her to stick to "her own kind" (110). Ironically, Cheryl's predictions about April's life are revealed as true when April arrives at her husband's home, is welcomed coldly by her mother-in-law and feels as if she has landed in another foster home (113).

Cheryl's hybridity, even though it is not perceivable at once, is evident in the way she learns her people's history at school. She tries to excel at school so that she will let everybody know what really happened to the Métis. She performs well in sports and academic matters in order to prove to people that the Métis are not inferior to Whites. She tells April that she would like to be a social worker so that she will be
able to help other kids like them. Instead of mimicking the colonisers, Cheryl affirms hybridity and works toward building a positive identity on both the individual and collective level by identifying with the Métis.

I have been talking of hybridity as a result of identity construction under colonisation. Whenever hybridity is mentioned one cannot talk of authenticity, and that once again puts into question the writers’ desire to re-establish what we assume about “original identity” and the argument that colonisation has destroyed it or that original identity has been “lost”. Throughout centuries, many migrations, invasions, and interracial marriages have taken place so that it is fanciful to claim an authentic identity exists today. Yet, as Brian Stross suggests, “The hybrid must belong somewhere eventually, and it must be classified somehow” (260). Some refer to this place as a liminal place between cultures. Bill Ashcroft et al. define liminality as a term “describing an ‘in-between’ space in which cultural change may occur. This space is a transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states” (Ashcroft 130). Liminality is part of cultural hybridity.

As mentioned earlier hybridity sometimes results in the marginalisation of the hybrid individual. He or she is referred to as an inferior being. Miscegenation or the skin colour provokes aversion towards individuals and groups of mixed blood origins within a racial hierarchy that inferiorises other races, placing pure bloods, especially Whites, at the top in terms of status.
Mrs Derosier in *In Search of April Raintree* considers April and her sister Cheryl as inferior beings only good to do domestic tasks and mostly because they are poor Halfbreeds, "good-for-nothing". One of the Derosier children openly uses racial slurs: "Is that the half-breed girl we're getting? She does not look like the last squaw we had" (40). Other slurs and popular myths used by the Derosier children, "dirty people", "they have lice in their hair" (44), etc., inferiorize the Métis in order to keep the mixed bloods in their place in the racial hierarchy. The slurs are used at school in order to prevent the other white children from getting near the Métis like April. The novel challenges these stereotypes in allowing April to rise in white society, by becoming a secretary and by marrying a white man. Cheryl is represented as a child who usually succeeds at school even though she sometimes quarrels with her teachers about the Métis history. The novel not only represents stereotypes, but it also reflects on the complexity of identity through the experiences and consciousness of mixed blood people. As shown in *Halfbreed*, the Métis can shape a positive self beyond stereotypes. The text allows April to fight the negative images that the colonisers attributed to the Métis and she decides that she will not continue to live according to these stereotypes. The text may be inviting the reader to view complex identity in the liminal space between cultures as a means of achieving a new identity. The new identity may allow the Métis to look for the best part of white, Indian, and Métis societies.

Mimicry implies that the individual is hiding something that might not be accepted by the society or some aspect of identity that is inferiorized. This thing may
represent one side of one's character, personality, race or social class that individuals are not satisfied with. Such behaviour can be called "camouflage". Before I explore further the theme of mimicry in both novels, I would like to quote Jacques Lacan’s description of mimicry as camouflage:

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage [. . .]. It is not a question of harmonising with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled – exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare. (Lacan as quoted by Homi Bhabha 234)

As we can imagine mimicking can sometimes imply a desire to change identity in order to become less visible. It can go beyond a simple desire to look like the others: mimicry can lead to alienation, as is the case with Joshua.

The capacity to survive all the changes that colonisation brings calls for one's ability to mimic the coloniser. In fact, with regard to those characters who try to survive or find their way in colonisation, they must make some compromise with the coloniser in order to prove they are civilised, capable of 'good behaviour' as well as the white man. Unfortunately, they sometimes do worse than the Whites, their 'hero'. Joshua is the best representation of mimicry in Ngugi's novel. He is more conservative in his Christian values than the missionaries. For example, he banishes his daughter Muthoni because she decides to be circumcised. April in Culleton's novel denies her own people in order to mimic Whites. Muthoni models herself after
tradition in order to be accepted by the Gikuyu. The three characters are looking for an identity by mimicking or modelling, and they seem to lose their way sometimes.

With the advent of colonisation, tradition and its concepts are called into question. One of the coloniser's aims was to demystify tradition. Those who decided to follow the white man found some “light” in colonisation that took them out of “darkness”. The metaphor itself suggests a hierarchy of racial colour. One weapon used by the coloniser to demystify tradition was religion, which came with modern education.

The text represents Joshua as a mimic man in the following:

He, along with a few others, had been the first to be converted to the new faith. [...]. In Siriana he found a sanctuary and the white man's power and magic. He learnt to read and write. The new faith worked in him till it came to possess him wholly. [...]. He realises the ignorance of his people. He felt the depth of the darkness in which they lived. (33)

After his experience at Siriana, Joshua considers it is time to take people out of “darkness”. But in order to help people come out of it, Joshua must himself lead the way. That is when he becomes a brave preacher, having been freed from fear (34). His voice and the strictness with which he leads his family are assets that enable him to win other souls. He condemns drinking, tribal dances, and circumcision. This last practise is so disgusting to Joshua that “he devoted a prayer asking God to forgive him for marrying a woman who had been circumcised” (35). He is not portrayed as protecting women from the practice, in fact, he is a wife beater himself; instead, he condemns circumcision because the white missionaries say it is a sin. He believes the white man is his brother, and thus, does not mind the fact that people must pay taxes.
He seems to be blinded by his faith. In one scene he is shown foaming (41). He sometimes becomes angry and feels like taking a stick and beating people so that those he considers to be sinners will follow the white man’s way. He is shown to be a fanatic throughout the novel. His daughter Muthoni’s disobedience to God’s word pushes him to ban her from his house. Why does he appear so fanatic in his mimicry? The text depicts Joshua as an example of fanaticism and the danger of alienation that may exist in mimicry. Joshua’s refusal to consider the stories told about the missionaries and the Gikuyu women at Siriana shows that he aligns himself with the Whites. Overall, he has lost a sense of himself and his people through mimicking the European colonisers.

Through Muthoni’s conversation with her sister, the text reveals the naivety of new converts. Muthoni reminds her sister, Nyambura, “Father said that at the Mission there is that man Livingstone and many women. Those are his wives. And do you think that he, a man, would marry a woman not circumcised?” (30). According to this comment, she is perhaps explaining to her sister that the white man knows that a real woman is the one who is circumcised. Perhaps, Muthoni thinks that all cultures believe in the same tradition, at least where women are concerned. But the reader knows that white people disagree with female circumcision, even if that may not prevent them from having sex with these women. If Joshua really thinks that circumcision is evil, should he not try to convince his white brother not to keep company with circumcised women? In the European religious teachings there is no mention of women’s circumcision, so whatever is done against these teachings is evil.
P. A. Aorisade argues that "Ngugi moves beyond history to fiction and raises fundamental question of self-apprehension and self-cognition under such alienating social relations as imposed by colonialism" (63). According to Aorisade, Ngugi is not condemning Christianity in itself, but he is criticising Christians’ interpretation of Christianity, and the naivety which new converts live in. Ngugi himself has stated that he grew up wanting to adapt Christian beliefs to his own culture. He argued that in school he looked for ways that could help remove the central Christian doctrine from the dress of western culture and help reshape the doctrine according to the central beliefs of Kenyans (Aorisade as quoted in Hawley 72).

Christopher Wise argues, "Nevertheless, Ngugi’s disavowal offers us one of the most sensitive and poignant accounts yet of the historical, religious, and psychological effects of western-based missionary ventures in Africa upon indigenous peoples, from the time of David Livingstone to the present" (32). Indeed, colonisers used missionaries to pacify tribes everywhere they went in order to prepare the way for economic goals. With regard to Joshua’s behaviour, one can notice they win their wager. Ngugi offers us the following as Joshua’s reflection on taxes, “He knew it was his duty as a Christian to obey the Government, giving unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (36). According to him, individuals’ blindness and refusal to change their hearts cause the ills that come upon people. Is not Joshua negating himself in order to please the white man? He does not realise he is a useful instrument in the hand of the white man for the establishment of colonisation. Without such complicity it would have been rather
difficult for the coloniser to occupy the country. The result of Joshua mimicking the white man is that he becomes an alien in his own society. He is only feared by his wife and his older daughter, who really hates what he does to his tribe; that is, he brings division in the tribe. The text states, "Joshua was identified as the enemy of the tribe. He was with Siriana, with the white settlers. For now it was said that the Siriana missionaries had been sent to prepare the way for the settler" (125).

*The River Between* is an exploration of what mimicry has done to Africa as a colonised space. Indeed, on the one hand those who are hybrids in Kenyan society and mimics like Joshua enable division, but on the other, fortunately, they institute the wind of revolution in other people's minds. In this indirect sense mimicry can be a good instrument to turn against colonisation. Joshua is not the one who turns against the white man, but he opens the door for others to reflect on and take action against their misery and their alienation from their property and their cultural essence. Kenyans will be equal to white people only with slow growth under the European economic system; yet as we know Africa already had a well organised economic system before contact. Joshua is a tragedy to Kenyans, but mostly to himself and his family. He wants a united family but only succeeds in dividing it by banishing his daughter Muthoni and by forcing Nyambura to rebel and leave with a non-Christian man. One positive aspect of Joshua's western ways is that he will, inadvertently, help people reflect on some negative and barbaric aspects of tradition such as women's circumcision.
If mimicry sometimes leads the colonised to copy the outsiders, it can also take place among insiders. But in this case this type of mimicry is referred to as modelling. Beatrice Culleton’s text, *In Search of April Raintree*, presents not only April’s mimicry of Whites, but also Cheryl’s attempts to resemble an ideal from inside Métis culture. Cheryl Raintree proposes to help her people and she wants to show that the Métis have not always been miserable. She decides, then, to model herself on Métis traditions.

She models herself on Métis customs because she is proud of them and believes that this behaviour can help her be herself. She learns Métis history and finds out they have had some heroes in the past such as Louis Riel. She does not hesitate to give her opinions of what she thinks about the white man’s version of Métis history (78). Whenever she finds some time, she writes down her story and sends it to April. Staying in a foster family where the wife is Métis helps her. The fact is that if she wants to help people to overcome their misery, she must adopt their way of thinking, their social customs, and feel their sufferings and be able to discuss them. Cheryl, with her experience of displacement in many foster families, proves to her sister that the white social workers are not the best ones who will help them because they do not live in Métis reality. In placing Métis children in different families, the white system destroys the Métis family unit and is then able to better control the Métis and assimilate them. Cheryl succeeds up to a certain point, but certainly fails to avoid the worse part of the disintegration of Métis culture. She ends up committing suicide like her mother died (208-209). Cheryl has been too idealistic
in her efforts for cultural revival. She uses, in fact, the same means as the white man, that is social centres, to help the Métis. In these centres, the Métis are mainly helped with financial means and shown their deficiencies. These institutions replace closely-knit community life. The text is not questioning the social centres as such, but it is questioning the methods used there that do not encourage Cheryl and the other Métis to leave their harmful habits. Her failure, however, helps her sister, April, realise that she must be herself and accept what she is. Julia Emberley argues that the ending of the book reclaims identity and not difference; that is, difference is not so harmful when one can get some instruction from it in order to discover whom he or she really is ( Emberley as quoted in Helen Hoy 168). Cheryl’s suicide suggests that the Métis struggle for identity is not sufficient. In struggling against the colonisers they may neglect the origins of other problems. For example, Cheryl needed to struggle, as well, against being alcoholic and drug addicted, practices that help inferiorize the Métis. In Campbell’s life story, the struggle against drugs and alcohol is an important step in recovering pride.

An exploration of these novels by Culleton and Ngugi allows us to appreciate the degree to which the phenomena of hybridity and mimicry have affected colonised communities as they are mirrored in the novels. Depending on their geographical situation and their social structure, each colonised people react with the means they are afforded in order to reach their aim, that is, to improve their lives and that of their community. Their failure to bring together tradition and modernity is due, for Waiyaki, to tradition and the pressure it exercises. In the Gikuyu communities
conformity and tradition set the boundaries, and those who try to bring changes also bring upon themselves danger and tragedy. The hills are the guardians of the tradition and the purity of the community. Whoever looks beyond the hills can be sure of banishment. The text tells how Gikuyu are bound by their traditions in the following passage:

These ancient hills and ridges were the heart and soul of the land. They kept the tribes' magic and rituals, pure and intact. Their people rejoiced together, giving one another the blood and warmth of their laughter. Sometimes they fought. But that was amongst themselves and no outsider need ever know. [. . .]. Leaders of the land rose from there. For though the ridges were isolated, a few people went out. These, who had the courage to look beyond their present content to a life and land beyond, were the select few sent by Murungu to save a people in their hour of need: Mugo, the great seer; Wachiori, the glorious warrior; Kamiri, the powerful magician. They became strangers to the hills. Thereafter, the oilskin of the house was not for them. It was for those who lived inside. (3-4)

This description shows that traditions were indigenous and tied to the Kenyan setting. People who did not belong to this place might not have been able to integrate into tradition, and those who tried to take a path different from tradition were exposed to banishment. However, the passage suggests that tradition was also tied to what was natural, for example, hills, valleys, and river. With the advent of modernity the sense of peace that these natural elements offered were going to be lost through the exploitation of the land by the colonisers. We now understand why Waiyaki, Joshua, and Muthoni cannot succeed in their desire to bring unity between traditional culture
and the white man’s culture. They bring new ideas to the community, which is not acceptable according to the laws of the hills. This is a strong anti-colonial message.

_In Search of April Raintree_ uses social and economic disposessions to underline the split between two sisters. April embodies abjection and self-negation by repeating white racism against her own community. She is helped to assimilate by her skin colour. Cheryl complains about the lack of unity and coherent subjectivity. Here is what she says, “I wish we were whole Indians” (45). The sisters are divided by their discourse as the Métis people have been divided by loyalties and different strategies of developing identity. While April’s discourse encourages racism, Cheryl’s exposes its violence. Perhaps the aim of the novel in representing the sisters in this manner is to invite the rest of the Métis community to reflect upon the fact that identity is forged in unity as well as in difference. Cheryl’s death will help April accept her difference from white people. Now, she is going to be proud of her origins, and to think about new ways of helping her peers. Cheryl tells her once before she dies that, “All life dies to give new life” (228). Cheryl’s son embodies this new life, so whenever April looks at him, she will remember that being different is not synonymous with being ‘good-for-nothing’.

In short, Waiyaiki and April Raintree represent the innocence of natives. They can be granted the benefit of having sowed the seeds of independence. Apparent “failures” are harmful to the Métis and Gikuyu in the long run. Muthoni’s and Cheryl’s death raise people’s consciousness that things can be done otherwise. James Ngugi’s and Beatrice Culleton’s choices of characters allow readers to view
the struggles for identity that might have prevented colonised nations from beginning their fight for independence faster and more efficiently. Neither text seeks to condemn the traditional culture or the European one, but rather the imposition of the latter on the former. Another lesson the characters can learn from their experiences is that one must be aware of the notion of unity if one wants to realise his or her dreams of freedom. Ngugi and Culleton succeed in their adaptation of realism and the dominant discourse in their writings. Ngugi juxtaposes orality, through the river analogy and an oral story-telling style, to the logic of the European written canon. Culleton uses the strategy of doubling to oppose two sisters so that one seeks her identity in the other's personality.

As for mimicry and hybridity, both texts underline cultural hybridity as the struggle to find a compromise between tradition and modernity. Both novels represent individuals caught in a liminal position. Those who fail to appreciate both tradition and modernity sometimes choose to mimic the colonisers or model themselves after tradition and the natives. In mimicking the coloniser, some native characters are hired to control their peers and they acquire a false sense of belonging to the coloniser's group in this way. For mixed bloods, miscegenation is a constant source of marginalisation that keeps them in the position of outsiders who are seen as racially impure. Ngugi and Culleton dramatize both the possibilities and difficulties of finding new identities in the liminal space between cultures.
CONCLUSION

The post-colonial desire is the desire of decolonized communities

for an identity ... (Ashcroft et al. 125).

The aim of this thesis was to look at the ways novels and an autobiography showed individuals shaping a new identity under the colonial system in Canada, Kenya, and Nigeria. However, although my research on identity shaping in these texts began with the conviction that natives “lost” their pre-colonial identity with colonial contact, I soon altered this assumption about lost identity in order to explore how traditional identities shifted in complex ways under colonisation to create new, hybrid identities.

As mentioned earlier, identity is not stable. Instead, it constantly changes with regard to the different contexts that surround individuals’ and the group’s lives. The Africans’ and the Métis’ pre-colonial identities bear traditional traits, such as male dominance in Kenya and Nigeria, internal segregation towards some specific individuals that constitute a curse for the rest of the community, worship of many deities, respect for elders, and a closeness to the land. With colonisation native tradition has tended to be devalued and replaced by modern values. This brings changes in natives’ identity. Under the pre-colonial period, the individual’s identity was shaped according to the group’s social demands. During this period the group was most important to the individual’s social evolution. With modernity,
individualism overtakes community as a value shaping identity as discussed in respect to the characters Joshua and April. In order to view these changes, as they were rendered in novels and an autobiography, I analysed identity in two ways in my thesis: first, as the development of self in relation to loss of land, language, and community under colonisation, and second, as the negotiation of a complex identity under colonisation resulting from mimicry and hybridity.

In Chapter One, I analysed the Self and the development of identity within the community. This chapter focuses on an exploration of Things Fall Apart and Halfbreed, works that both represent the individual shaping an identity within the Ibo and Métis communities respectively. I linger over two characters, that is, Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart and Maria, the autobiographical subject in Halfbreed. Okonkwo’s identity is shaped with regard to psychological and social pressures that govern the Ibo society. In this society men must succeed. Whenever a man fails to forge himself a personality that will call for respect, this man is inferiorized and called a woman. The Ibo society is very patriarchal, and every individual is required to respect the elders and men that have a title. Lustig et al. call such society a high context and high MAS culture, meaning that masculine values such as physical force and owning many wives are privileged (123). Okonkwo is very respectful to these social values and commits all his life to them. Thus, as colonisation takes place in Nigeria, Okonkwo strongly opposes modern values because he wants to protect tradition. Unfortunately, he fails since he underestimates the subtle spirit of the coloniser and the way the group will conform to new values. I have been able to
analyse Okonkwo's identity thanks to the developmental strategy Achebe's novel follows. The novel represents Okonkwo as he first succeeds and later loses prestige. His decline represents the decline of tradition in the community as a whole. The title of the novel reflects this by showing the traditional values falling apart during the contact with modernity.

*Halfbreed* uses a autobiographical retrospective strategy in order to represent Maria Campbell's life story as she looks for a new Métis identity in a white-dominated, settler society filled with stereotypes and prejudices against "halfbreed". Campbell's text opens with the story of a community that enjoyed freedom despite the complex identity that it may have had with regard to mixed racial origins, that is European Canadian and Indian. But, while the autobiographical subject looks back at her history, the text reveals a point where the Métis start to resent the effect of the different stereotypes the colonisers impute them. In fact, the Métis are considered to be the leftovers of Canadian society. They have no status because they are not granted a piece of land as reserves, nor can they succeed at keeping land under the conditions of homesteading practices. Besides being dispossessed of land and hunting rights, they are considered to be impure because they are under the spectre of miscegenation. The life story shows that with all this history of racial problems, the Métis individual must fight to overcome the negative construction of identity disseminated through racial stereotypes. Maria tries to flee misery by leaving her family for cities. She thinks the city will provide a better life. Unfortunately, the sense of inferiority that the Métis experience is more present there. Her life story
follows a downward trajectory towards street life, drugs alcohol, and prostitution. She must return to her grandmother’s teachings in order to remind herself of a collective Métis identity and how to be proud of it.

These texts enable me to look at the decline of proud traditional communities in Nigeria and Canada, the one indigenous and the other a result of miscegenation. The texts, by using developmental and retrospective strategies, depict the colonised subject developing a complex identity that emerges during or after colonisation. While some characters conform to modern values, others decide to confront them and look for ways of merging tradition and modernity. This time the greater part of this identity struggle will be led on an individual level. The individual chooses to build his identity by himself.

The second chapter of my thesis analyses two different characteristics of the complex identity: hybridity and mimicry. In this chapter, the texts under study are Ngugi’s *The River Between* and Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree*.

Chapter Two raises the complex story of shifting identity under colonisation in Kenya and Canada. Both novels show characters caught between two cultures, negotiating a solution that will take them out of their misery as colonised people. *The River Between* represents cultural hybridity as a reaction to the changes that take place in the Gikuyu society in Kenya. In the text there are two parties: the extremists and the moderates. The moderates are those who mainly look for a compromise between traditional and modern values. Waiyaki is the main moderate character who negotiates compromise between the colonisers and the colonised through the use of
formal education. Education helps this character stand the deep changes that devalue Gikuyu traditions by providing him tools for teaching the children modern values. Waiyaki constructs schools where Gikuyu children will learn modern values that may better their social status in the future. This is not simply mimicry because Waiyaki is conscious of changes, and he is almost sure that tradition declines and that the Gikuyu must look for other ways of getting free. Unfortunately, Waiyaki does not succeed in bringing the moderates and the extremists together. My explanation to this failure is that he works by himself, sometimes neglecting the group. Instead of bringing life to his community as a river would have done, Waiyaki increases the gap between both parts. Ngugi’s novel portrays the river in the following way:

The river was called Honia, which meant cure, or bring-back-to-life. Honia river never dried; it seemed to possess a strong will to live, scorning droughts and weather changes. And it went on in the same way, never hurrying, never hesitating. People saw this and were happy. (1)

This description of the river shows us that one of the aim of the river is to cure or bring back to life. It flows through the valley of life. But this valley is surrounded by two ridges that become antagonists and, like two rivals, are ready to come to blows in a life and death struggle for the leadership of the isolated region (1). These natural elements constitute a metaphor for the Gikuyu and the life of the community. Indeed, the river represents Waiyaki who is viewed as a leader that shall bring life to the Gikuyu. But, contrary to the river that never hurries, Waiyaki hurries in his desire to bring peace to his community that is divided the two components: Kameno and
Makuyu (112). Waiyai hesitates when times come to make decisions about the two ridges' reconciliation. The narrator reports, talking of Waiyaki's indecision, "Yet when the appropriate moment came he had failed. He had become intoxicated with wonder, anger and surprise and had lost himself. The moment had come. The moment had passed. Had he remained calm he would have spoken outright for reconciliation" (115).

*The River Between* represents two kinds of extremists. The first group of extremists hangs on to tradition, and the second group entirely adopts modern values through mimicry. The second group is considered aliens to the rest of the group. Ngugi's novel reflects mostly on religion. In fact both extremist groups fight each other over religious values. According to some characters, like Joshua, the coloniser's religion brings light to darkness. Joshua condemns traditional religions and values and all that surrounds them. The text uses him to warn the Gikuyu against mimicking modern values.

*In Search of April Raintree* represents miscegenation in Canada and portrays the ills that befall two Métis sisters looking for an authentic identity. The author, Beatrice Culleton uses the doubling of two sisters, April and Cheryl, to illustrate two paths open to the Métis: to identify with white society or Métis society. Culleton plays with skin colour, that is making one sister, April whiter than the other, Cheryl. April whose skin is whiter identifies with white people and thinks she can integrate the high society. As we discover, April ends up recognising that she is only living an illusion. Meanwhile, Cheryl, who resembles more the Métis, also fails in her fight to
gain pride and to decolonise her people because she falls into a negative state of mind and life style which ends in suicide. Culleton’s novel may be criticizing Cheryl’s path, not because she is proud of being a Métis, but because she is too idealistic. What holds my attention about the complex identities of April and Cheryl is the fact that even if hybridity is making one of two distinct things (Young 260), the Métis remain a community without status and their skin colour does not make them authentic, confirming then the fact authenticity is only a myth as Griffith suggests. However, despite their failure, Culleton’s use of doubling allows the reader to reflect on the fact that the Métis can discover positive elements in their mixed origins. For example, April learns after her sister’s death that she can be proud of being a Métis. Cheryl learns that April may not be hating the Métis, but their way of living, as alcoholic people, drug addicts and prostitutes and the fact that they resigning the struggle for decolonisation.

These African and Canadian Métis texts are all realist representations of what Africans and Métis may have lived before, during, and after colonisation. In spite of the fact that both peoples have been colonised, they, nevertheless, proceed differently in representing the search for a new identity. The African texts focus more on the individual as he or she evolves within the group. The group puts a lot of pressure on the individual, and any attempt by the individual to do without the group is automatically repressed. My point of view is that African texts are more collective because the individual usually shifts his or her traditional identity of the group in order to integrate to modernity as a group value, for example, through religion,
education, etc. While these African texts are more collective, the Métis ones are more individual. The individual is shown to be left alone to look for a better life. The individuals live an individualist world of white settler society, where they are scattered among foster families and live in cities where violence and prostitution are their fate. The sense of community is more present in African texts than in the Métis ones, as is the connection to the land. Such a situation may find its explanation in the strong presence of Europeans in Canada which meant that natives and the Métis were dispossessed of their land. The loss of land among the Métis has had repercussions on the family, language, economic standing, and location as many Métis become mobile or transient.

Indeed, African countries, except South Africa, have been for the most part colonies of occupation. They have only been a kind of reservoir where European powers have taken riches. Africa has been mainly touched by the colonisers' values in its political, economic, and educational organisations. The colonial administration replaced the traditional political institutions where the voice of the elders generally predominated. However, the traditional foundation of African culture has remained almost intact. According to me much more could have stayed in traditional culture if there had not been discrimination within Ibo and Gikuyu societies themselves. Discrimination is reflected in the following examples: in *Things Fall Apart*, twins are thrown away (138), and in *The River Between*, non-circumcised women are not considered "whole" women. The colonisers exploit these breaches within these African societies in order to control populations.
Canada was a settler colony where natives were forced into reserves. Contrary to Africans who, for the most part, kept their land, Canadian Métis have been denied their rights to the land. With the settlement policy, a new race arises in Canada, that is the Métis. Their case is interesting in that they were not even considered as members of the Canadian community. Besides having no land to live on and being denied status, the Métis, as Halfbreed and In Search of April Raintree represent them, are often led to either illegal hunting, alcoholism or prostitution. While Africans see their traditions being devalued, the Métis are devalued in their very identity and considered by others and themselves to be no one, “half-people”, “Road Allowance people”. Assimilation of the Métis is very strong in Canada. This may be due to the fact that the Métis children are so often taken away when their families dissolve and that they are forced to deny their origins. The dissolution of Métis families occurs for a number of reasons illustrated in both works: poverty, disease, despair, alcoholism, suicide, etc.

It was important for me to present the difference between settler colonies and colonies of occupation because I wanted to point out the different reactions of both the groups and the individuals regarding colonisation. Another interesting point I have noticed throughout my textual analysis is that the Métis are more concerned with the racial issue than the Gikuyu and the Ibo, who are more interested in winning their political liberation under the European administration. Chinua Achebe’s and James Ngugi’s texts upset traditional male roles in Nigeria and Africa. Maria
Campbell and Beatrice Culleton upset Métis female roles, by denouncing the violent sexual acts Métis women undergo as sexual objects.

In comparing these works, I have tried to gather the elements that have contributed to the colonisation and its side effects in Africa and Canada. Some of the texts present pre-colonial Africa and Canada. For example *Things Fall Apart* and *Halfbreed* present Nigeria and West Canada before the advent of colonisation. Achebe’s text represents traditional Nigeria where male dominance and deities govern the Ibo’s life. Campbell’s autobiography portrays the origins of the Métis community in representing how Europeans mixed sexually and culturally with Indians. Both texts later introduce the reader to the first contact with the colonisers, and go on representing the naivety of natives with respect to the colonisers’ sophisticated methods of domination. For example, to the Ibo people the colonisers preach love, equality between men, and goodness. With the Métis, the colonisers introduce a feeling of inferiority in the Métis mind. The colonisers encourage children to devalue their parents who are seen as only poor, backward alcoholic, and drugs addicted. In too many cases, they end by committing suicide. The Métis children are encouraged to renounce their origins if they want to get a better life one day.

*The River Between* represents a colonial Kenya where the colonisers actually establish their rule and help enlarge the gaps existing within the Gikuyu society. The colonisers use religion to separate the Gikuyu by challenging traditional beliefs through Christianity. *In Search of April Raintree* may be said to show a post colonial
period in that it portrays the serious ills that sap the Métis community. The reader is invited to look at hybrid individuals struggling for social and economic independence. Despite the stage of colonisation represented in each novel, we can say that all the texts are postcolonial because they all represent people fighting against colonisation as soon as it begins. As mentioned earlier, postcolonialism began the very day the colonisers arrive in native societies (Ashcroft et al. 2).

As I am talking of postcolonialism, I will like to say a word about the notions I have explored throughout my chapters, that is miscegenation, mimicry and hybridity. Miscegenation arises mainly in the Métis texts. Campbell and Culleton represent miscegenation in different ways. Campbell represents it by giving the reader the historic information about her family tree and ancestors. Maria perpetuates miscegenation in marrying a white man. This marriage, according to Maria was intended to have been a solution for not sending her brothers and sisters into foster families. Unfortunately, this solution fails, and the Campbell family ends up being separated. Maria then falls into a period of extreme alienation and despair on the streets of Vancouver and Winnipeg. Culleton's text exposes hybridity fictionally and as an allegory, through the lives of two sisters. In Search of April Raintree testifies to the mistreatment of the Métis children in foster families. The Métis children are viewed as troublemakers, good for nothing, and dirty. These qualifications raise the spectre of racial purity, in that the Métis who are hybrid people can never be “pure”. Both sisters struggle for identification with different groups in their mixed origins.
As for mimicry and hybridity, all the texts point out the cultural hybridity and the fight each character leads in order to find a compromise between tradition and modernity. The different texts represent individual caught in a liminal position. Those that fail to appreciate both tradition and modernity, sometimes choose to mimic the coloniser or the natives. In mimicking the coloniser, the native individual is often hired by the colonisers to control his peers and he or she acquires a sense of belonging to the coloniser’s group. Miscegenation, mimicry, and hybridity are significant stages in the shaping of individual and collective identities because they present the reasons that lead the individual and the community to look for a new identity or to remain attached to tradition.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo is very strict about the fact that one must remain faithful to his or her group. According to his behaviour, there is no need to compromise with the white man who is responsible for the destruction of Ibo tradition. Okonkwo is a character whose identity is shaped according to the group’s priorities. Okonkwo’s suicide is somewhat normal because as tradition is due to disappear, then, its puppet inevitably undergoes the same fate. However, Okonkwo is not the only one who is submitted to tradition, but the other individuals are more flexible and provident. Indeed, Obierika, Nwoye, and others already foresee the disappearance of traditional rulers. They adopt the coloniser’s modern values in order to forge themselves a new identity and a status in a community that will be from now on ruled by the modern administration.
In *The River Between* Waiyaki is initiated to traditional customs, and he is later sent to Siriana school in order to learn the white man’s knowledge. While studying there he keeps faithful to some aspects of his tradition. The white man’s refusal to condone some traditional practices such as circumcision and initiation rituals encourages Waiyaki to become a leader who represents a need for the Gikuyu to have a compromise if they want to get independence. Through education, he becomes a cultural hybrid who looks for peace within the Gikuyu community.

*Halfbreed* represents a girl who shifts from the Métis traditional identity to an individual identity that leaves the individual with a sense of being inferior. Nonetheless, after many mistakes and a difficult life, Maria is able to remember her grandmother’s teachings and to think about other, more collective ways that will help her look for better solutions for her and her peers.

*In Search of April Raintree* is not so different from *Halfbreed* in that the main protagonists, two sisters, who originally led a kind of peaceful life with their family, are forced, through the dissolution of the family, into a life that is not theirs. Both sisters view the world differently through white or Métis culture, but they end up finding each other even if one of them dies at the end of the novel.

All these colonised subjects struggle for freedom, be it from tradition or colonisation. Despite some failures during these struggles, all the texts gives a sense of hope for the colonised nations in Africa and Canada. African texts present the old African society with its values and its imperfections. These imperfections actually help the colonisers establish power in African societies. Canadian Métis texts speak
against the dispossession of land and the devaluation of the Métis as human beings. They present the Métis people as they used to be happy when they had land and lived with their families, and the way they become a sad and powerless people when everything is taken away from them. Both the African and Métis texts show the move toward decolonisation. The former suggests compromise as a means of decolonisation and the latter encourages the Métis to take their destiny in their own hands and not remain in the negative stereotypes that the colonisers impose on them. What is interesting in these texts is the fact that despite the different ills the colonisers undergo, the authors all show ways of developing a new sense of self and community through hybridity and decolonisation.
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