

Sanny Lu

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### Major Twentieth Century Writers Adventure

Reading about the major twentieth-century writers has enabled me to develop a wider worldview on several pertinent matters ranging from social, cultural, and economic factors. The major twentieth-century literary journey has given me a deeper insight into issues that different communities face that I could have known even by traveling to those communities myself. This paper presents my whole journey through major twentieth-century writers detailing my observations, cross-cultural analysis of the major cultures I have interacted with in the course of this literary journey and their impacts on my own literary development. Major twentieth-century writers explore salient themes that form the backbone of human existence and interactions such as racism and ethnic marginalization, gender stereotyping, pursuits of dreams and passion, and various disadvantages and disadvantages to individuals based on ascribed and achieved status. This paper thus details my twentieth-century literary adventure comparing one book to another and organized in a book by book format from Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* to Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asian*.

Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me* opened my expedition into twentieth-century writers adventure. Coates explores the theme of racism in the United States in his letter to his fifteen-year-old son, Samori. It shows the racial divide that existed in America starting from the time when blacks were enslaved until the time when Coates wrote this book. Coates remarks that the situation of black Americans is the same in the present time just as it was during the time of slavery because in both cases, black people exist under constant surveillance and

threats from their white counterparts. He starts off his epistolary book by saying that he was recently on a talk show during which the host asked him "what it meant to lose my body" (Coates, 6). In his response, Coates felt that there is a great rift between the world of the interviewer (whites) and his own world. He goes ahead to explain that the ideology that the white people are more successful than the black people have been made possible over the years through what he termed as looting and violence towards the black people but not a genuine achievement through hard work.

It is fascinating how Coates explains the racial divide that exists between the whites and the blacks. He believes that racism is not natural but only a human creation. Even though I am not an African American, Coates has made me understand the problems that African Americans are forced to endure for them to co-exist with their white counterparts. The main take away from Coates's epistolary book is the issue of racism and how it affects black people in the United States. He explains his life as a young man, now living in the black body in America made him vulnerable to several dangers, such as being shot. He brings out the point of cosmic injustice and asserts that some people living in other areas were not as disadvantaged as them living in the slums of Baltimore. In Baltimore, he got to understand why black parents used harsh physical punishment to correct their children-this was a way of keeping them out of trouble. But Coates remains adamant whether this method was effective. Policies also deliberately exposed black children in the slums to the dangers of the world. The laws failed to keep blacks out of danger instead was another source of violence and in turn, kept them in a constant state of fear. Coates recounts an incidence when, for the first time, the subject of murder became real to him. He witnessed a boy pulling out a gun from his ski jacket pocket. Coates refused to tell his parents or teachers but remained amazed with how easily death can easily rise up from nothing of a boyish

afternoon (Coates 19). He then began to think about another world, different from his where children and the old alike are safe.

After dropping out of Howard, he enrolled at Prince George's County school often abbreviated as PG County in Maryland. PG was dangerous as it was notorious for crimes such as extrajudicial murder and drugs. He also says that the police officer often used excessive force on the blacks. He recalled an incidence when he was pulled over by a police officer who was on patrol who asked him for his ID. A black being pulled over by a police officer is a never wrecking experience. The PG country police officers were notorious for using excessive force and even killing blacks. He reads an article on *The Washington Post* about the murder of his friend Prince Jones. The police officer claimed that Jones attempted to run over him, but in reality, Jones didn't try such a thing, and this was just a makeup story to cover up for the murder. This incidence prompted him to start researching about police brutality in the PG county. He found several stories about police shootings and use of excessive force, which made him sad, prompting his relocation with his family to New York. Coates asserts that being a black person when he was young, one needed to work as twice harder than their white counterparts, he had to be as twice as good as the whites to avoid police brutality. His perils of being a young black boy included taking responsibility for the crimes that others committed and mastering the rule of having to work harder than others.

The next book in my major twentieth-century writers' journey was James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*. Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*. It is closely related to Coates' in both the writing style and the theme they address. It is divided into two sections; *My Dungeon Shook*; *Letter to My Nephew on the one-Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation* and *Down at the Cross*; *Letter from a Region in My Mind*. I will only analyze the first section; *My Dungeon Shook* since

it had a profound impact on my literary journey than the second letter. What interests me about this letter is its main message. Baldwin talks to his nephew and namesake, James. He explains what integration means in the United States society. He gives a very different conception of integration and asserts that it means something entirely different from the meaning that had been assigned to it. Baldwin explains to his readers how the whites perceived the black man's struggle for integration; it is a black man's desire for acceptance by the whites. But the reality of integration is much more terrible; blacks must learn how to accept the whites but not the other way around in order to resolve the racial tension that existed in the country.

It is fascinating how Baldwin introduces James, from the viewpoint of somebody that he is well conversant with. Baldwin tells his nephew that the sight of his face reminds Baldwin of two people; his brother (the boy's father) and his father. By evoking the faces of his father and brother, Baldwin shows the importance of history and family lineage, sometimes bringing up a past issue can help in solving the present issues. He then explains his brother's childhood and evolution. He remembers carrying his brother and watching him grow. As he was growing, his brother started experiencing inner pain. This pain represented the destruction that the white man subjected the black race. Baldwin then makes a sharp turn and introduced his own father as someone who was destroyed by the whites by making him believe in what the whites told him he was. For examples, Baldwin says that the whites regarded his father as a subhuman and it was for this reason that his father became religious. His nephew, James, is not religious and represents the new era and the new way of thinking. Baldwin warns his Nephew not to commit the mistakes that his grandfather did; one of them was believing in what the white man said about him. A reader can understand the magnitude of the problem between the blacks and the whites. The whites are deceitful, and the black should not believe in what they tell them.

Baldwin informs his nephew that the society in which they live is so biased against the black Americans such that their fate is already sealed from the time of birth that they will languish under Whiteman's oppression. Baldwin is in internal conflict. He feels that telling his nephew the truth about their origin and social tension so blatantly is so difficult, but at the same time, he believes that his nephew can draw up his powers from understanding the circumstances under which they thrived. Both Baldwin and Coates explore the issues of racial inequality in the United States. Both use the epistolary format in their works. Coates lamented the use of excessive force towards black Americans. The Baltimore Neighborhood, where Coates lived before moving to the United States, had rampant cases of police brutality. Coates and Baldwin's upbringing is similar in the sense that both witnessed racial tension and shooting of the black Americans in its worst form. Just like Coates, Baldwin saw the need to inform his nephew about the reality of American society. Both assert that the whites have higher chances of being successful than blacks since blacks are born already in the bondage of racial prejudice. Baldwin maintains that even though the blacks have suffered from racial prejudices, the blacks must accept the whites and co-exist with them. On the other hands, Coates seemed to favor a more radical way of dealing with racial prejudices such as filling a lawsuit.

In one of the passages in his book, Baldwin illustrates one of the reasons why he believes that there is a sharp ideological difference between the blacks and the whites. Baldwin asserts that whites do not believe in death, something that I personally do not take as true. All in all, Baldwin believed that being that blacks believe in death while whites do not, there will be a conflict of ideologies that will lead to the destruction of the country. The black skin resembles death to the whites, and the presence of the black people intimidated the whites. However, Baldwin believes that one should not fear death; after all, death is a constant in life. At some

point in life, everyone must die, and Baldwin does not seem to understand why some people fear death. I find it a fallacy in Baldwin's argument that people should face death with passion and courage. There are things in life that we are undergoing just because we have no powers over them. No one likes to see family members die. The process of dying is just so sad to subject the loved ones. Therefore, Baldwin's opinion that people should rejoice in the fact of death does not agree with the common belief of death and dying especially when a young member of the society who has not yet accomplished his or her mission on earth dies.

I am particularly impressed by the epistolary style of writing used by Ta-Nehisi Coates and James Baldwin. One thing I noticed here is that both the writers are addressing someone that they know at a personal level; Coates is talking to his fifteen-year-old son Samori whom he named after a freedom fighter in West Africa, Samori Touré while Baldwin is addressing his nephew named after him, James. The first quality of epistolary form that is evident in both of their works, which may be different from other forms of writing is that the writer can get too personal with the intended reader. As a result, the reader gets to know much details than when a writer was addressing an anonymous audience. For instance, Baldwin tells James that he knew him from his childhood. He knew the characters that manifested even as a child, and he knew how he resembled his grandfather. Coates in his side tells his son all that have changed during the period he watched him grow. Epistolary styles enable the writers to give a personal appeal to the intended readers using the information that the intended reader can relate to. The benefit of the epistolary form of writing is that it assumes that the writers know the audience on a personal basis and the issues that the audience most care about, therefore, the writer can address only those issues.

Even though Baldwin and Coates explore the same theme of racism in post-slavery America, they send different messages to their audience. Baldwin held that African Americans had the rights to be angry due to the treatments that they are subjected to. But they ought to transcend their anger and improve their abilities to accommodate and co-exist with their white counterparts in order to solve racial tensions. On the other hand, Coates believes that it is racism that gave birth to race, not the commonly held notion that race brought forward racism. Race never existed without racism. The white people used racism to show white superiority over other people. Therefore, in order to solve the issue of racism, black Americans should believe in themselves, hold fellow black Americans in high regards and believe that they are the best to avoid constant humiliation. In his side, Coates believed that the notion of racism is psychological, when the blacks are continually being reminded that they are an inferior race, they start thinking that they are indeed inferior, and their self-esteem is lowered. As the whites constantly get self-validation that they are the best race, it gets into their minds, and their self-esteem rises. Therefore, according to Coates, the only way to offset racism, which is just a concept, is that the blacks to start believing in themselves which contrast Baldwin's solution to the racial problem in the United States that the blacks should accept their status and learn to co-exist with the whites.

Inspired by Baldwin work, Jesmyn Ward compiled a collection of essays and titled her book, *The Fire This Time. The Fire Next Time* is made up of seventeen essays and poems and titled after James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*. *The Fire This Time* is divided into three major parts Legacy, Reckoning and Jubilee. The book explores several contemporary issues such as race, rage, identity, death, and significant and sometimes untold moments in human history. This analysis will focus on a single story, the Weight by Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah as it makes a close

connection with Ta-Nehisi Coates *Between the World and Me*, and Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*. Ghansah says that she wants to go to France to visit the James Baldwin. James Baldwin is her writing idol and source of her inspiration. Ghansah had just earned her first income from writing and is decided to take a train to Nice to meet Baldwin.

In Nice, Ghansah found out that Baldwin didn't go to France just driven by the spirit of exploration or due to Naivety. The reason that could drive anyone out of the United States are the same reasons why he went to France because anywhere else seemed better than home. Baldwin could have gone to Africa, but he didn't know Africa by then. Ghansah found out a great deal of resemblance between Baldwin and her grandfather despite Baldwin moving to France to escape racism where he settled in Nice and became a literary legend. *The Fire This Time* has a lot of similarities with Coates' *Between the World and Me* as both are iconoclastic books. They both explore the issue of racism that the black people in America faced and had to deal with throughout their lives. Just as Baldwin, Coates moved from PG country to New York since PG County had frequent police Brutality against black Americans. He then established himself as a successful writer in New York, where he is able to write widely about issues about race.

These three books have exposed me to the understanding of racism from the lenses of Africa American writers as they explain living in a black body in America. I have understood the kind of challenges they had to undergo, working as twice as the whites. *The Fire This Time* is written from the perspectives of different female writers that offers a broader worldview on the issues of race, rage, identity, death and significant and sometimes untold moments in the human history. Relating to the Chinese and Japanese literature, which I had interacted with the most, there is a significant difference in the issues which are put into focus. Most of the Japanese and Chinese literature talks about their culture, the heroic act of the ancient Japanese and Chinese



legends and ancient court culture. Writings such as the tales of Genji, Kojiki among others are classical masterpieces that set the stage for the modern writings, but they didn't put any focus on the Europeans or western culture. This shows me how much African Americans have been distracted with the issue of racism that they cannot focus on tracing their culture but on addressing what is salient to them first. I don't know whether the Africa writers back in the African continent also focus their works on the Americans and Europeans. But I am pretty sure that the issues of colonization must be at the center of their actions since their lives were so much changed due to colonization.

James Baldwin published his literary masterpiece on racism, *The Fire Next Time* in 1963, about half a century ago and it was considered one of the most passionate and raw explorations of the race relations of its time. Jesmyn Ward's *The Fire This Time* was just published in 2016. These two books have a lot of similarities as well as differences. As the title of *The Fire This Time* Suggest, it is built on James Baldwin's themes and issues he explored but written by the current generation writers. It goes without mentioning that James Baldwin's work was the voice of the civil rights movement, yet he was not a civil rights leader. But some people chose to dismiss his writings based on his sexuality. Baldwin was gay, and during his time the LGBT community had not had much voice and support. If Baldwin could be living presently, his writings could not have been dismissed on such grounds as his sexuality. Nevertheless, Baldwin's writings were appreciated and supported largely within and outside the United States.

*The Fire Next Time* is different from *The Fire This Time* for an apparent reason that latter is a compilation of various works by various writers and the former was written by Baldwin alone. *The Fire This Time*, therefore, gives a varied perspective on the issues of race, rage, identity, death, and significant and sometimes untold moments in human history. Even though

the writers of *The Fire This Time* can draw into the past to make a more informed judgment about the topics they are writing about, they are more inclined to tackle these issues from a contemporary point of view since they have lived in the present time and more aware of the present time. But a lot had changed between the present time and about half a century ago when Baldwin wrote his book. For example, more African American leaders are being elected in political posts including the Presidency of Barack Obama, an African American with a Kenyan origin. Therefore, it is likely that contemporary African American writers to address the issues of racism with less rage. James Baldwin's book came at a time when civil rights activist such as Martin Luther King Jr, W.E.B Du Boise were championing for racial equality with insurmountable efforts. After reading the whole of *The Fire Next Time*, I realized that Baldwin didn't write about race alone, but about humanity too. *My Dungeon Shook* shows that Baldwin wrote from a viewpoint which was not only political but also from a humanistic. As Philippe Lancon puts it, Baldwin was a noisy boy while growing up with his adoptive parents, and as he grew up, he found a different way of making noise; through his gift of writing. Thanks to his noise, he became a source of inspiration to many.

Moving away from the books that explored racism in the United States as their main point of focus, the major twentieth-century journey took me to Saadawi's *Memoir of Woman Doctor*. El Saadawi introduces her book by describing how she experienced gender discrimination in her family. Her brother was always favored in almost everything and given all the freedom he needed. But for her, things were different; she was expected to be cautious in everything she did and exists the freedom to even play in the street. The fact that the *Memoir of a Woman Doctor* is written in the first-person singular aided Saadawi to communicate the aspirations, desires, her struggles, and sufferings. The reader gets to understand how Saadawi is

determined to change this patriarchal system that existed in her society. She hates how her society has raised females to be looked down upon while the boys are treated like gods. To make it worse, even her mother perpetuates such kind of stereotypical perspective. She feels that the whole of society has failed in gender equality issues. According to her, society is composed of boys who are brought up to think that they are superior to women; the second composition of the society is her mother, who is seen as weak and ineffectual. Saadawi is also angered that the women in her society such as her mother have accepted their fate as weak and are required by the society to teach their daughters to see the position of female in the society from the lens of their mothers. The protagonist who is understood to be Saadawi herself hated being a female, being a female often felt like she was in chains, chains holding her back from reaching her full potential. They were chains of shame and humiliation.

The protagonist remarks, "I hated my femininity, resented my nature, and knew nothing about my body... I was going to show my mother that I was more intelligent than my brother and the man she wanted me to wear the cream dress for, than any man" (Saadawi 22). Due to the anger and bitterness that she had inside of her growing up, she decided to pursue a profession in medicine, which was male-dominated, and women were not seen as fit enough for the profession. In fact, the protagonist notes that she was the first female doctor. She wanted to show to her mother who had taught her all her life to be submissive to men and who was treating her brother like a god, that she was better than many men by qualifying to study medicine. Indeed, being a doctor helped the protagonist to understand that men also become as useless when dead just like anybody else. Therefore, she realized that the idea of male supremacy is just something created by her society's backward perspective on the issue of gender.

Saadawi's dedication and ambition prove that if women put in much effort, they can be whatever they want. "I was going to show my mother that I was more intelligent than my brother than the man she'd wanted me to wear the cream dress for, than any man, and that I could do everything my father did and more" (Saadawi 23). She was obsessed with proving people wrong about her gender, starting with her brother, her supposed suitor, every other man, including her father. "Medicine was a terrifying thing. It inspired respect, even veneration, in my mother and brother and father. I would become a doctor then, study medicine, wear shiny steel-rimmed spectacles, make my eyes move at an amazing speed behind them, and make my fingers strong and pointed to hold the dreadful long sharp needle. I'd make my mother tremble with fright and look at me reverently; I'd make my brother terrified, and my father beg me for help" (p.23). Even the men who were like the gods would fear her if she became a doctor. Such was the source of her ambition.

Saadawi later realized that just setting her feet into the class to pursue her life-long ambition of becoming a doctor could not end her discrimination. As a female doctoral student, she had to undergo discrimination still and endure a lot of gender stereotypical behaviors. She had to hide her face several times during her course practices such as the scene in the dissecting table. When she stood by a man's corpse, she found that she was all alone and every eye staring at her in amazement. She narrates that she almost turned away, but her ambition could not have let her. But the dissecting room scene gave her perhaps the best lesson she wanted to learn, that after death, both male and female do not know whatever goes around them, whether it is the female doctor or the male doctor dissecting the body. And it was during this scene that her fear for men completely vanished. The absurdity and vanity of male power and glory became evident to her when she started to dissect the body.

Reading this novel is a twist from the issues faced by African America to the plight of Muslim ladies even though it still talks about the issues of inequality in the society just like Coates' *Between the World and Me*, Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* and Jasmin Ward's *The Fire This Time*. The issue of inequality is dissected first into how it affects African Americans in both in the past and present, and now how it affected Muslim women. It strikes me so much after reading her legal struggles and even detention and jail just because she stood up for the truth about gender inequality. It is much more inspiring that she did not give up the struggle to make the whole world understand the extent of gender inequality in Egypt and the Muslim world as a whole. She never bent low even if her stance on gender equality led her to be stripped off her position as the director general of public health for the Egyptian ministry of health. So, all her life has been shaped by her desire to prove to the world that male and female are equal.

Atiq Rahimi is another writer who gave me an interesting insight into the Muslim community. He explores the issues of gender inequality and the marginalization of women in the Muslim world passionately and intriguingly. He tells the sad story of a protagonist woman who has suffered in silence for almost a decade in her arranged marriage but ultimately developed a voice to talk about things that trouble her. Readers can find themselves asking why the protagonist woman is talking to her comatose husband, yet he can neither answer her or help her in any way concerning her insecurities, conflicts, troubles, and desires. But she still tells him anyway. The title of the book comes handy in answering this troubling question. According to Persian mythology, *syngué sabour* is a stone that when placed in front of a man absorbs all his plight, suffering, insecurities, and doubts. According to the mythology, there existed a magic stone, the patience stone (*syngué sabour*), that when one puts in front of him/her and entrust to it all the miseries and sufferings, the stone will act like a sponge and absorbs all the sufferings until

one day it bursts into pieces, and all the sufferings and miseries are no more. Therefore, when this woman in her thirty felt that she had something to let off her chest, he looked for her syngué sabour. In his supine position, the woman starts talking to her syngué sabour, confessing about her past life, all that she longed for but her marriage was not able to offer her, all that she still longs for in life.

The woman is confident that just like syngué sabour, her husband is listening to her, and when he finally recovers, all her insecurities will be over as she shall have told him everything that troubled her. Among her current problems, this woman is abandoned by her family and in-laws, she is denied credit since she has unpaid credits and cannot afford medicine and water for her comatose husband. Apart from her comatose husband, she also has other two younger daughters to take care of. She is seen holding prayer beads as he tends to her husband; she prays for her husband's recovery amid this war-torn country. The family of her husband has fled the country, leaving her behind with her husband in a coma. It seems that this woman has reached her limit and cannot contain herself any longer. Her prayers are turning into confessions. Relating this scene to *Memoir of a Woman Doctors*, one important similarity between these two women is that they only have authority and power over dead men. It is apparent that they have gone through a lot in life that they can't take it any longer. They have decided to stand up and talk. The protagonist in *Memoir of a Woman Doctor* finally got an opportunity to prove to a dead man that women also have authority over men and it is during this experience that she made her biggest discovery about men; the absurdity and vanity of the purported men superiority. That once a man dies, he becomes just as useless as a dead woman.

Through her revelation, the reader gets to understand the inequalities between men and women, which indicate the marginalized nature of women in this society. During her wedding,

her husband was so much involved in politics that he never attended the wedding. Only her portrait was present to represent him. She still went ahead with the wedding. Her father was so obsessed with his combat quails that when he lost a huge bet, he had placed on one of his quail, he had to marry off one of his daughters to set the loss during the bet. The society was also so patriarchal that failure of a couple to find a baby was automatically blamed on women. All these facts, as unveiled by the protagonist woman points to the marginalized state of women in this society. This is the same situation in the *Memoir of a Woman Doctor*; the society is so patriarchal that girls had no voice at all right from the family. Women taught their daughters to treat men like gods, while the female gender was seen as a weak and ineffectual beings.

What comes out so clearly in both *Memoir of a Woman Doctor* and *The Patience Stone* is that these two protagonists are not talking for themselves alone but for all the women in the society they live. They are just single voices that communicate the opinions of all the women in the society. "I didn't go and seek counsel from the Hakim, or the mullah. My aunt forbade me. She says I'm not insane or possessed. I'm not under the spell of a demon. What I'm saying, what I'm doing, is dictated by the voice from one high, is guided by that voice. And the voice coming out of my throat is a voice buried for thousands of years." This statement shows that the woman speaks about the issues that women in society have been facing for thousands of years. Just like in *The Fire This Time* the women authors such as Jesmyn ward talks about issues which are not affecting them individually but all women. Through their literary works, they talk about issues of race, and gender inequality through in the contemporary American concept.

I have learned a lot about the racial discrimination basically towards the African Americans living in American both during the post-slavery and in the era of civil right movement as told by James Baldwin and different authors in *The Fire This Time* who made

comparisons and connections of the contemporary and past racial discrimination. I have also learned about gender inequality and patriarchal society in the *memoir of a Woman Doctor* and now *The Patience Stone*. I have developed an insight into how Muslim society treated males different from females. Males were seen as inherently superior while females were seen as weak and ineffectual being. One literary concept that stood out for me in *The Patience Stone* is how Atiq Rahimi has made the connection of his title to his story; it is just fascinating how the connection has come out. Since Syngu   sabour absorbs all the miseries, troubles, sufferings, and doubts of the person who confides in it like a sponge and later burst and all of them are gone, the husband of the protagonist woman takes that role. In his vegetative state, he absorbs all of the woman's sufferings through her confessions to him just like the syngu   sabour does, and later recovered from his state and kills his wife for allowing herself to be raped when she was young hence ending all her suffering, troubles and miseries.

Atiq Rahimi did a great job of transcending gender in his work as he was able to get into a female's head and present the woman's thoughts with such clarity and exactness as seen in *The Patience Stone*. It is not easy for one gender to assume the role of another gender and presents the issues that affect that gender with a high level of exactness, as did Atiq Rahimi. It is clear that the women in the Muslim society suffer from a variety of issues which are very different from the ones that men face, and I could have imagined that only a female writer could understand these issues better just like Nawal El Saadawi wrote about gender inequality issue in Egypt. Being able to assume the role of a woman when the issues that women face are different from those that men face is a remarkable achievement. Additionally, Atiq Rahimi does a good job in constantly reminding his readers that the protagonist woman does not only speaks for



herself but also to millions of other women who undergo similar issues that troubles her hence using her as an archetype for voicing the plight of women in her society.

The same technique of using a nameless woman as an archetype is also seen in Saadawi's *Memoir of a Woman Doctor* where even though the woman protagonist is best assumed as Saadawi herself and that the work is like her autobiography, the woman protagonist is nameless and is the only one bold enough to speak up against the gender inequality and the societal patriarchal system. The use of archetypes has been very effective in *The Patience Stone* since through the confessions of the protagonist woman; readers get into personal life and minds of several other women undergoing through the same plight. The writer is able to delve deeper into the suffering of one woman rather than superficially talking about the situations of different women.

Abraham Verghese's *Cutting for Stone* talks about the pursuit of the medical profession. The novel tells a story about the lives of conjoined twin brothers named Marion and Shiva Stone. The two brothers are forced to grow up without their parents. Their mother, Sister Mary Praise, died during delivery while their father Dr. Thomas Stone went mad due to grief and ended up abandoning his newly born sons. Abraham Verghese is very symbolic of how he chose the names in the novel. First, he gave the mission hospital in Ethiopia, where Dr. Thomas Stone was contracted to work the name Missing. Later we see Dr. Thomas Stone missing from this hospital after the death of Mary Praise. The name Stone and the title *Cutting for Stone* relate hence can trick a reader into thinking that it's the character's name in the title.

Marion goes to further his education in the United States many years after his father had gone missing from Missing Mission hospital. He is received by chief Residence Deepak upon his arrival in the United States and settles at *Our Lady of Perpetual Succor*. It is coincidental that

one of the visitors that came to see Deepak happened to be Marion's father. He is still suffering from mental problems and seems never to have recovered fully. Genet, his childhood love, also moved to the United States and the two reunited. They slept together, unfortunately, infecting Marion with hepatitis B. Marion becomes terminally ill, and his father Dr. Thomas Stone asks Hema and Shiva to travel to the United States. Shiva and Hema arrive in the United States and find that Marion's condition is worsening. Shiva proposed a risking surgery when he agreed to donate part of his liver to Marion. Thomas Stone reluctantly carries out the operation. The globe donated by Shiva functions well, but Shiva dies during the operation. What a wonderful story of love, family ties, medical practice, passion and career, and the inevitability of suffering.

This novel transcends time and space to present medical practice as a romantic pursuit, a passionate quest, and a privileged yet a hazardous undertaking. The story is set in Ethiopia at Missing mission hospital and in New York. The novel presents a hospital as a crossroads for birth and death, injury, and healing. Most of the setting of the novel takes place around two hospitals; Missing Mission Hospital in Addis Ababa and later in Our Lady of Perpetual Succor in the Bronx, New York. The story is told from the limited first-person point of view by Dr. Marion Praise Stone, who tells the story about his mother and all that transpired before he was born. Part of the story about his parents is a compilation of the stories he was told by his adoptive parents and from his father after meeting him in the United States.

Verghese brought out the theme of family ties very strongly in this novel. Shiva and Marion are conjoined twins by an artery in their heads. By the time they were attending school, they are known as "ShivaMarion." They were often wearing identical clothes, shared a room, and they play the same game most of the times. As they were growing older, they begin to forge individual identities that challenge the sense of unity they had as younger boys. But they never

lost it all completely; Shiva agreed to donate half of his liver to Marion, an operation that left him dead. Perhaps by donating part of his liver to Mario was a way of paying back Marion for the betrayal. Marion and Shiva still regarded Dr. Thomas Stone as their father regardless of the fact that he disappeared from their lives and were only rejoined by coincidence. The theme of family ties is also portrayed in Coates' *Between the World and Me* by how Coates is concerned about his fifteen-years-old son Samori. Coates is also forced to relocate from PG county to New York since he felt that his family was not safe in PG Country.

The theme of love and betrayal is also portrayed in the novel. The inability of the characters to control their feelings led to betrayals. Dr. Thomas Stone betrayed his sons when he abandoned them at Missing Hospitals after the death of Sister Mary Praise. They later reunited in New York and reconciled. Dr. Thomas Praise later undertakes a risky surgery with the hope of treating Marion, which ended in the unfortunate death of Shiva. Comparing this kind of betrayal to the betrayal in *The Patience Stone*, a reader gets to understand that Dr. Thomas Stone didn't betray his sons out of his own free will putting into consideration that he had suffered intense depression that left him mentally ill.

In *The Patience Stone*, the jihadist husband to the woman protagonist wakes up from the coma and kills his wife who took care of him when all his family members including his brothers fled the country and left him and his family behind. Another significant incident of betrayal in *Cutting for Stone* is when Shiva slept with Marion's best friend Genet whom Marion had been contemplating to marry all his life. But they later reconciled when Hema and Shiva Moved to the United States. Just like Abraham Verghese, James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time* advocates for reconciliation between the African American and the whites even though the African American had undergone a great deal of suffering due to racism and discrimination that they were

subjected to by the whites. He acknowledges that the blacks had indeed suffered but they ought to forgive the whites and reconcile for them to coexist with one another peacefully.

*Cutting for Stones* is a very useful and interesting book that has made me have a more informed opinion about the profession of medicine. The book has transcended time and place to give readers a great story and to portray the aspect of medicine that is not depicted in the modern television through expressing pursuit of the medical profession as a passionate, romantic, spiritual calling, privileged yet hazardous undertaking. The book sets in Ethiopia then moves to New York and back to Ethiopia, "Born in Africa, living in exile in America, then returning at last to Africa, I am proof that geography is destiny. Destiny has brought me back to the precise coordinates of my birth, to the very same operating theater where I was born. My gloved hands share the space above the table in Operating Theater 3 that my mother and father's hands once occupied." The book has presented how communities in Africa need medical attention. Health care is one of the many sectors that the African continent still lags behind. This story is personally appealing to me that there is a need for forgiveness and reconciliation no matter the extent of betrayal that a person has undergone. Women such as Sister Mary Praise and Genet are actively taking part in medical practice and politics, respectively.

Another story that transcended time and space to present a comparative view of American and African culture in the contemporary world is Chimamanda Ngozi's *Americanah*. It is an indictment of both American and Nigerian cultures through the story of two Nigerians, Ifemelu and Obinze. But the story is told through the eyes of Ifemelu, the protagonist of the novel. Chimamanda makes her the protagonist character and the observer who goes through the experiences in her life and comments on them from a distance. Chimamanda sometimes presents these observations through other characters in the form of dialogue. The title "Americanah" is

adapted from the nickname given to Nigerians who move to the United States then back to their native land, taking back with them an array of affections and snobberies about Nigerian and its differences with the west. Americanah can comprise of manners of speech and body language; perception of the United States tastes in clothes, music, or food, or other mannerisms that could be influenced by American Culture.

The story begins with Ifemelu and Obinze when they are students in Nigeria. They are from a middle-class family with an educated background. They fell in love with each other and decided to join the same university called Nsukka university now called The University of Nigeria, UNN, a federal university located in Nsukka in Enugu State. But their education was hampered due to the university strikes that took a long time for learning to resume. Ifemelu decides to go to the United States to proceed with her education there. On her arrival in the United States, Ifemelu receives a huge cultural shock, especially in the way race is seen in the United States. She gets into romantic relationships and finds a job through a rich boyfriend who she ultimately dumps for what she termed as "curiosity sex." Ifemelu then begins a blog on race, which quickly becomes popular as Ifemelu takes random meetings with strangers and instances from her friends lives then publishes them online. Before she secured a job through her rich boyfriends, Ifemelu did odd jobs such as being a part-time nanny in order to survive while pursuing her studies.

Meanwhile, Obinze goes to the United Kingdom because he is unable to follow Ifemelu. Things turn tougher for him while in the United Kingdom, he realizes the impossibility of surviving as an illegal immigrant. He is forced to move from one low-paid job to another before he is finally caught and deported back to Nigeria. In Nigeria, Obinze meets the right people and makes his fortune within a short time such that by the time Ifemelu returns to Nigeria, he is an

established businessman, already married, and has a daughter. Ifemelu has sold off her blog in the United States by the time she is returning to Nigeria, and she opens one in Nigeria upon her return where she talks about her experiences as an Americanah. Obinze and Ifemelu get back together, and the story ends with Obinze leaving his wife, Kosi for Ifemelu.

The novel questions the institution of marriage. Chimamanda thinks that women get into marriage for economic reasons rather than love. The instances given in the story is enough for every reader to concur with the notion that marriage is wielded as economic means rather than love. While in London, Obinze attempts to marry Cleotilde in order to win a green card and become a UK citizen. The economic aspect of marriage and romantic relationships is also seen in Nigeria through the extramarital affair between Auntie Uju and the General. The General would give Auntie Uju as much money as she would have needed but was careful not to give her enough all at once that she would have never come back. The end of the story where Obinze chooses Ifemelu over his wife Kosi also questions the sanctity of marriage. Obinze is a married man with a wife but does not respect his marriage enough to remain bound to it and treat Ifemelu just as an ex-girlfriend whose part in his life had ended since he is now in a binding relationship with his wife due to marriage.

While *Americanah* questions marriage from the lens of the economic drive to marriage over love, Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* questions marriage from the perspective of societal expectation over love. In the *Patience Stone*, a woman is expected by the society to remain in marriage even if the husband no longer loves or care for her. In fact, in the society where *The Patience Stone* is based, a woman can get married to a man who doesn't even love her in the first place but because the society has seen it fit for a certain man to marry a certain lady, the marriage will just go on and sadly the woman is expected to endure. The woman protagonist in

*The Patience Stone* is married off to a man who is absent during the wedding, and only his portrait was placed to represent him. When he came home and found that society has married him a woman, he cannot love her despite acknowledging her beauty. He never shows any affection to her; he cannot kiss or caress her. But the woman is expected to endure and remain in the marriage, loyalty to the husband is unquestionable in this Muslim society. Divorce is a sin and can lead to excommunication. But such kind of loyalty of women to men does not exist in Americanah because women in Americanah can stand up for themselves; they believe in their potential and have a voice. The society also believes in women's potential, and this is why Ifemelu's blog is able to attract viewers and makes her famous.

Women in *Americanah* strive to be educated, unlike their counterparts in *The Patience Stone*. Ifemelu moves to the United States for further studies. Perhaps what gives women power in Americanah is the fact that they have gone to school and can no longer depend on men for all their needs. In Nawal El Saadawi's *Memoir of a Woman Doctor*, education plays a very important part in the path to gender equality. The unnamed woman protagonist struggles to attain her education, and her main motivation is to show to the society that just like men, women can also be educated and even pursue professions which were regarded as men dominated professions like medical practitioners. Both women in Americanah and *A Memoir of a Woman doctor* believe in their potentials despite the difficulties that they face in society. They believe that they have a voice and they are important members of the society even in the face of gender prejudices and biases. The women in *The Patience Stone* are also starting to speak out of the problems facing them. The woman protagonist is speaking out the issues that women in her society have suffered for thousands of years in silent. Perhaps this would be the beginning of a long road to gender equality of them.

The theme of identity is also critical in the story. As Ifemelu and Obinze grew up, their characters and behaviors were affected by the outside world that they interacted with. Ifemelu struggles with her identity while in the United States. She takes an American accent and straightening her hair, thinking that she would assume the American identity. She is also forced to use a fake identity when looking for work since she only had a student visa. But she realizes that all her efforts could not make her an American, but she will forever remain an African American for all her time in the United States. She then decides to embrace her "Nigerianness" which even made her adapt more easily to the American culture and ultimately finding success. She gives up her fake accents and accepts her natural African hair. In her natural look, she meets and starts dating a rich white man. The blend of cultural identities seems healthy for her, but at the same time means that Ifemelu is not fully American or fully African, but she is kind of in-between, she is an "Americanah." Hence the title of the novel.

Obinze experience more difficulty in adapting to identity in the United Kingdom. After his visa expires, he is forced to forge people's identities to find work. He also tries to buy into a marriage for a chance to become UK's citizen through the green card program. There is fear of illegal immigrant in the United Kingdom, and Obinze feels insecure and worthless. He is finally caught and deported back to Nigeria. Back in Nigeria, Ifemelu finds it hard again to fit in the Nigerian culture. The secondary character, Emenike, completely changes his identity and becomes a wealthy British citizen. The issue of identity in the United States seems to transcend time. The issue of identity is also central in James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* as well as Coate's *Between the World and Me*. These books explore how to live in American in the black body. The issues that African-Americans have to deal with just because they are black, and others are white. They explore the identity crisis experienced by blacks in America. *The Fire*



*This Time* explores the issue of cultural identity encountered by most of the female characters in a more contemporary manner, just like *Americanah*. Just like in *Americanah*, most of the stories in the *Fire This Time* show that many forces work upon the creation of someone's identity, including cultural, racial, economic and even personal ambition and preferences.

The idea of separation and reconnection also comes out clearly in the novel. The idea of separation is seen through the physical distances, cultural and racial divides, and even misunderstandings. The central separation is seen in the novel and also that defines the plot of the story is when Ifemelu goes to the United States, and Obinze is unable to follow her there, instead decided to go to the United Kingdom for further studies. Thousands of miles physically separate them. The physical separation leads to Ifemelu breaking off contact with Obinze. But they later reconnect towards the end of the story when they reunited in Nigeria. The theme of separation and reconnection is also seen in Abraham Varghese's *Cutting for Stone* when Marion is forced to leave Ethiopia after his name was linked to the rebel group that wanted to overthrow the government mainly because of his connection to Genet. Genet and joined the rebel group that hijacked a plane. Mario leaves Ethiopia to the United States when he settles at Our Lady of Perpetual Succor. He is physically separated from his twin brother Shiva and adoptive mother Hema. But all reconnected in the United States before Shiva died during the risky operation in which he donates half of his liver to his brother Marion.

*Americanah* talks about race and identity from a different perspective from that of Coates and Baldwin. Coates and Baldwin are born in the United States; they are only aware of the cultural differences and struggles in the United States. But *Americanah* brings out the racial and cultural identities and struggles of people born in Africa who are typically Africans but moves to the United States and the United Kingdom for further studies with the hope of a better future.

The story takes readers back to Nigeria and illustrates how African society values those who have traveled abroad. Even though the blacks living in the United States undergo myriad of issue related to identity and cultural change, the United States is still seen as a paradise by the African community. They believe that there are a lot of opportunities in the United States. Going abroad is like an eye-opener, a chance for better education and opportunity to make it in life. But the novel provides another side of the story, Obinze is deported back to Nigeria with nothing and makes a fortune overnight. This novel should teach African who believe that they can only be successful abroad that African countries equally have opportunities and connections to make them successful. They should embrace their culture, believe in opportunities in their countries, and exploit such opportunities.

Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* tells a great story about the American dream. It shows the pursuit of the American dream. The narrator of the story, Nick Carraway, a young man from Minnesota moves to East Coast to work as a bond trader and makes ends meet and meet Jay Gatsby who is the protagonist in the story. What is even more captivating about the whole story is how Fitzgerald begins his story about Nick Carraway. Nick Carraway remarks that he learned from his father to reserve judgments about others. This statement becomes so useful later in the novel as it depicts Nicks approach to his friendship with Jay Gatsby. Nick Carraway says, "in my youngest and more vulnerable years, my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. 'whenever you feel like criticizing anyone,' he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantage you've had.' He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that" (Fitzgerald, 1). Carraway ends the lessons he learned from his father by saying that reserving judgment is a matter of infinite hope.

Carraway explains his background, and the reader can understand why his father was telling him to reserve his judgment about others since not everybody had the advantages that he had. He explains that his family had been prominent, well-to-do people in the Middle Western city for three generations. "The Carraways are something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we're descendant from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother, who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War, and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on today," (Fitzgerald 1). When he arrived in New York, Nick Carraway rented a house in a part of Long Island called West Egg considered as the home to the "new rich." The new rich as those who had recently made their fortune. The New Rich had a tendency of lavishly displaying their wealth and this public display of lavish lifestyle characterized West Egg. Here is where Nick meets Jay Gatsby, a wealthy neighbor to Nick Carraway, to whom his name is given the title of this book.

Nick Carraway later learned that Jay Gatsby came from nothing and built all his wealth by himself. He is the precise representation of the American Dream in the story. He became a major in the Army, and then became a bootlegger and made wealth. But things never end well for Gatsby; his life came crushing right before his eyes. American Dream is a concept that everybody in American can receive anything they want and made a good life for themselves just if they work hard enough for it; with hard work and determination, everything is possible in America. Jay Gatsby is a son of a poor farmer from North Dakota but grew to become notoriously wealth in the West Egg. Jay Gatsby later dies in the novel and deserted by his friend. All his friends run away after his death leaving only Nick to plan the burial. The life of Jay Gatsby shows the impossibility of attaining the American Dream.

Nick also introduces the reader to other characters in the story, such as George and Myrtle, who are also used to portray the American Dream. George is a hard worker and hopes to improve his social and economic status through his hard work. He operates a shop, and he gives his business all his efforts. He sank into the idea that if one puts just much effort, he can achieve everything he wants. Myrtle, on the other hand, is seeking to improve her social life through her romantic relationship with Tom Buchanan. Tom Buchanan is one of the old rich. But things turned out so horribly for these dreamers. Despite all his wealth, Gatsby views Daisy as a sign of status, but Daisy refuses to leave Tom Buchanan for him. Myrtle is killed, and George thinks that Gatsby is responsible for the death of Myrtle and kills Gatsby before killing himself. All the dreamers in story die and the idea of the American dream remains just but an illusion, something unachievable.

Gatsby's mansion, which used to host numerous parties that Gatsby used to throw has been given particular spotlight in the novel. The mansion represents the American Dream and failure to attain the American Dream. This mansion sits on forty acres of land in the west egg. This mansion is the first representation of how wealthy Gatsby is. But it is also a symbol of Gatsby dream of materialism as a proof of success. Therefore, from a different point of view, Gatsby's mansion is not a representation of the possibility to achieve an American Dream but shows the short-sightedness of the dreamers in their pursuit of the American dream. The dreamers attributed their success of steps towards realizing the American Dream by the material possession that they were able to acquire.

The title of the book, *The Great Gatsby*” leaves a lot to be discussed. One can ask whether Gatsby was indeed great, or the title is used ironically. Well, I found my answer while reading the book Gatsby is probably the richest man in Long Island and West Egg. He has a forty

acres mansion having all the expensive things someone could imagine. He often throws a party and gives his guests first-class treatments even though he barely knows some of them. Gatsby is known in the whole of West Egg, and this makes him great. Even though Nick has discovered that Gatsby made his fortune in a dishonest way, he is sure that Gatsby has a good heart since he sees him as generous, loyal, and honest. He once bought a lady a new dress because she tears her dress at Gatsby's party. His personalities make him great too.

I haven't read a novel before that explicitly brings out the pursuit of the American Dream like this novel before. In Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*, the American dream is portrayed as not only confined to the American people only but is open to everyone who is a dreamer. Chimamanda fails to get a good education in Nigeria due to constant strikes that stagnated education. Chimamanda then decides to move to the United States to pursue her education; she becomes successful and even establishes herself as a blogger after her graduation. Throughout the years, the American dream is conceptualized by all people around the world who started seeing America as a land of opportunities. Other writers whose works we have studied in class such as Coates, Jesmyn Ward, and Baldwin also believed in the American dream. They believed that America is full of opportunities that everybody, regardless of the ethnical origin, should be able to thrive, but the issue of racism is making American Dream unattainable for the blacks. Racism goes against the concept of the American dream. American dream holds that anybody can become whatever he or she wishes just if they work hard enough, but racist ideology believes in white supremacy ideology; hence according to them, the American dream is for the whites. James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*, and Jesmyn Ward's *The Fire This Time* address the issue of racism and all portray racism as a major hindrance for the black people living in America to attain America Dream.

In *Cutting for Stone*, Marion, the narrator, escapes Ethiopia to the United States in order to continue with his studies and chase his dreams of being a doctor. The United States is a life saver for most for Africans who cannot achieve their dreams and aspirations in their home countries but can afford to travel abroad. American dream in *The Great Gatsby* evolved into everyone's dream regardless of the country of residence. The vivid description of the characters' belief and the pursuit of the American dream makes the reader understand better why in the latest novels like *Americanah*, *Cutting for Stone* and *the Fire This Time* broadens the ideal to the world at large. In the end, the young dreamers die except Nick, who expresses how disappointing and unachievable the idea of the American Dream was.

Thus far, I have covered the racial tensions in contemporary and civil right era of the United States history and the gender issues in Muslim worlds in my literary journey. I am headed to the African society in the colonial era when the colonial masters were just starting to establish their rule in the African soil. Chinua Achebe presents the lives of the Igbo people in details in his book; *Things Fall Apart*. Igbo is a tribe in Nigeria and Achebe is an Igbo by birth but writes in English. Being that Achebe was born and raised among the Igbo before traveling to London for his further studies gives him the authority to write about the culture of Igbo people, including the finest details. *Things Fall Apart* presents readers with the image of precolonial Nigeria using the life of the protagonist Okonkwo and his Igbo people told from a third person omniscient point of view. The third person, the omniscient narrator, moves into space and time to give the readers the finest details about the narration. The book presents the Igbo people are those who are deeply rooted in their tradition and culture. The story illustrates the events before the coming of the Europeans detailing how the common Nigerians used to carry on with their daily affairs and how the coming of the Europeans altered the traditional institutions among the Igbo people.

Okonkwo, the protagonist of the story tries, is best to organize his people to resist the Whiteman's invasion but was terribly defeated. As a result, the Christian missionaries managed to spread Christianity in many people got converted. By the coming of the Europeans could not end at spreading Christianity, there was more to come. White missionaries were proceeded by the colonial masters who had no regard for the lives of the indigenous Igbo people.

Food is an important aspect of culture which I will use to portray my take away from the culture of Igbo people. The coming of Europeans is foreshadowed by the coming of the swarm of locusts which covered half of the sky before descending on the leaves, grass and covering the bare ground. The locust came without warning. They came when nobody anticipated their coming. Locusts had not visited Umuofia for a long time, and their coming was received with a lot of excitement and enthusiasm. The villagers wished that locusts could stay for the night when they watched them in the sky. The locust indeed stayed for the night. The villagers had learned from much older elders that locusts are a delicious meal. So as soon as the locust descended, they started to collect them before the elders advised them to wait until the nightfall. At nightfall, the people collected as many locusts as they wanted. They roasted the locusts then dried them until they became dry and brittle. The villagers enjoyed this rare, delicious food for many days. A potluck of a roast locust dish would help in a better understanding and representation of the arrival of the Europeans and its effects on the culture of the Igbo people. This is a delicious meal that was regarded by the people of sub-Saharan Africa as a delicious source of proteins. Since is it not an everyday meal, having this meal was a privilege.



Coming of the Locusts related to the establishment of the colonial rule in Nigeria in several ways but mainly it can be related to the effects of the colonial rule on the culture of the Igbo people. A swarm of locusts is very devastating; it can destroy a whole field of crops. They eat every green leaf on a farm. When the colonizers went to Africa, they destroyed the indigenous culture of the African people. They referred to those cultures as barbaric and evil. They made Africans to denounce their religions and accept Christianity as one true religion. Colonizers alleged that they wanted to civilize the African territory. They were preceded by the missionaries who went to the African land bit bits starting with small groups then large groups just as locusts descended in Umofia. "At first, a fairly small swarm came...soon it covered half the sky, and the solid mass was not broken by tiny eyes of light like shining stardust. It was a tremendous sight." Locusts remained a delicacy among the Igbo people, and small numbers are welcomed just as the African people welcomed missionaries, but when large groups of colonizers arrived, they greatly suffered from forced labor, brutality, and loss of their lands



among many other atrocities. Even though the coming of the Locust is harmless, it foreshadows the coming of Europeans in the Umofia which turned out to be harmful.

After reading about the effect of colonialism on the African people who were the oppressed, my literary journey explores the issues of colonialization and the spread of Christianity to the African people from the whites' perspective. *The Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver is an indictment of western colonization and post-colonialism which exposes the European's cultural arrogance and greed. All the five authors of the book individually believed that they were taking to Africa a superior and a better culture. They believed that Africa was an inferior region, also known as the land of savages. Cultural arrogance was not only depicted by the colonizers but also by the missionaries such as Nathan himself. When Anatole, a school teacher in Congo, goes to inform Nathan that Chief Tata Ndu is mobilizing his people to reject Christianity since a move towards Christianity was seen by the traditionalists as destructive to the moral formation of the Kilanga people, Nathan become outraged and sends Anatole out of his house instead of becoming curious to learn the ways of the local and why they believed in what they believed in. It could be better to understand why the Chief was saying so, see the matters from the perspective of the inhabitants as well as his own perspective to help him in making the best decision of how to reach the locals with the gospel. Cultural arrogance is also depicted in *The Fire Next Time*, and *Between the World and Me*, where in both, the authors lament that the blacks are seen as inferior by their white counterparts.

*The Poisonwood Bible* and *Things Fall Apart*, shows the events that that happened during the establishment of European rule in Africa. *Things fall Apart* show these events from the perspective of Africans. It is able to present the traditional institutions and hierarchy of authority that's existed during the pre-colonial period. It also shows how African society was organized;

they indeed had a sense of dignity. On the other hands, the whites thought that Africans were barbaric and inferior people who had no form of civilization. They referred to their missionary adventure as a great commission to take light to the dark continent. The novel presents a different conception of justice as conceived by each of the five women authors. According to Adah, justice is better conceived on a global scale, and she gives up any lingering belief in the human-centric world. Adah doesn't think like a Christian and gets a reader thinking about the level of hypocrisy in Price's mission. Adah thinks that medicine, relief foods, and doctors should be sent to Africa where people are dying because of hunger, tropical diseases and inaccessibility to healthcare, Adah thinks that sending medicine, food incentive and doctors will also lead to deaths due to overpopulation, and deforestation. He holds a view that life forms balance itself rather than human beings trying to balance life forms. Therefore, according to Adah, one life form must die in order for another one to thrive. The Poisonwood Bible exposes brutality and ferocity of the whites towards the native Congolese.

Another story that explores the issues of colonialism from the perspective of a white man is *The Dream of the Celt*. *The Dream of the Celt* is a story of a traitor, a martyr, and a Liberator. The protagonist, Roger Casement traveled through the Congo basin during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century rush to harvest the region's natural resources such as the animal's hides, the minerals, the ivory and Congo rubber. Joseph Conrad, the author of *Heart of Darkness*, was not the only European author who traveled to Africa during this period when the European powers wanted to exploit African's rich natural resources. As Joseph Conrad was journeying by caravan to Leopoldville in 1890, he met Roger Casement. Conrad was journeying to Leopoldville where he was going to take charge of a merchant ship *Le Roi des Belges*. Conrad described Casement as a handsome man in his 25<sup>th</sup> year of Irish descent who was a do-gooder and had lived in Congo and worked in

the Congo Free State for the past few years. Just like Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement had come to Africa having been pushed with a conviction that European colonization would bring social, moral, and economic progress to the African people. They had thought that colonization would free Africa from paganism and other barbarities, but it did not take long before each of them could learn the gravity of their mistakes.

Casement's take on African colonization was when he witnessed a Belgium officer publicly and mercilessly whipping an unconscious Congolese boy with a "vine-like cord" called *Chicote*. *Chicote* was made from the hide of a hippo, and when dry, *Chicote* was known for its ability to cause more burning, blood, scars, and pain than any other method of scourge. Years later when he was on an assignment by the British government to Peru and other parts of South America, Casement witnessed on several occasions officers of the rubber companies beating, pillorying, mutilating and enslaving men, women, and children. Casement started to report these human rights abuses and earned short-lived fame. Just like Casement, Joseph Conrad also started reporting the abuses of human rights he was witnessing in Africa. In his book, "Heart of Darkness," Joseph Conrad detailed all the atrocities that the Belgium officials put Africans through. However, for Casement, his reports on the atrocities committed in the Amazon and Africa were all forgotten and overshadowed by his undignified end.

The life of Roger Casement was indeed complicated and turbulent, but I am glad Vargas Llosa unearths his achievements in *The Dream of the Celt*. For some people, Roger Casement was a great anti-colonial fighter and a defender of human rights who sacrificed his title, dignity and even his life for the freedom of the Irish people but to some people, he was a traitor who betrayed the British government which had employed him and gave him several assignments in Congo and the Amazon region. Casement has spent most of his twenties as a British Consul

tasked with investigating the working conditions in a rubber plantation in Congo and later taken to Peru for a similar job. His reports stirred public outrage and were rewarded with a knighthood in 1911. Despite his earned title, Casement's continued loathing for colonialism slowly turned him into an Irish nationalist and started seeing British as an enemy occupier of the Irish land and freedom. Casement traveled to Germany with his deceitful and untrustworthy Norwegian lover, Eivind Christensen, to ask Kaiser to arm Irish against British. Yes, Roger Casement was gay. But after his return from Germany, Roger Casement was stripped of his knighthood and hanged for being a traitor. He was hanged in London at Pentonville Prison.

*Heart of Darkness*, *Poisonwood Bible*, and *The Dream of the Celt* explore the theme of colonization in Africa. They detail the atrocities committed by the European powers, especially Belgium against the native Africans. There were reports about abuse of human rights in the Congo region, but the British government could not substantiate them hence they sent Roger Casement as its consul since he had more experience in the region having worked as a traveling commissioner to the Niger Court Protectorate by the British Foreign Office. His job was to investigate the numerous incidences of abuse of human rights and them to the British government. He diligently undertook his assignments and presented his findings to the British government, which made necessary changes. The 1904 report by Casement made the British to put pressure on Belgium to have respect for human rights and treat the natives with some dignity. Casement was then sent on another similar assignment to Peru. However, in the course of his assignments, Casement discovered the great lies that had long been hidden in colonialism. Colonialism was never for the benefit of the native people; it was for the benefit of the colonial powers who wanted to exploit the natural resources and the human resource of their colony for their own selfish gains. At this time, Ireland was still under British rule. Casement then related

his finding to his own Irish people. Having known very well that on its own, Ireland could have never defeated the British, he sought the help of the Germans in 1914. But his lover sold him out, and he was arrested on his return and hanged.

Mario Varga Llosa uses the third person omniscient point of view to tell the biography of Roger Casement long after Casement had died. I can say that Llosa tried to appease the ghost of Casement since at the time that Casement died, even some of the Irish people believed that Casement was indeed a traitor. His remains were only taken for a decent burial in Ireland years after his death. Llosa's use of the third person omniscient narrator enables him to tell the reader everything that was happening throughout Casement's journey and even his feelings and thoughts. He uses flashbacks to tell the bulk of the story since the story starts at Pentonville prison and ends there. Most parts of the story are told through Casement's memories through a series of flashbacks. However, *Dream of the Celt* is different from *The Poisonwood Bible* in that the latter is told from the perspective of the five women authors; Nathan Price's four daughters and the wife. The five women authors tell the story from the first-person point of view and only talk about what they saw or experienced. Llosa's use of third-person omniscient traverse time and space to provide the reader with information of what happened in British at the time Casement was in Congo as also what happened long ago through flashbacks and memories. *The Dream of the Celt* is a story of a hero according to me my own stance, a person who could be the oppressor but chose to be on the right side of the history by talking against the injustices done by the colonial masters. It is a story of a hero who wanted to right the wrongs of colonialism.

Comparing *the Dream of the Celt* and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, Achebe gives the story of colonialism from the oppressed point of view while Llosa gives the same story of colonialism from the of one who could be the oppressor but chose to side with the oppressed.

*Things Fall Apart*, therefore, gives much information about the African people and how the African people perceived and reacted to the idea of colonialism. Each story present to its readers a hero, both of whom had undignified ending due to their bid to rescue their people. Okonkwo ended up committing suicide after defeat by the British while Roger Casement ended up being hanged by the British government. Just like Okonkwo was rejected by his people, Roger Casement's Irish people did not understand that he was a patriot but also saw him as a traitor. From this story, I have learned a lot about how colonial powers exploited Africa's natural resources for their own selfish gains. This is the first book that has detailed colonialism in South American, and I have learned that the nature of colonial governance in South America was not different from how Africans were treated.

From the colonialism theme, my literary journey took a different turn back to the United States. *Manhattan Beach* is set in the New York City at the time that the county was experiencing its worst economic recession; the great depression and the horrors of world war II were looming. It is on a chilly after of 1934, Anna Kerrigan, who is 11 years old, is accompanying his father, Eddie Kerrigan to a business meeting. As a kid, Anna is distracted by the journey which she thought was headed to the Coney Island until she realizes that it is only four days past the Christmas and the cold season could not make a visit to the Island enjoyable. This was only four years after the 1929 stock market crash. They then reached their destination, a house stood in front, "a palace of golden brick three stories high, windows all the way around, a rowdy flapping of green-and-yellow-stripped awnings. It was the last house in the street which dead-ended at sea" (Egan 3). Anna saw the size of the home and later the size of the toys that Dexter's children had and concluded that Dexter was way richer than her father.

Manhattan Beach explores the lives of three people digging deep into their private lives. These are Anna Kerrigan, a young woman who becomes a diver in the Brooklyn Navy yard and also an underwater builder and repairs for the allied warships, her father Eddie Kerrigan who was initially a stockbroker but following the 1929 stock market-crushing became a bagman for the criminal underworld and later mysteriously disappeared and Dexter Styles, a mobster of Italian origin who owns several night clubs in the city and lives with his family in the Manhattan Beach. The connection between New York and the sea is also made so evident and important in this novel. The heart of New York is not just the skyscraper and the broadways, but once, New York was the first and famous port and the country's principal gateway for immigration. The water and the sea make an important setting and plot of the novel. At Dexter's home, "Anna watched the sea. There was a feeling she had, standing at its edge: an electric mix of attraction and dread. What would be exposed if all that water should suddenly vanish? A landscape of lost object: sunken ships, hidden treasure, gold and gems, and the charm bracelet that had fallen from her wrist into a storm drain" (Egan 7).

The initial scene of the first chapter is very important for the understanding of the entire novel. All the three main characters are introduced. Eddie, Anna, and Dexter Styles are all introduced in this chapter. Eddie drives to Dexter for a business meeting but is not the business as usual. Eddie is nervous, and Anna is distracted by the journey to understand this. The reader will be interested to understand why Eddie is nervous and what kind of business meeting this could be, "They'd driven all the way to Mr. Styles's house before Anna realized that her father was nervous" (Egan 1). Eddie has gone to talk with Dexter to hire him as his bagman. Eddie was once a stockbroker in the New York stock market and union member. But since the stock market crash four years ago has left him poor. Even the car he drove to Dexter's home used to be

his, but he had since sold it to the union and could only rent it on demand. Eddie's younger daughter, Lydia, is disabled, and he certainly needs more money to offer her extra care. It is the events of this scene that led to all that happened in the story after that. Anna likes her father more than her mother. She is proud of her father's effort to keep the family in some comfort during the hard times of great depression. Accompanying his father to the several other places was preparing Anna for her future role as the main breadwinner; a role that could later be inevitable for her.

During this visit, Anna and Dexter's children; Tabby and Philip are left to go and play in Dexter's private beach as a reward for their good behavior. Anna is marveled at the sight of the sea and takes out her boots to step into the icy cold water, "Tabby watched Anna unbuckled the straps of the black patent-leather shoes she shared with Zara Klein, downstairs. She unrolled her wool stockings and placed her white, bony, long-for-her-age feet in the icy water. Each foot delivered an agony of sensation to her heart, one part of which a flame of ache that felt unexpectedly pleasant" (Egan 7). Dexter saw Anna with her bare feet in the icy cold water and was impressed by her childhood toughness. This sight left a long-lasting impression on Dexter's memory. In chapter two, Eddie needs to buy to Lydia a special chair which was monstrously expensive. "Having such a daughter required of a man like Dexter Styles-but did such men have children like Lydia? In the first year of her life, Agnes had brought Lydia each week to a clinic at New York University where a woman gave her mineral baths and used leather straps and pulley to strengthen her muscles. Now such care was beyond their reach. But the chair would allow her to sit up, look out, join the vertical world. Agnes believed in its transformative power, and Eddie believed in the need to appear to share her belief. And perhaps he did, a little. That chair was the reason he'd first sought out the acquaintance of Dexter Styles" (Egan 17).



At age 13, her father mysteriously disappeared, “Her father had left the apartment as he would have on any day-she couldn’t even recall it. The Truth had arrived gradually, like nightfall: a recognition, when she caught herself awaiting his return, that she’d waited days, then weeks, then months-and he’d still not come. She was fourteen, then fifteen. Hope became the memory of hope: a numb, dead patch. She no longer could picture him clearly” (Egan 53). At 19, Anna had to take up the role of being a breadwinner. She takes a tedious job in Brooklyn Navy yard inspecting tiny ship parts with a micrometer and also taking up classes at Brooklyn College. After a year working in Brooklyn Navy Yard, eating lunch on a pier one day, Anna catches her first glimpse of a diver descending from one of the barges and feels a seismic rearrangement within herself. She felt the longing to walk along the bottom of the sea. She begs lieutenant Axel to try out that job. The preparation alone for the test was nearly impossible for her, according to Lieutenant Axel. One had to dress with the help of two other people. A diver must dress in a suit rubberized canvas, made with a copper breastplate, a belt made of blocks of lead attached, a helmet made of brass and wood and leather shoes, “The shoes weigh thirty-five pounds; he told Anna. “The whole dress weighs two hundred” (Egan, 143). To lieutenant's astonishment, Anna passes her first test. Anna beats all odds and becomes the first woman professional diver to work in Brooklyn Navy Yard. Anna later meets Mr. Dexter whom she asks to drive her and Lydia to the beach. The doctor had told her that taking Lydia out of the house could help her health. Anna and Dexter start a relationship, and the turn of events left Anna pregnant, and Dexter dies. Anna relocates to San Francisco where she reunites with her father, who had not died all this time.

There is a connection between the protagonist in *The Patience Stone, Memoir of a Woman Doctor* and Anna. Anna finds it comfortable to tell her secrets to her paralyzed sister Lydia. Just like the woman protagonist in *The Patience Stone* could only tell her secrets to her

comatose husband but could not tell him before. The protagonist in the *Memoir of a Woman Doctor* who could be assumed to be Elsaadawi herself could only prove her power over men during the practical lesson with a man's corpse, "Anna whispered a secret to her sister at night. Only Lydia knew that Mr. Gratzky had shown Anna the hole his side a few weeks ago" (Egan 24). *Manhattan Beach* is also similar to *The Great Gatsby* in the way the two books expressed the pursuit of wealth and survival. Jay Gatsby is like Mr. Dexter Styles since all their wealth were made from illegal gambling and criminal activities. However, Eddie Kerrigan had no choice but to join Style's criminal gang for the survival of his family. Later he escapes the criminal syndicate just as Nick Carraway escapes West Egg after realizing that the people he associated with were not true friends.

I concluded this literary journey by comparing the global dreams to the American dream drawing insights from Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* is a satirical self-help book written in the second-person perspective. The use of second person perspective implicates a reader as a character. In most of the books that we have studied so far, only first and second person perspective has been used as a narrative style; hence this book differs from them in its narrative styles. This book is about the pursuit of identity, featuring a young man who tries to change his fate from a poor village boy to establish himself as a successful businessman. Through his transformation, this young man has to go through demoralizing social issues in the search for his new identity and business success. This book is a delightful narrative and termed as a self-help book since every chapter opens with a set of business-coaching clichés. Just like in *Memoir of a Woman Doctor* and *The Patience Stone*, the author in this novel uses an unnamed character as the protagonist. But the protagonist is also the reader, as Hamid addressed the reader directly as "you" to create a sense of bondage between

the reader and the author through the imaginative life. The author's task is to create an imaginative world through the novel, and the reader will attempt to live in this imaginative life as best as one can.

*How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* contains several instances of irony as it seems to mock the poor state of the setting that the book is adapted. The term "rising" can be critically analyzed in the book to stand to the poor and underdeveloped state of the economy that any struggling person in this region is set to operate. The story seemingly takes place in a country in South Asia. Even the term "filthy rich" is ironical in the sense that in the end, most of the struggling people in this unnamed country end up being broke. While the title of the story may seem to be a straight shot to success, the content of the book contains a unique path which does not show any straight shot to success. The protagonist in the story, in the end, fails despite trying so hard to succeed. The issues that hinder this protagonist's path to success are caused by the colonial history of this unnamed country which but is better understood to be Pakistan. Hamid explains to the reader issues that a dreamer must face in this particular country in the struggle towards economic success. The opening and ending of this book are similar to the story in the *Great Gatsby*. Both the protagonists in the two books wanted to distinguish themselves from the rest of society. They decided to pursue economic success and increase their lot in life. In both cases, they are never successful.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway realizes that all who surrounded him and Jay Gatsby were fake friends. *The Great Gatsby* ends in the tragic death of several dreamers and other escaping from West Egg. Nick Carraway eventually leave West Egg to back to his home town, a town he had left in pursuit of his dreams. The protagonist in *How to Get Filthy Rich* also never made it in the end. Both the protagonists in the two books failed to reach their dreams.

Hamid does not name his characters and places in his novel so that to provide the reader with the idea that the issues he raises in the novel are general issues affecting the general population in the region where the novel is set. The social stratification that Hamid talks about in his novel is also given much focus in *Between the World and Me* where Coates makes a claim the social mobility of the blacks was poor due to being economically disadvantaged. This young man, too, wanted to move out of his poor economic situation. In *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin makes claims that imply that for one to be successful in the black body in America, a black person must work twice as hard as the whites. This young man was not born from a rich background; hence, he had to work hard to be successful, which, unfortunately, he ended up not achieve all that he wished to achieve.

One of the social and economic problems that affect the dreamers in this unnamed country is corruption. This young man fails because he is swindled of his cash by his sister and his brother in law. Hamid also remarks that inductions of teachers are done through bribery and nepotism, “*A bribe is equivalent to sixty percent of one year’s prospective salary, and a good low-level connection in the education bureaucracy in the form of a cousin, secure only the post he (teacher) currently occupies*” (Hamid 23). It is quite ironical that the people who hold positions in the governmental enterprises takes with character building get those position not through merit but through unfair means such as through canvassing and favoritism. In another instance, Hamid remarks that in this country, a person considers being a meter reader to a teacher because there are chances of corruption in meter reading than in teaching since people are ever ready to steal electricity.

Just like in *Great Gatsby* where Jay Gatsby does illegal business and like in *Manhattan Beach* by Jennifer Egan where Dexter Styles become rich because of his criminal activities, this unknown

country is compared to the United States during the 1940s and 50s where corruption could leave people to success. This unnamed protagonist also runs a fake business, and in order to gain the favor of the bureaucracy, he gives them bribes. During the course of his business, permits denied, inspection failed, meters improperly read, audits initiated, all these scams and hassles you have over the years surmounted by greasing junior and mid-level palms” (Hamid 141).

Terrorism is another problem that faces business in this unnamed country. Terrorism is a lethal social problem that faces Pakistan, and many lives have been lost due to terrorism. "Fears of terrorism have led to the politician to take measure to secure his residence, erecting a razor wire-topped boundary wall far in excess of permissible heights" (Hamid 144). However, it is satirical that the lives of politicians are much more valued than the lives of thousands of other citizens exposed to terrorism activities without protection from the government. Another mention of terrorism is in page 103 where Hamid writes, "the hotel is the city's most exclusive, its old wind temporarily closed and scaffolded since a massive truck bomb shattered windows and ignited fires inside” (Hamid 103). This novel also talks about the impermanence of things, the man rose from his poor state when he was a boy and made a fortune, but before his death, he lost it all. The novel remarks that riches sometimes is not worth dying for. He only experiences true transcendence when he was at the end of his life, “You are ready to die . . . for despite all else you have loved . . . you have been beyond yourself, and so you have courage." The novel suggests that not the cars, and power associated with wealth are worth struggling for but going beyond one's self. Reading this novel has added to my knowledge of writing styles that I will definitely use to develop my own writings. Hamid has used a satirical style to mock the social institutions in this unnamed country where the novel is set. The novel holds up social wrongs of

various institutions of this country and ridicules them. Hamid targets social institutions concerned with education, health, bureaucracy, and social amenities such as electricity.

Major Twentieth Century Writers has enabled me to develop a wider worldview and in-depth understanding of most salient issues that have been affecting different communities since the colonial period until the present time. The books that I have read cut across geographical locations, time, and cultures to provide the reader with information in its exactness. Reading about other people's culture is a better way of learning the culture than even physically traveling to those regions. I have learned that most of these issues cut across cultures and geographical locations but only varies in the intensity and the magnitude of their effect on an individual. The writers have brought out their experiences and perspectives regarding the social, economic, and political aspects of life passionately and intriguingly by integrating appropriate literary devices in their writings. I seek to integrate these literary skills in my own writings. I feel more inclined now than never to read a lot, further my literary journey, and discover more information about the culture of different communities. I believe that what humans intrinsically share that differentiate us from other animals and makes us special is the same thing that enhances our commonality, not race is better than another, no gender is better than another since everybody by virtue of being human is commands the same respect. In future, I plan to use literature as a tool for enhancing unity since the majority of issues facing people cut across different cultures, geographical locations and social classes.

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