



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

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FACULTY OF COMMERCE, HUMAN SCIENCES AND EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGES

Exploring Mimicry and Ambivalence in *God of Mercy* and *The Fishermen*: A

Postcolonial Perspective

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ENGLISH AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

BY

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ABSTRACT

Colonialism has brought a lot of changes to Africa. These changes remained after colonialism and they can still be seen today. The culture, the identity, the beliefs, and the language of African people have been greatly influenced by the West. These changes are portrayed by African writers in their novels that show the impacts of colonialism. It is for this reason that this thesis aimed to investigate the themes of mimicry and ambivalence in Okezie Nwoka's *God of Mercy* and Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*, focusing on the profound effects of colonialism on African identities, cultures, and interpersonal relationships. Colonialism has significantly reshaped the cultural landscape of Africa, leading to shifts in identity and social dynamics among its people. Through a postcolonial theoretical framework, this study analyses how these authors portray the psychological and social consequences of colonial influence, particularly how mimicry manifests in characters' behaviours and attitudes.

Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study utilises a text selection criterion to focus specifically on these two novels which have received limited scholarly attention despite their rich exploration of postcolonial themes. The findings reveal that Western cultural influences deeply permeated African societies, resulting in conflicts between those who embrace new beliefs—such as Christianity—and those who remain committed to traditional practices. The analysis highlights how characters navigate their identities amidst these cultural tensions, illustrating the complexity of their relationships shaped by mimicry and ambivalence.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the ongoing effects of colonialism in contemporary African literature, emphasising the need for further exploration of these themes in other works within the genre.

DECLARATION

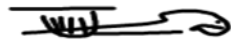
I, **Tuhafeni Shange-Shiwaovanhu Valombola**, hereby declare that the work contained in the thesis, entitled '**An investigation of mimicry and ambivalence in *God of Mercy* by Okezie Nwoka and *The Fishermen* by Chigozie Obioma,**' is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university or other higher education institution for the _____ award _____ of _____ a _____ degree.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved daughter, Joy Feni Nendongo. Your presence in my life has been a constant source of inspiration and motivation. Everything I strive for is for you, and I hope that one day you will look back and see the dedication and hard work that went into achieving this milestone. May you grow to understand the importance of perseverance and know that giving up is never an option.

ABBREVIATIONS

- GoM: God of Mercy
- TF: The Fishermen

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1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Chapter one serves as the foundational framework for this study, providing essential context and outlining the key components that guide the investigation into mimicry and ambivalence in Okezie Nwoka's *God of Mercy* and Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*. The background of the study elaborates on the historical context of colonialism in Africa, emphasising the erosion of traditional cultures through missionary activities and colonial education systems. This section sets the stage for understanding how contemporary African authors like Nwoka and Obioma reflect these themes in their works, using mimicry and ambivalence to explore the complexities of cultural identity in a postcolonial context.

The chapter also outlines specific research objectives that guide this inquiry, focusing on how mimicry and ambivalence are used to portray cultural influences, their impact on character identities and relationships, and the representation of colonialism as a central theme.

In addition to establishing the significance of this research within the broader field of postcolonial studies, Chapter One delineates the scope of the study, clarifying its limitations to two specific novels by Nigerian authors. Key terms relevant to the research are defined to ensure clarity and understanding throughout the study.

Overall, this introductory chapter lays a comprehensive groundwork for exploring the intricate dynamics of mimicry and ambivalence in contemporary African literature, setting the stage for deeper analysis in subsequent chapters.

1.2. Background of the Study

Colonisation profoundly disrupted African culture, dismantling indigenous systems and imposing foreign values. European powers, motivated by economic exploitation and imperial dominance, sought to replace African traditions with their own, often through missionary activities that spread Christianity while suppressing native religions (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008; Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). This process not only undermined African spiritual practices but also redefined social norms and hierarchies.

The restructuring of educational systems during colonisation prioritised European languages and cultural norms, leading to the erosion of indigenous languages and traditions (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). Colonial education was designed to produce clerks and interpreters rather than fostering technological or industrial development. This legacy continues to influence African education systems, often failing to integrate indigenous knowledge effectively.

The impact of colonisation extended beyond education to economic and social structures. European rulers seized land and resources, compelling Africans into exploitative labour systems through legal coercion, such as the imposition of hut taxes (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). This disarticulation of African economies entrenched dependency on European markets and suppressed local industries. The lasting effects of these policies have perpetuated underdevelopment in many African states.

Post-colonial African literature has emerged as a powerful medium for exploring these historical disruptions. Writers like Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o critically examine the socio-political and cultural consequences of colonisation, addressing themes such as liberation, nationalism, displacement, and identity (Achebe, 1958; Ngũgĩ, 1986; Said, 1978). These narratives often engage with concepts like mimicry and ambivalence to critique colonial legacies (Bhabha, 1994). A lot of writers such as Chigozie Obioma and Okezie Nwoka have written novels on mimicry and ambivalence through the lens of post-colonialism to emphasise the significant changes and challenges colonialism brought, and also how it laid the foundation for the diverse and dynamic Africa we see today. More research has been done on other African novels such as *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe, *The River Between* and *Petals of Blood* by Ngũgĩ, but books such as *God of Mercy* by Okezie Nwoka and *The Fishermen* by Chigozie Obioma have received little attention. For this reason, the researcher used these novels to investigate the use of mimicry and ambivalence in them. By analysing these texts, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on post-colonial African literature.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Before colonisation, African societies were rich in culture, with well-established systems of governance, trade, and knowledge transfer. Communities thrived on agriculture, fishing, and artisanal skills passed down through generations. Africa was also abundant in natural and human resources, with civilisations like Mali, Kush, and Great Zimbabwe achieving remarkable advancements in governance, trade, and science (Ntloedibe, 2017; Iliffe, 2007). These pre-colonial societies were characterised by their resilience and adaptability, with complex social structures and cultural practices that were deeply rooted in their histories and traditions (Mamdani, 1996).

The colonisation of Africa, which intensified during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, disrupted these systems. By 1914, Western powers had colonised most of the continent, imposing artificial borders that disregarded ethnic and cultural realities (Fanon, 1963; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2008). European languages, legal systems, and religions were enforced upon indigenous populations, leading to the erosion of indigenous languages and traditions. The aftermath of colonisation brought profound changes to African societies. Whilst some individuals embraced Western cultures, others resisted or experienced ambivalence towards these imposed changes (Said, 1978). This duality is often explored in post-colonial literature through themes of mimicry and ambivalence.

While pre-colonial Africa was marked by cultural richness and self-sufficiency, post-colonial Africa grappled with the legacies of imposed foreign systems and identities. Although significant scholarly attention has been given to themes of mimicry and ambivalence in African literature generally, there is limited research focusing on their presentation in *God of Mercy* by Okezie Nwoka and *The Fishermen* by Chigozie Obioma. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating how mimicry and ambivalence are portrayed in these works while examining their broader implications for understanding post-colonialism in African literature.

1.4. Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to analyse the presentation of mimicry and ambivalence in *God of Mercy* by Okezie Nwoka and *The Fishermen* by Chigozie Obioma. This objective was guided by the following sub-objectives:

1. To analyse how authors used mimicry and ambivalence in the novels to portray how African culture was influenced by western culture.
2. To examine the impact of ambivalence and mimicry on characters' identities and relationships.
3. To interpret how postcolonialism is regarded as a central theme in the novels.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research could deepen one's understanding of how different Africans felt about colonialism. This study could also provide a platform for examining the enduring impact of colonialism on societies and individuals, as well as the on-going struggles for decolonisation, self-determination, and cultural revitalization. This study might also contribute to the existing literature on post-colonial studies.

1.6. Delimitation of the Study

This study was limited to the two novels only, namely, Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* and Okezie Nwoka's *God of Mercy*. It investigated mimicry and ambivalence only in the novels through the lens of post-colonial theory.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

- **Post colonialism:** Postcolonialism is a theoretical framework that examines the social, cultural, political, and economic effects of colonialism and imperialism, both during and after the colonial period. (Ashcrof et al., 2006)
- **Mimicry:** Refers to a complex process by which colonised or subjugated cultures imitate or adopt certain aspects of the colonisers' culture or ways of life, often as a strategy to negotiate power dynamics and navigate the challenges of colonial domination (Bhabha, 1994).

- **Ambivalence:** Refers to the complex and contradictory feelings, attitudes, and responses that colonised and postcolonial subjects may have toward their colonial history, culture, and identity. (Bhabha, 1994).

1.8. Thesis outline

This study has five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. It comprises the background of the study, a statement of the research problem, research objectives, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, and the definition of key terms. The second chapter presents the literature review in subsections. The first section provides an analysis of how authors used mimicry and ambivalence to portray how African culture was influenced by western culture, the second section gives an overview of the impact of ambivalence and mimicry on characters' identities and relationships. The third section interprets how postcolonialism is regarded as a central theme in the novels. Chapter three clarifies the research methods used to conduct the study. Chapter four provides the findings and the discussions of the study in three sub sections. Chapter five presents the conclusions and recommendations.

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

Ambivalence and imitation are significant notions in postcolonial theory, providing insight into the complicated interactions between colonisers and the colonised. Ambivalence refers to the colonised's shifting and contradictory attitudes towards the coloniser, which includes a desire to mimic them while rejecting their rule. Mimicry, in contrast, defines the colonised's copying of the coloniser's cultural habits, attitudes, and behaviours, which can both strengthen and destroy colonial power structures.

This literature review looks at how these ideas have been theorised and implemented in postcolonial studies, focusing on the prominent work of researchers such as Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, and Gareth Griffiths. It looks at how ambivalence and mimicry are presented in cultural, linguistic, and psychological domains, and how they are used to both challenge and maintain colonial rule.

By synthesising the key insights from this body of scholarship, this review will provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which ambivalence and mimicry shape the postcolonial experience and condition. It sheds light on the nuanced and often paradoxical nature of colonial power relations, and how the colonised navigate these complex dynamics through various strategies of resistance and adaptation.

2.2. Literature Review

2.2.1. Effects of mimicry and ambivalence on African culture

Mimicry

Mimicry, described as an act of imitation closely related to other ideas such as 'parroting', 'copying', and 'emulation', is an essential topic in postcolonial studies. The colonial people interacted with the Whites and carefully watched their behaviour, forming certain aspects of their identities. As a result, they believed that the people of the 'East' were incapable of self-government and that it was the White man's obligation to rule and civilise them (Tyagi, 2021).

Jacques Lacan, a well-known psychoanalytic thinker, "...aligns mimicry with the technique of camouflage as 'practiced in human ware'; he lists travesty and intimidation as the other 'major dimensions' in which the mimetic activity is employed" (Ferhood and Janoori, 2020).

According to Anantama et al., mimicry can extend beyond traditional methods of imitation and hybridisation. Not only did the colonised people or immigrant minority mimic the Whites' dress, culture, and language norms, but the White colonisers also mimicked and fantasised the colonised people's socio-linguistic norms, either in secret or with their consent.

Mimicry can extend beyond the normal processes of imitation and hybridisation. Not only did the colonised people or immigrant minority emulate the Whites' dress, culture, and language norms, but the White colonisers, in concealment or acquiescence, replicated and fantasised the sociolinguistic norms of colonised people. (Anatama et al., 2020)

Mimicry is commonly regarded as a cause of shame, and any colonised individual discovered imitating the coloniser is exiled from his own group. However, this was not true for Bhabha. Bhabha believes that mimicry is a method used by colonised people to challenge the colonisers' ideological and cultural domination. Bhabha does not believe that violence is a tool of decolonisation or a solution to colonial issues. In his article "Of mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," quoted in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Bhabha argues that: "the colonial imitation is the yearning for a reformed, recognisable other, as a subject of a difference that is nearly the same, but not quite" (152.)

One of Bhabha's most essential Postcolonial notions is mimicry. It is part of a larger concept for depicting the postcolonial predicament. There is a binary opposition between authority and oppression. Mimicry happens when a person seeks to duplicate someone else in some way, typically with ridiculous results. In general, mimicry is when one species imitates another (Kumar 2011:1). According to Batchelor (2008), everyone imitates leaders to acquire access to the same power.

Wardani and Widyhening (2020) attempted to explain mimicry in its most fundamental form, including its role in colonial and postcolonial discourse, as well as how Western exploitation of

the East contributed to feelings of inferiority. Postcolonial studies have highlighted the issue of eastern countries' subjugation to dominant elites, with the effect of copying. Imitation is a very natural phenomenon in which people perceive something alien and superior to them; nevertheless, when this natural becomes unnatural, a problem arises. During colonial times, they (natives of the ex-colonised country) had a tendency to believe themselves inferior to the colonial masters because of their ignorance of the West's manipulation and diplomacy, which caused them to feel disappointed, dispossessed of their identity, and ruined.

Furthermore, Batchelor (2008) observed that colonisers see the colonised as the "Other" and push them to accept the colonisers' superiority since natives were constantly told that they had a lot to learn from white men and civilisations. The colonisers in the novels attempt to impose their language, manner of life, and western education on the indigenous people, resulting in a hybrid and distorted image that poses a threat to the colonisers.

According to Amardeep (2009), postcolonial literature emerges when people from a colonised society (such as Indians or Africans) mimic their colonisers' language, clothes, politics, or cultural attitude. He goes on to argue that under colonialism and in the context of immigration, mimicry is perceived as an opportunistic pattern of behaviour in which one imitates the person in power to obtain the same position.

The colonised, through mimicry, seek to establish order and consistency. In colonial discourse, both the colonised and the coloniser attempt to negotiate. Mimicry mixes menace and likeness. The uncertainty that colonised people face in postcolonial discourse is similar to that of diasporic people living in postcolonial countries (Bhabha 1987).

In the context of transitional justice, mimicry can be disgraceful, strengthening, and subversive because it includes the shameless copying of former colonisers' tactics by the postcolonial ruling elite and the spread of 'western' concepts of rule of law, justice, and human rights, as well as opportunities for postcolonial 'agency' Moyo, K. (2015). The colonised natives did not achieve perfection by copying the colonisers; rather, they formed a "blurred copy" of the coloniser. The colonisers note the natives' imperfection in becoming like their white masters and regard them

as the "other". The phrase "other" alludes to the colonial subjects. Jean Paul Sartre, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan were among the theorists who used the term.

The colonised attempted to abandon their own culture and values in order to align with the position of colonisers, but they failed to completely remove their aboriginal identity several times. Aside from that, it had a negative effect: when a colonised person mimicked the ethnic elements of others, he or she was suspected and judged as weak by his or her own community people, resulting in shame and frustration, and such a person was derided (Anantama et al., 2021).

Ambivalence

The concept of 'ambivalence' arose in psychoanalytic thought. It is a useful tool for describing the continual oscillation between wanting one thing and wanting another. It also describes the attraction and repulsion of an object, person, or action (Young 1995). According to Ferguson (2002), the connection between them is ambivalent or binary since the colonised subject is never completely hostile to colonial power. Ambivalence typically implies that some colonial subjects are 'complicit' and others are 'resistant'. It also suggests that 'complicity and resistance' exist in a dynamic engagement with the colonial subject.

Bhabha believes that ambivalence weakens the clear-cut authority of colonial power. It interrupts the simple interplay between coloniser and colonised. Ambivalence is also seen as one of the coloniser's least favourite aspects of colonial discourse (Ashcroft and Tiffin 10). Ambivalence and hybridity are related concepts, according to Ferhood and Janoori (2020). This is because ambivalence 'decentres' authority from its source of power. When placed within the context of colonialism, authority morphs into a hybridised creature.

Sigmund Freud, a well-known psychotherapist, defined ambivalence as "a continual fluctuation of two things, one is wanting of a thing and wanting its opposite as well," which signifies attraction to the thing and repugnance towards the object, person, or action (Khan et al., 2022). Furthermore, the colonised people want to equalise their social position with that of the colonisers while maintaining their uniqueness (Islam and Hasam, 2020). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "The Dangers of a Single Story" examines the subject of what one's identity is and how

the discrepancy between coloniser and colonised cultures influences self-definition and identity (Tyagi, 2021).

How African culture was affected by the Western

Colonialism, the slave trade, and missionary activities were instrumental in introducing Western civilisation and culture to Africa. Falola (2003) argues that colonialism served as a vehicle for cultural imperialism, imposing foreign dominance over indigenous political, social, cultural, economic, and religious systems. This imposition disrupted traditional African structures and introduced new systems that often undermined local values. While colonialism facilitated the spread of Western ideas, it also led to the subjugation of African societies and a loss of cultural autonomy.

The influence of Western civilisation on African culture has been profound and multifaceted. Arowolo (2010) highlights how Westernisation has overshadowed African values, with Western culture often perceived as superior. This cultural dominance created a duality within African societies, where traditional values coexist with Western ideals, resulting in contradictions in social and community life. Post-independence, Africa continues to grapple with these contradictions while attempting to forge a unique identity that integrates both traditional and modern elements.

Western civilisation's impact on African society has been both positive and negative. Sibani (2018) observes that while acculturation has improved certain aspects of African value systems, it has also disrupted traditional practices. Culture encompasses various elements such as language, marriage customs, arts, religion, education, and governance systems. These aspects have undergone significant transformation under Western influence. For instance, education

systems prioritised European languages over indigenous ones, leading to a gradual erosion of native linguistic heritage (Agha, 2014). Similarly, traditional religious practices were replaced or marginalised by Christianity introduced through missionary activities.

The concept of culture itself has been defined in various ways by scholars. Skinner (cited in Agha, 2014) describes culture as encompassing all aspects of people's lives and behaviours. Akama (2012) expands this definition by viewing culture as a complex system that includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, and societal norms. Otite and Oginwo (2016) describe it as an accumulation of shared knowledge and practices passed down through generations. These definitions highlight the dynamic nature of culture and its susceptibility to external influences such as colonialism.

In post-colonial literature, themes such as mimicry and hybridity often explore the intersection between traditional African identities and Western influences. Tyagi (2021), drawing on Homi Bhabha's theories, examines how mimicry reflects the colonised subject's adoption of colonial culture while maintaining connections to pre-colonial traditions. This hybridity is evident in Obioma's *The Fishermen*, where the tension between traditional customs and Christianity is vividly portrayed. The novel uses biblical allegories to explore this cultural interplay while depicting Christianity as both alien and transformative to the people of Akure.

The literature reviewed demonstrates that while Western civilisation disrupted many aspects of African culture, it also introduced new dynamics that continue to shape post-colonial identities. By examining these interactions through literary works such as *The Fishermen* and other post-colonial texts, this study seeks to understand how mimicry and ambivalence contribute to the broader discourse on cultural identity in Africa.

2.2.2. Impact of ambivalence and mimicry on characters identities and relationships

Impacts of Mimicry on identities and characters relationship

Deng (1995) argues that identity refers to how individuals and groups define themselves and are perceived by others in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture. Based on this definition, we can conclude that identity can be classified into two types: personal and cultural identity.

Africa is not a single country; there are numerous separate governments on the continent. The continent has a rich history, with several governments founded due to political pressures from colonial authority (Eze & van der Wal, 2020). Independent states' identities reflect their diverse religions, languages, cultures, and histories (Achebe, 1999; Eze & van der Wal, 2020; Yewah, 2008). According to Eze and van der Wal (2020, p. 189), Africanism is commonly viewed as a "collective identity" to be recreated in the modern day. According to Idang (2015), Africanism is frequently viewed as a primordial religion centred on ancestor worship, divination, soothsaying, and sorcery, with a focus on justice, truth, and spirituality.

Ucham (2014) established three degrees of identity development for Afropolitans, which are considered to apply to all Africans and their descendants. Ucham (2014) again added that Africans begin by constructing or reconstructing their national identity. According to Ucham (2014), a person's current location, whether within or outside of Africa, is considered their home. Ucham (2014) identifies a person's racial identification based on the physical characteristics of their parents or ancestors, as well as their perception of themselves as black, biracial, or neither. A person's race is also a "category for literary and political analysis, as a means of describing a group of people, as a way of differentiating people with different backgrounds, and as an identification and economic marker" (Alabi, 2005, p. 1). According to Ucham (2014), Wagner (2016), and Werbner (2013), individuals develop and reconstruct their root identity by identifying their cultural, ethnic, or motherland.

The identity question is the most essential theme in postcolonial literature and history, and it must be acknowledged as the root cause of the crisis that exists in all postcolonial societies. The problem appeared veiled at first due to the circumstances of the postcolonial period, as well as

the risky situations that newly liberated nations and countries faced in their quest for the construction of their own identity (Tyagi,2021).

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, identity is "the certainty of being who or what a man or thing is." Identity is derived from the Latin word *identitas*, which means "sameness." Philosophically, identity is defined as the unique affinity that each thing has with itself. The psychological sense of identity includes the characteristics, traits, attitudes, expressions, and views that characterise an individual or group. In sociology, identity is described as social appearance, self-esteem, and physical features that indicate one's uniqueness and identify oneself from others, such as national, cultural, and gender identities.

The concept of identity encompasses various factors. It is not a static concept, but one that is always evolving. Identity is the way we define or understand ourselves and the world around us. The concept of a national identity for a newly independent post-colonial nation necessitates a compromise between the old and the new, resulting in a hybrid mix of both cultures rather than a homogeneous reproduction of either (Alabi, 2005).

Nigeria, as a country, has been incredibly unfortunate in terms of leadership as an aspect of human existence, and literary artists have continued to utilise their works to highlight the numerous ways in which the country's administration has failed its citizens. This is what Chigozie Obioma has done in *The Fishermen*, where an irresponsible father, as well as our leaders, destroy the hope and future of those they are supposed to serve and protect. This reenactment of history is intended to serve as a wake-up call for contemporary leaders to refocus their efforts on the country's growth (Emelone 2020).

Postcolonial theorists and critics have viewed the issue of identity as one of vital exchange, and the true subjects in progress in the postcolonial period, particularly the novel, have been the breakdown of the self and the crisis experienced by previously colonised people, as well as the vital effects of colonialism on local culture (Sheoran 2014, p. 1). As a result, the conflict between the colonised's native culture and the coloniser's foreign culture leads to an identity crisis. It is a psychological condition characterised by isolation and confusion regarding cultural identities.

Impacts of Ambivalence on identities and characters relationships

Glover et al. (2016) explain that the circumstance in which second-generation immigrants are unclear whether to keep and practise their ancestor culture—which they know nothing about—or the culture of the location in which they are presently living would be problematic. In the framework of postcolonial theory, this conundrum would lead to an identity problem known as ambivalence of identity. Young (1995) defines ambivalence as a continual oscillation between wanting one thing and wanting another. It also describes the simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from a thing, person, or activity. Ambivalence, as defined by Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, is the sense of culture as a collection of contrasting perceptions and perspectives (Windari and Anwar, 2023).

Tope Folarin's *A Particular Kind of Black Man* (2019) delves into the question of identity as well. This story revolves around the main character, Tunde Akinola, who was born and reared in America. His father pushed him to be a true black man by mimicking famous black men, listening to Nigerian music, and eating Nigerian food, despite the fact that Tunde favours the opposite. Tunde feels perplexed as a result of his situation, questioning how he can be a true black man if every contact must adapt to American values and cultures (Windari, 2023).

2.2.3. Postcolonialism as a central theme in the novels

According to Chennels (1999), African literature has frequently underlined how colonial administrators manufactured an African reality and then acted as if that reality was universally seen. Hebbri (2010) underlined the importance of postcolonial history, claiming that some issues have historically been of vital concern to postcolonialism. One of the issues is history. History is important because it allows mankind to learn from the past in order to improve the present and shape the future. Woodson (1984) claimed that if a race has no history, no worthwhile heritage, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world and faces the risk of being extinguished. This implies that a group must acknowledge its past in order to remain responsible members of the human race. However, history becomes difficult since it records change and is subversive.

Hawley (2010) has defined postcolonialism as a complex kind of analysis in which writers draw inspiration and intellectual resources from a wide range of political and philosophical traditions,

as well as philosophers. According to Abrahamsen (2003), postcolonial studies share a 'tame' set of differences while attempting to provide a starting point for understanding their many forms and issues of research. Postcolonial criticism, according to Young (as cited in Babatunde, 2019), has taken on several objectives: First and foremost, to re-examine colonialism's history from the perspective of the colonised; second, to ascertain the economic, political, and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonised and the colonising powers; third, to examine the decolonisation process; and fourth, most importantly, to engage in the goals of political liberation, which include equal access to material resources, the contestation of power structures, and the expression of political and cultural identities.

The majority of writers at the time concentrated on colonial times when they were colonised by the colonisers, and their writings reflected all of their problems and concerns about their own countries' social and political issues. A sense of euphoria swept over Africa as each country commemorated its emancipation from the oppressor, as well as the years of political and cultural supremacy that followed the continent's independence from the colonial empire in the middle of the twentieth century. The majority of African writers began their works with expressions of liberty and hope (Babatunde, 2019).

According to Hebbri (2010), postcolonial writers have made significant efforts to re-inscribe African history by challenging Euro-American historical conceptions and recognising the African people's past. Another key subject in postcolonial discourse is the preservation of diversity as a counter to Western universality.

Language is an important topic in postcolonial theory. According to Ashcroft et al., (1997, p. 283), language is a vital site of struggle for postcolonial discourse since the colonial process begins in language. This emphasises the importance of language in postcolonial discourse. In 1982, Amuta proposed that the most persistent manifestation of colonialism fixation on African literature discourse is the problematisation of the language dilemma. Olaniyan (1995, p. 39) agreed, writing, "The imposition of colonial languages is the imposition of colonial culture.

Hebbri (2010) claimed that the relationship between postcolonialism and modern Western concepts such as postmodernism is investigated. Though postcolonialism shares some of these

theories' subversive and interrogative tendencies, it differs in its approach to politics and history. Major postcolonial subjects fundamental to African postcolonial literature, including history, universalism, diversity, and language, have been addressed. According to Bandia (2021), postcolonial African literature has been used to destabilise the European ethnocentric understanding of history in order to re-inscribe a distorted and bastardised African past. Postcolonial African literature also resists Eurocentric universalism by maintaining a distinction that encourages decent behaviour and cultural diversity.

A novel like *The Fishermen* is an instructive example of such postcolonial changes since it questions, responds to, and works with colonial legacies of authority, hierarchy, and essentialisation (Heinz, 2022).

Obioma explains how, in terms of both form and substance, adaptation influences how a postcolonial culture such as Nigeria thinks and tells its own stories, but he also argues that postcolonial cultures do more than merely write back to the Empire. Writing beyond the single reality of chronological history—along with his father's and brother's versions of the family's past and future—Ben's parabolic stories, with their repeated, circular structure, highlight the dangers of assuming that we can tell and know the truth about one another (Heinz, 2022).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial theory

Postcolonialism is one of the most influential literary ideas. It has taken literary studies by storm. The term "postcolonial literature" refers to literary works produced by former colonial subjects during or after their independence. Homi K. Bhabha is a well-known critic of postcolonial literary theory.

Postcolonialism is an intellectual paradigm that has acquired recognition in the literary world since the middle of the 20th century. It is mostly concerned with the residents of previously colonised countries following the end of colonialism.

According to Cuddon (2012) and Sawant (2012), postcolonial theory and literature investigate cultural confrontations in which one culture utilises philosophy to assert supremacy over

another. Postcolonialism is an emancipatory approach to literary analysis that emphasises on literature written in English in formerly colonised countries or outside of the Western world (Sawant, 2012). Cuddon (2012) and Said (1985) believe that overcoming colonialism's impact on cultures and communities requires recovering the self from the portrayal of others in colonial literature and discourse.

The concept centres on power, religion, and culture, and how they interact with colonial hegemony (Brizee, Tompkins, Chernouski, & Boyle, 2015). According to Olatunji (2010), postcolonialism is a historical phenomenon that involves the observation, study, and interrogation of colonialism's philosophical orientation, praxis, and repercussions on other societies (p.125). Lye (as cited in Kandemiri, 2018) states that the philosophy relies on the concepts of otherness and resistance. Furthermore, postcolonial theory is concerned with the reading and creation of literature written in historically or currently colonised countries, as well as literature written in colonising countries that deals with colonisation or colonised peoples (Kandemiri, 2018).

African writers confronted Europe's colonial powers in the postcolonial era through protest, struggle, suffering, and obsession. Europe has constantly misrepresented Africa.

The bulk of writers at the time concentrated on colonial times when they were colonised by the colonisers, and their writings reflected all of their problems and concerns about their own countries' social and political issues. A sense of euphoria swept over Africa as each country celebrated its liberation from the oppressor, as well as the years of political and cultural dominance that followed the continent's independence from the colonial empire, which began in the mid-20th century. The majority of African writers wrote to express liberation and hope.

Hawley (2010) also stated that postcolonialism is a complex form of analysis in which writers draw inspiration and intellectual resources from a diverse range of political and philosophical traditions and philosophers. According to Abrahamsen (2003), postcolonial analyses share a 'tame' set of differences, but strive to offer a starting point for understanding their varied forms and themes of investigation. Young (as cited Babatunde, 2019), postcolonial criticism has adopted a number of aims: Most profoundly, to reexamine the history of colonialism from the

perception of the colonised; to determine the economic, political, and cultural influence of colonialism on both the colonised people and the colonising powers; to analyse the process of decolonisation; Above all, to engage in the goals of political emancipation, such as fair access to material resources, contesting forms of domination, and articulating political and cultural identities .

Culturally, however, the word postcolonialism refers to the various practices by which race, ethnicity, culture, and human identity are shown following the liberation of former colonies. However, some critics use the phrase to highlight culture and cultural items that directly portray the colonial era and its aftermath. Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interaction between colonisers and the people they colonised. Thus, postcolonial studies focus on the effects of colonisation on previously colonised cultures and communities.

R.S. Malik's book, *A New Approach to Literary Theory and Criticism*, distinguishes between hyphenated and non-hyphenated terms. The former refers to a period of time experienced by colonised societies, while the latter refers to a creative mindset and critical approach, (Malik, 2014).

Furthermore, in their work, *Race and Postcoloniality*, Amoko (2006) argues that postcolonial studies refer to an effort by researchers in such different fields as literature, cultural studies, and history to come to grips with the legacy of European colonialism.

In his book *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, Dirlik (as cited in Gandhi, 2020)i examines three different meanings of the word. First, it is used as a literal description of conditions in formally colonial societies; second, it is used as a description of a global condition after colonialism; and third, it represents "discussion on the above-mentioned conditions that is informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products of these conditions." Thus, postcolonial refers to a cultural examination of colonialism's impact on the literature and culture of former colonised countries. However, in *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin use the word to refer to all civilisations influenced by the imperial process, from colonialism to the current day (Ashcroft et al., 2003).

Postcolonialism addresses themes of identity and cultural belonging. In many locations, colonists destroyed indigenous cultures and traditions. They also attempted to replace previously removed habits with the colonisers' own culture, customs, and traditions. The generations that lived under colonial control adopted some of the coloniser's habits and traditions. This led in the establishment of a new class division between native identification and indigenous hybrid identity. As a result, postcolonial literature mostly refers to the literary works produced by former colonies prior to and following their political independence (Nurcahyani & Kamil 2021).

Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Henry Lewis Gates, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, are the most prominent critics of the postcolonial theory. Bhabha has played an important role in developing several notions for the theoretical framework of postcolonial discourse. His literary principles of hybridity and mimicry made significant contributions to the field of postcolonial studies. His book, *The Location of Culture*, is widely recognised as one of the best examples of postcolonial theory.

In colonial and postcolonial literature, mimicry is most typically seen in colonised nations, where people imitate the colonisers' language, attire, behaviours, or cultural views. Actually, imitation has traditionally been regarded as an opportunistic pattern of behaviour. The colonised seeks to mimic the person in power (the coloniser) because they want to have the same power as the coloniser. During this copycat process, colonised oppressors twist their local cultural identity.

Mimicry is the process of copying the colonial or subaltern group's behaviour towards the dominant group. This happens because dominant groups' cultures are regarded as greater or more complex than those of subaltern tribes. Cultural imitation is not a complete idea in mimicry. It has an element of ambivalence. On the one hand, subaltern communities strive to share cultural qualities with dominant groups, yet they cannot be entirely similar.

According to Bhabha, mimicry is the process by which colonised subjects mimic the cultural practices, values, and behaviours of the colonisers, but this imitation is never a perfect replication; rather, it creates a "blurred copy" that both resembles and deviates from the original (Bhabha, 1994: 86). This partial imitation undermines colonial authority by revealing its inherent contradictions, and it becomes a subversive act because it unsettles the coloniser's dominance by presenting a version of colonial culture that is "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994:

86). This dynamic illustrates how colonial power attempts to create compliant subjects but unintentionally encourages ambivalence and resistance through mimicry.

Another key idea in Bhabha's theory is ambivalence, which is the simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from colonial authority that colonised subjects experience. This duality undermines the clear-cut authority of colonial discourse and reveals its fragility by exposing colonial power's inability to fully control or assimilate the colonised (Bhabha, 1994). Ambivalence also throws off the binary opposition between resistance and complicity by demonstrating that colonial subjects frequently embody both positions at the same time.

The ambivalence and mimicry concept is especially pertinent to the analysis of colonised societies' management of cultural hybridity. According to Bhabha (1994), mimicry demonstrates how assimilating elements of colonial culture can function as a means of resistance as well as a survival tactic. The psychological and cultural conflicts that are a part of this process are also highlighted by ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994). The way colonial subjects maintain ties to their pre-colonial traditions while navigating their identities inside an oppressive system is clarified by these ideas taken together.

2.4 Research Gap(s)

There is a growing body of research on the themes of mimicry and ambivalence in African Literature. Books such as *The River Between* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe are overly studied. However, through intensive research, *God of Mercy* and *The Fishermen* have received relatively little scholarly attention. The researcher aims to fill this gap.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter Two of the research focused on the literature review and theoretical framework, examining the concepts of ambivalence and mimicry within postcolonial theory. It began by defining ambivalence as the contradictory attitudes of the colonised towards their colonisers, characterised by a desire to imitate while simultaneously rejecting colonial rule. Mimicry is explored as the act of adopting the coloniser's cultural practices, which can both reinforce and

undermine colonial power structures. The chapter synthesises key insights from prominent theorists like Homi Bhabha, discussing how these concepts manifest in cultural, linguistic, and psychological domains, and their interplay with related ideas such as hybridity and the "third space." The review highlights the effects of mimicry and ambivalence on African culture, illustrating how colonised individuals often internalise feelings of inferiority while grappling with their identities. It further delves into the impact of these themes on character identities and relationships in selected novels, emphasising the identity crises faced by individuals caught between traditional and colonial influences. The chapter concludes by positioning postcolonialism as a central theme in African literature, underscoring the importance of historical context in understanding contemporary cultural dynamics.

The research gap identified in the study highlights a significant oversight in the existing scholarship on postcolonial literature, particularly regarding the themes of mimicry and ambivalence. This gap indicates that although mimicry and ambivalence are critical themes in understanding the postcolonial experience, their portrayal in these specific novels remains underexamined.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

3.1. Introduction

Research methodology refers to the systematic framework that guides researchers in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. It encompasses the theoretical underpinnings and practical approaches that inform how a study is conducted, ensuring that the research is rigorous, valid, and replicable. This chapter details the specific methodologies employed in this research, focusing on the qualitative approach used to explore themes of mimicry and ambivalence in postcolonial literature. By adopting an interpretivist paradigm, the study emphasises understanding the subjective experiences of characters within their cultural contexts. The chosen methods, including desktop research and content analysis, facilitate a comprehensive examination of the selected texts, allowing for nuanced insights into the complexities of identity and cultural dynamics. Additionally, ethical considerations are addressed to ensure that the research adheres to established academic standards. Overall, this chapter provides a clear roadmap of the methodological choices made throughout the research process, highlighting their relevance and significance in addressing the research questions posed.

3.2. Research Paradigm

The interpretivism paradigm was used in this study. Interpretivism is a paradigm that highlights the necessity of understanding people's subjective meanings and interpretations in social situations. According to Crossman (2017), interpretivism is based on the premise that reality is subjective, multifaceted, and socially produced. That is, we can only grasp someone's reality by their own experience of it, which may differ from another person's according to the individual's historical or social context. Interpretivism design was relevant to studying mimicry and ambivalence to this study because it provides a framework for understanding the subjective experiences and meanings that characters assign to their actions. This approach allowed a nuanced analysis of the complex emotions and behaviours of characters, which is crucial for understanding the dynamics of colonialism and postcolonial identity.

3.3. Research Approach

The researcher used a qualitative approach. According to Crossman (2017), qualitative research is a social science research method that collects and works with non-numerical data to derive meaning from these facts and help us comprehend social life through the study of particular groups or places (p. 1). It is particularly useful for exploring complex social issues where context and meaning are critical (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research is well-suited to explore complex social phenomena, such as culture, identity, and power relations, which are also focuses of the proposed study. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to delve into the subjective meanings and experiences of characters, providing a rich understanding of how mimicry and ambivalence are portrayed in the selected novels. By focusing on the qualitative aspects of the texts, the study can uncover the nuanced ways in which authors use literature to critique colonial legacies and explore post-colonial identities.

3.4. Research Design

According to Bryman (2012), a research design provides a clear roadmap for the study, ensuring that the chosen methods align with the research objectives and that credible conclusions can be drawn from the data. The researcher used a desktop research design. A desktop study is a secondary research method that involves gathering and analysing existing data or information from readily available sources such as books, academic journals, online databases, government reports, and other published materials. It does not involve primary data collection or fieldwork but instead relies on synthesising pre-existing knowledge to address research questions. The researcher read the selected novels and made a list of all sources that provided relevant information to the topic being studied.

The researcher analysed previous related study articles and journals of other postcolonial books such as *The River between* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Things Fall apart*, and *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe, by focusing more on studies related to mimicry and ambivalence. The researcher then compared and contrasted data from previous studies with the findings from the selected novels to draw conclusions about how mimicry and ambivalence are portrayed in these works. This comparative analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of how contemporary authors engage

with post-colonial themes and how their works contribute to the broader discourse on colonialism and identity.

3.5. Text Selection Criteria

The selection of *God of Mercy* by Okezie Nwoka and *The Fishermen* by Chigozie Obioma was based on several criteria. Both novels were written by authors from African countries that were colonised, and they focus on the experiences of the colonised people. These novels explore the historical and cultural impact of colonialism, delving into themes of cultural identity, mimicry, and ambivalence, which are central to post-colonial literature (Ashcroft et al., 2002). The reputation of the authors, who have a history of publishing post-colonial novels, also influenced the selection. By choosing novels that explicitly address post-colonial themes, the study can provide a detailed analysis of how contemporary literature reflects on colonial legacies and their ongoing impacts on African societies.

3.6. Data Analysis

The collected data for this study was analysed using content analysis. This method involved selecting the texts to be analysed, in this case, *The Fishermen* and *God of Mercy*. The researcher identified and marked passages where mimicry and ambivalence appeared in the novels. The findings were then interpreted to conclude how these themes are portrayed in the texts by evaluating the selected data to see if it matched the subject of analysis. Through content analysis, the study provided a systematic and detailed examination of the texts, shedding light on how the authors use mimicry and ambivalence to explore post-colonial identity and cultural dynamics (Krippendorff, 2013). By focusing on specific textual examples, the study demonstrated how literary works contribute to the understanding of colonialism's lasting impacts on culture and identity.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Before the research began, the research committee at NUST provided ethical approval. The study was based on publicly available postcolonial books; therefore there was no direct contact with actual participants. Nonetheless, the researcher did not ridicule the authors of the two chosen

novels. Finally, the researcher recognised all sources used and adhered to the APA Referencing Style guidelines for in-text citations and reference lists.

3.8. Chapter summary

Chapter Three outlined the methods used to study themes of mimicry and ambivalence in postcolonial literature, specifically focusing on *God of Mercy* by Okezie Nwoka and *The Fishermen* by Chigozie Obioma. The study employs an interpretivism paradigm, emphasising the subjective meanings individuals assign to their experiences, which is crucial for understanding the complex emotions of characters within colonial and postcolonial contexts. A qualitative approach is utilised to analyse non-numerical data, allowing for an exploration of cultural identity and power relations. The researcher conducted desktop research, reviewing relevant novels and previous studies, and employed content analysis to identify instances of mimicry and ambivalence in the selected texts. Ethical approval was obtained from the research committee at NUST, and all sources were properly cited according to APA guidelines, ensuring respect for the authors and adherence to ethical standards.

4. Chapter 4: Findings and Discussions

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines mimicry and ambivalence in Okezie Nwọka's *God of Mercy* and Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*. Using a qualitative approach, this study seeks to investigate how these themes are tightly woven into the characters' identities and relationships, reflecting the broader implications of colonial influence on African literature. The findings show that both novels depict colonialism's tremendous impact on African communities, notably in how people navigate their cultural identities in the face of opposing influences. In the introduction, the researcher presents the synopsis of the two books, *God of Mercy* and *The Fishermen*.

4.1.1 Synopsis of GoM

Okezie Nwoka's *God of Mercy* is a captivating debut novel that explores faith, cultural conflict, and personal growth in a wonderfully imagined Igbo environment.

The plot revolves around Ijeoma, a girl with the ability with speech disabilities to fly. Set in a village, *God of Mercy* by Okezie Nwoka is a compelling debut novel that intertwines themes of spirituality, cultural conflict, and personal growth within a richly imagined Igbo setting.

The story centres on Ijeoma, a girl with speech disabilities who can fly. Set in a tight-knit rural community, Ijeoma's unique gifts initially inspire awe but soon lead to fear and suspicion among the villagers. Her father, Ofodile, worries that her powers may disrupt the spiritual balance of their world, fearing she might be possessed by malevolent forces. This tension escalates when Ijeoma performs acts that defy traditional beliefs, such as feeding an abandoned infant in the forest, which challenges the community's views on good and evil.

Ijeoma's extraordinary gifts initially inspire amazement but quickly lead to fear and mistrust among the inhabitants. Her father, Ofodile, is concerned that her abilities will upset the spiritual balance of their world, and that she will be seized by bad spirits. This tension rises as Ijeoma engages in acts that contradict conventional beliefs, such as feeding an abandoned child in the evil forest, challenging the community's understanding of good and evil.

As the narrative unfolds, Ijeoma becomes a target for Pastor Nwosu, a hardline Christian leader who perceives her as a threat to his religious authority. He seeks to imprison her, viewing her gifts as blasphemous and dangerous. This conflict highlights the broader theme of cultural clashes between traditional Igbo spirituality and the encroaching influence of Christianity.

When Ijeoma was imprisoned by the Christian church in *God of Mercy*, she faced a harrowing experience that highlighted the clash between traditional beliefs and the imposition of Western ideologies. Pastor Nwosu, the hardline Christian leader, viewed Ijeoma's unique abilities as a threat and sought to convert her along with other so-called "witches" and "pagans" within the church's confines.

During her imprisonment, Ijeoma was subjected to a regime that aimed to forcibly convert vulnerable children into a singular Christian ideology, often through violent means. The church's "Manifestation Quarters" were notorious for their brutal methods; children were beaten for questioning the church's teachings or for expressing any semblance of their indigenous beliefs. This environment was designed to erase their identities and instil a rigid adherence to Western religious norms.

Despite the oppressive conditions, Ijeoma found solace in her diary, where she wrestled with her identity and sought understanding of her powers and purpose. She prayed to her Supreme Being, reflecting her inner strength and resilience even in the face of dehumanisation. The narrative emphasises her quiet defiance, as she managed to challenge the oppressive environment without uttering a word, showcasing her determination to hold onto her cultural identity amidst attempts at conversion.

One day pastor Nwosu asked pastor John to rape Ijeoma and Impregnate her. However, pastor John did not impregnate her, but revealed to Ijeoma that he was sent to impregnate her so that she could bear children that could fly for the church, exposing the evilness of pastor Nwosu. He further revealed that the children who were brought to church to be delivered all those years were not returned to the houses, but were sold (human trafficking) to other people. And Ijeoma was not sold because they wanted her to bear flying children so that the church could have more

power. And that the boy named Ikemba who became Ijeoma's lover was also not sold because he was the illegitimate child of pastor Nwosu.

In the end, after 10 years, Ijeoma and the other children escaped from the church. Ikemba started fire with the help of Phyllipa who is the pastor's wife, the one who taught Ijeoma how to write English. Ijeoma went back to her Village and the other children and took care of them with Ikemba.

4.1.2 Synopsis of TF

The Fishermen by Chigozie Obioma tells the story of four brothers—Ikenna, Boja, Obembe, and Ben—growing up in 1990s Nigeria. Their Father , Mr Agwu, wanted his sons to take western education and choose good careers. The brothers' lives take a dramatic turn when Ikenna, the eldest, encounters a local madman who prophesies that one of the brothers will die at the hands of another. This chilling prophecy deeply unsettles the family and sets off a series of events that lead to increasing tensions among the brothers.

As they engage in fishing at the local river, their relationships become strained, and jealousy and rivalry surface. Each brother grapples with the weight of the prophecy, and the bonds of brotherhood begin to fray.

Because of this rivalry between brothers, one day Ben and Ikenna fought, Ben killed Ikenna, the same way it was prophesied by Abulu the mad man. Ben disappeared and was found dead in the well after some days. This whole situation made their mother mad and started hallucinating. Boja decided to avenge their brothers, and asked Ombebe to help him. After many failed plans of trying to kill Abulu, they finally killed him one night, but they were seen by two church leaders. Boja ran away to another village while Ombebe remained. Ombebe was later arrested and served his term in jail.

Set against the backdrop of a changing Nigeria, the novel reflects on the brothers' struggle to navigate their cultural heritage while confronting external societal pressures. Ultimately, the story delves into the complexities of family dynamics, the loss of innocence, and the tragic

consequences of their actions, culminating in a heartbreaking climax that forever alters their lives.

4.2. Effects of Mimicry and Ambivalence on African Culture

4.2.1. Effects of Mimicry and Ambivalence on African Culture in *God of Mercy*

Okezie Nwoka uses the themes of mimicry and ambivalence to portray the tension between African cultural traditions and the influence of Western colonial ideals. By illustrating how characters negotiate these opposing forces, Nwoka highlights the deep impact of colonialism on identity, spirituality, and social cohesion in the fictional Igbo community of Ichulu.

Influence of Mimicry on African culture in GoM

Mimicry in *God of Mercy* is portrayed as a form of adaptation, where characters selectively adopt Western customs and Christian beliefs. This process is neither full assimilation nor outright rejection but rather an attempt to negotiate the boundaries of identity under the pressures of colonial influence.

Okezie Nwoka skillfully uses mimicry to illustrate the impact of Western culture on African traditions and values. Through mimicry, Nwoka shows how characters in Ichulu navigate the push and pull between their indigenous beliefs and the encroaching influence of colonial Christian teachings. Ijeoma, who is described as blessed with flight and healing powers, initially represents a deep connection to Ichulu's traditional spiritual beliefs. However, when the Christians heard of it, they perceive her ability as "witchcraft," showing how Western religious ideology reframes indigenous powers as malevolent: ***"She must be a witch! That is it! She must be a witch, and now she wants to compromise the faith of my flock. God will not allow it!" "He will not," The king said,*** P.103. This highlights how the community begins to mimic this foreign perspective by viewing her powers negatively, symbolising how Africans have moved away from their culture because of colonialism.

Obi Oraotu's rejection of cultural practices, especially those that empower women or challenge patriarchal norms, further underscores his mimicry of colonial values. For example, he condemns Ijeoma's gift of flight as "witchcraft" and a "demonic curse," even though it is regarded as a sacred

blessing by her family and community. He is the one who told pastor Nwosu about Ijeoma and suggested for Ijeoma to be brought to church: ***“Why not bring this child here to the church and keep her in the Manifestation Quarters. Since she is a witch, her witchcraft must be broken by the blood of Jesus. You must heal her, pastor.”***

In his fervour to impose Western religious doctrine, Obi sees Ijeoma’s power as a threat to his newfound Christian order which he believes to be superior. His dismissal of her gift exemplifies how his mimicry of Western ideology warps his understanding of his culture, leading him to criticise aspects of it.

Obi Oraotu adopts a strict Christian moral framework, he condemns practices that have been integral to Ichulu’s culture for generations. He calls indigenous rituals "foolish" and dismisses their gods as false idols, mirroring the missionary disdain for African spirituality. He thinks that only the Lord’s path leads to salvation, thus reflecting an internalised colonial mentality that alienates him from his roots. His mimicry of Western religion, therefore, serves to undermine Ichulu’s traditional values and divides the community between those loyal to indigenous beliefs and those persuaded by Christian teachings. As a Christian leader in Ichulu, Obi Oraotu has assumed a position of power modelled after the missionaries, using his authority to assert Christian values over indigenous beliefs. When the eight boys were sent to Amalike to ask for help, he mocked them: ***“You think this is like the ancient days, when we dealt with idle gods and foolish medicine. Eh? Do you think my town concerns itself with something as foolish as a curse?”*** (p12). You can see how he is ridiculing the ancient ways by calling the medicine “foolish” This shows how the African culture has been erased by the colonisers.

Again when one of the church member, Aison, saw Ijeoma flying she referred to her as a witch: ***“I saw her flying in her bedroom! She is a devil! A friend of the dragon of 666! The cause of Y2K!”*** (p258). Again this shows how African natural powers are regarded as witchcraft by those that have become Christians.

The adoption of English and Christian worship practices also acts as a form of mimicry, gradually pushing Ichulu’s cultural identity towards Westernised expressions. At one point, Pastor Nwosu did not want to speak to Ijeoma in Igbo even though Ijeoma did not understand: ***“I know that***

she does not understand English! But I will not speak any Igbo to her, and neither will any of you. I'm sure you know that it is against my regulations"(p171) . Phylipa also told Ijeoma that *"Speaking Igbo as well as attempting to write it are prohibited on these premises. Do not fail to remember it."* (p170). By speaking in the language of the colonisers, the villagers unconsciously begin to echo the beliefs embedded in Western practices, shifting away from their original expressions of faith and they felt the almost the same as their colonisers, because through mimicry, the colonised feel like they are the same as their oppressors to avoid feeling inferior.

Nwoka also uses the visual transformation of the villagers' clothing to represent Western influence. Missionaries often provide Western clothing as symbols of "civilisation," leading villagers to abandon traditional attire. When Ijeoma was taken to Amalike, *" There were people moving through the streets in their vehicles: metalrams and gliding pots—which Ijeoma believed, cooked their foreign clothes,"* (p.166). The mimicry here conveys not only the physical change but also a mental transformation that devalues African culture. The people of Amalike have stopped wearing their traditional clothes and wore those of their oppressors.

As the Christian church grows in influence, characters adopt Western moral frameworks, often in direct conflict with traditional values. For instance, Pastor Nwosu is increasingly judgmental of local practices they once respected, mirroring the Christian missionaries' attitudes of superiority. When Ijeoma was brought to his church, he believed that she was possessed: *"All of my questions require answers! I don't care if you are mute, and I don't care if you cannot understand my language! Once we are done removing these demons from your body, you must understand ... stupid child!"* (p176). The Christians believed that people who practise their traditional beliefs are sinners and Jesus Christ is the only saviour and they wanted everyone to be like them: *"Ijeoma, this is the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He died on a cross like this for you and me ... to save us from our sins. If you believe in His cross you will not perish, but will attain everlasting life. I know you will have questions about what I am saying ... Do not worry, do not worry at all. The pastor will help you understand and believe..."* (p.168).

Effects of Ambivalence on African culture in GOM

In *God of Mercy*, Okezie Nwoka employs ambivalence to illustrate the complex, often contradictory, influence of Western culture on African traditions and values. This ambivalence reveals the villagers' conflicted responses to the arrival of Christian missionaries and their practices, showing both the appeal and the resistance toward adopting aspects of the new culture.

Throughout the novel, villagers express mixed feelings about the Christian power. For instance, Igbokwe, in reflecting on the missionaries, thinks, " ***"It is the people of Amalike who have cursed your daughter and our village. I have tried to stop this curse with my divinations and I cannot. The gods have told me that the curse can only be broken by the medicine of Amalike's people."*** ***"No! No! How can the people of Amalike still have the power of medicine! Did they not join the god of the white one! "*** (p 8). This duality suggests an internal struggle between loyalty to traditional beliefs and curiosity or doubt inspired by the Christian God. Igbokwe also ***"AMID THE SCURRY GENERATED by the pending storm, Igbokwe sent eight very young men to the town of Amalike, bearing the responsibility of informing its king that Ichulu wanted their curse to be broken"*** (p9) . The ambivalence here demonstrates the villagers' struggle to reconcile their long-standing spiritual customs with the foreign promises of salvation.

Western ideas of sin and purity seep into Ichulu's value system, creating an internalised judgment that is at odds with their indigenous morals. The villagers experience guilt for their traditional practices, not out of personal conviction but because they feel the pressure of Western moral standards. This ambivalence shows how Western culture induces self-questioning without offering a full resolution, leaving Ichulu in a state of moral confusion.

The missionaries introduce English as the language of the "civilised," which creates both fascination and resentment among villagers. A village elder reflects, ***"Ụzọdị, speak to him," said Nwabueze. "Is it not the good word that you can speak like him?"***

Ụzọdị recoiled, not wanting to speak a language that he had been instructed never to speak again, remembering the instruction of the one called his mother as he moved backward, away from the gateman.

“Go on, speak!” said one of the eight.

“If you can speak, speak, so that we can return to our home!” said another (p10).

The use of language here as a foreign and almost mystical power reveals the ambivalence in how the community views English—admiring its authority yet fearing its potential to alienate them from their own language and stories. Nwoka thus uses ambivalence to show the power dynamics inherent in language adoption.

In *God of Mercy*, Nwoka’s use of ambivalence illustrates the complex ways that Western culture impacts African traditions, creating both attraction and alienation within the community. This nuanced portrayal reflects the inner conflicts of Ichulu's people as they attempt to navigate between preserving their own identity and grappling with the seductive promises and subtle demands of Western influences.

Ofodile’s faith in the traditional gods of Ichulu is complicated by his curiosity about Christianity and its promises: ***Ofodile dropped his machete and looked deeply into the man’s eyes, searching for any sincerity—but by the promise of a cure he believed John’s word to be good, and he invited him into his obi,(P.160)***

4.2.2 Effects of Mimicry on African Culture in *TF*

Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* intricately explores the theme of mimicry to portray the influence of Western culture on Africans. Through the narrative, Obioma illustrates how colonial legacies and Western ideologies permeate the lives of his characters, often leading to tragic consequences.

In Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*, the river Omi-Ala serves as a powerful symbol of the clash between traditional and modern cultures, reflecting the complexities of identity and the impact of external influences on Nigerian society. The river's transformation from a revered source of life to a site of fear and abandonment encapsulates the broader themes of cultural dislocation and the struggle to reconcile heritage with modernity.

Initially, Omi-Ala is depicted as a vital part of the community, once embraced by the townspeople. However, as modernity encroaches and the town develops, it becomes neglected and feared:

“Omi-Ala was a dreadful river: Long forsaken by the inhabitants of Akure town like a mother abandoned by her children. But it was once a pure river that supplied the earliest settlers with fish and clean drinking water. It surrounded Akure and snaked through its length and breadth. Like many such rivers in Africa, Omi-Ala was once believed to be a god; people worshipped it. They erected shrines in its name, and courted the intercession and guidance of Iyemoja, Osha, mermaids, and other spirits and gods that dwelt in water bodies. This changed when the colonialists came from Europe, and introduced the Bible, which then prized Omi-Ala’s adherents from it, and the people, now largely Christians, began to see it as an evil place. A cradle besmeared. (Obioma, 25).

This quote highlights the river's duality—while it symbolises life and sustenance in traditional culture, its degradation reflects the community’s shift towards modern values that disregard ancestral connections. The river's decline mirrors the characters' internal conflicts as they navigate their identities amidst changing societal norms.

The brothers' decision to fish in the Omi-Ala against their parents' wishes signifies a rebellion against traditional values. Their actions represent a desire for autonomy and adventure, yet they are also steeped in the consequences of abandoning cultural norms. Trouble begins when the children decide, against their parents’ wishes, to fish in the Omi-Ala River: ***“Mama, it began the day we met Abulu at Omi-Ala,” Obembe said once Mother repeated the endearment (p97).*** Obioma referred to Omi_ala as a ***‘long forsaken by the inhabitants of Akure town like a mother abandoned by her children’*** (Obioma, p 4). This metaphorical abandonment underscores a generational rift where modern desires clash with traditional expectations. The river becomes a battleground for these conflicting ideologies, illustrating how Western influences can lead to estrangement from cultural roots.

The prophecy delivered by Abulu further complicates the symbolism of Omi-Ala. It instils fear and paranoia within Ikenna, leading him to believe that he is doomed to die at the hands of one of his brothers: ***“To my brother, Ikenna, the fear of death as prophesied by Abulu had become***

palpable, a caged world within which he was irretrievably trapped, and beyond which nothing else existed." (p98). This belief reflects a Western-style fatalism that disrupts familial bonds and highlights how external narratives can infiltrate traditional beliefs. The river thus becomes not only a physical space but also a psychological one where fears manifest and relationships deteriorate.

Furthermore, mimicry in *The Fishermen* manifests through the characters' interactions with Western cultural elements, particularly language and belief systems. The protagonist Benjamin reflects on how they prayed in English but not in Igbo: ***"Yes, Daddy," I replied, clearing my throat, and began praying in English, the only language in which I knew how to pray. "In Jesus' name, Lord God, I ask that you help us... bless us, oh God, please heal Mama, you who healed the sick, Lazarus and all, let her stop talking like a madwoman in Jesus' name we have prayed." The rest chorused "Amen!" Oioma, (p221).*** This quote encapsulates the alienation that arises from adopting a language associated with colonial power. The characters' struggle with their cultural identity is compounded by their attempts to navigate a world shaped by Western influences, highlighting the complexities of postcolonial existence.

The encounter with Abulu, the soothsayer, serves as a pivotal moment that intertwines traditional beliefs with Western notions of fate and prophecy. The brothers' belief in Abulu's prophecy reflects an internalisation of both local superstition and a broader existential dread influenced by Western narratives of destiny: ***Mother's efforts to heal her son, Ikenna, were wasted on him. For the prophecy, like an angered beast, had gone berserk and was destroying his mind with the ferocity of madness, pulling down paintings, breaking walls, emptying cupboards, turning tables until all that he knew, all that was him, all that had become him was left in disarray (Obioma p127).***

Here, Obioma illustrates how Western-style fatalism infiltrates traditional African beliefs, leading to a psychological unravelling that mirrors colonial trauma. The mimicry of Western fears—of madness and doom—manifests in Ikenna's tragic fate.

The family unit in *The Fishermen* becomes a microcosm for exploring broader societal issues influenced by colonialism. As the brothers rebel against their father's authority by fishing in

forbidden waters, they embody a clash between traditional values and modern desires: ***“I realize that it was during one of those trips to the river that our lives and our world changed”*** (Obioma p24). This rebellion signifies not only a personal journey but also reflects the collective struggle against imposed identities stemming from colonial rule. Their actions symbolise an attempt to reclaim agency in a world where their cultural heritage is overshadowed by Western ideologies.

Ambivalence and culture in TF

In *The Fishermen*, Chigozie Obioma employs ambivalence to highlight the complexities of African identity in the face of Western cultural influences. The characters navigate a world where traditional values clash with modern expectations, leading to a deep sense of confusion and conflict. This ambivalence is particularly evident in the actions and thoughts of the brothers, especially Ikenna, as they grapple with their identities amidst the pressures of familial expectations and societal norms.

The boys' father, Mr Agwu, embodies the ambivalence towards Western values. He desires his sons to pursue prestigious careers that align with Western ideals, which creates a tension between their traditional upbringing and modern aspirations. This is evident when Benjamin reflects on his father's dreams:

“ I sweat and suffer to send you to school to receive a Western education as civilized men, but you chose instead to be fishermen. Fish-amen!” (Obioma, p. 46).

In this quote, Obioma illustrates the conflicting loyalties within Ikenna, who feels torn between his father's expectations and his own desires. The pressure to conform to Western ideals leads to resentment and rebellion among the brothers.

Ikenna's belief in Abulu's prophecy exacerbates this ambivalence. The prophecy that he will be killed by a fisherman—one of his brothers—creates a psychological torment that reflects both traditional superstition and a Western-style fatalism:

“The prophecy, like an angered beast, had gone berserk and was destroying his mind with the ferocity of madness... To my brother, Ikenna, the fear of death as prophesied by Abulu had become palpable, a caged world within which he was irretrievably trapped” (Obioma, p. 134).

This internal conflict showcases how Ikenna's fear is rooted in both cultural beliefs and the existential dread often associated with Western narratives. His struggle illustrates the broader theme of how external influences can distort personal identity and familial relationships.

The river Omi-Ala serves as a metaphor for this ambivalence; once a source of life and community connection, it becomes tainted by fear and superstition: **“The Omi-Ala... had come to be seen as ‘an evil place’”** (Obioma, p 44).

This transformation underscores how colonial legacies have corrupted traditional spaces, leading to a loss of cultural reverence. The brothers’ actions—fishing in this once-sacred river—reflect their struggle to reclaim agency in a world where cultural dislocation is rampant.

Through the use of ambivalence, Obioma effectively portrays the complexities faced by individuals caught between traditional African values and Western influences in *The Fishermen*. The characters' internal struggles reveal how these conflicting forces shape their identities and relationships. As they navigate their fears, aspirations, and familial bonds, Obioma invites readers to reflect on the broader implications of cultural exchange in postcolonial societies.

4.3 The impact of ambivalence and mimicry on characters’ identities and relationships.

4.3.1. Impacts of Ambivalence on characters’ identities and relationships in TF

In *The Fishermen*, Chigozie Obioma intricately weaves ambivalence and mimicry into the fabric of his characters’ identities and relationships, reflecting the complexities of navigating cultural influences in a postcolonial context. The interplay between traditional African values and Western ideologies creates a rich tapestry of conflict, fear, and ultimately tragedy.

The Agwu family experiences ambivalence in their cultural identity, influenced by the presence of Western ideals and traditional Nigerian values. Their father, Eme, embodies this ambivalence. He believes in hard work and self-discipline, values often associated with Western ideals, and has high expectations for his children to become successful, respected members of society. However, he also feels the pull of Nigerian traditions, which place high importance on family unity and local community. This ambivalence affects his relationships with his sons, as he expects them to follow

strict codes of conduct but is distant from their emotional needs, resulting in a disconnect that contributes to the brothers' later struggles and tragic outcomes.

The brothers' encounter with Abulu, the madman, highlights their ambivalence toward local superstitions and prophecies, a blend of traditional beliefs that conflict with the rational, modern outlook they are encouraged to adopt. When Abulu foretells that one of the brothers will kill another, the prophecy incites fear and suspicion, revealing the brothers' internal struggle between belief in the prophecy and their desire to dismiss it as superstition. This ambivalence tears at their relationships, as Ikenna, in particular, becomes paranoid and estranged from his brothers, leading him to mistrust those closest to him. The prophecy thus acts as a catalyst, triggering identity conflicts and causing the brothers to view one another with suspicion instead of unity.

The brothers experience ambivalence as they grapple with their father's expectations rooted in Western ideals. Mr Agwu desires his sons to attain success through education, often at the cost of their cultural heritage: ***"My children will be great men," he'd say. "They will be lawyers, doctors, engineers—and see, our Obembe, has become a soldier."*** p 343. The children loved fishing but their father, Mr Agwu, did not entertain fishing: ***"Although we knew from the very beginning that fishing was nowhere on Father's list, we did not think of it at the time. It became a concern from that night when Mother threatened to tell Father about our fishing, thereby kindling the fire of fear of Father's wrath in us (p38)."***

This quote highlights the children's internal conflict between adhering to his father's ambitions and his own desires. The pressure to conform leads to tension within the family, as the boys feel torn between loyalty to their father and their yearning for personal freedom.

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strict codes of conduct but is distant from their emotional needs, resulting in a disconnect that contributes to the brothers' later struggles and tragic outcomes.

Ikenna's psychological struggle is exacerbated by Abulu's prophecy, which instils a sense of fatalism reminiscent of Western narratives. The fear that grips him transforms into a destructive force: ***"The prophecy, like an angered beast, had gone berserk and was destroying his mind with the ferocity of madness... To my brother, Ikenna, the fear of death as prophesied by Abulu had become palpable"*** (Obioma, p 134). This ambivalence manifests in Ikenna's relationships with his brothers, as paranoia leads to mistrust and ultimately tragedy. The prophecy acts as a catalyst for their unravelling familial bonds, illustrating how external influences can distort personal identity.

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4.3.2 Impacts of mimicry on characters' identities and relationships in TF

Mimicry is evident in the boys' use of English, which serves as both a tool for communication and a barrier that alienates them from their traditional roots:

"English, although the official language of Nigeria, was a formal language with which strangers and non-relatives addressed you. It had the potency of digging craters between you and your friends or relatives if one of you switched to using it" (Obioma, p 35).

This symbolises how adopting Western language creates distance within familial relationships. The boys' struggle with language reflects their broader struggle with identity; they are caught between two worlds—one that values tradition and another that champions modernity

The act of fishing in the forbidden Omi-Ala River symbolises both rebellion against parental authority and an embrace of modernity. Their defiance is steeped in mimicry of Western notions of freedom: ***“Trouble begins when the children decide... to fish in the Omi-Ala River, ‘long forsaken by the inhabitants of Akure town like a mother abandoned by her children’”*** (Obioma, p 4). This rebellion signifies not only a rejection of traditional values but also an attempt to assert their identities in a rapidly changing world. However, this act leads to dire consequences, illustrating how mimicry can result in cultural dislocation.

In response to the growing tension, the younger brothers, particularly Benjamin, begin to mimic Ikenna's behaviour in an attempt to understand and cope with his actions. This mimicry reflects a desire to adopt the traits of strength, control, and distance that Ikenna exhibits, but it also intensifies the family's fragmentation. The influence of fear and the need to survive the prophecy's perceived power lead the brothers to mimic destructive behaviours, distancing themselves from the emotional closeness they once shared. This mimicry deepens the rift in their relationships and highlights how colonial and local influences create internal and external conflicts within the family.

The prophecy and Ikenna's descent into suspicion represent the cultural and psychological fractures caused by colonial influences. At one point, Ikenna even questions his relationship with his own brothers, once a source of comfort, seeing them instead as potential threats due to Abulu's words. This shows captures how ambivalence corrodes his sense of family and identity. The prophecy and Ikenna's struggle to reconcile his father's Westernised ambitions with his local culture ultimately lead him down a path of violence, demonstrating how the pressures of mimicry and cultural ambivalence can have tragic effects on identity and family cohesion.

Through ambivalence and mimicry, Obioma poignantly explores the complexities of identity formation in *The Fishermen*. The characters' struggles reflect broader societal issues stemming

from colonial legacies and modern influences. As they navigate their fears, aspirations, and familial bonds.

4.3.3 Impacts of Ambivalence on characters' identities and relationships in *GoM*

In *God of Mercy* by Okezie Nwoka, the themes of postcolonial ambivalence and mimicry profoundly shape the identities and relationships of the characters, particularly through the lens of the protagonist, Ijeoma. The novel explores the tension between traditional Igbo culture and the influences of colonialism, showcasing how these dynamics affect personal and communal identities.

Ijeoma's community, similarly, finds itself divided, while some celebrate her gifts as a blessing, others, influenced by external judgments, begin to question the place of these "strange" talents within their community, some believed that Ijeoma was cursed and that is why their village is receiving food: ***My husband told me that after the sacrifice failed, Igbokwe spoke with the gods, and they told him that whoever cursed Ofoadile's daughter also cursed the people of Ichulu with this evil water that is coming" (p 5).*** This ambivalence contributes to tension and mistrust, as characters negotiate their loyalty to traditional Igbo culture against a backdrop of colonial expectations.

Ijeoma, the protagonist, represents the conflict between accepting her magical talents and conforming to traditional cultural standards. Her distinct abilities make her distinctive, prompting her to swing between pride in her background and a desire to adhere to Western standards such as saving children from the evil forest. This internal turmoil causes anger among the people, who regard her as an outsider. When Ijeoma strives to assert her identity, she is met with hostility from individuals who perceive her peculiarities as threatening.

The introduction of Christianity and Western education causes an identity crisis in the town, separating characters into groups that either accept or reject these influences. Characters who accept Western views frequently look down on those who adhere to traditional ways, resulting in enmity. Christians consider those who worship ancient gods to be fools. This illustrates the deep animosity that stems from ambiguity over cultural identity, as people struggle with their loyalty and the perceived superiority of foreign ideologies.

Ambivalence causes hatred between characters. This is seen when Ofodile gives his daughter to the Christians to get cured from her flying powers, because Igbokwe failed to heal her. Even though Igbokwe tried to convince him that Ijeoma was chosen by the gods: ***“Igbokwe, I do not want to hear your nonsense! You have not, been able to heal my child—so I must send her, to this man who promises he will” (p163).*** In this quote, you can see the choice of words that Ofodile is using. He believes that Christians have more power and starts to question the power of his own gods.

Hatred developed between Ofodile and Nenna, Ijeoma’s mother, when she heard that Ofodile sent his daughter away to Amalike. Nenna saw nothing wrong with her daughter, she always tried to protect her when others were against her. When she heard that Ofodile sent her daughter away, she was so driven by anger and sorrow that she stood in the market and began to curse her own husband:

That man whom you call Ekwueme. That man whom I used to call my husband—that wicked man, he has taken my daughter from me. He has taken my Ada—stolen her! And now she is with our enemies in Amalike.” Nnenna fell to her knees, and the people at the market square gathered around her. “Last night he was telling me that my Ada is not returning to Ichulu, that my Ada is not returning! I asked that fool of a man, I asked him to return my daughter to me, and he said I will never see my Ada again. He said that he has dismissed her, never to return to Ichulu. He, Ekwueme, this fool of a man, told the mother of his children that she would never see the child whom she carried for nine months—the child whom I birthed with my own blood, (p216).

This symbolises how ambivalence destroyed characters’ good relationship. Ofodile had a good relationship with Mnadi, but when he decided to take Ijeoma to Amalike, their relationship got ruined. Mnandi left her husband’s house and went to live somewhere far.

Ijeoma was a girl with speech disabilities, she wanted to be able to speak like other people and be understood by other people. When she learnt how to read and write in English, she was able to communicate with Ikemba and this built their relationship. This means that ambivalence

creates good relationship between characters. However, this did not change her identity. Her wanting to fly shows the resilience in keeping her identity.

4.3.4 Impacts of mimicry on characters' identities and relationships in *GoM*

Mimicry plays a crucial role in shaping relationships within *God of Mercy*. Characters often imitate behaviours or beliefs from the dominant culture as a means of survival or acceptance. For instance, Pastor Nwosu represents a figure which enforces mimicry through his church's practices, attempting to convert those he deems 'lost.' Ijeoma reflected in her diary: ***They beat and burned me as a child, and now I witness the same horror as they desecrate another set of young ones. In the name of Jesus, is what they are declaring, in the name of another god.,*** (p138). This shows how mimicry creates a rift between characters, fostering resentment among those who resist such changes.

Because of mimicry, hatred developed between the characters. Ijeoma's unique abilities set her apart from the other villagers, leading to both admiration and resentment. While some characters might initially be fascinated by her gifts, the mimicry of Western ideals—such as individualism and a departure from communal values—fuels hatred among those who feel threatened by her difference. For instance, when Ijeoma begins to embrace her powers, some villagers view her as a disruptor of their traditional way of life.

The introduction of Christianity through missionary influence complicates relationships within the village. Characters who adopt Christian beliefs often look down on those who adhere to traditional practices, leading to divisions and animosity

4.4 Postcolonialism as a central theme in the novels

4.4.1 *The Fishermen*

In *The Fishermen*, Chigozie Obioma presents postcolonialism as a central theme by exploring the complexities of identity, familial relationships, and the lingering effects of colonialism on Nigerian society. The narrative reflects the struggles of the Agwu family against a backdrop of political instability and cultural dislocation, highlighting how colonial legacies shape personal and collective experiences.

The novel is set in Nigeria during the mid-1990s, a period marked by political turmoil and military rule. This context serves as a reminder of the colonial past that left deep scars on the nation's identity. Obioma illustrates this through the character of Mr Agwu, who embodies traditional patriarchal authority yet is influenced by Western ideals: ***I sweat and suffer to send you to school to receive a Western education as civilized men, but you chose instead to be fishermen. Fish-a men!" (p 56).*** This reflects how colonial influences permeated familial expectations, creating a conflict between traditional values and modern aspirations. The father's desire for his sons to achieve success through Western education symbolises the internalised colonial mindset that prioritises foreign ideals over indigenous culture.

The tension between tradition and modernity is further illustrated through the brothers' relationships. Their decision to fish in the forbidden Omi-Ala River signifies both rebellion against their father's authority and a yearning for freedom from societal constraints. Trouble begins when the children decide to fish in the Omi-Ala River, ***'long forsaken by the inhabitants of Akure town like a mother abandoned by her children'" (p 4).*** This act of defiance highlights their struggle to carve out their identities in a rapidly changing world. The river, once a symbol of life and community connection, becomes tainted by fear and superstition, mirroring Nigeria's postcolonial condition where cultural heritage is overshadowed by external influences.

Abulu's prophecy serves as a powerful metaphor for the destructive impact of colonialism on Nigerian society. The prophecy that Ikenna will be killed by one of his brothers encapsulates the fear and paranoia that arise from living in a postcolonial state: ***Mother's efforts to heal her son, Ikenna, were wasted on him. For the prophecy, like an angered beast, had gone berserk and was destroying his mind with the ferocity of madness, pulling down paintings, breaking walls, emptying cupboards, turning tables until all that he knew, all that was him, all that had become him was left in disarray (Obioma, p 134).*** This psychological turmoil reflects how colonial legacies create an environment of distrust and division among individuals, paralleling Nigeria's ethnic conflicts exacerbated by colonial rule. The brothers' eventual descent into violence underscores the tragic consequences of these external pressures on familial bonds.

Obioma has described *The Fishermen* as an allegory for Nigeria's postcolonial fate, where personal narratives intertwine with national history: ***"When I look back today... I realize that it was during one of these trips to the river that our lives and our world changed"*** (Obioma, p 3). This reflection emphasises how individual experiences are shaped by collective historical events. The brothers' lives become emblematic of Nigeria's struggles with identity, belonging, and the quest for stability in a fractured society.

Through *The Fishermen*, Chigozie Obioma sadly addresses postcolonial themes by examining how colonial legacies influence individual identities and familial relationships within Nigerian society. The interplay between tradition and modernity, embodied in the characters' actions and decisions, reflects broader societal tensions that continue to shape contemporary Nigeria. Ultimately, Obioma's narrative serves as a powerful commentary on the complexities of postcolonial identity, inviting readers to reflect on the enduring impact of history on personal lives.

Obioma artfully uses the Agwu family's tragic unravelling to show how postcolonial legacies continue to shape, and sometimes haunt, the lives of individuals and communities in Nigeria. When reflecting on his father's dreams for his children. He believed that they were destined for great things, that each one of them had a purpose laid out for them. This belief reflects a clash between traditional, predetermined roles and the pursuit of new identities, a common postcolonial tension.

Abulu's prophecy, which sets the brothers against each other, represents lingering colonial chaos: ***"Ikena, you will be bound like a bird on the day you shall die," he cried... "Ikena, you will be mute," he said... "Ikena, you will be crippled," he said... "Your tongue will stick out of your mouth like a hungry beast, and will not return back into your mouth," he thrust out his tongue, and curled it to one side of his mouth. "Ikena, you shall lift your hands to grasp air, but you will not be able to. Ikena, you shall open your mouth to speak on that day"—the madman opened his mouth and made a loud gasping sound of ah, ah—"but words will freeze in your mouth."*** (p 59). The violence and discord sparked by this prophecy symbolises how the divisive impact of colonialism can disrupt community harmony. Colonialism has brought changes in Africa, it

destroyed the cultures and Ikenna believing the prophesy of Abulu symbolises how Africans lost what they once believed in; their culture.

In addition, this quote: *“And our family had become shadows of what we once were,”* (p277) illustrates how Africans became a shadow of what they once were. Their identities, culture or religion changed.

4.4.2 God of Mercy

In *God of Mercy*, Okezie Nwoka presents powerful scenes and dialogues that highlight the impact of colonialism on the village of Ichulu. When Ijeoma’s ability to fly becomes known, people in her village celebrate her as special and gifted. However, when neighbouring Christianised communities learn about her, they see her abilities as signs of evil or superstition. This is evident when outsiders describe her as “possessed” or “touched by the devil,” reflecting colonial Christianity's tendency to demonise indigenous spiritual practices. This conflict mirrors how colonialism frequently positioned Western beliefs as “civilised” and indigenous beliefs as “savage.”

In several scenes, Christian missionaries and outside authorities try to introduce new education systems and Christian values, dismissing Ichulu’s long-standing traditions and knowledge systems as backward. For example, elders in Ichulu discuss how their community’s spiritual practices are looked down upon, and some express fear that their children will be taught to reject their heritage. This dismissal represents colonialism's attempt to erase indigenous ways of knowing and to replace them with Western ideologies.

Certain characters begin to question their beliefs due to the influence of colonial education and religion. For instance, Ikemba struggles with the pressure to “become a Christian” to gain acceptance in the church. His internal conflict reflects how colonialism often leads individuals to devalue their own cultural identities, resulting in feelings of shame or alienation within their communities and families.

Despite these pressures, Ichulu demonstrates resilience by holding onto its traditions. Ijeoma’s family continues to see her abilities as a blessing, even as others see them as a curse. The village’s

commitment to its spiritual and cultural practices, despite external pressures to conform, represents the postcolonial struggle for autonomy and identity. Nwoka uses Ijeoma's mother and her love for her as symbols of the community's refusal to be completely shaped by colonial influences. These scenes illustrate how *God of Mercy* uses postcolonial themes to explore the complexities of identity, spiritual resilience, and the cultural survival of Ichulu. Through Ijeoma's experiences, the novel portrays a community that, while challenged by colonial pressures, fights to preserve its values and traditions.

In addition, Okezie Nwoka uses the themes of mimicry and ambivalence to portray the tension between African cultural traditions and the influence of Western colonial ideals. By illustrating how characters negotiate these opposing forces, Nwoka highlights the deep impact of colonialism on identity, spirituality, and social cohesion in the fictional Igbo community of Ichulu.

Nnamdi's ambivalence is evident in his conflicting feelings about his daughter's supernatural abilities, which are seen as a blessing in his own culture but might be regarded as unnatural or threatening by the Christianised outsiders. Nnamdi wants to embrace and protect his daughter's gifts, yet he fears the judgment of Westernised communities. His ambivalence reveals the pressure to conform to colonial norms even as he values his traditional beliefs, highlighting the alienation that colonial ideologies impose on indigenous communities.

Nwoka suggests that ambivalence, rather than being purely negative, may open a space for cultural renewal. Through the characters' selective embrace and rejection of colonial influences, Nwoka shows that ambivalence allows for a re-examination of identity. This duality challenges colonial stereotypes and expectations, illustrating a complex negotiation that enables the community to redefine itself in ways that honour its past and adapt to its present.

Ijeoma was feared and seen as an outcast because she cannot talk, and when she starts to fly... her people partly fear her and partly assume that she communicates with the gods. She is both revered for her potential connection to the divine and ostracised for not conforming to societal norms. This duality reflects the broader conflict within Igbo society as it grapples with the imposition of Western ideologies.

As Ijeoma is exiled into a Christian community, she faces the harsh realities of being labelled a witch. This transition illustrates how colonial religious practices disrupt traditional beliefs. The church was led by a downright evil pastor who eventually wished to use her gifts for his own gain. This manipulation of Ijeoma's abilities by the pastor represents the exploitation of indigenous spirituality by colonial forces. The church becomes a site of oppression rather than salvation, showcasing how colonialism distorts local belief systems and creates conflict within communities.

Despite the challenges she faces, Ijeoma's journey reflects a form of resistance against colonial ideologies. Her psychic powers and ability to fly symbolise a connection to her ancestral roots that cannot be easily extinguished. Ijeoma healed a barren woman and rescued a boy born with a full set of teeth from the evil forest. These acts signify not only her innate abilities but also her role as a bridge between traditional practices and new realities imposed by colonialism. Her resilience embodies the struggle for cultural survival in a rapidly changing world.

The novel also explores how colonialism affects community dynamics. As Ijeoma navigates her exile, she confronts the complexities of belonging in both her Igbo village and the Christian community. She grapples with the beliefs of other people—just as she did as a child among her own people. This shows Ijeoma's sense of displacement as she is caught between two worlds that reject her. Her experiences reflect the broader theme of cultural dislocation that many individuals face in postcolonial societies.

Furthermore, Okezie Nwoka uses Ijeoma's experiences in the Christian church to symbolise the clash between colonial and traditional beliefs. This conflict is manifested through Ijeoma's journey from her Igbo village, where ancestral worship is prevalent, to a Christian community that labels her a witch due to her supernatural abilities. This transition underscores the broader themes of cultural dislocation and the struggle for identity in a postcolonial context.

Ijeoma's exile from her village of Ichulu represents the rejection of traditional beliefs in favour of Western ideologies. In her village, she is both feared and revered for her powers, which are seen as a connection to the divine. Ijeoma was feared and seen as an outcast because she cannot talk, and when she starts to fly, her people partly fear her and partly assume that she communicates

with the gods. However, upon entering the Christian community, she is immediately marginalised and accused of witchcraft. This shift illustrates how colonial influences distort perceptions of indigenous spirituality, turning traditional practices into sources of suspicion and fear.

The church, rather than providing sanctuary, becomes a site of oppression for Ijeoma. The pastor exploits her abilities for personal gain, reflecting how colonial powers manipulate indigenous beliefs for their own purposes. This manipulation highlights the hypocrisy within colonial religious institutions that often prioritise their own interests over genuine spiritual guidance. It demonstrates how Western ideologies can corrupt traditional values and create further divisions within communities.

Ijeoma's experience in the church leads to a profound crisis of faith as she grapples with conflicting belief systems. Forced to renounce her traditional gods while enduring abuse and isolation, she reflects on her identity and the nature of mercy. Ijeoma pleads for protection and mercy from the god of her people while being forced to renounce them. This internal struggle symbolises the broader conflict faced by individuals in postcolonial societies who must navigate between their ancestral heritage and imposed foreign beliefs.

Despite her suffering, Ijeoma's journey also embodies resistance against colonial ideologies. Her supernatural abilities serve as a reminder of her connection to traditional beliefs that cannot be easily extinguished. Her resilience in the face of adversity highlights the enduring strength of indigenous cultures amidst external pressures.

Through Ijeoma's experiences in the Christian church, Okezie Nwoka effectively symbolises the clash between colonial and traditional beliefs in *God of Mercy*. The novel illustrates how colonialism disrupts indigenous spirituality, leading to marginalisation and manipulation while simultaneously highlighting the resilience required to navigate these cultural conflicts. Ultimately, Nwoka invites readers to reflect on the complexities of identity formation in postcolonial contexts and the enduring power of cultural heritage.

4.5. Discussions

In this chapter, the researcher delves into the findings of the study on mimicry and ambivalence in Okezie Nwoka's *God of Mercy* and Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*. The researcher interprets these findings in relation to the research objectives, exploring how they contribute to the understanding of cultural identity, the impact of colonialism, and the complexities of character relationships within the context of African literature.

4.5.1 Influence of Western Culture

One of the primary findings of this study is the depiction of mimicry as a means through which both authors illustrate the pervasive influence of Western culture on African traditions. In *God of Mercy*, Nwoka portrays characters who adopt Western behaviours and ideologies, reflecting a desire for acceptance within a changing societal landscape. For instance, Ijeoma's supernatural abilities and her subsequent ostracisation, highlight the tension between traditional beliefs and Western ideologies. This mimicry not only serves as a survival mechanism but also critiques the superficial adoption of foreign values that often leads to cultural dislocation.

Similarly, in *The Fishermen*, Obioma presents a family grappling with their identities amidst colonial legacies. The father's authoritarian demeanour can be seen as a mimicry of colonial power structures, suggesting that the internalisation of oppressive systems can perpetuate cycles of violence and control within families. This finding underscores how mimicry operates on multiple levels—both as a form of adaptation and as a critique of cultural assimilation.

4.5.2. Impact on Characters' Identities and Relationships

Another significant finding is the impact of ambivalence on characters' identities and relationships. The characters in both novels exhibit a profound sense of conflict as they navigate their dual identities shaped by traditional values and external influences. In *God of Mercy*, Ijeoma embodies this ambivalence; her struggle with her supernatural gifts reflects her desire to belong while simultaneously resisting societal expectations. This internal conflict affects her relationships with family and community members, leading to isolation but also to moments of empowerment.

In *The Fishermen*, ambivalence manifests through the interactions among family members, particularly between the father and his sons. The father's rigid adherence to authority creates tension, illustrating how colonial legacies can distort familial bonds. The sons' attempts to assert their identities often lead to rebellion against paternal authority, highlighting the complexities of navigating personal desires within oppressive structures.

4.5.3 Colonialism as a Central Theme

Colonialism emerges as a central theme that informs both authors' portrayals of mimicry and ambivalence. In *God of Mercy*, Nwoka addresses the lingering effects of colonialism through Ijeoma's experiences, suggesting that colonial narratives continue to shape contemporary identities. The community's response to Ijeoma's abilities reflects broader societal anxieties about cultural authenticity in the face of external pressures.

Obioma's *The Fishermen* further emphasises this theme by depicting how colonial histories influence familial dynamics. The father's authoritarian control can be interpreted as a reflection of colonial power dynamics that persist in postcolonial societies. This finding illustrates how colonialism not only impacts individual identities but also shapes collective experiences within communities.

The findings align with existing scholarship on postcolonial literature, particularly regarding the themes of mimicry and ambivalence. Scholars such as Homi K Bhabha have argued that mimicry is a complex strategy employed by colonised subjects to negotiate their identities within oppressive frameworks. The analysis supports this view by demonstrating how both Nwoka and Obioma depict mimicry as both a survival tactic and a form of resistance.

Additionally, the exploration of ambivalence resonates with works by theorists like Edward Said, who highlight the dualities present in postcolonial identities. The characters' struggles reflect broader societal tensions between tradition and modernity, underscoring the ongoing relevance of these themes in contemporary African literature.

The implications of our findings extend beyond literary analysis; they offer critical insights into contemporary discussions about cultural identity in postcolonial contexts. By illustrating how

mimicry and ambivalence shape character identities, Nwoka and Obioma provide a nuanced understanding of how individuals navigate cultural change. This understanding is particularly relevant in an era marked by globalisation, where traditional cultures are continually redefined in response to external influences.

While this study provides valuable insights into the themes of mimicry and ambivalence, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. The focus on only two texts may not fully capture the diversity within African literature regarding these themes. Future research could expand this analysis by including additional works from different authors or exploring other cultural contexts.

Moreover, examining gender dynamics in relation to mimicry and ambivalence could yield further insights into how different identities experience cultural change. Investigating how female characters navigate these themes could enrich our understanding of gendered experiences in postcolonial narratives.

In conclusion, this chapter interpreted the key findings regarding mimicry and ambivalence in Okezie Nwoka's *God of Mercy* and Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*. By analysing how these themes reflect the influence of Western culture on African identities and relationships, we have illuminated the complexities inherent in postcolonial literature. The exploration of colonialism as a central theme further underscores the significance of these narratives in understanding contemporary cultural dynamics. Through this study, we contribute to ongoing conversations about identity formation in an increasingly interconnected world.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter four provided a comprehensive discussion of the findings from the analysis of mimicry and ambivalence in Okezie Nwoka's *God of Mercy* and Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*. The primary objective was to explore how these themes illustrated the influence of Western culture on African identities and relationships, while also interpreting colonialism as a central theme in both novels.

Both authors depict mimicry as a response to Western cultural influences. In *God of Mercy*, Ijeoma's supernatural abilities and her subsequent ostracisation, highlight the tension between

traditional beliefs and external pressures. In *The Fishermen*, the father's authoritarian demeanour reflects colonial power structures, suggesting that mimicry can serve both adaptive and critical functions.

Ambivalence and mimicry significantly shape characters' identities and their interactions. Ijeoma's internal conflicts illustrate her struggle to reconcile her gifts with societal expectations, leading to isolation, yet, at the same time, these are moments of empowerment. In contrast, the family dynamics in *The Fishermen* reveal how colonial legacies distort relationships, particularly between the father and his sons, emphasising the complexities of navigating personal desires within oppressive frameworks.

Post Colonialism is portrayed as a pervasive influence in both novels. Nwoka uses Ijeoma's experiences to reflect on the ongoing effects of colonial narratives, while Obioma depicts how these histories shape familial dynamics and authority structures.

5. Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter synthesises the findings into clear conclusions based on each research objective, followed by targeted recommendations for future research. These recommendations aim to extend the conversation initiated by this study, encouraging further exploration of these themes within a broader literary and cultural context. By addressing these objectives, the researcher hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of how African literature reflects and responds to the complexities of cultural identity in an increasingly globalised world.

5.2. Conclusions

5.2.1. Influence of Western Culture

Both Okezie Nwoka in *God of Mercy* and Chigozie Obioma in *The Fishermen* effectively utilise mimicry and ambivalence to illustrate the complex interplay between Western and African cultures. Their narratives reveal how characters adopt Western behaviours and ideologies, often leading to cultural dislocation and identity crises. This portrayal highlights the tension between maintaining traditional values and adapting to external influences, suggesting that mimicry can serve both as a means of survival and a critique of cultural assimilation.

5.2.2. Impact on Identity and Relationships

The study reveals that ambivalence significantly impacts characters' identities and relationships in both novels. In *God of Mercy*, Ijeoma's internal conflict illustrates her struggle to reconcile her supernatural gifts with societal expectations, leading to a nuanced exploration of identity formation. In *The Fishermen*, the familial tensions arising from colonial legacies highlight how mimicry can distort relationships, particularly between authority figures and their subordinates.

5.2.3. Post Colonialism as a Central Theme

Colonialism emerges as a central theme that profoundly influences character behaviour and community dynamics in both *God of Mercy* and *The Fishermen*. Nwoka's depiction of Ijeoma's experiences reflects the ongoing effects of colonial narratives, while Obioma illustrates how

colonial histories shape familial authority structures. This thematic exploration underscores the lasting impact of colonialism on contemporary African societies.

5.3. Recommendations

5.3.1. Influence of Western Culture

Future research should explore a wider range of African literary texts that address the themes of mimicry and ambivalence. This could include comparative studies across different genres or authors to understand how various cultural contexts influence the representation of these themes. Additionally, examining contemporary works might provide insights into how current global dynamics continue to shape African identities.

5.3.2. Impact on Identity and Relationships

Further research should investigate the role of gender in shaping experiences of ambivalence and mimicry within these narratives. Analysing how female characters navigate these themes could enrich our understanding of identity formation in postcolonial contexts. Additionally, longitudinal studies that track character development over time could provide deeper insights into how ambivalence influences personal growth and relational dynamics.

5.3.3. Post Colonialism as a Central Theme

Future studies should delve deeper into the historical contexts surrounding these novels to better understand the specific colonial legacies at play. Comparative analyses with other postcolonial texts from different regions could also illuminate commonalities and divergences in how colonialism is represented across cultures. Furthermore, interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate historical, sociological, or anthropological perspectives might enhance our understanding of colonialism's multifaceted impact on identity and culture.

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Appendices

ECA



NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES

DESKTOP STUDIES

RESEARCHER/SUPERVISOR DETAILS

Title (Prof/Dr/Mr/Ms/Other): Ms

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E-mail address: tuvalombola@gmail.com University: : Namibia University of Science and Technology
Faculty: : Faculty of Commerce, Human Science, and Education
Department: Department of Communication and Languages
Title of research project: An investigation of mimicry and ambivalence in <i>God of Mercy</i> by Okezie Nwoka and <i>The Fishermen</i> by Chigozie Obioma
NUST students (indicate degree programme): Master in English and Applied Linguistics
Supervisor (Title, name and surname): Prof Max Mhene

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	Yes	NS*	No	ACTION REQUIRED
1. Familiarity with Ethical codes of conduct				
As researcher, I have familiarised myself with the professional code(s) of ethics and guidelines for Ethically responsible research relevant to my field of study as specified in the list herewith attached, AND the policy for the assurance and promotion of Ethically accountable research at NUST	x			If YES: Continue with the checklist. If NS/NO: Researcher must do so before proceeding.
2. The proposed research: (Proceed with the whole of Section 2)				
a) Involves gathering information directly from human subjects (individuals or groups) (e.g. by means of questionnaires, interviews, observation of subjects or working with personal data)			x	If YES: Continue with the checklist. If NO: This checklist process does not apply to the proposed research, except if 2 (b) applies.

b) Involves gathering information directly from companies, corporations, organisations, NGOs, government departments etc. that is not available in the public domain			X	If YES: Continue with the checklist. If NO: This checklist process does not apply to the proposed research.
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Valombola Tuhafeni		16/07/2024
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

I hereby declare that I will conduct my research in compliance with the professional code(s) of ethics and guidelines for Ethically responsible research relevant to my field of study as specified in the list herewith attached, and the 'Framework policy for the assurance and promotion of Ethically accountable research at the Namibia University of Science and Technology,' even if my research poses minimal or low Ethical risk.

2

SUPERVISORS

PROF MAX MHENE Name of Supervisor (if applicable)	 Signature	16/07/2024 Date
Name of co-supervisor (if applicable)	Signature	Date

Confirmation letter



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09 August 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Namibia University of Science and Technology offers its compliments to your esteemed organisation and would like to avail the following to your kind attention:

Tuhafeni Shange-Shiwovanhu Valombola, student number **222142499**, is a Masters of English and Applied Linguistics student studying at Namibia University of Science and Technology. The student is required to undertake a research project as partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master's degree programme. She intends to carry out research on the following topic under the supervision of **Dr. Max Mhene**.

An investigation of Mimicry and Ambivalence in God of Mercy by Okezie Nwoka and The Fishermen by Chigozie Obioma

On behalf of the Department of Communication and Languages, I humbly request your good offices to assist the bearer in enhancing her academic endeavours. I wish to assure you that the information/data provided by your offices will only be for academic purposes and in strict confidence.

I thank you in advance for your usual cooperation. Please be assured of my highest consideration.

Scholarly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aletta'.

Dr Aletta M. Hautemo

**Masters of English and Applied Linguistics Programme Coordinator Department of Communication
and Languages**