

# THE CENTER-PERIPHERY ENCOUNTER IN AFRICAN FICTION: A WHITE CHILD'S CONSTRUCTION OF A 'THIRD SPACE' IN IFEOMA CHINWUBA'S *FEARLESS* (2004)

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## Résumé

*Cet article explore la portée du "troisième espace" de Homi K. Bhabha (2004) quant au contact qu'a un enfant Européen avec la culture africaine via des enfants Africains de son âge dans l'œuvre intitulée Fearless (2004) de Ifeoma Chinwuba. Chinwuba plaide pour une acceptation mutuelle entre Noirs et Blancs à travers la rencontre entre un enfant originaire de l'occident et ceux dits de la périphérie, c'est-à-dire l'Afrique. Cette acceptation mutuelle telle que promue et qui semble possible par le truchement de ce que Bhabha nomme le «troisième espace» constitue la toile de fond du roman. Ainsi, prenant appui sur la théorie postcoloniale qui vise à briser la vision qu'a le centre de la culture et de la tradition africaines, cet article examine l'importance du «troisième espace» de Bhabha tel qu'illustré par le petit homme venu de l'occident avec la culture africaine via des camarades Africains du même âge dans Fearless. Dans cette étude, je démontre également comment Chinwuba fait usage de la littérature comme moyen de résistance au racisme.*

**Mots clés:** Culture africaine, assimilation, enfants de la périphérie, troisième espace, enfant de l'occident

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## Abstract

*This paper explores the scope of Homi K. Bhabha's "Third Space" (2004) as regards a White child's acquaintance with Black culture via African children in Ifeoma Chinwuba's Fearless (2004). Chinwuba makes a child of the Centre and Peripheral children advocate mutual acceptance between Blacks and Whites. As promoted by the children, this mutual acceptance which sounds possible through what Bhabha terms the "Third Space" underlies the backcloth of the novel. Therefore, focusing on postcolonial reading, a theoretical tool that aims to debunk the Centre's view about non-European culture and tradition, this paper examines the scope of Bhabha's "Third Space" in regard to the White child's acquaintance with Black culture via African children in Fearless. I also show how Chinwuba uses literature as a form of resistance to racism.*

**Key Words:** African culture, assimilation, peripheral children, Third Space, white child

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## Introduction

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*Fearless* turns out to be a novel that revitalises and revives the culture considered as peripheral or subaltern to the eyes of the Centre, that is, the West. In the novel, Ifeoma Chinwuba pictures a white child-character who cleaves to African lore. The writer makes her African child-characters together with their fellow White child reverse what is viewed as the norm or in Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's words move the centre (Ngũgĩ, 1993).

Deservedly, Ngũgĩ claims that: "Cultures under total domination from others can be crippled, deformed, or else die" (Ngũgĩ, 1993: xvi). Therein lies the motivation of writing *Fearless* which seems to struggle for the survival and revival of African cultural life despite the unremitting and inexhaustible vestige of colonialism in Africa. In this way, the force of Black culture is celebrated through its total acceptance by Ralph, a European child-character. The point is the cultural vitality, the richness and the greatness of African culture and tradition found within the community of Umudo, the local setting, which entices the White boy who is away from his original Western background. Though the African way of life spawns both hesitation and contradiction in this ten-year-old foreign child, what is worth noting is his eventual adherence and acceptance of this culture considered as barbaric and savage.

In point of fact, some writers have labored the issue of the African child's encounter with the West. Thus, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1962), John Munonye's *The Only Son* (1966), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) among many others deal with the African cultural issue. In these fictional works, some African child-characters namely Nwoye and Nnanna, as well as some grown-up ones such as Eugene, the adult and father character are influenced by the western culture.

However, what makes Chinwuba's *Fearless* different and original to a certain degree compared to the aforementioned novels is that the inhabitants of this imaginary traditional society are homogenous folk that stay bound to the traditional and authentic life. The emancipation of the characters along with their commitment to stay themselves due to self-confidence is a value, a virtue I am interested in. Accordingly, the actions they perform together with their reaction are worth praising and studying, thereby, making me surmise the writer's hidden desire and dream which consists in repackaging Africa image. Thus, the writer's efforts to break cultural difference between the West and Africa paired with a Western child's outstanding contribution to stop the circulation of stereotypes and clichés about Africa and then promote togetherness constitute the novelty of my analysis. From this standpoint, my contribution can open new vistas in terms of partnership between whites and blacks beyond Chinwuba's literary output.

The pertinent and central point of this paper is the moving of the dominant discourse about African culture or what I may call centre "writes back" to centre paraphrasing Bill Ashcroft et al. (Ashcroft et al, 1989). In that perspective, light will be cast on Chinwuba's *Fearless* by using

postcolonial theory. Indeed, this theory attempts to disrupt, to contradict and counterattack the dominant discourse of colonial power. Endorsing this standpoint, Robert J. C. Young writes thus: "Postcolonialism seeks to intervene, to force its alternative knowledges into the power structures of the west as well as the non-west. It seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different peoples of the world" (Young, 2003: 7). This view is well demonstrated and shared by Chinwuba throughout the lines of the novel. Therefore, the analysis will show how the Periphery or the subaltern culture overcomes the powerfulness of the Center, and then reveal the assimilation of the so-called barbaric culture and tradition by the Western boy.

A series of questions constitute the background and the leading analytical perspectives of the exploration of Western stereotypes about Africa paired with the eventual adherence of the West to this subaltern culture through its child: is there any superior culture? How does Ifeoma Chinwuba playfully dissect the powerfulness of the Black culture? How is the Western culture dissolved or destabilized in *Fearless*? The main thrust of this paper revolves around the assimilation of the Western boy, the enactment of the subaltern culture through this European boy's perspective.

The analysis then falls into three structures. First, It is focused on African lifestyle and the Western logic of culture difference. Second, the paper sheds light on the Western child's assimilation into peripheral culture. As for the last part, it deals with the endeavour made by the White boy to champion togetherness through a "Third Space" susceptible to have diverse races and cultures live as one community and advocate inclusion, mutual acceptance and respect.

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## **1. African way of life and the western logic of culture difference**

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Matt, the White man character travels to Africa with a mind brimful of stereotyped European ideas and thoughts of the Black continent. So, he is depicted as a missionary who has come to Nigeria and beyond Africa with a view to civilising Black people, particularly Umudo community. The text reads:

Matt had spent the next few weeks arranging for the journey. First Missionary Journey to the Unknown, he called it. Go to Africa, to primitive tribes and re-establish the old principles taught them by earlier missionaries. In short, he was to reconvert them, to bring back the Good News, to civilise them (Chinwuba, 2004: 14).

Matt seems to side with Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who claims that "What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Underdeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History" (Hegel, 1956: 99). Matt as well as Hegel and their likes views Africans, not as their equals but as inferior and uncomplete fellow critters that need civilising. Considering the date *Fearless* was released (2004),

what is unearthed through such an allegation is racism and disparaging words toward African people.

As underscored in the novel, the above quotation means that Africa should remain under the sway and the paternalistic view of the West. The African way of life seems relegated to the periphery, to the second zone since for the Westerners, Blackness represents the diametrical opposite (...) it stands for ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality (Sardar, 2008: xiii). Therefore, they view African people as an "uncivilised" race. As such, they need reshaping and sophisticating to enter what is considered to be the civilised world. The old clichés and stereotypes developed about Africa are kept burning in the Westerners' collective imaginary through the character of Matt in *Fearless*. The White man's rejection of the African lifestyle is highlighted as follows: "He had warned Ralph (his son) several times about mixing too much with the natives and their ways" (Chinwuba, 2004: 78). Obviously, the Self/Other difference is defined and delineated. The representative of the Western people is against the blending, the meeting of cultures which is likely to mitigate racial conflicts.

So, mixing with the African way of life is tantamount to soiling the White race if we were to tally with the White man's viewpoint in the novel. Such a misconception might account for the opposition between the Western father and his child with regard to the latter's adoption of African culture. Chinwuba then brings back to surface this old dominant discourse by having the Western child reverse their logic of culture difference. Accordingly, the authoress might be deriding the West when she makes the European child get attracted by the so called primitive tribe.

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## **2. The white child's assimilation into peripheral culture**

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In *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess define assimilation as "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them into a common cultural life" (Park & Burgess, 1969: 735). What is meant by assimilation is at first glance, the absorption or acceptance of various foreign aspects of culture or way of life and behaviour. The concept of assimilation is then about the White child in the narrative of *Fearless*, as his culture is not portrayed as the dominant one but rather the indigenous people's, which the Western boy sounds to relish. If the process of absorbing the other's cultural codes and values is known as assimilation, then Ralph Wilson, the Western-born child is an assimilated person. Many passages are illustrative of the foreign White lad's assimilation and "going native" (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 106) in *Fearless*. It is noteworthy that "Going native" in Bill Ashcroft and his associates' words could encompass lapses from European behaviour, the participation in 'native' ceremonies, or the adoption and even enjoyment of local customs in terms of dress, food, recreation and entertainment (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 106).

Indeed, living side by side with a new culture exposes human being to its overwhelming influences. In fact, when a man considered as

belonging to an inferior zone is exposed to a dominant culture, he subsequently ends up lured into this foreign cultural codes. The reverse paradigm is also possible. A man from a dominant culture gets influenced when he is conversant with a lower cultural background. Thus, be he of Western or African origin, a White man or a Black man who lives in a foreign cultural environment bears the hallmarks of that culture as shown through the European boy in *Fearless*.

The authoress adopts a three-step approach to frame this assimilation process or the Western integration into the African ways of life namely the learning of the indigenous language, the African lifestyle (food, custom and tradition) and the African folklore medicine. She substantiates the linguistic assimilation of the White boy to emphasize his Africanization. Thus, we are left to feel his interest in the indigenous language as follows: "I am already learning. Uwa teaches me. Nmiri is water. Bia, come, Kedu, how are you? See?" (Chinwuba, 2004: 80). From this assertion, it is crystal clear that the little foreigner is willing to believe in the local habits. This kind of admittance of the Western child into Umudo local language among many other habits is a successful attempt the authoress makes. Ralph then turns out to be a staunch proponent of African culture with regard to the initiation rite which is solemnised and extolled. Indeed, it is through him that African tradition and culture are brought to the Centre. His pro-black message is suggestive of his in-between status or twoness which is likely to bind the two worlds, the African world and the Western's together. In this way, he shall move the Centre (Ngũgĩ, 1993).

Another assimilation trait tucked into the novel is the child's attachment to African food. Showing the boy's going native and attachment to the indigenous diet or food, Chinwuba offers an articulate account of one of his assimilated facets through this passage: "Ralph took a handful of fufu and made to put it directly into his mouth (...) Ralph gobbled the whole liquid down" (Chinwuba, 2004: 54). The boy's love of this food testifies to his acceptance of assimilation.

What is even more interesting about the novel is its description of Ralph's adaptation to African lifestyle. Indeed, Chinwuba masterfully shows how the White child adapts to the lifestyle of the local community that life's vicissitudes make him meet. In this vein, the writer corroborates the strength and force of the peripheral culture that resists not to let itself yield to the intruder's volition and will. In fact, unlike his father who still rejects the tradition and culture of Umudo, the local setting, the young traveler finds himself uprooted to let himself get assimilated. One of the most vivid accounts of his assimilation and "going native" is spotlighted in these lines:

The Supervisor (the White man and father of the Western boy) was there, with Uwa (the houseboy) by his side. He watched, dazed, as his son half-marched, half—ran amongst the natives. Never had he imagined, when he was taking this job, that it would come to this. No one had warned him in London about this aspect of a boy's life in Africa.

What was more baffling was the ease with which Ralph (the White boy) had accepted this alien custom, had yearned for it, had embraced it, had become engulfed in it (Chinwuba, 2004: 182).

The young traveler's acceptance of African customs is clearly displayed. The words used to describe his assimilation are really emphasized by the expressions "yearned for it," "embraced it," and "engulfed in it" to make the reader notice how committed and devoted to the African lore the child is. Chinwuba is correcting the misrepresentation of African lifestyle contained in foreign texts on Africa when she has the English-born child break falsehood and adopt the indigenous way of life. This passage which evidences that Ralph is an aficionado of everything African convinces me to use Fanon's account of the alienated African in other terms in *Black Skin White Mask*. Mocking at the alienated African, Fanon posits that he becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle (Fanon, 1986: 18). I would rather put that the European child becomes blacker as he renounces his whiteness, his sophisticated and europeanised world to the detriment of Black culture. Ralph's refusal to comply with his father's view about the African cultural life is a telltale sign as regards the destruction of stereotypes developed about Africa according to which Africa has no culture. Ralph's father might be shocked, but his son has been making his way amongst the natives cum their culture.

From now on, the Western child is a full member of Umudo community. As such, he willingly abides by its rule, its cultural protocols and codes. Dealing with Umuaro community which is similar to that of Umudo under study, Emmanuel Obiechina pens:

If you are Umuaro you are tied to the rest of Umuaro (...) you have rights and obligations defined within the social structure and inviolable because they bear the stamp of custom and tradition (...) You are subject to its taboos and prohibitions and are entitled to participate fully and actively in the life of the community (Obiechina, 1975: 203-204).

Raymond Williams goes on to consider community as a sense of common identity and characteristics (Williams, 1976: 75) as it is substantiated through the character of Ralph, the Western child in *Fearless*. Like any member of Umuaro, Ralph sounds to confirm and strengthen his bonds and ties with Umudo community. In this way, he becomes a full member of Umudo as he takes part in the initiation ceremony which achieves his belongingness, inclusion and integration.

Chinwuba might be on a par with Chinua Achebe when the latter skilfully writes that: "Africa is not fiction. Africa is people, real people" (Achebe, 2009: 157). Such a contention might be behind the British child's acquiescence in the local community life he was negatively told about in books or texts written by non-Africans. Wole Soyinka has this to add: "Africa has paid, and continues to pay a heavy price for the upkeep of a European Fiction" (Soyinka, 2012: 39). It follows from both Achebe's and Soyinka's contentions that Chinwuba is resolute to make the truth surface and then break misconception and misrepresentation. To back up her

viewpoint, she has Ralph deconstruct falsehood, and reconstruct true facts and the truth about Africa.

In the encounter of Western way of life with the Black culture, what is left in abeyance is the Western culture while the African lore is solemnised, revived and revitalised in *Fearless*. As a matter of fact, Ralph starts his "africanisation" journey when he challenges his father and joins the group of initiation. This ceremony, I qualify as an African-British ritual for a foreign Western child debunks the master-servant relationship and advocates mutual acceptance.

Here, the Black children are pictured to withstand imperialism and eventually have the representative of the West bow down to their culture and tradition. Poring over the book, I can use John Munonye's voice through the character of Idimogu in *The Only Son* to back up my analysis. In a conversation with Chiaku, the only son's mother about the liaison their children have with the White settlers, the old man shares with the reader the anxiety of the local community regarding the treason of their children to the land. The text reads: "This is a bad wind which has come into our land (...) The worst thing about it is that children relish it—and these same children will one day be the fathers and mothers of the land" (Munonye, 1966: 92). Unlike those native children depicted by Munonye as defenders of the foreign culture, the ones in *Fearless* are the staunch, the unswerving defenders of the Black culture. The bad wind foreshadowed for the African land years ago in Munonye's *The Only Son* is no longer its, but the White's in Chinwuba's *Fearless*. Contrary to the wise man, I may argue that the current wind in *Fearless* is not bad as such, but, it is rather a good omen.

Anyway, whether it is Ralph or his mother, both believe in Black culture and tradition, hence their search for traditional medicine to heal the sick mother: "There are many great medicine-men in Africa. They have the herb already for this disease without our knowing it. If so, find it, son. Find it and save your mother's life" (Chinwuba, 2004: 19) the mother insistently reveals. The force, the redemptive feature of African culture through its medicine is corroborated by the White woman who seems both to deconstruct the stereotypes developed about Africa and to underscore the ignorance of her fellow Western people. We then witness the entry of the subaltern into the "master's" belief, for, as Ngũgĩ contends: "What one race can do, another one can" (Ngũgĩ, 1975: 131). No doubt, the Black race can even do it more than the White race can, if we were to concur with Ralph's mother's words regarding African folkloric medical science.

Indeed, asserting that Africans have the herb already for her disease, she countenances the force and the vitality of the African traditional medical science. Of greater significance again is that Africa seems to own the solution to the illness long before as emphasised by the use of the adverb "already" in the aforementioned quotation. This entry is backed up by the socialisation of the foreign child coupled with both the mother and the son's acceptance of African traditional mode of conduct and life. In this line of argument, what seems praiseworthy is the creation of what Homi Bhabha terms the "Third Space," which is likely to lead Black and White to mutual acceptance and respect.

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### 3. The white child's clarion call for togetherness through a "third space"

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The peripheral children's and the Western child's encounter in *Fearless* is suggestive of a burgeoning society where Blacks and Whites are likely to merge and break racial line. Indeed, when Chinwuba makes the Western child assimilate into a new culture codes (indigenous language, lifestyle and folklore medicine) different from his, she brings about the emergence of a contact zone where conflicting heterogeneities are silenced and subdued. In this vein, she gives room to the presence of cultural homogeneities likened to the "Third Space" termed by Homi K. Bhabha (2004). In post-colonial Africa, the "Third Space" is a zone of cultural exchange where the hegemonic posture of the Western civilization is not valid. The "Third Space" does not tolerate the expression of cultural singularities of African nationalism either. Hopefully in *Fearless*, the "Third Space" is a hybrid realm where the White man is urged to renounce his logic of cultural otherness and get on a par with African ways as illustrated in the following quote:

Fearless went to a corner, tilted his glass, poured some of its contents on the parquet floor, and said: 'To you, renowned forefathers of Paddington, drink.' He let drop some more drink. 'And to you, illustrious ancestors of London...drink has come. He poured more out. 'And you, great people of Umudo, take and drink. I salute you all. I thank you all.' Then bringing his glass to his lips, he indicated to Mr and Mrs Wilson, to do likewise (Chinwuba, 2004: 251).

Ralph henceforward *Fearless* is then releasing all mind full of the stereotyped European ideas of the Black continent from viewing Africa as a savage and uncivilised area. Therefore, the name *Fearless* carries the metaphor of courage and the acceptance of the other race. *Fearless* might be urging his fellow European citizens to break and transcend what Reni Eddo-Lodge calls the "fear of a black planet" (Eddo-Lodge, 2017: 117-141) and adopt multiculturalism where diversities are promoted. The realm in which this diversity together with the Black planet or culture is likely to thrive seems to be the "Third Space."

Thus, scientists such as postmodern political geographer and urban theorist Edward William Soja's and Indian English scholar and critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha's definitions sound relevant to have me search for the reasons the authoress of *Fearless* has the children of different races meet in her novel. What I grasp from Soja's opinion is that "Third Space" is a place, where opposite but related aspects can come together and form a profitable environment. He claims thus: "thirdspace is a flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings" (Soja, 1996: 2). In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha fleshes out the concept when he argues that:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew (Bhabha, 2004: 55).

The two theorists' views of the concepts are of note as they suggest the instability of the old space and discourse, thereby opening up a new field or space where views change. What makes Bhabha different from Soja in the framework of this study, is the former's creation of a space where the discourse of the "primitive" tribe henceforth resists and has the child of the light adhere to its idea and belief. Therefore, if Soja's contribution to the working definition is of interest, Bhabha's seems more pertinent to the completion of the analysis.

Indeed, Bhabha's breakthrough in *The Location of Culture* lies in his empowering of the colonized before the colonizer while inactivating and disempowering the colonizer's domination over the colonized. The colonizer meets both a tribe and its children who eventually impose their culture upon the West through Ralph, its child. In this vein, they sound to suggest the coexistence of both cultures. This coexistence is first underlined through the school curricula which encompass the initiation ceremony and other school subjects such as Mathematics, English and History among many others. In doing things so, the writer advocates inclusion and revitalises African culture. Putting side by side ritual ceremonies and other school subjects shows how cautionary the tale of *Fearless* is as regards the birth of a "Third Space" where fixity is broken. Taken altogether, two diverse ways of education (initiation rite and western school subjects) in one system might be suggesting that the Western way and the African's should be part of the same school system. Therefore, "the self" and "the other" though different are likely to become similar to a certain degree.

Indeed, reading Chinwuba's *Fearless*, we are allowed to witness the merging, the hybridization of various races cum shared views and interests that live together in one universe, the land of Umudo. Consequently, races are likely to form a beautiful unity, shape and colour. Ralph Wilson is exhorted to acquire African usage and symbols in addition to his European culture even back home. In fact, the encounter between the British supervisor as well as his child and the Umudo community within the context of a civilizing mission creates a situation in which there is a cultural overlap.

The grain of evidence which is left unsaid in Chinwuba's novel might be her vow and strong desire to combine and put together both African cultural characteristics and the Western world view. So, the two cultures must come into play and develop a new "third" culture in the course of their interaction and clash. As Bhabha puts it:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the

exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. It is the 'in-between' space that carries the burden and meaning of culture, and this is what makes the notion of hybridity so important (Bhabha, 2004: 56).

It follows from this contention that hybridity or third space is a prerequisite for mutual acceptance and peace. Ralph Wilson is made as a palimpsest on which the traces of successive inscriptions or identities are inscribed to re-fashion his life experience. In this line of argument, his creator the Black woman writer uses him to have his fellow White countrymen view Africa not as a jungle or savage landmass but as a partner (Said, 1994: 46). The White boy shifts from one identity to identities: Ralph, Fearless, the medicine man interested in the African way of life (food, language, healing plants).

Accordingly, Ralph helps Africa remove the centre and praise the marginal, the peripheral world or what Enrique Dussel designates as the "Underside" (Dussel, 1996). By the term "underside," I figure out the subaltern and the peripheral people. In Bill Ashcroft and associates' words: "Imperial Europe became defined as the 'centre' in a geography at least as metaphysical as physical. Everything that lay outside that centre was by definition at the margin or the periphery of culture, power and civilization" (Ashcroft et al., 2007: 32). By letting himself go native, Ralph turns into a heterogeneous person open to the outside world. As such, his European culture is therefore made "(im)pure." Said cogently argues this thought as follows: "Far from being unitary or monolithic or autonomous things, cultures actually assume more 'foreign' elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude" (Said, 1994: 15). Europe might deny the force of African cultural values, but Ralph, its representative approves of them.

Therefore, as the future of the West, many Western children, adults of tomorrow shall one day promote Africa and then make the third space gain impetus. This view is rightly couched in the excipit of the book. During a celebration in preparation for the return journey to Africa after a spell in London, the narrator makes us read how the British-born child let breathe and feel his African scent when he glorifies great Africans and orders his parents to do the same (Chinwuba, 2004: 251).

Henceforward, Ralph alias Fearless clearly sounds to show he owes allegiance to African people. His new name which stands for the title of the book testifies to his acceptance of the African identity. And more importantly, his evocation of African people of high title, his paying tribute to the people of Umudo he designates as great is evocative of his hybridised and africanized traits. Ralph alias Fearless is no longer a pure Western boy but an African-English child who has bowed to the African children's will paired with their tradition.

Undoubtedly, Ralph might be telling his parents and beyond Europe that Westerners are wrong, and that Africans are not primitive and uncivilised as it is written in books produced by white people such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *The Philosophy of History* (1956), and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2021). As a "wise baby" to use Sándor

Ferenczi's words (Ferenczi, 1988: 205), Ralph seems to side with the African native people his forefathers and fathers developed and are still developing stereotypes and clichés about. Accordingly, he strives to keep aloof from such disparaging words, thereby, intensifying my contention that there is a real confusion of the tongues between the Western adults and Ralph, the Western child to paraphrase Ferenczi. Indeed, I maintain that this white boy fails to see the truth, the link between what is said about Africa and what the reality, the truthfulness is, hence his promotion of African culture.

Ralph, the western child is so hybridised that he is not willing to return to his homogenised Western identity and culture. He even requests his parents to observe the same ritual he makes on behalf of traditional tenets. So, as emancipated and decolonised-mind folk, the native children in Chinwuba's novel strive to keep the tie that makes them Africans. What they succeed in achieving is the colonisation of the Western boy's mind and turning him into a hybrid "African-British." The potential reader of the book is then given the opportunity to read the process of desalienation (Césaire, 2000: 84) of the children of African origin. There is a true reversal of the roles which definitely shall create a third space probably dreamt of by Ifeoma Chinwuba.

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## Conclusion

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This paper has presented one aspect of what I might loosely term Chinwuba's critical analysis toward the Western world. This critical analysis has been focused on the African ways and the western logic of culture difference, the White child's assimilation into peripheral culture, and the endeavour made by this Western child to campaign for togetherness through a "Third Space." Leaning on cultural issues, the study has explored a Western child's acquaintance with African children to picture the force, the vitality of African culture the imaginary Nigerian society has become embedded in.

Thus, through her depiction of both the local setting and the attitude of the main White child protagonist or eponymous character named Ralph alias Fearless, the authoress has written the Black and White relationship otherwise. Here, Chinwuba seems to distance herself from thinkers and writers like Chinua Achebe, Frantz Fanon, John Munonye and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o whose literary outputs are a diatribe against some alienated black characters who blindly follow the White man. Unlike these authors' fictional works, in *Fearless* the African children succeed in colonising the Western child's mind and making him an "African-European" caught between two cultural codes. In this way, the latter is likely to make his community follow his footsteps to build a third space where the two ways of life shall be put together for the rise of a new society replete with inclusion, mutual respect and acceptance. After reading *Fearless*, we may be sanguine about the bright future of the world, for, the liquidation of colonization is nothing but a prelude to complete liberation, to self-recovery (Memmi, 1991: 151). This self-recovery is becoming true through the agency of African folk in *Fearless*.

Change cannot come at one sweep, but we are offered a perspective through the Western child's African-like libation under the silent gaze of his parents at the end of the book. Silence which seems to suggest "do exactly as you are told dear parents, because Africa is a fount of knowledge" or the house of life to use Ayi Kwei Armah (2002). Therefore, endorsing this view, I may state from what Enrique Dussel presents as from Old order via Passage of liberation we are about to reach a New order (Dussel, 1996: 6) where mutual respect and acceptance will get room and achieve the global civilisation. No doubt, Chinwuba's objective is to make the white world see Africa otherwise so as to build a wonderful world where diverse races mingle with each other and promote unity, sameness and togetherness.

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