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## Postcolonial Epistemology: African “Registers”

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**Abstract.** With global digitalization and the resulting intensification of communication processes, the accumulation and retransmission of ideas and their connotations have accelerated. The academic environment has changed in the course of updating the research field and building up a new picture of the world, complex and diversified. The accumulation of “critical mass” of talented intellectual scholars based both in Africa and within the African Diaspora, focused on “breakthrough” in philosophy and epistemology, was reflected in an attack on the theoretical principles of postmodernism and Postcolonialism and a dynamic transformation of the conceptual principles and content of African studies. Contrary to Eurocentrism, Africa has become an epistemological laboratory, where the developing theories claiming to become metanarratives, within which new metalexemes and metagenres are emerging. Postcolonial discourse contains elements of metascience, a universal system of knowledge production. The interrelation of facts and methodology in their framework fully corresponds to the trends of the time in the era of algorithms, and their choice both forms the mechanisms of scientific knowledge, but also ensures success in the fight against stereotypes, not only racial and ethnic. The theoretical and methodological significance of postcolonial studies refers to the actualization of the “crossroad” problems in the history of Africa and the Diaspora, such as colonialism and decolonization, ethnicity and identity, hybridity and otherness, essentialism and transcendence, exodus and exile. In the present article the authors focus on the results of the interaction of researchers of African descent with postcolonial theory, as well as on the ideas of postcoloniality and decoloniality, which to a certain extent oppose each other. Particular attention is paid to the development of an updated epistemology of knowledge in the process of the formation of the “postcolonial library,” which includes the works of many scholars from Franz Fanon and Leopold Senghor to Kwame Anthony Appiah and Achille Mbembe.

**Key words:** postcoloniality, decoloniality, discourse, metanarrative, Africa, diaspora, identity, African studies

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## Постколониальная эпистемология: африканские «регистры»

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**Аннотация.** В условиях глобальной цифровизации и обусловленной ею интенсификации коммуникационных процессов произошло ускорение, аккумуляция и ретрансляция идей и представлений. Академическая среда видоизменилась в ходе обновления исследовательского поля и построения новой картины мира,

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сложной и диверсифицированной. Накопление в Африке и в рамках африканской диаспоры «критической массы» талантливых ученых-интеллектуалов, ориентированных на «прорывы» в области философии и эпистемологии, отозвалось атакой на теоретические установки постмодернизма и постколониализма и динамичной трансформацией концептуальных установок и содержания африканских исследований. Африка вопреки установкам евроцентризма превратилась в эпистемологическую лабораторию, где в настоящее время идет разработка теорий, претендующих на превращение в метанарративы, в рамках которых возникают новые металексемы и метажанры. Постколониальные дискурсы несут в себе элементы метанауки — универсальной системы производства знания. Взаимосвязь фактов и методологии внутри них вполне соответствует веяниям времени — эпохе алгоритмов, выбор которых формирует механизмы научного познания, а также обеспечивает успех в борьбе со стереотипами, не только расовыми и этническими. Теоретико-методологическое значение постколониальных исследований связано с актуализацией изучения «узловых» проблем истории Африки и диаспоры, таких как колониализм и деколонизация, этничность и идентичность, гибридность и инаковость, эссенциализм и трансцендентность, исход и изгнание. Авторы акцентируют внимание на результатах взаимодействия исследователей африканского происхождения с постколониальной теорией, а также идеями постколониальности и деколонизации, в определенной мере противостоящих друг другу. Особое внимание уделено становлению обновленной эпистемологии и гносеологии знания в процессе становления «постколониальной библиотеки», вместившей в себя труды многих исследователей от Франца Фанона и Леопольда Сенгора до Кваме Энтони Аппиа и Ачилла Мбембе.

**Ключевые слова:** постколониальность, деколонизация, дискурс, метанарратив, Африка, диаспора, идентичность, африканские исследования

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### **Postcoloniality as an Academic *Modus Operandi* and a Challenge to Eurocentrism**

The start of the era of Postcolonialism dates back to the late 1940s. The liberation of India, the largest British colony, from colonial dependence eventually led to the collapse of the whole colonial system, literally “forcing” its “gravediggers” — intellectuals of Indian and, a little bit later, of African origin — to embark on the path of exteriorization of their experience. The transformation of subalterns, who until recently were accumulating knowledge from outside, unable to “speak” (Spivak, 1988), into generators and relators of their own ideas was facilitated by the postmodern situation with its interest in pluralism and otherness, both racial and ethnic.

The non-European origin of post-colonial discourses (and theories), which are the subject of this article, made sense only at the time of their creation, as interest in them grew, and faded into the background in recent decades. As a result, at the crossroads of numerous ideas and

concepts, there has been formed a certain substance, which can be dialectically interpreted as something internally changeable, capable of self-development, as a certain step in the development of an “idea,” and, perhaps, even existence, following I. Kant and G. W. F. Hegel (Kant, 1964, pp. 254, 257).

Postcoloniality as an academic *modus operandi* and historical situation required a comprehensive understanding. Against its background, new methodological approaches and principles opposed to Eurocentrism emerged, causing the appearance of a “postcolonial library” in continuation of the “colonial” library (Mudimbe, 1988). The former contained the works of Frantz Fanon (1961; 1966a; 1966b) and Edward Said (1994), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) and Homi Bhabha (1994), Ali Mazrui (1967; 1974; 1986; Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998) and Vumbi Yoka (Valentin-Ives) Mudimbe (1988; 1994; 2016), Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992; 2006; 2007; 2018) and Achille Mbembe (2000; 2001; 2003). Thus, a new trend in the development of knowledge “breaking out of the

trap” emerged.<sup>1</sup> The search for new meanings of existence/knowledge was carried out in the direction of what was associated with the concept of “colonialism” and opposed it. A rethinking of such categories as race, nation, ethnicity, identity, hybridity, essentialism, otherness, etc. began to be redefined.

With global digitalization and the intensification of communication processes, the university and academic environment has changed under the onslaught of young and ambitious scholars. In difference with their predecessors, born in the 1920s — 1940s, who carried out their mission of an intellectual “breakthrough” and followed the “logic of daring” (Said, 2012, p. 645), being adherents to the “literature of liberation and resistance” (Said, 2012, p. 645), as F. Fanon (1961; 1966a; 1966b), Ch. A. Diop (1954; 1974; 1978; 1987; 1993), V.I. Mudimbe (1988; 1994; 2016) and even E. Said, the intellectuals of the 21st century saw the importance and prospects not merely in the integration into the global knowledge, but in building up a new picture of the world. The latter has become more and more complex and diversified: polycentric, polyphonic, polychrome. Previously “invented” stories and theories have given way to those relevant to the current moment (Said, 2012, p. 651). And although it is generally accepted that in the camp of non-European thinkers there is still no one of the level of Jean-Paul Sartre or Michel Foucault, “figures of learning and authority whose general scope in the many fields gave them more than professional competence,” that is the critical intellectual style. Their successors “are principally competent to solve local problems, not to ask the big questions set by the grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment” (Said, 2012, pp. 649—650).

Creation of new “fields of research,” expanding the limits of contemporary

knowledge, can be considered as the most important task, which makes it possible to update new and revise old ideas and interpretations. Thus, in fact, the problem of postcoloniality, lying at the intersection of economics, politics and culture, arose, studied at the interdisciplinary level within the boundaries of history and philosophy, political, literary and cultural framework, history and theory of international relations. The historical and cultural analysis of the African body of postcolonial epistemology that has been formed over the past decades makes it possible to identify its transformational (diversification) potential, the realization of which leads to the development of fundamentally new intellectual constructions, essences, and methods.

The plurality of interpretations of colonialism and anticolonialism, neocolonialism and Postcolonialism has become a challenge to the dominance of the Eurocentric approach. In one of her essays for Al-Jazeera website, prof. Grace Musila (Witwatersrand University, South Africa), emphasized that postcolonial theory “comes dressed in different registers.”<sup>2</sup> The diversity concerns both place and form, and contrary to the popular stereotype, the construction of postcolonial discourses is not a prerogative of intellectuals of Indian origin. “The theorization of the colonial experience by a postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon, as well as conceptualization of nego-feminism<sup>3</sup> by a feminist theorist Obioma Nnaemeka, come dressed in the same storytelling robes as it is in the case of Adichie’s<sup>4</sup> fiction.”<sup>5</sup> As G. Musila noted, theories and

<sup>2</sup> Musila G. A. Chimamanda Adichie: The Daughter of Postcolonial Theory // Al-Jazeera. February 4, 2018. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/2/4/chimamanda-adichie-the-daughter-of-postcolonial-theory> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>3</sup> Nego-feminism is a theory and practice based on an authentic negotiation culture. The idea of nego-feminism is detailed in the writings of Obioma Nnaemeka. See also: (Milto, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (born in 1977) is a Nigerian-American writer; in 2017 she became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

<sup>5</sup> Musila G. A. Chimamanda Adichie: The Daughter of Postcolonial Theory // Al-Jazeera. February 4, 2018. URL:

<sup>1</sup> Jili B. Review: Achille Mbembe. Out of the Dark Night // Theory Culture & Society. August 16, 2021. URL: <https://www.theoryculturesociety.org/blog/review-achille-mbembe-out-of-the-dark-night> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

stories (narratives) perform the same function – they “help us make sense of our worlds.”<sup>6</sup>

African and Asian intellectuals, bearing the “burden of representation,”<sup>7</sup> have taken the palm from the hands of scholars of the Old and New Worlds. The production of knowledge has been demonopolized. Its reconstruction is currently taking place under the influence from outside and from within, i.e. from Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Diaspora. The diversity of empirical experience contributes to the enrichment of its content, methodology, contexts, terminology, all that can be defined as epistemology.

Against the background of its renewal, metatheories, based on metadata and possessing a special metalogic, are emerging. Their goal is a comprehensive systematic description of previously appeared theories, their properties, structures and plots. Metanarratives balance at the level of mega- and metagenres and often tend to use a very complex, metalanguage, often artificially constructed. In essence, this is the idea of postcoloniality (that, in part can be regarded as a reflection on the idea of coloniality), which has undergone significant diversification in recent decades. Together (implicitly and explicitly) the discourses that have emerged on its basis can be treated as a separate substance (or substratum), and simultaneously as part of a more complex set of ideas characteristic of a particular, postcolonial, era.

### Postcolonial vs Decolonial

The reciprocal processes of colonization and decolonization were not limited to the loss/acquisition of political sovereignty and have had an impact on the economy and culture of the colonizers and the colonized. While France, according to a philosopher of Cameroonian origin A. Mbembe (perhaps, the most brilliant critic of colonialism, brought up under the

influence of French postmodernism in the shadow of the Annales school; and, possibly, other ex-metropolises) practically escaped “from self-decolonization,” by hiding under the veil of liberalism and democracy those manifestations of racial and colonial violence, which it is still impossible to end (Mbembe, 2021), the demystification of postcoloniality, typical mainly of the African environment, has led to many reinterpretations. Scholars and writers have shown themselves primarily at the linguo-discursive level, having made it possible, notwithstanding the seeming unambiguity of ideas on postcoloniality, to discover its new real and possible interpretations.

Indicative in this sense is a fragment from one of Kylie Kiunguyu’s posts, who proceeds from the thesis that “postcolonial theory is a dismantling force, or what Chimamanda Adichie termed as the “single story” narrative.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the Kenyan journalist cites the writer herself, who in an interview stated the following: “Postcolonial theory? I don’t know what it means. I think it’s something that professors made up, looking for jobs.”<sup>9</sup> In response, prof. G. Musila wrote on Aljazeera.com: “If we are to dismantle the inequalities that limit the possibilities of art and ideas from the postcolonial world, the lesson is clear: we should all embrace the postcolonial thought.”<sup>10</sup>

Approximately in the same way, in the process of understanding and discussing the idea, a delimitation appeared. First of all, it concerned differences in the assessment of the problems of de- and postcoloniality. While decolonialism was partly more acceptable to African intellectuals,

<sup>8</sup> Kiunguyu K. Postcolonial Theory Is the Force Dismantling What Chimamanda Adichie Termed the “Single Story” Narrative // *This is Africa*. February 12, 2018. URL: <https://thisafrica.me/politics-and-society/postcolonial-theory-chimamanda-adichie/> (accessed 20.02.2022).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Musila G. A. Chimamanda Adichie: The Daughter of Postcolonial Theory // *Al-Jazeera*. February 4, 2018. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/2/4/chimamanda-adichie-the-daughter-of-postcolonial-theory> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/2/4/chimamanda-adichie-the-daughter-of-postcolonial-theory> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

as it suggested some kind of extension in time, it was perceived as a process, dynamic and changeable, associated with the urgent need to solve many problems aimed at overcoming the remnants of colonialism in the field of science, culture and education. The situation of postcoloniality, settled and static, in a certain sense, required an acceptance of the changes that had taken place and, as a result, a change in the way they were represented, which not all researchers were prepared for. However, within the boundaries of the chronotope at the level of space-time coordinates, both ideas complemented and enriched each other. Decoloniality was an emanation of time; Postcolonialism emphasized the spatial characteristics of the situation, inextricably linked with the realities of the 21st century.

According to prof. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (University of Bayreuth, Germany), who inspired the African Decolonial Research Network (ADERN) and reconciled the ideas of decoloniality and postcoloniality in his works, colonialism and the colonial mentality that it entails destabilized the state of those formerly oppressed and provoked such tragedies as “epistemicide”, “linguicide” and “culturecide,”<sup>11</sup> each involving the destruction, displacement and substitution of knowledge, language and culture, respectively. Overcoming these catastrophes and acquiring a qualitatively new state, according to the intellectual, directly depend on the process of “rethinking thinking itself.”<sup>12</sup>

The decolonization of consciousness led to a move away from the methodology of Eurocentrism in humanities, expanding the boundaries of the search for “connecting patterns” at the regional, continental and transcontinental levels. The process of updating epistemology consisted of three phases:

<sup>11</sup> Decolonization, Decoloniality, and the Future of African Studies: A Conversation with Dr. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni // *Items. Insights from the Social Sciences*. January 14, 2020. URL: <https://items.ssrc.org/from-our-programs/decolonization-decoloniality-and-the-future-of-african-studies-a-conversation-with-dr-sabelo-ndlovu-gatsheni/> (accessed: 25.03.2022).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

- 1) awareness of the crisis;
- 2) deconstruction of the old epistemes — decolonization of knowledge;
- 3) creation of new epistemes and narratives.

As a result of the postcolonial turn, which brought to life a number of old and new “-isms” (including Pan-Africanism, Afrocentrism, Afropolitanism), a strategy for the purposeful transformation of the epistemology and geopolitics of knowledge was defined, which, to a large extent, happened under the influence of the works of the Argentine researcher Walter D. Mignolo, in particular of his article “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference” (Mignolo, 2002). The assertion about the threats of the total spread of Western epistemology was at the core of his research. Decoloniality has become an essential characteristic and alternative reality of humanitarian knowledge, as well as one of the possible principles for the transformation of the political, social and cultural life of contemporary society.

African intellectuals have succeeded most of all in reconstructing and representing focal situations (Mbembe, 2021), associated with the existence at the intersection of space and time, such as transcendence and identity as an example. For more than half a century, they have also debated the issues of Exodus and Exile, while simultaneously discovering for themselves and others new meanings in the discussion of the problems of globalization and miscegenation, hybridity and cross-cultural dialogue, intellectual and personal history, cultural heritage and historical memory.

According to the philosopher and cultural anthropologist C.E. Appiah, the conditionality of the boundaries of collective identity and its dependence on the recognition from others contributed to the actualization of personal achievements, primarily in humanities. “Stereotextuality,” a three-dimensional perception of the world in general and of Africa in particular, was characteristic of a significant part of African intellectuals (polyglots), prone to self-transcendence, with the ability to absorb

something else and relay it to the whole world. Such is K.A. Appiah himself, a descendant of the British aristocracy and the Ashanti royal family, a graduate of the Cambridge University (UK), president of the American Academy of Letters and Art. The same may be said of A. Mbembe. Both can be classified today as the most engaged thinkers among African scholars. K.A. Appiah has been working at top Ivy League Universities in the United States for many years. A. Mbembe used to teach in France. Currently he is a professor at the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) and the author of the book “On Post-Colony” (Mbembe, 2001), which has been cited 7239 times and has become largely a textbook for anyone, interested in the situation of postcoloniality.<sup>13</sup>

The book “Cosmopolitanisms” (Robbins & Horta, 2017) with an afterword by K.A. Appiah, has received 7313 citations, according to a tally announced on Google Scholar. In his other studies “In My Father’s House: Africa in the philosophy of culture” (4930 citations), “Ethics of Identity” (3423 citations)<sup>14</sup> he does not only pose, but seeks to analyze the key problems of modernity, destroying stereotypes and barriers to their perception. Interpretations of such categories as race and color, culture and identity, ethics and multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and patriotism are based on the methodology of postmodernism. And despite its European roots, perhaps, due to the endogeneity, associated with the author’s origin, in his works there is an obvious the renewal of the epistemology, phenomenology and semantics of knowledge, accumulated by a limited in number but very authoritative cohort of people who make breakthroughs in African studies. Their main message, addressed to Africans was precisely formulated by Noah Sow, writer, artist and freelancer. In a slightly paraphrased format, it

may be expressed as: “We make history (literature), we write history, we are history!” (Sow, 2017, p. 28).

Despite international recognition of the contribution of African intellectuals to the formation and popularization of postcolonial discourses (Gavristova & Khokholkova, 2020), some of them prefer to distance themselves from the very emblem of postcoloniality. The most frequent reasons for rejecting postcolonial terminology and conceptualization were its untimely application and disproportions in relation to the experience of the African continent. The Kenyan literary critic Simon Gikandi, Cameroonian literary critic Charles Ngiewih Teke, Malawian historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza agree that most countries of the continent have not yet fully got rid of colonialism, have not reached that cherished state of “post-” that allows “theorizing” in the appropriate manner. Gravitating towards a certain intellectual autonomy, as well as terminological and methodological originality, they have often declared the postcolonial approach as limited.

Thus, the Nigerian scholar Adebayo Williams saw inability of Postcolonialism to incorporate “authentic and well sustained African input” as its key problem (Williams, 1997, p. 831). In recent years, the trend of atomization has intensified, and increasingly, intellectuals of African descent (first of all, scholars from the South African region, like Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Malesela John Lamola, Nokuthula Hlabangane, Leonhard Praeg) prefer to work within the scope of the decolonial option.

S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, while recognizing that Africa has its own “intellectual genealogy” of Postcolonialism, points out that this discourse “not only challenged grand/meta-narratives, but also transcendental cultural commonalities and transcendental identities” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019, p. 201). In his opinion, unlike the concepts of decolonial choice and decoloniality, which unite and continue in such currents as Ethiopianism, Garveyism, Negritude, Pan-Africanism, etc., postcoloniality breaks the

<sup>13</sup> Achille Mbembe // Google Scholar. URL: <https://scholar.google.co.za/citations?user=1i7hKfQAAAAJ&hl=en> (accessed: 03.06.2022).

<sup>14</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah // Google Scholar. URL: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=B6ZqFrUAAAAJ&hl=en> (accessed: 03.06.2022).

connection with them. Therefore, postcolonial discourses can be viewed as a replacement metanarrative that substituted whatever that, in one way or another, was part of the “colonial library,” containing a significant number of studies, also dedicated to the ideas of anti-colonialism and decolonization, including those written by such recognized authors as F. Fanon (1961; 1966a; 1966b), Kwame Nkrumah (1964a; 1964b), Leopold Senghor (1964; 1977), V.I. Mudimbe and others. In their writings, colonialism, while remaining the basis of the postcolonial system of coordinates, has undergone more inversion than destruction: the former periphery was often declared a new center, heroes became anti-heroes and vice versa, old narratives were replaced by “original forms of expression” (Bachmann-Medick, 2017, p. 228). The negritude of L. Senghor, the consciencism of K. Nkrumah, the Afrocentrism of Cheikh Anta Diop and other theories which may be mentioned as examples, and under the dominance of Eurocentrism, were usually called marginal, arisen on the periphery of the literary and cultural space.

S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019) and a group of his students (“Gatshenians”) largely agree with S. Gikandi, who suggested that “poststructuralist theory and its postcolonial variety, which initially promised to deconstruct Eurocentrism, have actually reinscribed and reinforced it...” (Gikandi, 2001, p. 6), as well as Ramon Grosfoguel, who argued that postcolonial studies, in turn, should also be “decolonized in an epistemic decolonial turn” (Grosfoguel, 2011).

According to R. Grosfoguel, the need for decolonization of postcolonial studies is motivated by excluding extremes of “frontier thinking.” It is a “critical response to hegemonic and marginal fundamentalism,”<sup>15</sup> global and local. This approach appeals to those who see the future of epistemology not only in overcoming

Eurocentrism, but also in a diversity of methods of critical analysis.

### **Africa as a Knowledge Laboratory**

Following A. Mbembe, many supporters of the search for new paths within the concept of decolonial option believe that currently Africa is an epistemological laboratory. In the book “Out of the Dark Night: Essays on Decolonization” (Mbembe, 2021), A. Mbembe notes that “there is no better terrain than Africa for a scholarship that is keen to describe novelty and originality, multiplicity, singularity, and complexity” (Mbembe, 2021, p. 12) of situations, developing against the background of decolonization, which he sees not as a single event, but as a set of complex, uneven and diverse processes, unfolding over a long period of time. And this is not a transfer of power to local elites, but an epistemological and structural challenge to Western hegemony.

One of the foundations of the postcolonial idea was deconstruction. In itself, it has become a form of intellectual decolonization. African authors have subjected and are subjecting to the process of deconstruction both the Western system of knowledge and the conceptual constructions of its recent critics, the Africans.

Like F. Fanon, A. Mbembe sees decolonization as a reformatting of native existence towards modern life (Mbembe, 2021, p. 42). The fight against colonial alienation, in his opinion, must take place through getting rid of what he calls “black pain.”<sup>16</sup> This healing, in turn, requires “endogenous knowledge” (Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, 1984), similar to what, for example, was relayed by L. Senghor. The “bridges” he built in the name of recognizing Africa as having its own history and culture, and being, of course, a part of the world, have changed the status of the continent and

<sup>15</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah // Google Scholar. URL: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=B6ZqFrUAAAAJ&hl=en> (accessed: 03.06.2022).

<sup>16</sup> Jili B. Review: Achille Mbembe. Out of the Dark Night // Theory Culture & Society. August 16, 2021. URL: <https://www.theoryculturesociety.org/blog/review-achille-mbembe-out-of-the-dark-night> (accessed: 20.02.2022).

influenced Africa's place in the global coordinate system.

A. Mbembe repeatedly emphasized the central place of endogenous knowledge in decolonial practice. However, in his opinion, it is impossible to ensure the final liberation just with its help. Decolonization is not a return to a pre-colonial Africa. It is, first of all, a critique of Eurocentric knowledge and, at the same time, a means to resist the normative view of whites. It is necessary to achieve the transformation of Africa into a subject of history and to enable Africans, along with non-Africans, to legalize their ideas about Africa.

A. Mbembe sees Africa as the “avant-garde of world history,” a platform for generating social theory and a new format for the global future. He considers it as a central place for postmodern experiments. The Afropolitan perspective, in his view, is like a beacon illuminating the intricate knots that bind the colonizers and the colonized, highlighting what ultimately meets the need for unusual and even to some extent unprecedented knowledge.

For A. Mbembe, contemporary Africa and the diaspora are an environment for a critical review of the pulsating links between oppression and resistance, colonizer and colonized, master and slave, center and periphery, based on the characteristics of the continent and the mobility of its people. The subject of his own research is uncomfortable thinking, where the global meets the local. For him, ignoring mobility, continuity and coincidence means the provincializing knowledge and disconnecting histories, neglecting the relationship of the past, present and future.

According to A. Mbembe, academic and everyday discourses on Africa, weighed down by the profane thinking of the creators, contain many clichés that are directly related to Eurocentric fantasies and fears. Following F. Fanon, A. Mbembe emphasized that such an image is not that of real Africa, but only its unconscious projection, a simulacrum, a meme, the embodiment of numerous complexes,

including those generated by guilt. Like V.Y. Mudimbe, A. Mbembe interprets Africa not as a specific, isolated place, but as the center of contradictions that significantly complicate relations with the rest of the world and manifest themselves at the political, economic, psychological, cultural, semiotic and physiological levels.

A few decades ago, a Nigerian publicist and literary critic Chinweizu,<sup>17</sup> one of the ideological inspirers of Afrocentrism, known for his provocative statements, wrote about that. In his books: “The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slaves, and the African Elite” (Chinweizu, 1975), “Toward the Decolonization of African Literature: Volume I. African Prose and Poetry and Its Critics” (Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa & Ihechukwu, 1983) co-authored with Onwuchekwa Jami and Ihechukwu Madubuike; “Decolonization of the African Mind” (Chinweizu, 1987) and others (Chinweizu, 1984) he was one of the first to focus on the need to get rid of numerous colonial complexes and to decolonize approaches to the question of the authenticity of the cultural and linguistic traditions of the peoples of the continent.

Chinweizu clashed with the dissertation committee on the text of his doctorate (PhD), submitted for defense, first published in the form of a monograph. He was repeatedly criticized for his radicalism, snobbery, and highly original views on U.S. and African history, including critique from the first African Nobel Prize winner in literature, Wole Soyinka (1975). However, his ideas on the decolonization of literary process and language reform are still relevant and topical. In fact, he foresaw that not only scientists, but also representatives of the literary community should participate in the creation of postcolonial metanarratives and metalanguage. This is what happened, as evidenced, for example, by the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Taiye Selasi is. “In a situation where two languages and two

<sup>17</sup> Chinweizu Ibekwe was born in 1943.



cultures are in contact, there will certainly be linguistic/cultural interference” (Ayo, 2009, p. 75).

The intersection of the colonial and de-/postcolonial has given rise to an original mixture of linguistic traditions and practices. Authors of African descent followed both the path of “domestication” (Ayo, 2009, p. 76) of the English (and not only) language, and the path of introducing linguistic innovation. This applies to writers of the older generation and those just starting their journey.

In the context of the neological boom, largely associated with the era of globalization and digitalization, such neologisms, created according to a similar model, as *negritude* (Cesaire, 1956) and *migrITUDE* (its rebroadcast began in 2006 in a poetry show by Kenyan writer of Indian origin Shailja Patel, later the script was reformatted into a poem of the same name (Patel, 2010)), successfully passed the process of socialization and lexicalization (Ali, 2019), as well as the new constructions artificially invented by the writer Taiye Selasi, according to the model of the words “cosmopolitan” and “cosmopolitanism” — “Afropolitan” and “Afropolitanism.”

The way of adaptation of such lexemes as “Africanah” and “Americanah” in the linguistic environment turned out to be more difficult, despite the presence of analogies (*Africana*; *Americana*) in the Romano-Germanic languages.

In Russian and other Slavic languages many newly created terms hardly take root, the translation and transliteration of which is difficult. These include, for example, the word “Afropean” and its derivatives (*Afropeanism*, *Afropeans*, etc.). In the translation of the title of a recent novel by Ch. N. Adichie (2013) into Russian there has been made an unfortunate and unforgivable mistake, which made its reproduction completely inadequate (Adichie, 2018).

One of the missions of African writers and publicists in the context of postcolonial discourse was the “indigenization” (Ayo, 2009, p. 76) of language, the introduction of categories that characterized the worldview,

mentality, everyday life of the inhabitants of the countries with which they associated themselves and the heroes of their works. For example, Nigerian authors of different generations, including Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, Buchi Emecheta and Ben Okri, Femi Fatoba and Chigozie Obioma (Obioma, 2021) “globalized” Yoruba and Igbo cosmologies, introducing the public into the concepts of *chi*,<sup>18</sup> *Benmuo*,<sup>19</sup> *abiku*.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike Ngugi Wa Thiong’o or Niya Osundare, who tried to abandon the use of the language of the colonizer in favor of the Kikuyu and Yoruba, many writers, aware of the scale of the international readership, took the path of transforming the English or French language. Thanks to linguistic interference initiated by Africans, the words “jazz” and “cola,” “mamba” and “zebra,” “voodoo” and “safari,” “zombie” and “macaque,” “kwashiokor” and “harmattan” are rooted in a lot of languages.

The “African way” of dealing with the word was awarded a special name “*orature*.”<sup>21</sup> The advent of the Internet, which triggered the communication revolution, has led to oral traditions, infiltrating the online space. “*Orature*” has been transformed into “*cyberture*” (Khokholkova, 2021).

Postcolonial metanarratives have absorbed various traditions of the previous period. Many of them were created outside Africa by scholars and writers of African descent, who, like no one else, were aware of the vulnerabilities of the ideas and points of view they relayed. K.A. Appiah, who belongs to the triumvirate of main researchers in African postcolonial studies, has been critical of postcolonial discourse. He

<sup>18</sup> *Chi* is a transcendent essence that accompanies a person; guardian spirit.

<sup>19</sup> According to Igbo cosmology, *Benmuo* is the spirit world.

<sup>20</sup> *Abiku* (in Yoruba it means “predestined to death”) is a spirit of a child who dies and is reborn several times.

<sup>21</sup> The term “*orature*” was coined by the Ugandan linguist Pio Zirimu in the 1960s in order to avoid using the phrase “oral literature,” which he perceived as an oxymoron. Thereafter it was actively used by the famous Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong’o.

emphasized: “Postcoloniality is a state of things which we might ungenerously call a fruit of works of *comprador* intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in the cultural commodities of the world capitalism at the periphery. In the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other and for Africa” (Appiah, 1991, p. 348).

Professor K.A. Appiah considers that intellectuals in Africa are totally dependent on two key international institutions: African universities, whose intellectual life was arranged in the fashion and likeness of Western ones; European and American publishing houses, which are able to retransmit the knowledge, generated by Africans for the benefit of readers gravitating towards the global book culture. Such a situation in one way or another affects the created intellectual products, but does not cancel their intrinsic value.

### Coda (instead of conclusion)

In the context of the movement for epistemological freedom, the modern texture of knowledge becomes similar to a matrix. Within

each “postcolonial cell” information is generated, accumulated and actively transformed due to a multitude of “valency links” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019, p. 201), chains of interaction with other phenomena/segments close to it. Extrapolation of knowledge is carried out through the actualization of historiosophical ideas through understanding the experience of the Past and Present and “multiplication of entities,” which include theories with the prefix “post-,” “trans-,” “meta-” and various derivatives.

The desire for intellectual sovereignty, crystallizing in the adjacent spaces of decolonial and postcolonial, seeks to rehabilitate ideas and knowledge, produced outside the Old and New Worlds and turn them into a collective property, as opposed to the traditions of imperialism, colonialism, exploitation and any form of domination.

Africa and the African Diaspora have formed a special intellectual gravitational field, which, contrary to the classical Eurocentric attitudes, serves as a large-scale epistemological laboratory. Within its framework, there is an active development of decolonial and postcolonial theories, and their contradictory interaction forms unique fragments of the “mosaic epistemology” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019, p. 222) of the Global South.

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