RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE: A THEORETICAL REFLEXION*

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Introduction

This paper readdresses the old issues concerning the theoretical relationship existing between ethnography and literature. It reviews key concepts in these fields (literary theory, literature and literary criticism, ethnography and fiction, social construction and representation theories).

Through the years I have not been alone in thinking about the relationship of anthropology, ethnography and literature. In fact, many critics have commented constructively on this relationship.[1]

The re-examination of ethnographic texts has brought up complex questions about science and art, projection and distortion, truth and fiction. Many voices in this conversation have addressed the purposes and weaknesses of the writers of ethnography and anthropology, their class, gender and cultural biases, their status as outsiders, and their ways of

1 This relation was namely discussed in the works of Sir James Frazer and Ruth Benedict, *Between Anthropology and Literature Interdisciplinary Discourse*; John Leavitt's *Poetry and Prophecy: The Anthropology of Inspiration* (1997); Nathan Tarn's *Views from the Weaving Mountain* (1991); also in some edited works like *Anthropology and Literature* (1993), edited by Paul Benson; *Literature and Anthropology* (1989), edited by Philip Dennis and Wendell Aycock; *Literary Anthropology* (1988), edited by Fernando Poyatos; *Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism: Between Literature and Anthropology* (1990), by cultural critic Kathleen A. Ashley.

structuring their texts (Benson 1993; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986).

Some contributors to this dialogue have explored the use of the ethnographic novel for conveying anthropological information (Fernea 1989). Others have suggested ways to bring fictional strategies or the fictional material of a studied culture into the ethnographic text (Dennis and Ayocks 1989; Van Maanen 1993). Still others seem to have blurred the distinctions altogether. Dan Rose, for example, has envisioned "the dissolution of boundaries between literature, sociology, anthropology, critical theory, philosophy, cinematography, computer science and so on" (Rose 1993, 220) and called for "a polyphonic, heteroglossic, multigenre construction" (*Idem*, 218) to replace the old ethnography and anthropology. In effect, they all addressed the ways in which the language of social science fuses with that of the literary imagination.

In an insightful passage comparing the novelist with the ethnographer and the ethnographic novel with ethnography, Fernea writes,

> The ethnographic novel had some advantages over the standard ethnography. The novelist need not shun conflict, anger, hatred, or passion, and may often become a participant in the drama of the novel in a way denied the ethnographer, who has in the past been at pains to observe carefully and not to become too involved. Such involvement, existentially or textually, has been seen to mar the scholarly value of the work and violate the code of objectivity by which the ethnographer/researcher has been expected to abide. It is the relative freedom of the novelist that makes this form so fresh a source of insight into the cultures of others. (Fernea 1989, 154)

Fernea seems to support the position which sees the novelist as a new ethnographer, someone who is free to get existentially and textually involved in the reality he or she describes. Such an involvement was denied to the old ethnographer, because it was believed to violate the code

of objectivity by which he/she has been expected to abide. The new ethnography, however, called also the ethnographic novel, is believed to be a source of insight into the cultures of others. Therefore, the new ethnographic novelist should be free and fearless to participate in the drama of the novel he writes. This position of the novelist does not mutilate any scholarly value of his/her work. For example, this attitude is observed in Carvalho's *Vou lá visitar Pastores*, in which the author is existentially or textually involved in the reality he describes and he was not concerned about breaking any scientific code whatsoever.

In addition, James Clifford and Georges E. Marcus's works, especially *Writing Culture*, are also important for this fusion between the language of social science with that of the literary imagination. James Clifford and Georges E. Marcus´s *Writing Culture* addressed the problems created by the representation of culture through writing and offered valuable historical, literary, anthropological, political and philosophical sources for the understanding of the concepts of ethnography and literature.

Writing Culture raises relevant questions about ethnography itself. It emphasizes the fact that the rhetorical performances of ethnographies are determined by the need to tell an effective story. In reality, the telling of an effective story characterizes the work of an ethnographer.

Ethnography is placed at the centre of a new intersection of social history, interpretative anthropology, travel writing, discourse theory, and textual criticism by various essayists in *Writing Culture*. Recent experimental trends are assessed and the functions of orality, ethnicity, and power in ethnographic composition explored (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 1-25).

The core argument it tries to put forward is the fact that ethnography today is considered to be in the midst of a political and epistemological crisis where, for example, western writers can no longer portray non-western peoples with unchallenged authority and the process of cultural representation is now thought to be unavoidably contingent, historical, and contestable. Fundamentally, postmodern writers in humanities and social sciences are also challenged 'to rethink the poetics and politics of cultural invention' (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 2).

One could say that what for many western writers has become some kind of political and epistemological crisis, as claimed, for non-western writers it is probably a liberation from western cultural hegemony and an opportunity to reclaim authentic cultural representations, and certainly an opportunity to deconstruct colonial ethnographies written as a way to justify superiority of those who travelled towards those encountered and conquered (Clifford and Marcus 1986, 165-68).

Not less important is Clifford Geertz´s *The Interpretation of Cultures*, a collection of essays on culture, wherein culture is defended as a symbolic system. Clifford Geertz challenges Taylor's famous concept of culture ("most complex whole") and proposes a new one, since Taylor's definition has reached the point where it obscures more than it reveals (Geertz 2000, 4). Geertz presents a semiotic concept of culture, which, in line with Max Weber, emphasizes that human beings are animals suspended in webs of significance they themselves have spun. He takes culture as those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning (*Idem*, 4-5).

Geertz is trying to explain how culture functions and must function whilst construing social expressions on its surface. Particularly important are chapters one, on "thick description," four and eight on religion and ideology as cultural system and the last chapter, "Deep play: notes on the Balinese cock fight." In these chapters, Geertz developed an important new concept of culture, the 'semiotic concept of culture,' showing that the study of culture remains as central to modern thought about observation, experience and storytelling as it was thirty years ago. For Clifford Geertz, therefore, ethnography is 'thick description'. Doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing text, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary and, above all, it is interpreting and understanding culture from within.

Certainly, for him, it is not only those things, techniques and received procedures that define the enterprise. What defines it is the fact of being a kind of intellectual effort, an elaborate venture called "thick description," a notion borrowed from Gilbert Ryle. As he understands it, ethnography is

a collection of multiple and complex conceptual structures which at once are strange, irregular and inexplicit, and which an ethnographer must contrive, grasp and try to explain (Geertz 2000, 5).

Thus, Geertz thinks that "doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of construct a reading of) a manuscript — foreign, faded, full of clippies, commentaries, but written not in conventionalized grasps of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour" (Geertz 2000, 5). In this sense, I think that 'thick description' is literature and can be fictionally constructed or deconstructed where understanding culture is crucial.[2]

I agree with the fact that culture is that web of signs and meanings humans have spun to perpetuate their existence. But, it is thick, entangled and complex. That is the reason why I think that, in the process of disentangling the signs and meaning humans have spun, language and myths are not less important since they mediate, freeze and free meaning and understanding. This reflection links me to Ernest Cassirer's *Language and Myth.*

Ernest Cassirer's *Language and Myth* explored the place of language and myth in the pattern of human culture, the nature of magic and the relationship of culture and religion. This text helped us understand how humans construct their social and cultural webs of signs and meanings. I think that every single web constructed is a work of intelligence, art and genes. It is complex and requires social involvement.

Effectively, Cassirer's ideas have theoretical implications for ethnography and literature since they describe the place which language and myth must occupy in patterning human cultures as well as in understanding social constructions and representations, two concepts to be discussed later in this chapter as well.

Furthermore, paraphrasing Max Muller's philosophical analysis on myth and language, Ernest Cassirer argues that "a myth is conditioned

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[2] Ryle's discussion of "Thick description" appeared in two recent essays of his (now reprinted in the second volume of his Collected Papers), addressed to the general question of what, as he puts it 'Le Penseur is doing: Thinking and Reflecting and The Thinking of Thoughts.'

by the agency of language, therefore, the product of a basic shortcoming, and an inherent weakness of language" (Cassirer 1953, 3-4). What does this mean? It means that

> Myth, art, language and science appear as symbols; not in the sense of mere figures which refer to some given reality by means of suggestion and allegorical renderings, but in the sense of forces, each of which produces and posits a world of its own. In these realms the spirit exhibits itself in that inwardly determined dialectic by virtue of which alone there is any reality, any organized and definite being at all. Thus the special symbolic forms are not imitations, but organs of reality, since it is solely by their agency that anything real becomes an object for intellectual apprehension, and as such is made visible to us. (Cassirer 1953, 8)

A cultural symbol speaks, represents and signifies. Therefore, it reflects a context. Apart from being contextual, it is, above all, fruit of human intellectual effort. Human beings compose, freeze or free meanings through symbols socially accepted. That is why, for Cassirer, "myth, art, language and science appear as symbols, not in the sense of mere figures which refer to some given reality by means of suggestion and allegorical renderings, but in the sense of forces each of which produces and posits a world of its own" (Cassirer 1953, 8). In this sense, a culture is not but a human symbol.

Historically speaking, most theories of culture exerted great influence on the way different cultures were perceived and categorized by those who used racial superiority arguments to shadow people of different skin colour. Authors such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, Benedict Anderson and many others wrote about some of these racial conflicts and of its implications as far as cultural concepts and relations are concerned, strongly experienced and diffused in the colonial period.

From this perspective, Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* and many other works can help understand cultural relations from colonial

and postcolonial angles. This specific work has revealed some abuses of power and authority perpetrated by all those who earlier believed that they were the centre of all civilizations. Homi K. Bhabha claims that

> An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism is a paradoxical mode of representation; it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise the stereotype which is its major discursive strategy" is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated . . . as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no roof, can never really, in discourse, be proved. (Bhabha 1994, 66)

What does it mean? For Homi Bhabha, it means that "the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (Bhabha 1994, 70).

In fact, there was an abuse of power within the colonial discourse which represented the colonized as a socially subjugated reality. It employed a system of representation which is found clearly developed in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Said defended the thesis according to which the Oriental was an idea invented by the West to dominate it; it was a result of a cultural hegemony in relation to whom and what was oriental. As he puts it,

> L'orientalisme n'est jamais bien loin de ce que Denis Hay a appelé l'idée de l'Europe, notion collective qui nous définit, «nous» Européens, en face de tous « ceux-là » qui sont non européens; on peut bien soutenir que le trait essentiel de la culture

européenne est précisément ce qui l'a rendue hégémonique en Europe et hors d'Europe: l'idée d'une identité européenne supérieure à tous les peuples et à toutes les cultures qui ne sont pas européens. De plus, il y a l'hégémonie des idées européennes sur l'Orient, qui répètent elles-mêmes la supériorité européenne par rapport à l'arriération orientale, l'emportant en général sur la possibilité pour un penseur plus indépendant, ou plus sceptique, d'avoir une autre opinion. (Said 2003, 19)

Thus, as I see it, the issues raised in Achebe's and Carvalho's texts, for example, are not only concerned with languages, myths, old cultural symbols or encodings but above all with constructing identity and new symbols in postmodern times and deconstructing colonial discourse based on racial and geographical origin, 'in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction' (Bhabha 1994, 70) as claimed by Homi Bhabha.

These texts answer back to the colonial discourse in order to create a space for Africans to be able to tell their own stories and demystify those which denigrated them; a space for self-determination and identity. Specifically, ethnography and literature are used as tools for repositioning them or themselves in time and space as shown in my thesis.

Subsequently, the foundation of this ethnographic, literary, anthropological and philosophical discussion I constructed in my thesis was equally informed by literary theory, often believed to be the same thing as literary criticism. Since my research also addressed issues concerned with the influence of colonialism in literature, especially regarding the historical conflict resulting from the exploitation of less developed countries and indigenous peoples by western nations, my perspective was grounded on post-colonialist critique, developed by theorists such as Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Declan Kiberdas.

This certainly means that I listened to what postmodernism said about criticism in the twentieth century. Theorists like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Maurice Blanchot were particularly important in this dialogue.

Notwithstanding that, the fact that psychoanalysis (psychoanalytic literary criticism) has won some momentum in literary studies today, it should not be ignored since it explores the role of consciousness and the unconscious in literature including that of the author, reader, and characters in the text. So, authors such as Mario Klarer, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Harold Bloom, Slavoj Žižek, Viktor Tausk were generally visited to clarify the role of the author, reader and characters in the text. To what extent do they influence each other is also relevant.

The reader-response criticism was also used to focus upon the active response of the reader to a text. Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgang Iser, Norman Holland, Hans-Robert Jauss, Stuart Hall are important to reader-response criticism. Nevertheless, to examine the universal underlying structures in a text, the linguistic unit in a text and how the author conveys meaning through any structures, I appealed to structuralism and semiotics theories or simply semiotic literary criticism. Authors such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtin, Jurij Lotman, Antti Aarne, Jacques Ehrmann and Northrop Frye, Betrand Russell, to name just a few, are renowned theorists in this area. Bringing them into this thesis was also important for the understanding of Achebe's and Carvalho's work.

General Theoretical Review about Key Concepts

The following subsections will help us to elaborate on the other key concepts needed to further this discussion.

1. Literary Theory, Literature and Literary Criticism

Literary theory teaches us how to read a text. In this context, literary theory resembles philosophy, because it asks fundamental questions, and also, at times, it supports conceptual systems. Literary theory has a certain ambition to interpret the totality of what can be thought; it involves

a permanent scepticism interwoven with a variety of questions about the foundations of knowledge and thought.

Despite that, not all theory that we come across with is sceptical about the foundations of knowledge and thought. Some of the theories are positive in their views. All in all, one will happily or unhappily, come to terms with the fact that much of what one reads is undermined by this persisting scepticism (Culler 1997, 1-16).

I could ask what literature is then. This is probably the most fascinating question literary theory would ask. Another one would be how can we identify when we see it. Literature is probably most of the times understood as fiction; it may be many things but it simply cannot be trapped within such a definition alone. I expect that the answer to the following questions will help justify my claim.

Primarily, where does literature originate? What are the effects of literature? What is an author?[3] My premise is that literature is caused by language, by human psyche, by social, economic and historical forces. Effectively, literature is generated by social circumstances, which means it will happen everywhere there are people and at any time.[4]

Literature is commonly seen as a body of writing produced by people using the same language (*The Art of Literature* 1993, 77). The term has its origin in the Latin word *littera (litterae*, letters) (Aguiar e Silva 1982, 1-13). In the past, "literature tended to be considered separately in terms of kinds of writings, or genres as they came to be called in the 18th century when the term literature took on its modern meaning" (*The Art of Literature* 1993, 77). This derivation of the term literature seems to imply essentially writing. However, there is much of oral literature implicitly present in it as well.

Literature represents various things for different people. In fact, some think that "literature as a whole and its parts mean varying things

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[3] These are equally important questions asked by literary theory. So, one could say that literary theory is very much involved with matters of that kind.

[4] The discussion of the classification(s) of and around African Literature has been instrumental in the revision of a theoretical approach to localized artistic realities.

to various writers, critics, and historians. At one extreme, it may be believed that anything written is literature. Though this position is seldom held. At the other extreme — literature is only the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and *Hamlet* — which is slightly and more properly held" (*The Art of Literature* 1993, 77).

One could say that "among these extremes, attitudes vary widely. For some critics, a hierarchy exists: tragedy is superior to comedy; the short story is inferior to the novel. For other critics, qualitative criteria apply: poetry is verse that succeeds while the limerick and nonsense verse are failed poetry" (*The Art of Literature* 1993, 77).

Additionally, it is important to say that "critics also differ on the purpose or ends of literature. Many ancient critics — and some modern ones — hold that the true ends of literature are to instruct and delight. Others — a majority of the modern ones, probably — hold that pleasure is the sole end" (*The Art of Literature* 1993, 77). However, I agree with the first opinion according to which "the ends of literature are to instruct and delight." For me, the ideological purpose of literature would be to instruct and the aesthetical one would be certainly to delight.

Seen from this angle, *Things Fall Apart* and *Vou lá visitar Pastores* were written both to entertain and instruct readers as they appeal to relevant, fictional or real stories. These stories are meant to become powerful instructive forces which can construct a cultural identity or deconstruct the colonial discourses that preached submission and caused alienation among those encountered and conquered.

Since we all agree that "literature is a form of human expression," then we should also agree that it can be identified either in written or oral forms. Unfortunately, this claim has split apart many literary critics. For some, literature is only what is written. For others, both written and oral forms can be reckoned as literary. Yet, it should be mentioned that some think that

> not everything expressed whether in written or oral words, even when organized in complex textualities, is counted as

literature. Those writings that are primarily informative — technical, scholarly, journalistic — would be excluded from the rank of literature by most, though not all, critics. (*The Art of Literature* 1993, 78)

In fact, "certain forms of writing, however, are universally regarded as belonging to literature as an art… They include individual attempts which possess something called artistic merit, although the nature of artistic merit might be less easy to define than to recognize" (*The Art of Literature* 1993, 78). Although forms of writing, like those mentioned in the previous paragraph, were not universally accepted as belonging to literature as an art, since they lacked literary language, however, it is probably high time we should re-examine this claim. There are journalistic and technical texts which could be considered as ethnographic and literary by definition, because of the form and the approach they take. These texts open way to further this discussion in a very productive way. Many journalistic works can be seen as fictional, elegiac, epic, dramatic, narrative, expository and artistic.

Despite that, some would still agree that "the purest (or, at least, the most intense) literary form is the lyric poem, and after it comes elegiac, epic, dramatic, narrative, and expository verse" (*The Art of Literature* 1993, 78). Consequently, "most theories of literary criticism base themselves on the analysis of poetry, because the artistic problems of literature are there presented in their simplest and purest form" (*Ibid.*). According to what has just been said, many novels — certainly all the world's great novels — can be considered as literature while thousands are not so considered, because they do not contain the form and the content of what is essentially artistic (*Ibid.*). Jonathan Culler puts it in an interesting arrangement.

Literariness is often said to lie above all in the organization of language that makes literature distinguishable from language used for other purposes. Literature is language that 'foregrounds' language itself: makes it strange, thrusts it at you — 'Look!

I'm language! — so you can't forget that you are dealing with language shaped in odd ways. In particular, poetry organizes the sound plane of language so as to make it something to reckon with. (Culler 1997, 27)

Jonathan Culler emphasizes herein that the use of rhythmical repetition of sounds, the unusual combinations of words which attracts one's attention to the linguistic structures found in a text, the rhymes (a conventional mark of literariness) and the odd syntaxes it carries are particular signs to look for in order to frame if a piece of writing is or not seen as literature.

But, I would agree instead with authors like Larry Diamond (Diamond 1989, 435), Marroe Berger (Berger 1977, 46-214) or Vitor Manuel de Aguiar e Silva, just to name a few, who see literature as something bigger than what is assumed by conservative scholars. Diamond, Berger and Aguiar e Silva show how the imagined world of the storyteller can inform us about the real world of experience or of imagination. Under this claim, the novel reveals a wealth of insight into sociological, historical, psychological and political phenomena. Accordingly, Vitor Manuel de Aguiar e Silva argues that

A literatura é fortemente polissémica; o conceito de literatura é relativamente moderno e constituiu-se, após mais de dois milénios de produção literária, em função de um determinado circunstancialismo histórico-cultural; a literatura não consiste apenas numa herança, num conjunto cerrado estático de textos inscrito no passado, mas apresenta-se antes como um ininterrupto processo histórico de produção de novos textos — processo este que implica necessariamente a existência de específicos mecanismos semióticos não alienáveis da esfera da historicidade e que se objectiva num conjunto aberto de textos, os quais não só podem representar, no momento histórico do seu aparecimento, uma novidade e uma ruptura imprevisíveis em relação aos

textos já conhecidos, mas podem ainda provocar modificações profundas nos textos até então produzidos, na medida em que propiciam, ou determinam, novas leituras desses mesmos textos. (Aguiar e Silva 1982, 14)

Aguiar e Silva sees literature as something profoundly polyssemic, multigenre, polyphonic, modern but not static or ephemeral. In fact, it continually reshapes, changes and reinvents itself either because of the direct influence of its creators, of its readers or of its historical and cultural contexts. New texts are regularly composed, though only a few get canonized. Unfortunately, the texts which get consecrated are mostly those which are thought to conform to the western traditional conventions of the novel or poetry. Yet, most of literary texts do speak to different cultures. Fruit of the encounter of texts with various cultures, new readings and interpretations are usually done, bringing about new meanings and, eventually, the innovation of their form and content. But the conservative hardly ever see it that way. Later in this article, Diamond will give us more insights into how literature is socially constructed and influenced.

Similarly, literary theory asks other important questions: what is a reader? How does reading get done? How do we form the conclusion that we are interpreting something? What is the reading experience like? How do we put ourselves in contact with the text? But, these questions are equally asked in the hermeneutic studies, a hermeneutics of suspicion (Culler 1997, 57-65; Norri 1986): an issue concerned with interpretation of a text or of some particular kind of literature, as we will refer later in this text.

These questions raised above constitute what most literary critics would call "theoretical approaches to literature" (Klarer 2004, 75-100). These can be classified into five readings and approaches: text-oriented, author-oriented, reader-oriented, context-oriented and the literary critique or evaluation. This classification means that "literary interpretation always reflects a particular institutional, cultural and historical background; it means that various trends in textual studies are represented

either by consecutive schools or parallel ones, which at times compete with each other" (*Idem*, 75-6).

Effectively, according to Mario Klarer, the text-oriented approach "places the main emphasis on the internal textual aspects of a literary work. It means that extra-textual factors concerning the author (his or her biography, other works), audience (race, class, gender, age, education) or larger contexts (historical, social, or political conditions) are deliberately excluded from the analysis" (*Idem*, 78). "It centres on the text *per se*, primarily investigating its formal or structural features. So traditional philology, the formalist-structuralist schools, including Russian formalism, the Prague school of structuralism, new criticism, semiotics, and deconstruction attempt to trace general patterns in texts or illuminate the nature of literariness" (Lévi-Strauss 1967).

The author-oriented approach is a form of biographical criticism. It means that it links the literary text directly to the biography of the author. Dates, facts, and events in the author's life are contrasted with literary elements of his or her works. The aim is to find aspects connecting the biography of the author with the text (Klarer 2004, 90). Mario Klarer says that this approach

> Tends to use psychological explanations, which led to psychological literary criticism, a movement which sometimes deals with the author, but primarily attempts to illuminate general psychological aspects in a text that do not necessarily relate to the author exclusively. For instance, characters in a text can be analysed psychologically, as if they were real people. (Klarer 2004, 90)[5]

The reader-oriented approach, on the other hand, also called reader-response theory, "assumes that there are as many texts as readers." Still

[5] An example which has often been cited in this context is the mental state of Hamlet in Shakespeare's drama; psychoanalytic critics ask whether Hamlet is mad and, if so, from which

according to Mario Klarer, "this attitude implies that a new individual 'text' evolves with every individual reading process." These approaches "assume that a text creates certain expectations in the reader in every phase of reading. These expectations are then either fulfilled or left unfulfilled" (Klarer 2004, 90).

Finally, the term context-oriented approach "refers to a heterogeneous group of schools and methodologies which do not regard literary texts as self-contained, independent works of art but try to place them within a larger context" (Klarer 2004, 91).[6] So, we could make reference to "new historicism approach, which builds on post-structuralism and deconstruction, with their focus on text and discourse, but adds a historical dimension to the discussion of literary texts" (Klarer 2004, 92).[7]

Similarly, related to new historicism is the independent movement called "cultural studies." Mario Klarer defines it as a literary movement, which purpose was to analyse "the different aspects of human self--expression, including the visual arts, film, TV, commercials, fashion, architecture, music, popular culture, etc., as manifestation of a cultural whole" (Klarer 2004, 93).

Furthermore, Mario Klarer sees the feminist literary theory as "the most productive and, at the same time, most revolutionary movement of the younger theories of literary criticism in general and the contextual

psychological illness he is suffering. Sigmund Freud, too, borrowed from literary texts in his explanations of certain psychological phenomena. Some of his studies, among them the analysis of E.T.A Hoffmann's story "The Sandman", rank among the classical interpretations of literary texts.

[6] According to Mario Klarer, "Depending on the movement, this context can be history, social and political background, literary genre, nationality, or gender. The most influential movement to this day is literary history" (Klarer 2004, 91). See Marxist literary theory. On the basis of the writings of Karl Marx (1818—83) and literary theorists, including Georg Lukacs (1885-1971) and Antonio Gramsci (1891—1937), texts are analysed as "expressions of economic, sociological, and political factors".

[7] Mario Klarer says that "one of the leading figures in new historicism, Stephen Greenblatt (1943-), has analysed a colonial text of early American literature by Thomas Harriot (*c.* 1560-1621), comparing the relationship between Europeans and Indians in this text with the structures of dependence in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (*c.* 1611). As a result, the mechanisms of power are exposed as deeply rooted cultural structures which dominate the historical as well as the literary discourses of the time" (Klarer 2004, 93).

approaches in particular." He notices that "although gender is always at the centre of attention in this school, this particular movement may be used to demonstrate how different approaches in literary studies tend to overlap" (Klarer 2004, 94). This remark was particularly important to my thesis, since I also used different approaches to interpret Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Carvalho's *Vou lá visitar Pastores*.

Still regarding literary criticism, Mario Klarer notes that it "can refer to the literary interpretation of texts as well as their evaluation" (Klarer 2004, 100). Literary awards and book reviews are usually one of the results of literary interpretation or evaluation.

Having said that, another question can be asked. How does literary theory relate to the history of criticism? Literary criticism is perpetually concerned with the definition of literature. Many issues raised in the field of literature, like those found on the pages above, are equally relevant for literary criticism. As Steven Hale has put it in one of his essays with which I agree,

> Literary criticism is an extension of this social activity of interpreting. One reader writes down his or her views on what a particular work of literature means so that others can respond to that interpretation. The critic's specific purpose may be to make value judgments on a work, to explain his or her inter-pretation of the work, or to provide other readers with relevant historical or biographical information. The critic's general pur-pose, in most cases, is to enrich the reader's understanding of the literary work. Critics typically engage in dialogue or deba-te with other critics, using the views of other critics to develop their own points. Unfortunately, when critics assume that their readers are already familiar with previous criticism, the argu-ment may be difficult to follow. (Hale 1997)

Nevertheless, literary criticism is not only concerned with issues of evaluation or with issues of appreciation; it is also sceptical about the

foundation of its subject matter. Why sceptical? Because it never sees the result of any textual evaluation as an end in itself, but always as a new beginning for many other evaluative readings which can be done.

David Hume called scepticism as an illness which can never be radically cured, but returns upon us every moment, however we may chase it away (Hume 2008 [1748], 11-18.). I think there is much reason in what David Hume says.

I think Hume saw scepticism as some kind of disease which people must live with day and night and which cannot be totally dodged or cured. Certainly, he compares it with some kind of chronic disease in the body of someone looking for health and with which one will eventually learn how to live. In a nutshell, Hume gave emphasis on the importance of scepticism for literary criticism. A critic must never be happy with sporadic readings or interpretations of a text. He or she must always be suspicious about what apparently appears to be a great discovery.

This means that there is no literary criticism without a "hermeneutic of suspicion." Texts are believed to have unexpected hidden surprises waiting to be revealed by all those readers who approach them critically. Usually, such readers are advised to be prepared to encounter hidden surprises every time they read or interpret them.

From this perspective, literature is seen hypothetically as a territory of unimaginable twists and nuances to be faced by whoever gets involved in the serious business of critical reading while searching for meaning and understanding. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunning suggest that "the odd thing, in fact, about literature as an imagined territory is that there are apparently no natural limits and hence, it would seem, there are apparently no natural limits to the field of literary criticism." (Greenblatt and Gunning 1992, 6).

Moreover, aligned with literary criticism theory is the reader-response criticism, briefly mentioned above, which was developed by critics such as Roland Barthes, Noam Chomsky and Christopher Norris. This theory is crucial in order to understand the twists and nuances encountered and hidden in the text to be read or interpreted.

That implies that the depth of a particular reading act also depends on the ability of interpreting of the reader, i.e., the person's ability to respond to literary twists and nuances hidden in the text. An intelligent reading depends on a number of complex and predefined criteria which may render it understandable. This means that the subject is as important as the text in the act of reading and interpreting. There is no intelligibility without the mediation of an informed subject who makes the text and the reading process intelligible. Therefore, the role of consciousness and unconsciousness in literature cannot be but crucial. This means that the attitude, the psychological disposition and the intelligence of the readers do count in the act of reading or interpreting a text.

Literary criticism also appeals to the underlying structures found in the text. Like a symphony, a picture or a machine, the literary text is designed within a structural format where each one of its parts is meant to be functional and not simply a mere sum.

For example, if the musicians do not use the treble clefs, the notes and the pauses without the necessary scientific order, they cannot create any symphony but a cacophony. If a painter does not combine the colours he wants to use and the landscapes he imagines painting there cannot be any valuable art as a result.

The same thing occurs in a literary text. When we read a novel or a poem, it is easy to notice that the events that are being narrated carry some either explicit or implicit order, previously adopted by the author, which might eventually lead to a desired ending. But not always the author himself/herself is deeply aware of this order he/she creates.

Accordingly, how would one define structure? Structure is meant here as the organization of parts or units of a certain literary text in a coherent and significant order either in terms of textual content as a whole or in terms of form.

In that way, it is right to say that there are underlying structures in all literary texts which becomes the basis of the structuralist theory. Some theorists have tried to reconcile structuralist theory with a natural or intuitive approaches to texts. Among these theorists is Jonathan Culler

with his *Structuralist Poetics* (1975). In his view, the proper task of theory is to "provide a legitimating framework or system for insights which a competent reader should be able to arrive at and check against his sense of relevance and fitness" (Culler 1975, 2). I think that every relatively competent reader is capable of finding some logic in whatever he or she is reading. Nevertheless, to understand certain complex texts, one will need to be formally trained and relatively proficient in it.

Where did it all leave my thesis? My thesis is certainly located in the field of literary criticism. This approach tends to include and take all other theoretical approaches to literature very seriously and in a well-adjusted way. Most literary critics defend that all these approaches seem to overlap whenever someone is reading and interpreting a particular text with the purpose of finding meaning and understanding. And that is exactly what I did, i.e., I tried to integrate all these approaches to find meaning and understanding through fiction.

Thus, my critical reading and interpretation of the texts in my research was not only located in the field of literary criticism but also related to the concepts of ethnography and fiction as it is being persistently suggested here. Why would I state that? Straightforwardly, because ethnography and fiction are two central concepts in the fields of cultural studies and literary criticism, and my thesis was aligned with this perspective. In the following subsection I further elaborate on this.

2. Ethnography and fiction

As mentioned by Mario Klarer,

> Cultural studies adopts a comprehensive perspective, which attempts to grasp culture's multi-faceted nature. As early as 1958 the theorist Raymond Williams (1921-88) in *Culture and Society* argued in favour of a cultural understanding which takes into consideration the whole of cultural production rather than isolated details. (Klarer 2004, 93)

Among this cultural production we find, of course, fiction as well as artefacts. Both fiction and art are material manifestations or spiritual expressions of culture, and culture is a human product. Ethnography studies, interprets, classifies and describes all this cultural production of men and women.

Let me start with the definitions of each one of these two terms to clarify this claim. Its clarification helped me engage in a more thorough theoretical discussion, which eventually led to the understanding of different issues emerging within literature as a whole, within African literatures, and especially within the colonial and postcolonial representations of Africa as a whole.

Most dictionaries define ethnography as a scientific description of the culture of a society by someone who has lived in it. Contemporary ethnography, for example, emphasizes fieldwork as a criterion *sine qua non* for considering an ethnographic study complete and scientific. This implies that a researcher must live among people or in an area expected to be studied and described.

Studying and describing places or peoples is not something new. Herodotus did it many years ago (5th century BC). He wrote of some fifty or more different peoples he encountered or heard of, making remarks on their languages, laws, social customs, religion and appearance. Malinowski wrote several ethnographies of the Trobriand Islands (1915). Margaret Mead wrote about the Samoa (1925). However, not all of them lived in fact among the people or in the zones they described. Many of these studies or descriptions were products originating in secondary sources, but in certain cases ethnographically relevant because of the amount and kind of information they exposed.

In fact, I see fieldwork as some kind of rite of passage a cultural anthropologist must go through. In other words, without fieldwork, probably there is no ethnography whatsoever, as it was traditionally defended. However, it is important to mention that while in the past ethnography related more to communities rather than to individuals, contemporary ethnographies have now opted for the observation of the individuals,

focusing and concentrating on the description of current circumstances rather than historical events. This means that ethnographic studies are no longer restricted to small primitive societies but may also focus on social units such as urban ghettos and on the texts produced as a result of these studies.

No doubt, the tools of the ethnographer have changed radically since Malinowski´s time. For example, ethnographers have taken full advantage of technological developments such as motion pictures and tape recorders to expand their written accounts.[8]

The word fiction, on the other hand, is a Latin word (*facere)* which means to fabricate or to produce artefacts. In some literatures, fiction is seen as a false report or statement which you pretend to be true. For example, the expression 'Science Fiction' denotes some kind of imaginary facts or beings projected either to the past or to the future. The idea of falseness is implicit in it.

However, in this study the word fiction has been used with the meaning of a type of text, which is written with the purpose of conveying a message based on "real or imagined worlds,"[9] characters and events, yet it tells a story which can instruct or delight readers. Albert Camus once said ironically that "fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth." Yet, it is a very deep aphorism. It makes one think.

In that context, a fiction could be a result of an ethnographic piece of work carried out by an ethnographer, anthropologist or literary critic while studying, describing and evaluating a society or particular people of interest or while locked in his or her room with a pen and a piece of paper writing about them, imagining or pretending to be among these people. I would call these writings some kind of ethnographic fictions. In the

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[8] What is also interesting to notice is the fact that many ethnographers had no idea that their writings would have been extremely and theoretically challenging with ideological and aesthetic implications for their future readers, each one within his or her social *milieu*.
[9] Morroe Berger's book title (1977).

past, many of these ethnographic fictions[10] were born as a consequence of participant observation in certain social *milieu*, but many writers were unaware of the ethnographic role they played. Then, what was unthinkable of was the amount of theoretical jargon produced as a result, many of which have become outstanding literary and ethnographic stories worth consulting. Rose De Angelis, for instance, argues that

> Literary writers are ethnographers by virtue of the fact that they write stories about people and their sentiments, about places and happenings, and about contexts. Characteristically, the ethnographer participates, either overtly or covertly, in the daily lives of a group of people, watching, listening, and collecting data that will shed light on the observed subject or subjects. In literature, the writer/observer shares a piece of the other, and the overlapping pieces provide a window through which the reader may gain insights — social and cultural data — into particular cultures and societies. Reading the text as a cultural artefact becomes a way of participating in social research. The writer/ethnographer presents information to the reader/participant who acts as both subject and object as he or she reads the information presented and makes his or her own observations. Historians, classics, folklorists, mythologists, archaeologists, and ethnographers have all cited literary works for purposes of creating and interpreting the past or for identifying cultural patterns. (De Angelis 2002, 2-3)

In addition, she observes that scholars like Andrew Lang, Jane Harrison, Sabatino Moscati, Johannes Brondsted, and Ruth Benedict, to name just a few, have also searched literary sources for ethnographic data (De Angelis 2002, 4).

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[10] Fictional ethnographies: terminology used here to mean local or global literatures written as a result of fieldwork research, but which can develop inter-ethnic understanding through fiction.

Reading James Clifford, however, one perceives that ethnographic writing is determined in at least six ways. Firstly, 'it draws from and creates meaningful social *milieu*' which he called *contextual determination*; secondly, 'it uses and is used by expressive conventions' which he called *rhetorical determination*; thirdly, it is written within, and against, specific traditions, disciplines and audiences, which he called *institutional determination*; fourthly, an ethnography may be distinguishable from a novel or travel account. Actually, it is more than that. Clifford has called it a *generic determination*; fifthly, it is observed that in some ethnographic writing the authority to represent cultural realities is unequally shared and at times contested, which James Clifford has called *political determination*; sixthly, it might be said that all these conventions and constraints mentioned above keep changing and are historically determined, which he called *historical determination* (Clifford and Marcus1986, 6).

Furthermore, J. Clifford in *The Predicament of Culture* apart from addressing the issues of culture and ethnography in depth, also sought to understand the discussion concerning ethnography and authority and how it is related to literary criticism and literary theory (Clifford 1988).

Ana Martinho, paraphrasing him, while addressing the importance of African ethnographic writings, has said that

> Many African authors have used ethnographic writing as a tool to establish closeness with the people they wanted to represent, describe, and motivate. Appropriate representations and perceptions were not easy to disseminate though, due in part to the disparate reading of differences and to cultural portraits of disputed generalization. Thus, the articulated perception of misrepresentation creates in this context an uncomfortable place for the African writer, but seems to work as well as a protective filter on political grounds. (Martinho 2011, 10)

From the perspective of fiction, yet again quoting Martinho, it was said that

> Most of the modern African narratives are not merely reproductions of the so-called traditional oral stories and histories. They are cultural testimonies of national travellers, and epitomize transitions experienced as well as symbolic, cartographic, and cultural routes. Research from a combined perspective of Anthropology and Literature can illuminate some aspects of the discontinuities in cultural identification between the intellectuals and their "tribes." From this perspective, postcolonial societies and their cultures can be read through a localized anthropological gaze, since they tend to accept literature as cultural testimony. Such literature emerges from a resilient context of long-term war and post-war experience. (Martinho 2011, 10-11)

These two theoretical justifications are fundamental in reading African literature and ethnography, for example, because they accept literature and ethnography as cultural testimony and experience.

However, the issues that would probably emerge out of it are the problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research (Margaret D. Lecompte). The results of ethnographic research are often regarded as unreliable and lacking validity and potential of generalisation. Some ethnographers ignore such criticisms. Others recognize potential threats to the credibility of their techniques for inter-comprehension across research disciplines and traditions (Cicourel, 1964; Denzin, 1978; Pelto, 1978).

Notwithstanding that, I think that ethnography is a way forward to interpret such literatures "emerging from a resilient context of long-term war and post-war experience", as stated by Ana Maria Martinho.

As observed by J. Van Maanen, "Ethnographies sit between two worlds or systems of meaning: the world of the ethnographer and the world of cultural members. Ethnographies are documents that pose questions at the margins between two cultures" (Van Maanen 1988, 4).

Moreover, Larry Diamond emphasizes that "the literature of a society tells us much about its culture, social structure and even politics." This also means that, regarding fiction, one could say that "the fiction of a certain country, culture or period may reveal more of its values, customs, conflicts, stresses, changes and transformations than does all the formal scholarship of historians and social scientists" (Diamond 1989, 435).

Larry Diamond still goes on to say that "in particular, fiction may give us special insights into how culture and history intersect with and re-shape, or are reshaped by, the lives of people, ordinary and extraordinary. For these reasons, literature may provide a precious and indispensable window into a society, a people and an era" (*Ibid.*).

Larry Diamond raises two important questions here: literature seen as a mediator of history and as a history recorder, some kind of archive of historical, social, cultural and political events of certain people, therefore, some kind of ethnography to keep and pass on.

In his remarks, Diamond sees literature and fiction as having exactly the same function: "the literature of a society tells us much about its culture, social structure and even politics" and "fiction may give us special insights into how culture and history intersect with and reshape, or are reshaped by, the lives of people, ordinary and extraordinary."

For Diamond, literature is fiction and fiction is literature, bearing in mind that the fiction may provide a "precious and indispensable window into a society, a people and an era." This thesis is aligned with this perspective.

For him and for me as well, "fiction is more than a passive reflection of society and history. It is also an active influence, reinforcing or refashioning values, beliefs, ideas, perceptions and aspirations" (Diamond 1989, 435). Of course, Achebe's and Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's texts seem to have achieved that as I demonstrated in my thesis. Diamond adds that

> The teller of a story can become a powerful force in shaping the way a people think about their social and political order, and the nature, desirability and direction of change. Among other

> things, literature may affect the way people think about politics, about culture, about people and about writings (my emphases), the way they perceive their political system, and the approach they embrace to the challenge of political change. The novel, then, may be an agent of political culture, and the novelist a political philosopher and teacher. (*Ibid.*)

Accordingly, Achebe and Carvalho can be considered as two novelists playing the roles of political philosophers and teachers, as stated by Diamond.

My critical reading and interpretation of *Things Fall Apart* and *Vou lá visitar Pastoes* were in line with the concepts of ethnography and fiction defended by Diamond; all in all, because

> in literature, the writer/observer shares a piece of the other, and the overlapping pieces provide a window through which the reader may gain insights — social and cultural data — into particular cultures and societies. Reading the text as a cultural artefact becomes a way of participating in social research. (De Angelis 2002, 3-4)

One will note that the literary and ethnographic approaches were continually present in my reflections. Equally, I use the social construction and representation theories in order to gain social and cultural understandings about the Igbo and Kuvale cultural landscapes as described in *Things Fall Apart* and *Vou lá Visitar Pastores*. Why? Because the theories of social construction and representation are one of key concepts of sociology of knowledge given that they refer to the way we can create and acquire meanings through social interaction with others. They try to understand how realities such as language, symbols, colour, food, gestures, people and race are socially conceived, constructed and eventually learned. This is crucial.

3. Social Construction and Representation

What is social construction and what is representation then? Knowing that human beings cannot live isolated or detached from their fellow human beings as observed by Aristotle, so understanding how social and cultural realities are constructed and represented collectively and beliefs held for ages, cannot be less important for ethnography and literature. I used these two concepts because I wanted to understand how categories, myths, stories and metaphors are usually constructed and represented by people like Igbo and Kuvale and how the novelists under analysis constructed and conveyed cultural meanings through literature and anthropology.

To begin with, it is important to mention that there have been various uses of the metaphor "construction" and that processes of construction seem to differ with the types of objects that can be constructed. For example, for Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, it is used to refer to the "construction of both facts and things"; for Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker, it refers to the "construction of knowledge" (technology); and for Karim Knorr-Cetina, it refers to "Research Program" (Sismondo 1993, 516).

Consequently, four types of meaning of construction can be inferred: first, the "construction through the interplay of actors of institutions, including knowledge, methodology, fields, habits and regulative ideals;" second, the "construction by scientists of theories and accounts, in the sense that these are structures that rest upon bases of data and observations;" third, the "construction through material intervention of artefacts in the laboratory; fourth, the construction in the neo-Kantian sense of the objects of thoughts and representation" (Sismondo 1993, 516-17).

It should be stressed, however, that the origin of the phrase «social construction» is found in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman's book entitled *The Social Construction of Reality*, which claims that "reality is socially constructed and processes of social construction should be the focus of sociology of knowledge" (Sismondo 1993, 517). For these sociologists, reality refers to subjective reality, or people's beliefs about the world. It also refers to the rest of the real world: "objective reality or that which cannot be wished away."

Therefore, one can talk of society as objective reality and as a subjective reality: a product of both subjective and objective causes. For this reason also, some authors would appeal to the fact that in sociology of knowledge it is important to understand how societies are culturally constructed.

Retaking the subjects such as language, symbols, colour, food, gestures, people, race, referred to earlier, I should ask the following question: how are these concepts culturally or socially constructed and learned?

Let me take language first. A language is a system of sounds, and sometimes figures, to which we collectively attach meaning, and it means different things for different people. As claimed by Claire Kramsch, "particular meanings are adopted by the speech community and imposed in turn on its members, who find it then difficult, if not impossible to say or feel anything original" (Kramsch 2014, 5). For example, the roses: roses seen as flowers, as fragrance and as expressions of love. One sees here nature and culture bound together to create new meanings. In this sense, both oral cultures and literate cultures find their own ways of emancipating and constraining their members to new meanings culturally interwoven.

Quoting C. Kramsch once more, I should say that

> The screws that language and culture impose on nature correspond to various forms of socialization or acculturation. Etiquette, expressions of politeness, social dos and don'ts shape people's behaviour through child rearing, behavioural upbringing, schooling, professional training. The use of written language is also shaped and socialized through culture. Not only what it is proper to write to whom in what circumstances, but also which text genres are appropriate (the application form, the business letter, the political pamphlet), because they are sanctioned by cultural conventions. These ways with language, or norms of interaction and interpretation, form part of the invisible ritual imposed by culture on language users. (Kramsch 2014, 5-6)

Claire Kramsch also claims that "this is certainly the cultures' way of bringing order and predictability into people's use of language" (Kramsch 2014, 6). Perhaps I should emphasize here that "invisible ritual imposed by culture on language users" and "bringing order and predictability" are ways of teaching or sanctioning the members of a certain speech community. I think this matters enormously in the process of social construction. It means that processes such as socialization, enculturation or acculturation can be instructive or destructive. The effectiveness of these processes can either happen intentionally or involuntarily.

Human beings are creators of their own culture and *ipso facto* its products as well. They create symbols which represent their "real and imagined worlds"[11] and, eventually, these same worlds represent them in return.

Similarly, symbols are things that stand in for another thing, a result of conventions of use imposed upon us by our speech communities. For example, the colours of the Angolan flag, in which the red colour, standing for the blood spilt by people to fight for their independence, the black colour, meaning the African continent, and the yellow colour, standing for the national wealth, are commonly held by the Angolans not because these meanings were naturally bestowed upon them. No, they were not and they will never be. These are conventions of use. Effectively, symbols are conventions of use socially constructed and learned. They are usually associated with certain ideas, things or groups of people or even divinities.

In fact, symbols can characterize, identify, recognize, include or exclude certain entities. The confederate flag in America, which was used to exclude African-Americans, is an example of this exclusion. Now and then, these representations contain categories and ideas of superiority which can intentionally exclude or oppress others which are believed to be less powerful or intelligent.

Among these examples, we find stereotypes describing the indigenous American Indians as inferior and associating them generally with

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11 This expression was taken from Morroe Berger's book, as cited before.

nature, and nature, *strictu sensu*, implied primitiveness, nakedness and "poverty" or black people, associated usually with darkness, and darkness, *strictu sensu*, implied primitiveness, ignorance, fear, poverty and obscurity or the absence of illumination.

Then, why do social constructions and representations matter? I think it is because of what they tend to describe and because they are essentially and collectively held conventions. One cannot expect a particular construction or representation to be held only by a single individual and for a great number of years or to be simply replaced with another and at the same time expect an individual or people to conform to it and act accordingly, without being imposed by his/her community. The community is probably the most powerful force behind the tenure of cultural symbols or beliefs.

For example, the skin problem in the American continent was, is and will probably continue to be a very serious social problem for many more years to come despite the efforts which have been carried out by the American government. It seems to me that the stand against it is still weak, because there has not been an effective involvement of the whole American community. Unless it is communally addressed and fought against, it will not fade away unfortunately.

However, I must admit that social constructions and representations do change with time and all the time. Groups or speech communities may actively try to renegotiate meanings or be forced to adopt them by a social process called acculturation, a process which can cause either alienation or liberation. In this sense, social movements can be understood partly as collective efforts to change fixed or negative ideas about the world, peoples and cultures. New social constructions and representations can become powerful cultural tools with which to create and convey new meanings within a speech community and bring about the change it needs.

Thus, social construction and representation can be theorized together with concepts like literary criticism, ethnography and fiction. They all try to interpret, understand and describe culture as a human phenomenon.

As said earlier, one of the fundamental notions in the social construction theory is that the reality of specific groups can be objectified in symbols and represented through art and language. So, to represent is to communicate, to speak, to stand for or to act on behalf of someone else or to describe something or someone. In this sense, representation is an act of speaking of or describing someone or something; it is an act of pretending to be what you or others are or are not; it can be described as a positive or negative, true or false, blurred or optimistic way of thinking or writing about others.

Edward Said in his *Orientalism* gives examples of negative or false representations. He develops a conceptual theorization of the representations of colonized peoples by the Western colonizers, that is, of the Orientals by the Westerners. For him, the West has not represented the Orient adequately and the political and economic relations between the two worlds have never been on an equal basis. These relations are characterized by imperialist discourses and attitudes, that is, by economic exploitation and cultural alienation (Said 2003, 19).

Thus far, the West believed that it was the only civilization authorized to speak and write on behalf of other civilizations. Could we say that this attitude has finally changed? I am afraid it has not. History goes on witnessing disproportions in the relation between the West and the rest of the World. This is mostly experienced in the spheres of economy, politics, science, business and literature. The West continues to misrepresent the least developed countries. The language it uses is usually symptomatic and strong. We often hear words like: *third world, poor people, underdeveloped countries, band of refugees and illiterate, corrupt and violent, Negro and uncivilized*, just to mention a few.

This is much conspicuous in literature, in which African cultures and people were misrepresented. I said plenty more about it in chapter five of my thesis, where among other things, I reviewed post-colonial imperialism, discourse and cultural hegemony. But it was remarked for that reason that most African literatures were lumped or represented altogether into the "rather amorphous category of 'Third World' literatures, an

attitude which prevented many westerners and even some Africans or 'Africanists'"[12] from learning the important aspects of the African writings and people.

I focused on some of these African writings (especially Nigerian and Angolan), on the literary significance and the descriptive value they epitomize as well as on the important role they continue to play in unshackling the African continent out of poverty.

So for what has been said, I can conclude that there is a strong and unbreakable relationship between literature and ethnography and through the years I have not been alone in thinking about the relationship of ethnography and literature. It is true that the re-examination of ethnographic and literary texts has brought up complex questions about science and art, projection and distortion, truth and fiction. But it did not break that relationship. On the contrary, it reinforced it.

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[12] Africans who believe that what they write or say about Africa and its people can help put the continent back on cultural, political and economic progress. But once one reads or hears what they propose for Africa, one quickly realizes that it can usually cause more harm than joy when compared to what was done by those who colonized Africa long before. What they write or propose is simply a curse rather than a blessing in disguise. This includes people like Pieter Willem Botta, the ex-prime Minister of South Africa and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, just to name a few.

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