



## EVOLUTION OF LOCAL, NATIONAL OR REGIONAL LITERATURE INTO WORLD LITERATURE: *THINGS FALL APART*, *SO LONG A LETTER* AND *WIZARD OF THE CROW* IN PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract:

World literature has become an important area of enquiry. This is because it projects human interaction through literature across the world to make humans think broadly. The aim of this paper is to examine the evolution of world literature from local, national or regional literatures employing Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* as paradigms. The three novels selected here have not been combined before by scholars for studies of this nature, which makes this paper imperative. The paper is qualitative research, and it dwells on a discourse approach. It discovers that world literature is literature that is massively read across cultural divides, either in its original language of production or translation to foreign languages. The conditions that make literary texts enter world literature include their widespread (that is, circulation) across the world, translation to multiple foreign languages, use of the English language as a creative tool and universal relatability of its themes. Thus, it is seen that these factors facilitated *Things Fall Apart*, *So Long a Letter* and *Wizard of the Crow*, entry into world literature, emanating from their local, national or regional boundaries.

**Keywords:** World literature, translation, *Things Fall Apart*, *So Long a Letter*, *Wizard of the Crow*

### 1. Introduction

World literature as an aspect of literature and a distinct field of literary enquiry today in various schools and universities across the world is traced to the exploits and vision of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a German poet and writer of the 19th century. Goethe coined the term world literature, which is an English translation of his German term,

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*weltliteratur*. David Damrosch, in his seminal book, *What is World Literature?*, reveals that Goethe brought forth his vision in a discussion with his disciple, Eckermann, in such a statement:

*"I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men...I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach."* (1)

Thus, Goethe's statement that rooted world literature indicates that literature is an intellectual human property that manifests in humans wherever they are and at all times. Literature of a particular country about a particular people and experience can be felt by citizens of another distinct country because of some of their realities that may be reflected in the literature, though in a way and language made available by translation. This can be refreshing and mentally transporting around the globe, which is what Goethe admired and advised all lovers of literature to do. And when this is done, world literature is established. In addition, Damsroch also presents a later view by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their classic work, *The Communist Manifesto*, that enriched Goethe's idea of world literature:

*"The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionaries, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature."* (4)

By implication, the concept of world literature was given thought by the most fertile intellectual minds of the 19th century. Marx and Engels' view presents that world literature is reached when due consideration and fairness are applied to value judgment against hegemonic biases. Thus, in the approach to world literature, one has to be holistic and broad-minded.

## 2. Literature Review

Every subject has a definition, and in this regard, David Damrosch, one of the pioneering scholars of world literature, defines it thus: "[...] world literature [...] encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language [...]" (4). Damrosch means that for a work to be considered world literature, it must be read and appreciated beyond its place of origin, whether it is made available to

other languages of the world it finds itself in or it is accepted in its original language of production. In Guillen's view, *"a work has an effective life as world literature whenever, and wherever, it is actively present within a literary system beyond that of its original culture"* (quoted in Damrosch, 4). This view deems lasting impact as the key to a work of literature becoming world literature outside its culture of production. Sara Nagle defines *"[w]orld literature, in the modern sense, refers to literary works that are translated into multiple languages and circulated to an audience outside their country of origin"* (illinoispublishing.org). Nagle's definition points out major elements of world literature. These are translations into many different languages and external circulation.

Furthermore, Martin Puchner explicates:

*"World literature or world creation literature, as I understand it, thrives on the relation between the two words of which this term is composed: world; literature. It invites us to consider the dimension of reference, asking what world or worlds this literature refers to; the dimension of scale through which some type of totality is aimed at; and, by contrast, the decision to use the model as a way of making that totality manageable."* (quoted in de Zepetnek and Vasvari, 8)

Puchner bases his opinion on the morphological structure of the term, world literature, which sums up the literature is summed up and the summation is the framework of approaching world literature. Although world literature refers to a particular brand of globally spread literature, it is not "totalised" as Puchner would make of it, but it is only conceived as an intercontinental form of literature connecting humans. On his part, Marshall Brown opines that, *"world literature...is writing that conveys the power and the conflicted nature of encounters with natural, or social, or metaphysical realms beyond our power to contain them"* (quoted in de Zepetnek and Vasvari, 8). This reveals that world literature is the literature of extraordinarility. By this, world literature would refer to the Greco-Roman classics or African epics because of their extra-human features. But world literature in a contemporary sense refers to the accessibility of texts of foreign cultures by readers of far-away countries from that of the texts' emanation.

On the significance of world literature, Nagle posits that *"[w]orld literature can show us how information is shared between cultures and nations. It provides insight into how cultural artifacts are transformed as they traverse languages and boundaries"* (illinoispublishing.org). Nagle here informs us of the relevance of world literature to the global world. World literature brings about the sharing of knowledge between countries and individuals. It provides an avenue for tracing the evolution of cultural heritage in translated languages and new social environments. This makes the study of world literature interesting. Nagle proceeds that *"[i]t (world literature) also can help us to understand the ways that new media technologies could be facilitating globalization by creating a public space for the transmission of literature and other information across the globe"* (illinoispublishing.org). This is a further indication of the importance of the new media in the literature across the world.

World literature is an academic domain of investigating the global inter-mixture of literary texts of various cultural, linguistic and ideological backgrounds made easy by translation, information communication technology and fusion of the world's markets by efficient transportation and distribution chain with a strong influence on the global citizenry and writers. Thematically, what makes a text enter world literature is its exploration of universal phenomena like love, pride, adventure, greed, jealousy, power, heroism, masculinity and femininity, humour, among others. These are things anybody anywhere can relate to, even when portrayed in an unfamiliar culture. Also, oral parameters like myths, legends, spirituality and fables, when explored in texts, can appeal to a global audience because every group of people has some form of myths and legends among other verbal narratives that point to their existence, survival and progress in the world.

## **2.1 Evolution of World Literature**

World literature developed out of the desire of literary personalities to have their works read and appreciated by people in foreign countries outside of their own, and to also have wide access to literary works of foreign nationals and perceive their world view and sense of humanity. This is where Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the originator of world literature, comes to mind with his statement comes to mind: *"I am more and more convinced that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men...I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same"* (1). Moreover, world literature emanated from many factors in the book industry and society. Sowon Park and Jernej Habjan state that the underlying factors for the emergence of world literature studies are many. The end of the Cold War and the rise of non-Western economies, the advent of a global literary marketplace, and the proliferation of digital platforms are seen as some of its preconditions. In general terms, the expansion of world literature can be seen to reflect the rapid integration of the world into a single market ([www.oxfordbibliographies.com](http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com)). To Jason Lineberger and Anastasia Brooks, literature in many parts of the world has undergone a profound change in the 20th and 21st centuries, in part through changes in technology, communication, and warfare. As we passed World War II and the rapid expansion of technology and communication, artists (writers included) had more potential to share new ideas and express themselves than they had ever had in history. The experimentation from the early century continued, and as writers came more in contact with ideas from other cultures, they had more with which to experiment. And now, when ideas are shared in an instant, writers have a nearly limitless palette of flavours from which to choose and the freedom to question any assumption (study.com).

## **2.2 Factors that Cause the Evolution of Local, National or Regional Literature into World Literature**

Factors that enhance the entry of local, national or regional literature into world literature include: circulation, translation, production and use of the English language as a creative

tool. In circulation, when a book travels to far-away countries of distinct cultures and is read and appreciated, it becomes world literature. Thus, the wide spread of a book beyond its cultural borders is significant for it to become world literature. For instance, when a book is published in Nigeria and is distributed across the United States, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Russia, among several others, it becomes world literature. Translation is when a book is made available from the original language of publication to other languages so that the speakers of the various other languages can also read comprehensively and enjoy the book. A book may be published in English but translated to French, Italian, Yoruba, Spanish, Tiv or Swahili for speakers of the languages to also access the book in their home countries. By production, when a book is published by intercontinental publishing giants in the United Kingdom, United States of America and Spain such as Routledge, Longman, Heinemann, Harvard University Press, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Blackwell Publishing and many others, it would have a chance of massive promotion and wider circulation because of the global connections of the companies. This is also the case with renowned and super-talented writers like Wole Soyinka, Salman Rushdie and Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie, among many others. When they author a book, it has the chance of quickly becoming world literature. This is because of the massive promotion, fast distribution and huge orders it may get across the world. In the use of the English language as a creative tool, it is meant that books that are published originally in the English language or translated into English can enter world literature quickly and with ease. This is a fact that the English language is a global language. It is spoken and understood in so many countries across the globe, even in China.

According to Venkat Mani in his article, "A Pact with Books: The Public Life of World Literature", there is an entire set of mediators, representing several institutions, who enable the distribution and circulation of a literary artifact for a worldwide readership such as publisher, bookseller (or online vendor), librarian, magazine editor, literary critic, literary agent, book festival organiser, the scriptioner who translates a novel for theater or film, web-masters of "fan-websites" or Facebook pages of living or dead authors, selection committees for international literary awards, and TV personalities. There is the current digital culture - reading media such as Kindle, Nook, Nexus; online collections such as Google Books and Hathi projects; and online libraries such as the European Library, the Universal Library, the American Digital Public Library - transforming readers' access to world literature ([globalejournal.org](http://globalejournal.org)). Mani's observation is important because the internet has done a credible service to literature by enhancing its easy accessibility. Also, Mani's idea of literary festivals and translations into films or theater promoting world literature is apt. For instance, the Ake Festival of Literature, annually celebrated in Nigeria, and the BIGSAS Show in Byreuth, Germany, have promoted the enrichment of world literature as authors and promoters interact, displaying and sharing books.

The difference between world literature and local, national or regional literatures is that world literature is attained when a text has a wide spread across the globe into

foreign cultures different from the culture of origin of the production of the text. In this guise, Damrosch avers that world literature can be found when a work circulates across cultural divides separating speakers of a single widespread language like Arabic, Spanish, or French. A Senegalese novel written in French can enter world literature in an effective sense when it is read in Paris, Quebec, and Martinique (212). This means that the cultural sensibilities of the Senegalese are very different from those of the French and Martinis, even though they share language ties. Therefore, when a text is rooted in Senegalese culture and is read by citizens of those countries here, it becomes world literature. When Mariama Bâ's *Une si Longue Lettre* (*So Long a Letter*) is widely read in France and Quebec, it becomes world literature. While local, regional or national literatures are literatures that gain prominence only within their culture of origin without wide circulation into foreign cultures. For example, Cyprian Ekwensi's *People of the City*, Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* and Zainab Alkali's *The Virtuous Woman* can be considered local, regional or national literatures because their prominence is within Nigeria, West Africa and Africa.

### 3. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as World Literature

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was published in 1958. It is a novel that is set in the 19th-century Igbo society of Nigeria during the interface with colonialism and Christianity. It represents the traditional lifestyle of the Igbo people that brings them success or downfall. The penetration of colonialism and Christianity in the society caused the disregard for the people's beliefs and values, and humanity. The colonial masters and Christian missionaries consider the people to be backward and idol worshipers who need enlightenment and salvation from them. This then causes the disintegration of the society as the Christian missionaries embolden their new converts among the people to disregard tradition, while the colonial administration's police manhandle the people perceived to be against colonial interests. The novel revolves around the protagonist, Okonkwo, in the clan of Umuofia. Okonkwo is a warlord and a very important member of Umuofia. He is a titled man, and he is wealthy. He achieves his wealth through serious hard work and bravery. He is a member of the *Egwwuogu* masked ancestral spirits cult that makes vital decisions for the clan and leads in judgement between quarreling clansmen. However, angered by the total disregard for the beliefs, values and leaders of Umuofia by the colonial and missionary authorities, he challenges the colonial authority violently. And being aware that he will be persecuted, he hangs himself rather than die in the hands of foreigners in shame.

*Things Fall Apart* entered world literature quickly because of its counter representation of the colonial views of African people as savages, lazy and incomplete humans that needed pacification from the colonial hegemony of Western Europe, which has also been represented in colonial texts such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*. Achebe's novel cogently projected the voice of the colonised people against the colonisers. The larger colonised world could relate to the issues of

colonial disruptions of societies captured in *Things Fall Apart* that they had experienced. This made the novel receive global readership, thereby becoming world literature.

Themes and concepts in the novel, such as Okonkwo's masculinity, pride, quest for heroism and power and success - and the concept of tragedy, mythology, legends and fables, which are universal, made the novel relatable to readers of foreign cultures. This factor is also believed to have contributed to the novel's reception of wide readership across the world for personal, academic or scholarly purposes. It became the fundamental text for colonial and African literature studies and theorisations in universities and schools in Europe, America, Australia, Asia and the home continent, Africa. It was adopted as a vital text in anthropological and cultural studies. This huge significance of the text is still very much alive to this present decade in the 21st century. This achievement of *Things Fall Apart* confirms Damrosch's view that: "*A work can enter world literature by embodying what are taken to be universal themes and values, so that local cultural detail can be considered secondary or even irrelevant...*" (213).

The use of English as a creative tool also made the novel enter world literature. Achebe composed the novel in the English language, a language that is considered a global language for its significant usages in science, technology, commerce, sports and journalism across the world and the personal desire of the majority of its foreign individuals and over a hundred nations to learn and adopt it as one of their business languages. A point Damrosch, citing David Crystal, says:

*"In English as a Global Language (1997), David Crystal analyzes the ongoing spread of English as the second language of choice in many parts of the world. He argues that English has now become, in fact, the first truly global language in history, spoken in over a hundred countries altogether, as a first or more often second or third language."* (225)

This has made the English language a very vital language in the literature industry for its power and capacity to get texts to millions of readers and hundreds of nations across cultural divides in Africa, Europe, America, Australia and Asia. This greatly facilitates a text's entry into world literature, and it did to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as it enriched its massive reach across cultural divides in the world.

*Things Fall Apart* was produced by William Heinemann in the United Kingdom, and it helped it to enter world literature. The producer of a text enhances its entry into world literature when the producer is a big company with branches or associates across the world. In this case, William Heinemann was one of the biggest names in publishing in the world at that time and had the capacity to vigorously promote and distribute the novel across the world, and it did. Also, for William Heinemann publishing the novel in the United Kingdom and distributing it there made it world literature because it was read across cultural divides. For this, Damrosch emphasises:

*"Initially linked to translation as it is, world literature can also be found when a work circulates across cultural divides separating speakers of a single widespread language like*

*Arabic, Spanish, or French. A Senegalese novel written in French can enter world literature in an effective sense when it is read in Paris, Quebec, and Martinique; translation is only a further stage in its world circulation."* (212)

*Things Fall Apart* has undergone a very wide circulation across the globe. This is much to its global readership demand and the powerful promotion it got from information media outlets, book reviewers, critics, academics and distributors in the book industry across the world. Another contributing factor is its spellbinding form and intellectual content. In a 2008 essay in *The New Yorker*, Ruth Franklin puts that *Things Fall Apart* has been translated into fifty languages and sold more than ten million copies (thenewyorker.com). This record was presented over a decade ago, and currently, other scholars put the global sales at over twenty million copies. Aside this official records, there have been PDF ebook versions that people have bought or downloaded for free, while huge copies have been plagiarised and sold. This is what must have prompted Phil Mongredien to remark in a 2010 review in *The Guardian* that, "*The first part of a trilogy, Things Fall Apart was one of the first African novels to gain worldwide recognition: half a century on, it remains one of the great novels about the colonial era*" (theguardian.com). Therefore, the widespread popularity of *Things Fall Apart* across the globe has entered it into world literature.

Translation is also a significant factor that has established Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as world literature. Translation enhances the reach of texts to foreign readers in their local languages, against the original language of the text, which could have been a barrier. Therefore, published in English, *Things Fall Apart* is said to have been translated into over fifty languages of the world. However, a report by *Brittle Paper* in 2019 puts it at sixty one languages so far and lists them; Afrikaans, Arabic, Assamese, Basque, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Catalan, Chinese, Creole, Croat, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonia, Finnish, French, Galicia, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Kannada, Korean, Kurdish, Lithuanian, Malay, Malayan, Mongolian, Northern Soto, Norwegian, Panjabi, Persian (Farsi), Polish, Portuguese, Portuguese (Brazil), Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Setswana, Sinhala, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xhosa, Yoruba and Zulu. Of course, there are more translations that have not circulated very widely, for example, Moses Terhemba Tsenongo has translated *Things Fall Apart* into Tiv language as *Kwagh u Okonkwo*. This is tremendous for the number of translations *Things Fall Apart* has had, and there is no doubt that it has reached myriad corners of the world and her peoples. This is a confirmation of the novel's greatness, easy accessibility, wide readership and status as world literature. Therefore, from Achebe's nationality of Nigeria and region of Africa, his novel, *Things Fall Apart*, has traversed the world, becoming a part of world literature. Further, *Things Fall Apart* has been adapted to several films and theatre, such as the 1961 radio drama called *Okonkwo* and broadcast by the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, the 1987 miniseries broadcast by the Nigerian Television Authority and a

1999 theater production directed by Biyi Bandele. This is also a mark of the novel's status as world literature.

### 3.1 Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* as World Literature

*So Long a Letter* is an English translation of Mariama Bâ's novel, *Une si Longue Lettre*, originally written in French and published in Senegal. *So Long a Letter* represents the travails of women in a patriarchal and Muslim society in Senegal, Africa. It is woven through the epistolary narrative style. The protagonist, Ramatoulaye, writes a long letter to her long-time friend, Aïssatou, detailing her predicaments as her husband, Modou, has taken a new young wife, abandoning her with their twelve children to cater for all alone. She also reveals the challenges of raising the children all alone and their various behavioural developments. Aïssatou's husband, Mawdo, too on the other hand, marries a new wife, and Aïssatou divorces him and moves abroad to the United States.

The major success of Bâ's *So Long a Letter* and the cause of its entry into world literature is its English translation. Bâ's novel was published in French in Senegal in 1979. And Mariama Bâ was the first Senegalese woman to publish a novel in French. The English translation came out in 1980. The fact that the novel was published in French and has very substantial themes and form could have made it enter world literature because of its being received in France and other Francophone countries; however, it was little known until the English translation appeared in 1980. The translation of the novel in English and its publication by Heinemann Educational Books in the African Writers Series (AWS) projected it into the larger Anglophone world, where its circulation, readership and critical reception were tremendous. This was due to the power of the English language, which Sanelisiwe Sithole in her extensive work, *Translating Mariama Bâ: Representation of African Women and Reception of Une si Longue Lettre*, quoting Brouillette, avers that the English language has established itself as a dominant language at an alarming rate and this dominance is reflected in the world of translation as well (36). Translation grants an entirely new audience access to knowledge and material that would otherwise be inaccessible to them (11). Therefore, translation and the English language add extra prominence to Bâ's *So Long a Letter* that it enjoyed a wider spread across the world, selection for studies in schools and universities in the world and further translations into majority languages in the world, which entered it into world literature. Sithole puts that:

Our novel, *Une si Longue Lettre* is slightly unique in the sense that it was originally written in French, a widely spoken language that originated from the former colonial power, that is, France. When it was previously only accessible to the Francophone world, thanks to its numerous translations, it is now available in many other languages of the world, many of them spoken in the Global North. The novel has been translated from French in the following languages: English, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish, Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian, Czech, Russian, Romanian, Arabic, Japanese, Wolof and Swahili. (33)

The novel is translated into eighteen languages, but it was the English translation that exposed it to the wider world and received such huge recognition. The Eurasian languages the novel is translated into are powerful world languages that have a significant impact on any literary work. Sithole took an interest in the only two African languages the novel is translated into, Wolof and Swahili, and explained that they are very vital to the success of the novel on the African continent, to the indigenous people, because they are widely used. Wolof is the majority language in Senegal and a lingua franca in Dakar, the capital city where the novel was produced. Aside from that, Wolof is also spoken in Gambia and Mauritania, while Swahili is widely used in East Africa as a lingua franca. Swahili is a national language in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It is spoken much in other countries like Burundi and Rwanda. Regarding the number of people who speak it, Sithole has estimated to be as high as 100 million people. This paints a picture of just how widely spoken and understood it is on the continent, but also the potential readership the novel can gain in Africa because of the existence of the Swahili translation (34).

More so, Sithole affirms that the eighteen other translations of *Une si Longue Lettre* are part of the reason why the novel's impact is so far-reaching (9). Mariama Bâ's work has been widely read and relatively well received by Western audiences and has been rather popular with academic institutions in the West and in Africa, being taught in disciplines like gender studies, African literature, French and Francophone studies and anthropology, among many others (21). Novelist and professor of English, John Champagne has taught *So Long a Letter* in the United States, in a university in a course entitled "The Theme of Identity, in World Literature: Race, Gender, and other Issues of Diversity" (37) while professor Lisa Williams has taught it at Ramapo College in New Jersey as part of a women in literature course (40). Therefore, the novel's wide readership, teaching, and academic and scholarly engagements across cultural divides in the world entered it into world literature. This relates to Damsroch's view that: "*A work enters into world literature by a double process: first by being read as literature; second, by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and cultural point of origin*" (6).

Other parameters that enter *So Long a Letter* into world literature are its wider circulation and intellectual treatment of feminist issues in Africa. The wider circulation of *So Long a Letter* was its publication by Heinemann Educational Books under the African Writers Series. Heinemann, as a traditional British publishing company, had the resources to distribute the novel to the wider Anglophone world in Africa and Eurasia and it did it. And because it was published under the educational books category, the novel became part of the syllabus of many African Anglophone countries' schools in English language and literature. To Sithole, another reason that gave the novel a global status is that the novel touches on and explores many facets of human nature and behaviour that are understood and relatable to all people. It broaches the subjects of polygamy, education (women's education in particular), colonialism, the fight for liberation on the continent and friendship (9). These universal themes and the effective use of the epistolary technique in relating the story made the novel win the Noma Award

for publishing in Africa in 1980, the first novel in Africa to win the award. The significance of this award is that it is a big award that is given strictly for intellectual excellence with rigorous selection process and judgement. More to it, the award was established by a Japanese wealthy businessman, Shoichi Noma, founder of a Japanese publishing giant, Kondasha Ltd. Thus, the prestige and distinction of the Noma Award and its intercontinental connections gave *So Long a Letter* a global status, entering world literature.

### 3.2 Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* as World Literature

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is one of the African writers and scholars who deliberately withdrew from writing his creative works in English to write in his African language of Gikuyu originally before possibly translating into English. This is a mark of decolonising African literature from the colonial and neocolonial hegemony of English and its owners, Britain. Ngugi also changed his name from James Ngugi to Ngugi wa Thiong'o for the reason of severing from colonial roots in 1970. When his first published play in Gikuyu, *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry when I Want)*, co-authored with Ngugi wa Mirii was staged, it conscientised the masses about the bad leadership in the country, Kenya, that was exploiting them. The people became agitated, and this angered the government, which ordered Ngugi's arrest and imprisonment without trial in 1977. Therefore, seeing the power of writing in one's original language, which communicates one's intended message to one's people with more clarity and brevity, Ngugi resolved to write only in his Gikuyu African language onward and wrote his first novel in Gikuyu as *Caitani Mutharaba-Ini (Devil on the Cross)* in prison on toilet paper. Hence, he has written three novels in Gikuyu, which have been translated into English.

The novel under consideration here is *Wizard of the Crow*, published in 2006 originally in Gikuyu as *Murogi wa Kagogo* before being translated into English by the author himself. The novel is a satire of dictatorship and postcolonial misrule in Africa. It revolves around a young man, Kamiti, who goes in search of a job in the city but cannot find one despite being well educated. He then turns to sorcery in collaboration with Nyawira, a revolutionary woman, and finds fortune to the extent that even the Ruler seeks his help. He joins Nyawira's group of revolutionaries against the dictatorship of the president, known as the Ruler, bad government and postcolonial political bourgeoisie exploiting the people and laundering government funds. The novel is set in a fictional country of the Free Republic of Aburiria with its capital at Eldares.

*Wizard of the Crow* entered world literature through the influence of translation. With the publication of the novel in Gikuyu, it meant that its target audience was only those who understood Gikuyu, a language spoken by a particular ethnic group in Kenya known as the Kikuyu. That is, even in Kenya, people who are not of Kikuyu origin and do not understand Gikuyu would not access the novel, let alone the majority of people in East Africa, Africa and the whole world. But its translation to English made it accessible to a worldwide audience, and it received global critical acclaim. It received positive critical reviews published in powerful media channels with global following by

renowned literary personalities: John Updike in *The New Yorker*, Margaret Busby in *The Independent*, Laura Miller in salon.com, Jeff Turrentine in *The New York Times*, Maya Jaggi in *The Guardian*, and Aminatta Forna in *The Washington Post*, among others. The novel is studied across the world in literature courses. However, the novel achieved this global status only with its English translation. The novel is also translated into Finnish. Therefore, translation can be considered a significant phenomenon for entering literary works to world literature.

More so, *Wizard of the Crow* received the Tahti fantasia Award in 2008 for the best foreign fantasy novel released in Finland in 2007. The issues of dictatorship and bad leadership portrayed in the novel can be situated anywhere in most postcolonial states. And the capital city, Eldares, sounds like names of places in Latin America, thus making the events in the novel relatable to the post-colonial situations in the Latin American region. These have shown the intercontinental connections of the novel both on the continent and the wider world, which makes it world literature. This aligns with the position by Lineberger and Brooks that for literature to truly be considered world literature, it has to speak to people of more than one nationality. Even books that are very much influenced by their country of origin can rise to become world literature if they contain that insight into human nature that transcends borders (study.com).

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has traced how world literature can evolve from local, national or regional literatures using Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow* as paradigms. After critical evaluations, the paper has uncovered that world literature is literature at the global stage, achieved when a literary text is read across cultural divides and is within the reach of global citizens through translations and wide distribution. Therefore, the factors that enhance world literature are circulation (That is, its widespread across the world), translation (making it available in multiple languages), use of the English language as a creative tool, production and its global relatable themes. When a text enters world literature, it is noticed by its number of translations into foreign languages, widespread across the world and its study and discussions in academic institutions across the world in literature courses and related disciplines. A case where *Things Fall Apart*, *So Long a Letter* and *Wizard of the Crow* bearing the foregoing features have proven to enter world literature, emanating from their local, national or regional boundaries.

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### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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