Defying the Empire and Reconstruction of Identity in Selected Works of Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee: A Comparative Study

Jafar Baba

Doctoral Dissertation

Supervisor:

Dr. Zoltán Kelemen

Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies

Department of Comparative Literature

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Szeged

Szeged, 2025

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that I am the sole author of this dissertation, and that it has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for any degree or diploma at any other institution. I further declare that all sources have been properly cited and referenced, and to the best of my knowledge, this dissertation does not contain copied or reproduced materials from any existing work by another person, except where due acknowledgment has been made.

August 8, 2025

Jafar Baba

Signature

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Zoltán Kelemen, for his invaluable guidance, support, and academic friendship during my Doctoral journey.

I am also grateful to Professor György Fogarasi for his unwavering academic and personal support, and for believing in my potential and giving me the opportunity to be a student at the Department of Comparative Literature.

My sincere thanks also go to Prof. Gertrúd Szamosi (Institute of English Studies, University of Pécs) and Prof. Ágnes Zsófia Kovács (Department of British and American Literatures and Cultures, SZTE) for reviewing my dissertation. Your comments are invaluable and have helped to improve the quality of the research.

I would also like to express my deepest thanks to my family for their continuous and unwavering support during the past years.

Last but not least, I would like to thank one of the best colleagues I have ever had, Sultan Jaber, for all the support and amazing friendship throughout the course of this journey. I would also like to thank my childhood friend, Zein Aljerdi, for his encouragement and thoughtful conversations during my research.

Dedication

To my eternal love, my wife, Hiba Daknoush, and my beloved daughter, Emma.
This dissertation is dedicated to you both, with all my love…

Table of Contents

Abstract

The Western discourse on Africa created a form that essentialized the continent and its people into a narrow homogeneity that completely disregarded the diverse and complex structure of African cultures, beliefs, languages, and social traditions. In this respect, the present dissertation sheds light on the postcolonial discourse in West and South Africa, analyzing four selected works by two major postcolonial writers of the 20th century—the South African writer J. M. Coetzee and the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe—which thematize and are set against the backgrounds of apartheid and the British occupation of Africa. Examining Achebe's *Thing Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), along with Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986), the dissertation attempts to demonstrate how the selected works are representatives of the postcolonial literary spirit; the struggle to regenerate a revolutionary African identity in opposition to precursor-biased identities mapped out in canonical colonial texts. Additionally, the dissertation sheds light on postcolonial literary resistance, investigating how Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee exhibit canonical resistance through their literary works that challenge or subvert the supremacy of an established Western literary canon. The comparative aspect of the research concerning the treatment of colonialism stems from the writers' ethnic and racial backgrounds. While both writers project a harsh criticism of colonialism and its legacy, their approaches differ and are shaped by their respective positions as colonizer and colonized. Thus, by examining their distinct yet interconnected approaches, the discussion intends to offer insights into how both authors wage a sort of literary war against the Western canonical empire, promoting a more inclusive and diverse literary canon.

Introduction

European colonialism of Africa refers to the period starting from the late 19th century and lasting till much of the 20th century, where several European countries including Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and Germany took part in what was known as 'The Scramble for Africa', establishing colonies there that intended to manipulate and exploit the continent's resources while expanding their political and economic powers. However, such an occupation was not merely military, political, or economic but was also focused on establishing religious and cultural hierarchies that governed the Western representations of Africa. Such representations, which formed what is known as the colonial discourse, were primarily oriented to project the continent as a place of chaos, anarchy, barbarism, and, overall, a place that serves as the antithesis of Europe in social, cultural, political, and religious norms. The image of the African native, or the colonized subject, in these biased representations, served as a powerful tool that maintained the difference between the 'superior', 'civilized' West and the 'inferior', 'barbaric' African Other. Therefore, the Western discourse on Africa created a form that essentialized the continent and its people into a narrow homogeneity that completely disregarded the diverse and complex structure of African cultures, beliefs, languages, and social traditions.

In this regard, and with the increasing wave of decolonization and independence during the mid-20th century, postcolonial writers were met with a huge cultural challenge both on the national and international levels. While the international focus of postcolonial writers was primarily oriented toward deconstructing and subverting the colonial discursive practices that governed and controlled the representations of African indigenous cultures, the national part was the one that worried postcolonial writers the most, as they undertook the duty of reforming, re-forming, and reconstructing the colonially compromised social, cultural, and linguistic identities of their communities.

The interaction and conflicts between the colonizers and colonized societies gave rise to a vast array of literary works that came to be known as postcolonial discourse; one that represented, or gave voice to, the oppressed, stereotyped African Other. In their works, African writers played a crucial role in restoring and reclaiming agency over the misrepresented African culture and history while at the same time challenging the dominant colonial discourse and projecting a true image of African communities, unveiling stories, cultures, and social traditions that were hidden or deliberately dropped in the dominant colonial discourse on Africa.

In this perspective, the present dissertation sheds light on the postcolonial discourse in West and South Africa, analyzing four selected works by two major postcolonial writers of the 20th century—the South African writer J. M. Coetzee, and the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe—which thematize and are set against the backgrounds of apartheid and the British occupation of Africa. Examining and analyzing Chinua Achebe's *Thing Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), along with J. M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986), the dissertation will attempt to demonstrate how the selected works are

representatives of the postcolonial literary spirit; the struggle to regenerate a revolutionary hybrid identity against precursor-biased identities mapped out in canonical colonial texts, or what Helen Tiffin defines as the struggle

> to establish or rehabilitate self against either European appropriation or rejection…such establishing or rehabilitation of an independent identity involves the radical interrogation and fracturing of these imposed European perspectives, and their "systematic"… replacement by an alternative vision, or the attack on or erosion of the very notion of system and hegemonic control itself.[1]

Moreover, the dissertation aims to examine the concept of resistance in the selected works while also attempting to address certain questions, such as how did the Western colonial discourse on Africa emerge, and what were the factors that endowed such a discourse with representational authority? How do the selected works question and critique colonial discourse, and what postcolonial literary revolution od they offer? Furthermore, in what ways do such works deconstruct and reconstruct a postcolonial African identity? How do the selected works employ language, narrative structure, physicality, and silence as modes of identity reformation and re-formation? How does Achebe employ indigenization as canonical resistance, and how does he challenge the written tradition? By what means does Coetzee question the foundations of the Western literary canon? How does he challenge picaresque and adventure narratives through his works? What does a comparative reading of the works of a Black colonized subject and a white privileged colonizer reveal in terms of colonial critique?

The comparative aspect of the research concerning the treatment of colonialism stems from the writers' ethnic and racial backgrounds. While both writers project a harsh criticism of colonialism and its legacy, their approaches differ and are shaped by their respective positions as colonizer and colonized. As a white South African, Coetzee's position can be seen as that of a liberal white whose texts reflect an approach to colonialism that is sort of detached and impersonal criticism of the role that white colonizers played in oppressing the native blacks in South Africa. On the other hand, Achebe's approach, being a black Nigerian who grew up under British colonial rule, is profoundly personal and reflective of a dark, oppressive history in which Achebe, as a member of the black African community, suffered the worst effects of marginalization and colonization. Thus, the dissertation will attempt to highlight how each author represents the African voice in English, along with capturing the rhythm of African life and traditions and highlighting the social, political, and economic situation of both Nigeria and South Africa under colonialism.

The selection of these four texts by Achebe and Coetzee in this study is grounded not only in the contributions they offer to the postcolonial literary discourse, but also in the distinct yet interconnected approaches in addressing issues of postcolonial identity reconstruction and literary resistance. Despite highlighting different settings, colonial experiences, and historical contexts, the selcted works offer an interesting comparative analysis of they ways they

[1] Helen Tiffin, "Post-Colonialism, Post-Modernism and the Rehabilitation of Post-Colonial History," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 23 (1988): 1.

engage with colonial ramifications on colonized communities as well as the inner struggles of the communities they represent.

Unlike many Nigerian authors of the time, Achebe's works divert from a straightforward nationalistic tone against colonialism and shed light on the richness of pre-colonial life while simultaneously critiquing the flaws, and colonial disruption, of his own ethnic community. What distinguishes Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* is that, apart from their literary value, they offer a clear depiction of the colonized experience, giving voice to the Black, ultimately silenced, marginalized, and oppressed African experiences under colonialism. Moreover, what makes Achebe's works stand our from other Nigerian postcolonial texts is the way Achebe incorporates indigenous Igbo language, cultural norms, symbols, festivals, and linguistic and cultural hybridity into the English text as means of challenging and subverting the hegemony of colonial misrepresentations of Africa.

On the other hand, J. M. Coetzee's works offer the perspective of the liberal white South African who, as Stephen Watson describes, although he is considered a colonizer, he "does not want to be a colonizer."[2] In *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Foe*, Coetzee departs from plain realism evident in South African fiction that deals with anti-apartheid resistance, and rather adopts a more self-critical form of realism that addresses both white complicity and Black resistance. In other words, rather than presenting overtly realistic novels, Coetzee employs corporeality, intertextuality, symbolism, as well as subversion and reconfiguration of canonical literary genres to question the role and authority of language and narration in disseminating colonial hegemony. While Achebe's works highlight the importance of communal resistance against colonial imposition, Coetzee, on the other hand, highlights individual acts of resistance against narrative control and authority.

Thus, through this clash of representations between an author who attempts to give voice to the marginalized and voiceless, and another who directly attacks colonial narrative authority that claims the ability to represent the colonized, the four selected novels offer a comparative avenue for analyzing the different perspectives of identity reconstruction and postcolonial resistance in two different African settings. Hence, by examining Achebe and Coetzee's works together in a comparative framework, the dissertation attempts to offer a comparative analysis that highlights parallels and contrasts in their ideological strategies, narrative techniques, and literary efforts applied to challenge the authority of the Western literary canon. The present dissertation does not intend to offer a full comprehensive analysis of postcolonial literary productions in Africa, nor to cover the entire oeuvres of Achebe and Coetzee. Rather, it offers a comparative case study of four major texts that are representative of the critical strategies both authors employ in reconfiguring a postcolonial African identity as well as challenging and resisting the Western canonical empire. While concerns of Black identity and resistance to the literary canon may be present in other works by Achebe and Coetzee, the selected works offer the most comprehensive and thematically focused explorations of these issues. Although the present study foregrounds textual analysis of the

[2] Stephen Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee." *Research in African Literatures* 17, no. 3 (1986): 377. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3819221

four selected texts, it is informed by postcolonial literary theory, discourse analysis, and narrative strategies that shape this critical engagmeent within the scope of power, identity, voice, and representation.

1. Seeds of European Expansion: The Dawn of Africa's Encounter with Europe

The first alien presence in Africa dates back to the 15th century, more precisely, in the 1480s when the Portuguese, led by the explorer Vasco da Gama, were the first Europeans to reach the shores of Africa. Led by Prince Henry the Navigator, the Portuguese endeavored to explore and examine Africa as another possible trade route to reach the Asian continent, for Africa "has sometimes been depicted as no more than a giant barrier to the real objective of Europeans in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Asia."[3] The Portuguese exploration of Africa began as an economic and commercial one, as they began to establish commercial relationships with the native societies hidden under a wolfish desire for gold, ivory, and other valuable materials. In other words, the Portuguese method was, far from being reciprocal, an exploitative and selfish agenda through which the Portuguese "became a commercial aristocracy, adopted feudal ways, and depended exclusively on trade instead of making investments and helping to establish industries".[4] However, such an encounter did not last for long before it took a different more aggressive form that involved capturing Africans and enslaving them. Therefore, the Portuguese presence in Africa was a milestone in African history, as the consequences of their missions led to the displacement of millions of Africans, who were exported in a larger process of the transatlantic slave trade, and paved the way for possible future colonization of the continent. Following the Portuguese experience, several European powers started to orient their economic ambitions toward the African continent, including the Spaniards, the Dutch, the British, and the French, who arrived in Africa and started to establish colonies and trading posts.

Based on the aforesaid, it can be seen that the European presence in Africa was primarily based on mutual economic interest between the native African communities and the successive European economic powers arriving in Africa. However, although this economic exchange might look beneficial to both parties at first glance, the European powers have dealt with the matter in a purely exploitative way that has cost them the most gains and the fewest losses. In other words, the economic exchange between the two parties was heavily directed in favor of the European powers, who gained and extracted far more value than they returned in the seeming form of education and development.

Having highlighted the origins of Afro-European interaction, it is pertinent to highlight the hidden benefits and knowledge that the Europeans gained and internalized during the period of their presence in Africa and how these benefits paved the way for the subsequent official occupation of Africa in the late 19th century, the period known as the 'Scramble for Africa'. First of all, by establishing trading posts across the African continent, the Europeans were

[3] J. M. MacKenzie, *The Partition of Africa 1880–1900 and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1983), 11.
[4] Eduardo de Sousa Ferreira, *Portuguese Colonialism in Africa: the end of an era* (Paris: The Unesco Press, 1974), 32.

able to study and explore the local African geography, realize the nature and variety of African natural resources, and have a close examination of the local communities. Moreover, the early presence of European economic forces in Africa was primarily used as a means to legitimize European claims for African territories. The establishment of the trading posts as well as the treaties made with local African leaders allowed European powers to gain trust and safety for their future colonial endeavors. Furthermore, European engagement with the slave trading and slave raiding resulted in dismantling the solidity of African native communities, which in turn increased the need for European intervention, as millions of Africans were forcibly removed from their homes and native lands as part of the slave trade and transported over the Atlantic to the Americas, resulting in a state of havoc with local political, social, and economic institutions and therefore helped to create an environment in which European intervention was welcomed.

2. The Scramble for Africa: Exploring the Legacies of Colonialism in Nigeria and South Africa

This subchapter is intended to briefly examine the Scramble for Africa, the late 19th and early 20th-century phenomenon that marked the formal colonization of Africa. While the period itself deserves a more extensive analysis and examination due to its historical importance in reshaping the continent's ethnic, linguistic, and religious demography, the focus in this subchapter will be mainly directed to the colonization of Nigeria and South Africa by European powers. By examining the social, cultural, and historical dynamics of both countries, the discussion aims to close examination of how colonialism shaped the lives, thoughts, and orientations of the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe and the South African writer J. M. Coetzee, and what impacts colonialism had on their choice of themes and motifs, especially the ones dealing with resistance, identity, and racism.

While the period before 1880 was perceived by Africans as an era of economic exchange with Europeans, including the temporary presence of their (business facilitation) colonies, this seemingly peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship underwent a significant change on the European side. Indeed, "The generation following 1880 witnessed one of the most significant historical movements of modern times. During this period Africa, a continent of over 28 million square kilometers, was partitioned, conquered and occupied effectively by the industrialized nations of Europe." [5] In fact, during the period starting from 1870 until 1914, almost the entire African continent was under the control of major European powers, including France, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Britain, Belgium, and Italy.

The main and direct cause behind the Scramble for Africa remains debatable to the present day, as historians had different and controversial opinions in tracing the historiography of Africa's subjugation. However, different factors and ambitions were intermingled during the process of occupying Africa, a mixture of economic, political, cultural, religious, strategic, colonial, and other aspirations. One of the main reasons that facilitated, or justified, the

[5] G. N. Uzoigwe, "European partition and conquest of Africa: an overview," in *General History of Africa.VII; Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935*, ed. A. Adu Boahen (California: University of California Press, 1985), 43.

Scramble for Africa was the rise of Social Darwinism, the belief that certain human races were superior to others. In other words, the dominant norm for Social Darwinists was that, as Oswald Spengler puts it, "there are men whose nature is to command and men whose nature is to obey,"[6] and therefore, they viewed colonization as a process in which it is very natural that "'subject races' or 'backward races' [are controlled] by the 'master race' as the inevitable process of 'natural selection' by which the stronger dominates the weaker in the struggle for existence."[7] In the same vein, European powers sought to promote Christianity in African countries, an endeavor that stems from the very same belief about the purity and superiority of European religions over native African religions. In this regard, the propagation of Christianity in African countries served European powers at both cultural and linguistic levels, as the natives had to learn the languages of Europeans, and in learning the language and absorbing the religion, the natives fell under the indirect enforcement of European culture, which in turn facilitated the control of Africans and made religion a medium through which culture can be implemented as a mode of control.

Since rivalry and hegemonic competition in the late 19th and early 20th centuries increased, European powers approached the Scramble for Africa from a competitive nationalistic perspective, with the main aim of increasing the size of their empires at the expense of others. Indeed, the rivalry between the competitive European forces did not happen on the spur of the moment but dates back to the Age of Exploration; however, the nature of such a rivalry shifted from being a mere desire to explore new lands to taking control and capturing as much territory as possible. Therefore, the competing and rival situations between the nations also created a feeling of fear that perhaps played a pivotal role in making the process faster and more violent. One of the most important examples of the drive of fear in the European Scramble for Africa can be seen in the attitudes of Otto von Bismarck, the German statesman and politician who "explained his reluctant indulgence in colonial acquisition as resulting from the fear that his opponents would capitalize in the polls on the wave of enthusiasm for empire."[8]

Thus, as tension, rivalry, and animosity started to develop between European countries concerning the occupation of African territory, and fearing that the situation would deteriorate further, the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck called for the Berlin Conference, which lasted from November 15th, 1884, until the 26th of February 1885. The Berlin Conference (also known as the West Africa Conference or the Congo Conference) was primarily held to regulate the issue of European trade in the African region as well as to set the borderlines of European shares in African territory. The conference hosted representatives from fourteen countries, including Britain, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Ottoman Empire, Russia, Sweden, Austria-Hungary, and the United States (as an observer). However, what is remarkable is that no African representative attended the conference, and thus the conference went without even consulting African leaders about the future of their nation. The conference resulted in the

[6] Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), 32.
[7] G. N. Uzoigwe, "European partition and conquest of Africa",43.
[8] Robin Brooke-Smith , *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Macmillan Education LTD, 1987), 1.

signing of the General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa in 1885, which included several provisions that regulated European dominance and paved the way for European occupation of Africa, as by the 1900s the entire African continent, except for Ethiopia and Liberia, was under colonial control.

In fact, the Berlin Conference did not draw the dividing lines of the African territory that allocated specific parts or regions to specific countries, but rather "laid down rules and procedures for the annexation of territory in Africa"[9] and "in a rapid sequence of developments into the 1890s, commercial coastal spheres were turned into inland colonies, African states were conquered."[10] One of the most important and effective resolutions of the conference was the notion of the 'sphere of influence, which "made a distinction between exercising 'influence' and exercising 'sovereign rights'."[11] This notion was representative of the first stage of occupying African territory and regulating the process of gradual colonialism. Following this notion, European powers started consulting each other regarding their respective 'areas of influence', and once agreements about the borderlines of these areas were settled, the legal title of the desired territory would shift from being 'under the influence of' X nation to being representative of the sovereign rights of that nation.[12] However, the 'sphere of influence' notion was not enough for a nation to claim authority over a certain territory; therefore, another significant provision of the Berlin Act, which came as a complementary concept to the 'sphere of influence', was the principle of 'effective occupation', which suggests that "a European Power claiming territory in Africa must demonstrate an 'effective' presence on the ground. Although primarily intended to disallow theoretical and historical claims, it had the unintended consequence of increasing European intervention in Africa in areas in which they were interested."[13] Therefore, the 'presence' of a European nation on a particular African territory had to be 'effective', and so European nations began to run legions of their armies to settle, control, and build colonies on African lands, and so "the map of Africa… evolved after over two decades of systematic boundary making and military occupation was quite different from what it was in the pre-1885 epoch."[14] (see Fig. 1)

[9] Brooke-Smith , *The Scramble for Africa*, 2.
[10] J. M. MacKenzie, *The Partition of Africa,* 22.
[11] G. N. Uzoigwe, "Reflections on the Berlin West Africa Conference, 1884-1885." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 12, no. 3/4 (1984): 18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44715366.
[12] Uzoigwe, "Reflections on the Berlin West Africa Conference", 18.
[13] M.E. Chamberlain , *The Scramble for Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2013), xxxv.
[14] Uzoigwe, "Reflections on the Berlin West Africa Conference", 19.

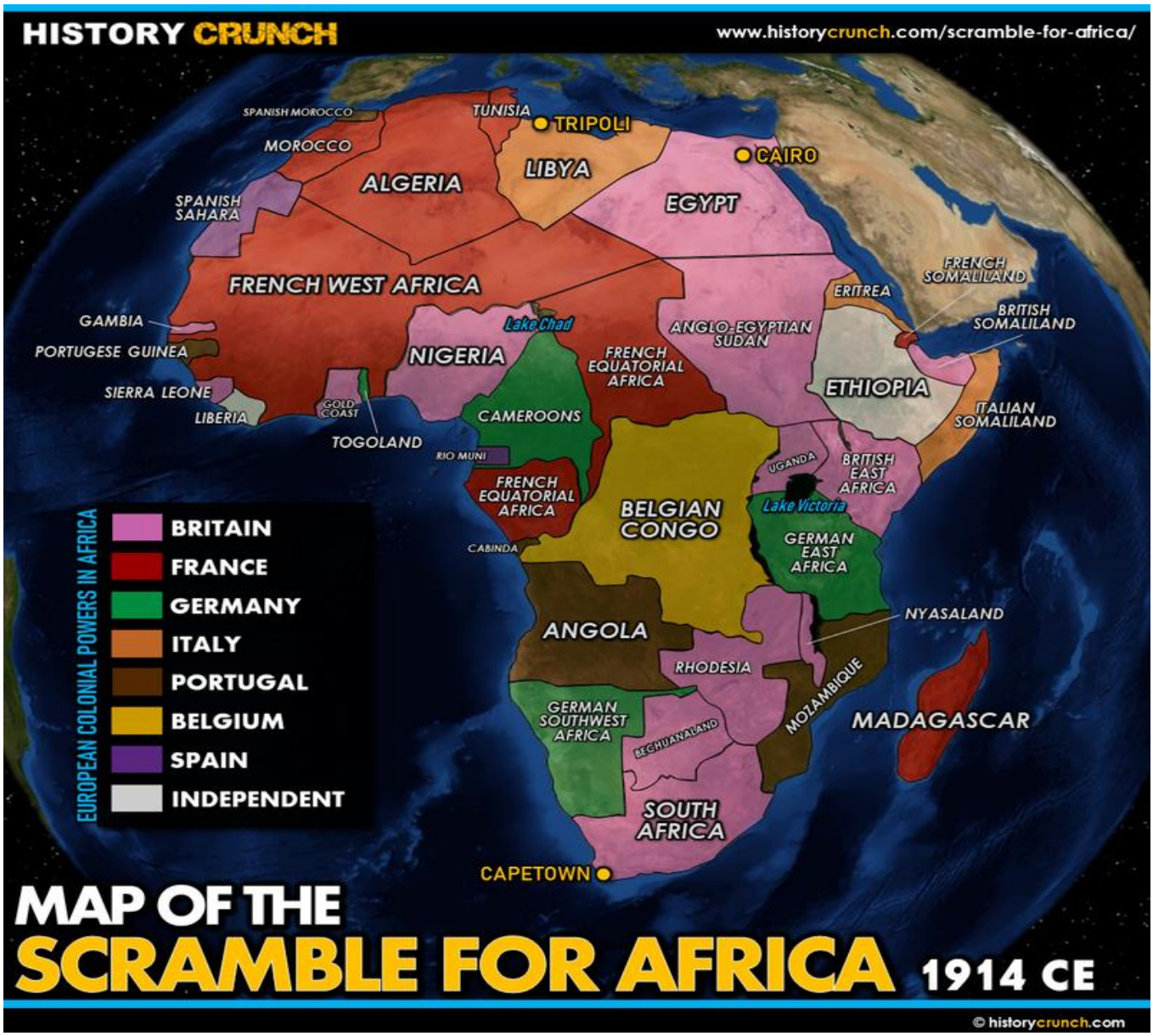

Figure1. How the African continent was partitioned following the Berlin Conference of 1884. "Scramble for Africa Overview," HISTORY CRUNCH - History Articles, Biographies, Infographics, Resources and More, n.d., https://www.historycrunch.com/scramble-for-africa-overview.html#/.(accessed April 13, 2023)

2.1 Nigeria under British Colonial Control

Before the British occupation, Nigeria was a multicultural area with a rich, complex, and diverse cultural and historical heritage. Several ethnic groups coexisted in Nigeria, each having its own autonomy, language, traditions, and social customs. As Abayomi-Alli Mayowa argues, "According to the 1952/53 census, there were more than 200 distinct ethnic groups in Nigeria (now there are over 450), most of who have distinct customs, traditions, and languages. The large and dominant groups include the Yoruba (at the time of census was

10 million), the Igbo (7 million), the Hausa (16 million), and the Fulani (5 million).”[15] These different groups had their own unique systems of governance and were living peacefully while depending on agricultural trade both on national and international levels. The northern part of Nigeria constituted the confederation of the Hausa City-States, along with the Kanem-Bornu Empire in the northeastern part of Nigeria. As for the south of Nigeria, it was mainly inhabited by the Yoruba Kingdoms and The Benin Kingdom in the southwest, along with the Igbo civilization in the southeast. However, it is important to note that these were the main parts or societies of Nigeria and not the only ones, as many more smaller societies inhabited Nigeria and formed, along with the main empires and kingdoms, the full mosaic image of Nigerian coexistence.

However, the law and order of traditional Nigerian life were disrupted by the arrival of the British. Indeed, the roots of the British colonial presence in Nigeria can be traced back to 1807, when the British Parliament passed the Slave Trade Act, which abolished the slave trade in West Africa and prohibited British ships from participating in the process while the British Royal Navy patrolled the West Coast of Africa for detecting any illegal violations of the Act. However, it was extremely important for the British not to lose their foothold on the West Coast of Africa, especially Nigeria, and therefore, they started to establish trading posts along the West Coast in an attempt to establish a legitimate business that would give them further access to the interior of Nigeria. Accordingly, “ the need for protecting the British "legitimate traders" from the attacks of the slave traders and of unfriendly African states became obvious,”[16] And so the British Navy in 1849 appointed John Beecroft as “Her Brittanic Majesty's Consul for the Bights of Benin and Biafra, an area covering not only the Niger Delta and Lagos, but also the Kingdom of Dahomey.”[17] As many historians suggest, the appointment of Beecroft can be seen as marking the beginning of British colonial expansion in Nigeria, for he is said to have “ succeeded in making British rule familiar to the native states under his consular jurisdiction.”[18] Thus, almost forty years before the Berlin Conference, Beecroft laid the foundations and footsteps of British power in Nigeria.

Another major incident in the colonial history of Nigeria was the bombardment of Lagos in 1851, an operation led by the British Navy against King Kosoko of Lagos who refused to end the slave trade. As a result, the British succeeded in deposing King Kosoko and re-enthroning Akitoye as the King of Lagos. In this regard, Alemika argues that “The history of colonial state as well as English-type, state police forces in Nigeria began in 1861, when British by deceit and gun-boat attack ("diplomacy") effected the conquest of Lagos by extracting/extorting a treaty from King Kosoko.”[19] Indeed, a decade following the

---

[15] Abayomi-Alli Mayowa, " Pre-Colonial Nigeria and the European’s Fallacy," *Review of History and Political Science*. Vol. 2, (2014): 17. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Pre-Colonial-Nigeria-and-the-European-%E2%80%99-s-Fallacy-Mayowa/a0973139fd0329add6e423e3ef7536d1086bfa09.

[16] K. O. Dike, “John Beecroft, 1790—1854: Her Brittanic Majesty’s Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra 1849—1854.” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 1, no. 1 (1956): 12. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41856608.

[17] Dike, “John Beecroft”, 13.

[18] Dike, “John Beecroft”, 14.

[19] E.E.O Alemika. “Colonialism, state and policing in Nigeria.” *Crime Law Soc Change* 20, (1993): 189, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01308450

bombardment of Lagos, the British administration annexed Lagos as a British protectorate in 1861, with Willaim McCoskry filling the position of the first colonial governor in Lagos,[20] which was officially declared a British colony in 1862. Now having annexed Lagos and declared it as a British colony, the British were not satisfied with such an achievement, especially with the increasing European interest in West Africa. Therefore, the annexation of Lagos triggered the colonial hegemony of the British in Nigeria, for Lagos "in the west… became the base for all colonial operations in Yorubaland, and from the trading states of the Niger delta and Calabar in the east."[21] With Lagos marking the official start of colonizing Nigeria, the British started moving inland and made all efforts possible to protect their newly established colony from any potential threat, especially in the south. Therefore, British forces started marching toward Yorubaland, easily gaining access as 'peacemakers' to end the arduous Ekitiparapo War between Ibadan and the alliance of Ekiti, Ijesa, Egba, Ijebu, and Ife forces.[22] Although the British interference ended the tribal fighting, it paved the way for full-scale colonization of the South, as members of the tribes agreed to a treaty that entailed them settling their disputes under the supervision of the British governor in Lagos.[23]

The British have placed the Nigerian native rulers between two paths that ultimately converge on the same destination: either to accept the British treaty, similar to that of Yorubaland or to have their land occupied forcibly. Indeed,

> When the Ijebu king refused to discuss trade terms with the acting governor of Lagos on a trip to Ijebuland in 1891, the British used this as an excuse to occupy the territory forcibly. British troops subdued the Ijebu in four days of fighting, sending a message to the rest of Yorubaland that the British were the new supreme power in the region and were willing to use their superior military machinery to get their way.[24]

The significance of these treaties lies in the fact that they granted the United Kingdom political authority over the territory of the signer, enabling the British to manage foreign policy on behalf of the monarch.[25] Fearing to face the same violent consequences, the rest of Yorubaland's leaders agreed to the British treaty, and their lands were later annexed as a part of the Protectorate of Lagos. In the same vein, the cities of the Bight of Biafra and the Delta states had to fall under British control, and by 1885, the British Council Hewett declared the formation of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, which included the city-states of Bonny and Calabar. However, the name was later changed to the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893, which further annexed the Kingdom of Benin in 1897.[26] During this period, the British Crown granted a royal charter to George Goldie's Royal Niger Company (RNC)[27] in 1886 to administer the Niger Territories representing the authority of the British Government.

---

[20] Alemika, "Colonialism, state and Policing in Nigeria." 189.
[21] Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge University Press, 2008),93.
[22] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 95.
[23] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 95.
[24] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 95.
[25] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 98.
[26] All three territories: Lagos Colony, Oil Revers Protectorate, and Niger Coast Protectorate, formed the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in the late 19th century.
[27] The company was originally established in 1886 under the name "National African Company".

However, due to the increasing French and German interest in West Africa, the British government had to cancel the mission of the RNC, and so "on January 1, 1900, the Royal Niger Company ceased to be the governing authority of the Niger and Benue. Its southern territories in the palm oil zone near the Niger delta were amalgamated into the Niger Coast Protectorate, forming the new Protectorate of Southern Nigeria."[28] It is also important to note that before 1900, the Northern part of Nigeria was also under the RNC control, and following the 1900 decision "The company's northern territories, including Ilorin, became the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria."[29] However, later in 1914, both the Northern and Southern Protectorates were unified by the British administration and formed the geographical area now known as Nigeria, which remained under British colonial rule until it was granted full independence in 1960.[30]

The British administrated Nigeria through the system of indirect rule, that is, "rule through traditional kings and chiefs – to govern local areas in each of the British protectorates."[31] This meant that native Nigerians would be under the control of their traditional native rulers and would resort to them for any judicial or legal matter, however, as intermediaries between the natives and the British colonial administration. Originally, the system of indirect rule was developed by Frederick Lugard, a British colonial administrator, who used this system in the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria before it was adopted in all unified Nigeria after the amalgamation of 1914.[32] In general, the British colonial policy had never been diplomatic or tolerant with either the natives or their leaders, as their colonial imposition was "either by the use of war or by surrender because of the threat of war…[which made] modern Nigeria…to a large extent, a product of violence."[33]

This social and political violence led to the breakdown of traditional social norms in the Nigerian community, for Nigerians had realized that the role of traditional and domestic authority had almost disappeared and that their local leaders had transformed into mere British agents. This, indeed, was the first step toward political fragmentation, as the appointment of native leaders (agents) was based on their loyalty and subservience to the British and not on the legitimacy and trust given to them by their people. Of course, native rulers were not operating solely but had a network of chiefs and assistants, who were considered the elites of society, and thus social hierarchy was founded, paving the way for regional tensions and further political instability. In this regard, Falola and Heaton argue, "promoting ''progress'' and ''civilization'' for peoples they considered inferior and backward, British colonial officers went about restructuring Nigerian societies in the years after their colonial conquest.[34]

Furthermore, British colonial policy contributed to the deconstruction of Nigerian social cohesion by directing all efforts possible to undermine native customs, traditions, and

[28] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 103.
[29] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 103.
[30] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 158.
[31] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 110.
[32] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 110.
[33] Toyin Falola, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*.(Indiana University Press, 2009),1-2.
[34] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 151.

religions under the pretense that they were harmful to Nigerian progress.[35] In this regard, colonial missionaries played a major role in altering the Nigerian religious, social, and cultural norms. Promoting Christianity and preaching against the 'primitive' and 'blasphemous' native religions, colonial missionaries created a huge crack in the Nigerian cultural and religious identity, as the number of converts started to grow gradually, native religions and cultural traditions were suppressed and risked the result of being completely lost. To strengthen the social fractures between the natives, the converts were ultimately treated differently, where " 'Christian' villages were indeed treated with some measure of respect by British officials and in a few cases were freed from military patrols. To most people, therefore, it became quite obvious that those who were associated with the Christian missions received preferential treatment."[36] Additionally, Christianity did not stand alone in the process of alteration but came as one part of a larger apparatus of oppression that, through imposing Christianity, aimed to enforce British (Western) values and social and cultural norms at the expense of erasing traditional Nigerian ones.

In fact, the role of Christian missionaries in suppressing Nigerian culture and identity went hand in hand with the colonial educational system, which fostered the imposition of Western (English) culture and language while at the same time neglecting the diverse indigenous cultures and languages. The introduction of the English language by the British was perceived by most Nigerians as a means of survival and a better future, for

> the ability to read and write in English became the stepping stone to a middle-class career. the ability to read and European-educated Nigerians could find reasonably paid jobs as clerks in the native courts or councils, or in other civil service positions in the colonial regime. They could also work as clerks or intermediaries for the European trading firms that dominated the export trade.[37]

Therefore, while the role of European education in Nigeria remains a debatable issue regarding its advantages and disadvantages, the educational system and preferences imposed by the British played a major role in dividing Nigerian society into different forms of hierarchies, for educational opportunities were limited and not all Nigerians had equal chances of getting a proper education. While British colonial policy created inter-racial hierarchies and preferred educated over non-educated Nigerians, the tendency of racial superiority remained prevalent in colonialist mentality, which was projected through the behaviors of European employers who tended to subjugate the skilled and European-educated Nigerians based on their racial background.[38] More blatantly, the colonial mentality was based on the belief that, as Falola and Heaton argue, " The ideal Nigerian was one who had attained enough education to be useful to the colonial system but not enough to think himself the intellectual equal of the white man."[39]

---

[35] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 110.
[36] Ekechi, F. K. "Colonialism and Christianity in West Africa: The Igbo Case, 1900-1915." *The Journal of African History* 12, no. 1 (1971): 105. http://www.jstor.org/stable/180569.
[37] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 127.
[38] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 129.
[39] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 129.

Economically, the British policy in colonial Nigeria could be summarized in a single word, that is, 'exploitation'. As discussed earlier, the British occupation of Africa was as much economic as it was political. The rise of the Industrial Revolution increased the demand for raw materials and additional territory, and even before the formal occupation, "The trade in Nigerian palm oil and palm kernels was already well established, and enormous resources of peanuts and cocoa made colonial conquest a lucrative enterprise."[40] Colonial economic policy was mainly directed at controlling agricultural crops, including cocoa, groundnuts, palm oil, rubber, and cotton, and setting them up for export. Another goal was to "bring Nigeria into a cash economy based on the UK currency… [and then to] force Nigerians to work for that currency."[41] The cash-crops system further altered the traditional Nigerian lifestyle, as the situation for people turned from planting their own food and having food self-sufficiency to cultivating cash crops for selling them. This process was, of course, ultimately harmful to the indigenous Nigerian economy, for "over time, colonial economic policy resulted in the growing dependence of Nigerians on an export economy dominated by European firms with which indigenous Nigerian enterprise could not compete and which conducted business primarily with a view towards European profitability at the expense of Nigerian producers."[42] Other economic practices included the system of forced labor in British-controlled mines and farms, the introduction of different tax systems that exhausted the Nigerians, and imposing trade restrictions in Nigeria that hindered the growth of Nigerian industry while promoting British goods instead. All in all, the British economic policy in Nigeria was ultimately predatory and based on plundering Nigeria of its natural resources and making it completely dependent on colonial economic vision and management.

2.2 South Africa

The first European settlement in South Africa dates back to 1652, when the Dutch managed to reach the Cape of Good Hope and established a refreshment base, run by the Dutch East India Company, with the main aim of providing supplies for their commercial ships sailing between Europe and Asia. However, long before the arrival of Europeans, South Africa was inhabited by different indigenous groups, who occupied the region for thousands of years. Such groups included the Khoikhoi, the Nama, the San, and the Tshu-Khwe, and all these groups are "now viewed by scholars as having a common origin and are referred to as the 'Khoisan' peoples."[43] Initially, the relationship between the Dutch and South African natives was relatively peaceful; however, when the Dutch settlers (the Boers) started moving inland, tensions and conflicts began to rise, and the Dutch launched several campaigns to drive the Khoikhoi from their lands and imported slaves from West Africa to fill their place.

Overpowered by European weaponry, the native South Africans could not further resist the Dutch expansion, and they then turned to tenants of their once-owned lands. This was the first form of forced labor imposed in South Africa by the Dutch, who subjugated the natives,

[40] Falola, *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*, 1.
[41] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 119.
[42] Falola and Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, 119.
[43] Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013). 11.

treating them as low-status servants or, more accurately, slaves. The Dutch controlled the Cape Colony for over 150 years, expanding settlements and exploiting natural resources until 1795 when they lost control to the British forces, who established a military base in the Cape Colony to ward off Napoleonic ambitions in South Africa. The British intervention came as a reaction against the French Revolutionary Wars between 1792 and 1802, where France occupied the Netherlands, and therefore the occupation of Cape Colony emerged as an urgent move to prevent French expansion in the region, and the Cape Colony was officially annexed by the British in 1806.

South Africa was mainly divided into four White-ruled colonies. Apart from Cape Colony, the British wanted to extend their field of control and therefore established the Natal Colony in 1843 intending to have the port of Durban under their hands. When the British administration abolished slavery in the region and extended civil rights to all ethnicities and races, the Boers were not so satisfied with racial equality, so they headed northward where they established the Orang Free and Transvaal States as two Boer Republics.[44] However, the tension between the British and the Boers started to grow day by day, which eventually led to what was known as the Anglo-Boer Wars. The First Anglo-Boer War took place between 1880 and 1881 when the British attempted to take advantage of the Transvaal state's financial difficulties; however, they were defeated by the Boers and the State of Transvaal gained a form of independence and a self-rule system. In 1886, gold was discovered in Transvaal, an incident that increased the rivalry between the British and the Boers, and eventually led to The Second Anglo-Boer War or The South African War between 1899 and 1902. During this war, Boer leaders resisted British forces with all possible force "until they [managed to] extract a favourable peace agreement that ensured them a measure of local self-government."[45] Indeed, the war ended with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902, where the Boers were granted self-government in the Orange Free and Transvaal States. However, both states were deemed British colonies, which, along with the Cape Colony and Natal Colony, formed the British-controlled Union of South Africa in 1910.

What is remarkable about the Anglo-Boer Wars is that the desires, needs, and future of native South Africans were completely ignored, and above that, they were caught in the violent current of the wars and were forced to take sides. The British administration exploited the natives and used them as forced labor in the British military camps under extremely harsh conditions and mistreatment. Furthermore, native South Africans were recruited by the British as spies to gather information about positions, tactics, and other military intelligence that the British may have benefited from. Similarly, the Boers were not better with the natives, but in fact, they relied more on the natives during the Anglo-Boer Wars, for the Boers lacked the efficient number of workers and support compared to the British, who started gathering forces and manpower from different colonies. More importantly, the Boers already possessed a superior racial tendency towards the natives, and therefore their attitudes

[44] While the Orange Free State and the Transvaal State were initially established by the Boers, both colonies were recaptured by the British following the Anglo-Boer War between 1899-1902.
[45] Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise.* 16.

towards them were harsh, inhuman, and brutal, and they often seized all their properties to support the Boer army.[46]

Following the 1910 union, South Africa was governed by the white minority under the leadership of Louis Botha, an Afrikaner (Boer) who served the position as the first prime minister until he died in 1919.[47] Racial segregation became more apparent after 1910, with policies that "generally separated races to the benefit of those of European descent and to the detriment of those of African descent."[48] What is remarkable is that during the first half of the 20th century, whites formed less than 20 percent of the entire South African population; however, all the laws and rules passed were directed to grant white supremacy and control over the country in all political and economical dimensions. In 1913, the South African government passed the Natives' Land Act, which limited ownership of land by Black South Africans to 7 percent of the entire country. The hardships Black South Africans lived through led them to leave their designated areas and look for better opportunities in white-ruled states to support their families. The influx of Africans led the government, represented by the South African Party leader Jan Smuts, to pass the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1923, which restricted the movement of Black Africans in the main cities, where they were allowed only to "'minister to the needs of the white population'."[49] To further isolate Black Africans, the government passed the 1927 Native Administration Act, through which Black Africans, in their designated areas, were given native courts to settle their matters away from the official government.

Resistance to racial segregation emerged in 1912 under the leadership of several educated Black South Africans who formed the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which was renamed the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923. Led by John L. Dupe, the ANC called for equality for all South Africans, irrespective of their color, and adopted a non-violent mode of resistance against the government and its racist practices. Apart from the ANC, several political parties and associations protested against apartheid, including the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) in 1919 and the South African Communist Party (SACP), founded in 1921. However, the South African government showed no tolerance for any form of resistance, as Prime Minister Smuts did

> not hesitate to use force when he thought it necessary to crush resistance to his policies. In May 1921, when 1,000 followers of a religious prophet, Enoch Mgijima, gathered in an area of the eastern Cape marked by a severe shortage of farm labourers and refused to dismantle their settlement, a thousand policemen armed with machine-guns killed 190 men, women and children within the space of ten minutes. When a group of the Nama people in Southwest Africa from 1921–2 protested against land

[46] Long before the apartheid system was introduced in 1948, the Boers implemented a similar system in their treatment with the native South Africans (Blacks, Colored, and Indians) that restricted the natives freedom of movement, job opportunities, and right to education.
[47] Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise.* 21.
[48] Clark and Worger, *South Africa: The Rise.* 21
[49] Clark and Worger, 23.

> loss, taxes and the forcible deportation of their leader, more than a hundred were killed by a combination of machine-gun fire and aerial bombing.[50]

Despite his aggressive policy, however, Smuts' administration was criticized by Afrikaners for somehow being supportive of the rights of Blacks in South Africa. For example, Afrikaner nationalists viewed the Natives' Land Act as being protective of Black South Africans' ownership of land. Indeed, following the Anglo-Boer Wars, Afrikaners started to develop a kind of exclusionist nationalism that mainly focused on the supremacy and elevation of Afrikaners. Therefore, Afrikaner nationalists turned their full support to the National Party[51] (NP) of 1914 under the leadership of J.B.M. Hertzog, who was infamous for his hatred of the native South Africans, his opposition to the British, and, most importantly, for his advocacy of the Afrikaner culture and language (Afrikaans). Furthermore, the NP gained more support, especially after the SAP took sides with the British in the First World War against Germany, a move that further inflamed the anger of Afrikaners, who did not forget the British brutality during the Anglo-Boer Wars.[52] This support was crystallized in 1924 with the NP candidates winning the majority of voices and, in coalition with the Labor Party, gaining control over the parliament.[53]

Motivated by a mutual desire to unite the country under a single political banner, the SAP and NP were united in 1934 under the name of the United Party (UP) , led by Hertzog, who attempted to create a government that would appeal to both Afrikaners and English-speaking white South Africans. The UP attempted to create racial harmony in South Africa and a kind of mutual coexistence between the races, including the blacks; however, the party failed to extract the deeply rooted racial and ethnic extremism in South Africa. Disagreements within the party began to rouse regarding its policies and support for Afrikaner interests, leading Daniel Malan to dissociate from the UP and form the Purified National Party in 1934, an extremist Afrikaner party that advocated a policy of extreme segregation and separateness between races, especially between blacks and whites, in South Africa. Moreover, the increasing opposition to the UP and its policy regarding the interests and supremacy of white South Africans resulted in the UP losing the 1948 elections against the NP, which came to power under the leadership of Daniel Malan. Therefore, it can be inferred that "the victory of the Nationalist Party in 1948 was in part the victory of the Afrikaner nationalism which had been nurtured in two hundred years of fighting against Africans for the control of the land: against the British (marked especially by the Anglo-Boer war)."[54]

The NP adopted the policy of apartheid, that is, "literally 'apartness' or separateness in the Afrikaans and Dutch languages…a policy of separating people by race, with regard to where they lived, where they went to school, where they worked, and where they died."[55] This

---

[50] Clark and Worger, 26.
[51] This party was mainly established in opposition to the SAP, and mainly formed to advocate the interest of Afrikaners.
[52] Clark and Worger, 28.
[53] Clark and Worger, 28.
[54] Unesco, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: South Africa and Namibia* (Paris: The Unesco Press, 1974), 50.
[55] Clark and Worger, 3.

policy of segregation, racial alienation, and racial discrimination remained in practice until the fall of the NP in 1994. As the name of the policy and the tendencies of the NP may suggest, the apartheid system was mainly focused on elevating the white South African races, supporting them with all possible means of development and privileges, while, on the other hand, completely ignoring the black and colored races and subjecting them to a group of oppressive laws. Under the apartheid system, every aspect of South African life was dictated by race laws.[56] Indeed, the NP government implemented several laws and regulations that shaped South African life in almost all aspects, including marriage, freedom of movement, housing, public services, and education.

The first legislation to be passed by the new government was the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949, which prohibited marriages between people of different races, and any breach of this act would result in imprisonment and heavy fines for the perpetrators. Additionally, this act was supplemented by the Immorality Act of 1950, which even prohibited and outlawed any form of sexual intercourse between different races. Also, the NP issued the Population Registration Act (1950) which divided all inhabitants of South Africa into racial categories, as people were classified as White, Black, Colored, or Indian. Under this act, all residents were required to carry identity cards that clearly stated the race of their holder. Furthermore, the country was geographically divided following the Group Areas Act of 1950, which allowed the government to remove blacks or colored from their homes and move them to specially designated areas while creating 'white-only' areas. This law also introduced the idea of 'passes' or internal passports; the document or the identification that every black South African was forced to carry if they desired to enter 'white' areas during labor hours.

Racism and segregation were not limited to human affairs only, for apartheid tendencies had reached the realm of education, resulting in the Bantu Education Act (1953)[57], the Indians' Education Act (1965), and the Coloured Peoples' Education Act (1963), under the terms of which "education for whites, Coloureds, Asians and Africans is separately administered, separately financed and follows differing curricula."[58] Under these educational acts, the quality of education offered to races other than white was inferior and aimed at providing education that ensured the lower status of other races as laborers and servants, not a type of academic education that would give them the right knowledge in different fields. As for political activity, the apartheid system eroded almost all forms of non-white participation in the government; while the colored were asked to elect four whites to represent them in the Parliament, blacks were completely denied any representative or any form of participation in the government.[59] Moreover, separation and racial segregation were not limited to government buildings and places but were expanded to reach public places as well, for apartheid was implemented in public parks, buses, taxis, beaches, zoos, restaurants,

[56] Clark and Worger, 48.
[57] The term 'Bantu' was used by the NP government to refer to Black South Africans.
[58] Unesco, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa,* 45.
[59] Unesco, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa,* 51.

theatres,[60] and even in hospitals where blacks and whites should be treated separately by a staff of their own racial group. [61]

By the 1950s, with the increasing volume of acts and legislations of oppression and segregation, resistance to the apartheid regime began to rise gradually. Africans, Coloreds, and Indians all protested against the repressive regime; however, the apartheid regime responded in more oppressive and brutal ways, and "each action taken by anti-apartheid forces was brutally suppressed and answered with increasingly repressive legislation."[62] Joining efforts and planning, both the ANC, under the leadership of Albert Luthuli, and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) called for a Defiance Campaign in 1952, an act of civil disobedience against the apartheid regime and one of the first mass-scale movements in the history of resisting apartheid. However, as expected, the campaign resulted in large-scale arrests and the banning of both parties, including their members.[63] However, the occurrence of the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 had a huge impact on the South African political situation, especially in terms of resistance and international condemnation of South African apartheid.[64] The massacre was a pivotal moment in the history of the ANC's form of resistance, for while the ANC adopted a non-violent mode of protest at first, the massacre sparked the need for a violent and armed protest, an idea that was first proposed by Nelson Mandela, who, following the oppressive curb of the Defiance Campaign, suggested that "'violence was the only weapon that would destroy apartheid and we must be prepared in the near future to use that weapon'."[65]

Outlawed and prohibited from any public activity, the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) managed to form secret meetings, the most important offspring of which was the creation of the "Umkhonto we Sizwe" (Spear of the Nation), the military wing of the ANC, with the main aim of carrying out strategic places in the form of sabotage and threat, avoiding to indulge in human-to-human confrontation. However, by 1964, the apartheid government succeeded in suppressing all forms of resistance, capturing leaders of the protests and attacks, who were charged with treason, and eight of them, including Mandela, were charged with life imprisonment.[66] However, the increasing international pressure on the apartheid government along with the rising rhythm of internal resistance led the NP to lose the general elections of 1994 against the ANC in the first democratic elections to be held in the history of South Africa. With the ANC taking power again, the apartheid system officially ended in 1994, and

[60] This practices of segregation were performed under the Separate Amenities Acts (1953) and Motor Transportation Amendment Act (1955); where laws were passed to institutionalize apartheid in each and avery aspect of daily life in South Africa.
[61] Unesco, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa,* 49.
[62] Clark and Worger, 57.
[63] It is important to note that Nelson Mandela was a key figure in the ANC during that time, and was banned from any form of political participation from 1952 to 1961.
[64] Sharpeville is an African township, where protestors, led by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960 gathered outside the local police station for a peaceful and non-violent protest against the Pass Law. However, the police responded very violently and opened fire on protestors killing at least 69 people and wounding more then 180.
[65] Nelson Mandela (1953), quoted in Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid,* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 60.
[66] Clark and Worger, 63.

Nelson Mandela was elected as the first black South African president. All in all, although apartheid was abolished in 1994, it was one of the worst tragedies of human history that shaped the lives of Black South Africans for almost five decades full of oppression, inequality, and poverty.

Thus far, and using both the Nigerian and South Africa colonial experiences, the analysis has demonstrated how colonialism was justified not only politically and militarily, but also ideologically through manipulating indigenous cultural systems, social traditions, languages, and religions. Yet among all such forms of colonial control, the formation and dissemination of colonial discourse emerges as one of the most powerful tools of manipulation, for it constitutes the basic foundation for framing the image of the colonized as inferior 'others' and thus legitimizing imperial control as a 'civilizing' and humanitarian mission. In this resepct, the dissertation in the next section turns to this discursive formation, analyzing the intersection between colonial power, ideology, and discourse and how such a collaboration played a pivotal role in shaping the image of Africa as the inferior, barbaric 'Other'.

3. Understanding Colonial Discourse and Literature: An Exploration of Africa's Representation as the 'Other'

Having discussed the roots, reasons, and policies of European expansion and colonialism in Africa, the focus now shifts to one of the main issues of this dissertation, that is, the emergence of colonial discourse and literature and how the representation of Africa was shaped and essentialized by prejudiced and biased images that portrayed the continent and its people as the barbaric, uncivilized, and inferior 'Other'. In this regard, it becomes essential to highlight the meaning of discourse and how the amalgamation of discourse, ideology, and power forms a hegemonic trinity that governs and shapes the representations of Africa in colonial literature. This subchapter will be mainly intended to discuss how colonial discourse and literature emerged through the interplay between discourse, power, and ideology, while the analysis of colonial discourse from a postcolonial perspective will be addressed in the following chapter.

Generally speaking, 'discourse' refers to any type of communication or language usage that takes place within a certain social context. Power dynamics, cultural norms, and historical circumstances all affect discourse, which can encompass spoken, written, visual, and other modes of communication. Teun van Dijk defines discourse as a "communicative event…that at least involves a number of social actors, typically in speaker/writer and hearer/reader roles (but also in other roles, such as observer or overhearer), taking part in a communicative act, in a specific setting (time, place, circumstances) and based on other context features. "[67] What van Dijk suggests is that discourse encompasses not only the written and spoken utterances but also the social context and practice in which these words/utterances are produced. Therefore, discourse for van Dijk as a "communicative event" emphasizes the significance of understanding the larger communication practices and social settings in which language is employed, and in this dimension, discourse becomes the "product of putting into

[67] Teun A. Van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 194.

motion all the dimensions of communicative acts, which are arranged in social surroundings."[68]

In his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Michel Foucault describes the difficulty of limiting the notion of discourse to a single definition or meaning, and how it is better to approach discourse "sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements;"[69] Foucault's argument here divides the notion of discourse into three main categories or meanings. The first refers to the general use of discourse that encompasses all meaningful statements that encompass all forms of language use; the second meaning implies that discourse is not an arbitrary form of language use, but a set of statements linked by mutual themes, presumptions, and modes of representation; and the third meaning suggests that discourse highlights a set of social practices and institutions that produce and disseminate knowledge in specific and controlled ways.

One of the most important features of discourse is that it can be a medium to create, control, and disseminate knowledge, and therefore it becomes a site of social and political contest as both individuals and political bodies strive to control the discourse in attempts to reform and re-form the meanings and knowledge produced by such a discourse. However, the use of discourse in our discussion will be mainly related to literary studies concerning the phenomenon of colonialism; how does such an oppressive, forced, and exploitative practice relate to the notion of discourse?

The relationship between discourse, ideology, and power is a central theme in discourse analysis, but the main question remains: how are the three subjects interrelated? According to Foucault, "Discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power…discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it."[70] What Foucault highlights here is the double-edged function of discourse, as it can be both a product of power, meaning that it can be employed and forced to shape and control individuals and social groups, and the very same discourse can also function as a medium of reflecting and reinforcing already-existing power relations. In clarifying the meaning of such power, Foucault argues that "power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogeneous domination over others…Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain".[71] According to Foucault, discourse is a social activity that creates and controls knowledge and power relations in society rather than just being a neutral medium of information transmission. In this way, Foucault argues, discourse may be viewed as a tool for the exercise and maintenance of power. One example of the power relations in discourse can be seen in institutional ratification, where the regulation and dissemination of discourse take place. This means that discourse production is closely

[68] Paulina Kłos-Czerwińska, *Discourse: An Introduction to van Dijk, Foucault and Bourdieu*, (Wrocław – Washington, D.C.: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Filologicznej we Wrocławiu), 69.
[69] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan-Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 73.
[70] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 101.
[71] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 98.

attached to and depends on institutions that ratify the production and dissemination of knowledge, and of course, the regulation and production of knowledge are largely associated with power in any given social situation or context. Therefore, in the discourse-power relationship, the exercise of power upon individuals is not enacted by other individuals but rather by social institutions that control and disseminate the discourse, and this can be seen, for example, in schools, universities, publishing houses, official texts, books, transcripts, and any other medium of knowledge production that has the power to be official or authorized.

The discourse-power relationship is always expressive of a certain ideology, or a medium through which the ideology is enacted and performed. Van Dijk defines ideologies as "'systems of ideas'…[and] shared representations of social groups, and more specifically as the 'axiomatic' principles of such representations. As the basis of a social group's self-image, ideologies organize its identity, actions, aims, norms and values, and resources as well as its relations to other social groups."[72] The interaction between ideology and discourse is complicated since they both shape and produce each other. While the term ideology reflects the values and ideas that shape individuals' and organizations' modes of communication and understanding the world, discourse reflects how these ideas are communicated and reproduced. In this sense, ideology shapes discourse, since language and communication are influenced by the guiding principles and ideals of a certain ideology. However, discourse can also shape ideology since the way language is used to create and transmit meaning may influence and reinforce certain ideas and values, as Van Dijk argues, "Discourse… has a special status in the reproduction of ideologies."[73] Dijk further suggests that unlike pictures, images, signs, and other semiotic codes, written and spoken discourse pave the way for the expression and formulation of ideological opinions and beliefs.[74]

In sum, the relationship between discourse, ideology, and power can be better understood under the general notion of hegemony, which, in Gramscian terminology, refers to the "political, intellectual and moral leadership over allied groups."[75] Therefore, in this cultural, ideological, and political hegemony, discourse emerges as the only way to shape people's understanding and perception of the world, a view that accepts no contestation or interrogation. As for the way discourse is generated and disseminated, there comes the role of ideology in creating a framework for perceiving the discourse in previously mapped-out manners that serve the dominant group's orientations. Of course, both discourse and ideology might have limited agency without power, and therefore, power becomes a key factor in retaining the hegemony of the dominating group, and such power stems from controlling mediums of knowledge dissemination, including the media, educational systems, and other epistemic sources.

In this respect, colonial discourse emerged as a result of the interconnectedness and complex interplay between discourse, ideology, and power. By definition, "Colonialist discourse

---

[72] Teun A. van Dijk, "Ideology and discourse analysis," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 2 (2006): 115, DOI: 10.1080/13569310600687908.
[73] Teun A. Van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 192.
[74] Teun A. Van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary*, 192.
[75] Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979), 10.

encompasses all utterances written, spoken, and iconographic aimed at affirming the superiority of a dominant group over another and at justifying that dominance so as to perpetuate it."[76] In other words, colonial discourse refers to the ways in which colonial powers employed language and representations to justify their colonial practices as well as to establish a set of epistemic criteria that clearly defined the hierarchical positions of both the colonizer and the colonized. In the literary field, colonial discourse refers to the body of literature, research, travel writing, and other forms of written and spoken materials produced during the colonial period, including all forms of texts and manuscripts written by colonizers to justify the colonial mission as a 'civilizing mission' and create a certain view of native cultures and people using biased and prejudiced observations that present the natives and their cultures as violent, barbaric, uncivilized, and in a desperate need for the white man's culture and civilization. However, it is important to note that colonial discourse should not be limited to a single monolithic system of representation or a definite number of texts but should be viewed as a series of interconnected discourses, each reflecting a specific historical period, yet having several aims and orientations in common.[77]

Colonial powers and writers employed colonial discourse as a means to create a worldview that set and maintained the hierarchies between 'us' and 'them', between the colonizer and the colonized. As W.E.B. Du Bois argues, colonial discourse created what is known as "double-consciousness this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness."[78] What Du Bois highlights here is how the colonial subject is not only defined but forced to accept this definition and representation, obliged to look at himself through the eyes, tendencies, and prejudices of others. It is through such colonial representations that the role of ideology and power becomes manifested in the form of colonial discourse. In terms of ideology, colonial discourse managed to create the forced reality of 'othering', that is, representing the colonized other as inferior, backward, uncivilized, and barbaric, while the colonial European is represented as the civilized, educated, and grand rescuer who will lift the colonized out of their miserable lives. As for the role of power, colonial discourse was mainly established as a product of power, the one and only source of information to be disseminated, authorized, and accepted as true knowledge by colonial powers. Under such power, Aimé Césaire argues, colonial powers managed to conceal the fact that "between colonization and civilization there is an infinite distance; that out of all the colonial expeditions…out of all the colonial statutes that have been drawn up, out of all the memoranda that have been dispatched by all the ministries, there could not come a single human value."[79] Indeed, Charles asserts, " the power of the West in its historic

[76]Asselin Charles , "Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus." *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 2 (1995): 135. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784839.
[77] David Spurr, *Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*. (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), 1.
[78] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xiii.
[79] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 34.

enterprise of world colonization has rested on…the coherence of its ideology, that is, of its myth of collective mission."[80]

Although a huge amount of research approaches colonial discourse as a mid-19th and early 20th-century phenomenon, it is worth mentioning that colonial discourse is not a modern phenomenon but one that can be traced back to the early existence of ethnically and linguistically diverse human communities competing for land, power, and resources.[81] One of the earliest examples of colonial discourse can be seen in the writings of the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus, who approached the Americas having absorbed the medieval European view of the world as " full of *terrae incognitae* and peopled by monsters."[82] Columbus's approach here can be better understood under what Thomas Metcalf explains as the "necessity to create a notion of an 'other' beyond the seas"[83] Metcalf contends,

> To describe oneself as 'enlightened' meant that someone else had to be shown as 'savage' or 'vicious'. To describe oneself as 'modern', or as 'progressive', meant that those who were not included in that definition had to be described as 'primitive' or 'backward'. Such alterity, what one might call the creation of doubleness, was an integral part of the Enlightenment project.[84]

In this regard, Columbus was representative of the European discursive mentality of representing the non-European, that is, the gothic, the unknown, the primitive, and the barbaric. In his writings, Columbus justified the conquest of the Americas by describing the native inhabitants (the Arawaks) as uncivilized barbaric creatures, who seemed to him as

> people very short of everything… They should be good servants, and very intelligent, for I have observed that they soon repeat anything that is said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, for they appeared to me to have no religion. God willing, when I make my departure I will bring half a dozen back to their Majesties so that they can learn to speak. [85]

Columbus's description depicts the Caribbean natives as 'something' totally different from Europeans; he immediately degrades them to the status of servants and depicts them as people devoid of religion, language, and any ability to communicate. The power and effectiveness of colonial discourse were seen in its ability to occupy the minds of the colonized and force them to accept and adopt the colonizer's view of themselves to the extent to which they admit their inferior position as natural and are ready to support the colonizer's cause to occupy them.[86] Another major example is the Spanish conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who, in his *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico* (1517), projected similar European attitudes towards non-Europeans and, like Columbus, projected the Aztecs as

---

[80] Asselin Charles, "Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus.", 135.
[81] Charles, 135.
[82] Charles, 137.
[83] Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 6.
[84] Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj, 6.*
[85] Christopher Columbus (1492), **quoted in** Frankiln W. Knight, *The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3.
[86] Charles, 139.

uncivilized, barbaric, and in ultimate need of European civilization. Of course, colonial discourse evolved through the ages, and what was taken as mere opinions and observations became proven facts, beliefs, and attitudes for most European peoples regarding the lives, traditions, and status of non-Europeans.

Broadly speaking, the term 'colonial literature' refers to literary works, including novels, travel writings, poems, memoirs, and other genres, written by authors, travelers, explorers, conquistadors, and other colonial personnel during the period of European colonization, which lasted from the late 15th century roughly to the mid-20th century. While colonial literature is commonly associated with the works produced under the reign of the British Empire, the term, as discussed in the previous section, also covers works written in Italian, Spanish, French, and other colonial languages. Colonial literature emerged as a medium to express European attitudes, beliefs, and analysis of non-European communities, including their cultures, traditions, religions, and other social practices, with the main purpose of delivering such representations and experiences to Europeans at home and offering home audience, as Boehmer argues, " a way of thinking about exploration, Western conquest, national valour,[and] new colonial acquisitions."[87]

Indeed, Boehmer's views on colonial discursive productions express a viewpoint comparable to that of Mary Louise Pratt, who, in her analysis of colonial travel books, asserts that such works created and fostered a series of misconceptions, beliefs, and ideologies in the European mind in terms of dealing with and understanding the non-European. Pratt contends that

> travel books written by Europeans about non-European parts of the world created the imperial order for Europeans "at home" and gave them their place in it… Travel books…gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized.[88]

What both Boehmer and Pratt highlight is the way colonial literature, in its various types, was produced with a sense of familiarity and ownership that is central in shaping colonial discursive productions. That is to say, foreign, unknown, and unfamiliar lands were represented through a Eurocentric gaze that transformed the 'unfamiliar' to possessable, and paved the way for colonial domination. What Boehmer and Pratt might define as a sort of textual colonization, allowed Europeans to create a sense of what Pratt defines as "planetary consciousness," that is sense of mastery, superiority, and cultural centrality that justified, in the minds of Europeans, the legality of colonial conquest.[89]

When addressing the relationship between colonialism and literature, it grows necessary to differentiate between terms such as 'colonial' and 'colonialist' in dealing with the literary realm. As Elleke Boehmer argues, colonial literature refers to "writing[s] concerned with colonial perceptions and experience, written mainly by metropolitans, but also by creoles and

---

[87] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* , 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15.
[88] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (New York, Routledge: 2008), 3.
[89] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 117.

indigenes, during colonial times…colonial literature therefore includes literature written in Britain as well as in the rest of the Empire during the colonial period."[90] In this respect, colonial literature refers to the body of literature produced during the period of active colonization by writers who belonged both to the colonizer and the colonized communities. Encompassing travelogues, histories, reports, memoirs, and fiction, colonial literature reflected the experiences inside the colony and presented the colonizers' views about the natives, including their cultural and religious practices, in a way that reflected the values, ideologies, and attitudes of colonial writers towards colonized communities. On the other hand, Boehmer contends, colonialist literature

> was that which was specifically concerned with colonial expansion…literature written by and for colonizing Europeans about non-European lands dominated by them. It embodied the imperialists' point of view. When we speak of the writing of empire it is this literature in particular that occupies attention. Colonialist literature was informed by theories concerning the superiority of European culture and the rightness of empire. Its distinctive stereotyped language was geared to mediating the white man's relationship with colonized peoples.[91]

It is Boehmer's definition of 'colonialist literature' that will be used as a point of analysis and reference in the present discussion. For Boehmer, colonialist literature refers to the body of literary works that played a pivotal role in defending and justifying the colonial mission as a 'civilizing' one by promoting the moral, technological, cultural, and religious superiority of the colonizer. Boehmer asserts the essential role that colonialist literature plays in 'mediating' the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, or, more accurately, how to civilized European approaches and perceives the barbaric, uncivilized 'other'.

In this context, the discussion now will shed light on the representation of the African continent and its inhabitants in colonialist literature, for understanding the literary implications embedded in such literary productions offer a better understanding of literature as a justification and promotion of colonialism. Colonialist literature portrayed Africa and its people in a completely negative manner, as the continent was represented as the 'dark continent', a place that is exotic, dangerous, unknown, full of barbarism and anarchy, and inhabited by people who are savages, barbaric, and uncivilized.

The term 'dark continent' was not necessarily related to the skin tone of the inhabitants of Africa, but was largely connected to the mysteriousness and exoticism of the continent that was seen as a place devoid of any form of history, cultural and social traditions, as something completely different and bizarre to European audiences. Of course, such biased and prejudiced representations were powerful tools in creating binarisms between the superior European and the inferior African native, between the civilized Europeans and the uncivilized barbaric African Others, and thus promoting the idea of colonialism as noble and necessary to save Africans from their own selves.

---

[90] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature,* 2.
[91] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature,* 3.

Indeed, C.L. Innes argues, "a recurring European view of Africa was that it is a place which has no history, and that history does not become significant there until the European comes on to the scene."[92] Likewise, in her analysis of natural history writing of Africa by Europeans, Pratt highlights a pattern she calls "anti-conquest," which she defines as a process that " "underwrite[s]" colonial appropriation, even as it rejects the rhetoric, and probably the practice, of conquest and subjugation."[93] Pratt argues that in writing African natural history, what may claim to reject colonial domination appears, paradoxically, to legitimize it. Therefore, Pratt asserts that "the conspicuous innocence of the naturalist…acquires meaning in relation to an assumed guilt of conquest."[94] What Pratt suggests here is that the neutrality and quasi-innocence of scientists, explorers, and travel writers writing about Africa reveals itself as a controversial complicity with colonial guilt. Echoing Pratt's theoretical claims, many European researchers and historians started to build up perceptions and hypotheses about Africa based on other European writings, including reports, reviews, travelogues, and other forms of writing that were prevalent at the time.

In this respect, Thomas Southerne's play *Oroonoko* (1695), which is a dramatization of Aphra Behn's novella *Oroonoko; Or The Royal Slave* (1688), can be studied as one of the earliest examples of colonialist drama which negatively depicts African characters and justifies colonialism and slavery. Drama had also played an important and major role in establishing racial, cultural, and social stereotypes about Africa and Africans. Colonialist plays changed the concept of representations to the level of performance, through which European audiences were not only reading or hearing about the myths of 'savage' Africans but were also able to see such representations and prejudices in performances. The play tells the story of Oroonoko, an African prince who is captured by the English and sold into slavery. Although the character is depicted as a noble one, nevertheless he is portrayed as a noble savage who has no control over his emotions and is governed by irrationality. Furthermore, what is interesting in the play is that Southerne uses the very same slaves to justify slavery, for in a conversation with a character named Aboan, Oroonoko's attendant, Oroonoko himself justifies slavery suggesting that "these men...whom you would rise against. If we are slaves, they did not make us slaves, but bought us in an honest way of trade...They paid our price for us and we are now their property, a part of their estate, to manage as they please."[95] The play further reinforces the racial tendency of the time regarding the superiority of the white race over all other races, as Diana Jaher stresses the racial prejudice in the play in which "all the African characters depicted are slaves," and are "incapable of sophisticated thought and feeling, desire no other life."[96]

Following this early racial encounter, Philosophers such as David Hume, Kant, and Hegel, started formulating epistemological perceptions and formalizations of Africa and its people.

---

[92] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) , 8.
[93] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 52.
[94] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 52.
[95] Thomas Southerne, *Oroonoko*, ed. Maximillian E. Novak and David Stuart Rodes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 8.
[96] Diana Jaher, "The Paradoxes of Slavery in Thomas Southerne's Oroonoko." *Comparative Drama* 42, no. 1 (2008): 54. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23038078.

For example, the Scottish philosopher David Hume was one of the first thinkers to clearly expresses his negative views in his perception of Africa and the Africans. In his essay "Of National Characters," Hume writes:

> The negros…[are] naturally inferior to the Whites… No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the Whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular… In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly.[97]

Such racial theorizations and categorizations articulated by Hume were later adopted by Immanuel Kant, who had similar views and negative perceptions of Africa. For Kant, " the negros of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the ridiculous" and "not a single one has ever been found who has accomplished something great."[98] Kant creates a sharp distinction between the white and black races, degrading the 'negros of Africa' to a level in which they can only be treated as slaves and servants and "have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling."[99] Kant further broadens the space between the two races, suggesting that "so fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color."[100] He further adds that whatever a black African might say or suggest, it would be meaningless and useless, for " [if] this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid."[101] In other words, the way Kant perceived Africa at offers a clear reflection of the Eurocentric racial mentality at the time, which championed and justified the exploitation of Africa and its people.

The creation of these racial hierarchy and systematization were subsequently adopted by the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, who, although he never visited Africa himself, had extremely negative and biased views of Africa and its people based on reports and stories he heard and read from other explorers and traders. Hegel writes:

> Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained — for all purposes of connection with the rest of the World — shut up…The Negro, as already observed, exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality — all that we call feeling — if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character.

---

[97] David Hume, "Of National Character", in *Hume: Political Essays*. Edited by Knud Haakonssen.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 86. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139170765.
[98] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings,* ed. Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), xxviii.
[99] Immanuel Kant, "On National Characteristics", **quoted in,** *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader,* ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden,: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997), 55.
[100] Immanuel Kant, "On National Characteristics", 55.
[101] Immanuel Kant, "On National Characteristics", 57.

> At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit… What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.[102]

Hegel's denial of history to colonized people was used to reinforce and justify colonialism as the grand rescuing mission for Africa, which is presented as a primitive place with primitive people who live outside the scope of history and civilization. In other words, Kuykendall argues, "Africa…is unable to fit within Hegel's philosophical scheme where history is only significant when it has reached the minimal level of consciousness."[103] Therefore, Hegel excluded Africa from world history and degraded the African natives to the level of animals and objects who lack the basic principles of humanity. Indeed, Hegel's perception of Africa was governed by a generalizing denial of civilization, history, culture, language, and even the very nature of humanity.

Describing Africans as primitive, living in a state of nature, and having no single form of social, cultural, or political structure, Hegel's views of Africa shaped the perceptions of European readers, especially with the huge dissemination and acceptance of Hegel's philosophical views in Europe during the 19th century, which led the European audience to construct a negative stereotypical image of the country and its people. Most importantly, such views formed a basis for colonial powers to justify their conquest and exploitation of the natives, as European attitudes toward such occupation were overwhelmed by a feeling of general acceptance of the necessary and noble mission to 'save', 'civilize', and 'develop' the primitives.

Based on the aforesaid opinions and views of the three philosophers, it can be inferred that the tendency of the time was directed to project Africa in a mode of denial—a denial of history, culture, civilization, and any possible chance of improvement and development in Africa. The dominant narrative of African history and culture enforced by Hume, Kant, Hegel, and many other philosophers during the 18th and 19th centuries was based on a policy of degradation and dehumanization of Africans, a typical Eurocentric scheme that ignores the diversity of African social and cultural heritage and confines the continent within a racist, monotonous, and biased mode of representation that was sustained and perpetuated through art, literature, and popular culture.

Following the Enlightenment, Romantic depictions of Africa did not dismiss the representations that placed Africa on the margins of history and civilization. Rather, Romantic authors internalized the biases of Enlightenment thought and reconfigured this othering into literary and imaginative characterizations. In other words, European Romantic writers and travelers continued the Enlightenment vision through depicting Africa as a place of chaos, exoticism, and danger. As Alastair Pennycook asserts, "with the rise of European

---

[102] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J.Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 111,117.
[103] Ronald Kuykendall, "Hegel and Africa: An Evaluation of the Treatment of Africa in The Philosophy of History." *Journal of Black Studies* 23, no. 4 (1993): 573. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784387.

romanticism …[Africa] was constructed as an abstract ideal through which social, cultural and political institutions in eighteenth century Europe could be criticized."[104] Hence, the dissertation suggests that Romantic literature played a pivotal role in paving the way for what Edward Said later identifies as "Orientalism" or the Orientalist approach through which the West is defined in terms of opposition to the barbaric, dark, and unknown East or South.

In this regard, Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799), offers a poignant reflection of the Romantic approach to Africa, for in this travel book, Park creates an image of Africa as a place defined b danger, exoticism, wonder, and sublimity. Yet, his discourse reflects colonial ideology when approaching Africans. For example, in describing the Moors of Africa, he asserts that "I dreaded nothing so much as confinement again among the Moors, from whose barbarity I had nothing but death to expect."[105] Moreover, Park further depicts an image of Africans as culturally inferior to Europeans and driven by superstitions, for in deriding how his attendant offered a chicken to the "spirits of the woods," Park writes

> although this man had resided seven years in England it was evident that he still retained the prejudices and notions he had imbibed in his youth. He meant this ceremony, he told me, as an offering or sacrifice to the spirits of the woods, who were, he said, a powerful race of beings of a white colour, with long flowing hair. I laughed at his folly.[106]

However, the Romantic discourse was not totally racist in terms of dealing with Africa or Africans for authors like Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, and Coleridge offered different works that directly opposed and criticized slavery and racism. Yet, works such as Park's were the ones which gained attention and shaped the colonial discourse on Africa. Thus, such epistemologies persisted and were later present in the mid-to late 19th century. For example, Jules Verne's adventure novel *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863) offers another example of the negative representation of Africa in colonial literature. In his work, the French author tells the story of three Englishmen (explorers) who decide to take up a journey to discover the uncharted regions of Africa during the 19th century. However, during this journey, Verne depicts African natives as "savages" and "wretched Negroes," perpetuating the same colonial stereotype of Africa as a barbaric and uncivilized place demanding European intervention. Furthermore, the novel stresses the binarism between the superior European and the inferior African, for in describing the natives, one of the characters, the doctor, argues that "These people…can't help but see us as supernatural beings—when the first Europeans came among them, the natives thought they were a race of supermen."[107] The very same idea of Africans' backwardness is further supported by a young priest, who expresses a colonialist and paternalistic attitude towards the natives suggesting that "our primitive, unenlightened

---

[104] Alastair Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 2002) , 58.
[105] Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark, 1799), 172
[106] Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior*, 86.
[107] Jules Verne, *Five Weeks in a Balloon: A Journey of Discovery by Three Englishmen in Africa*, ed. Arthur B. Evans, trans. Frederick Paul Walter (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 199.

brothers whom only religion can educate and civilize."[108] In this regard, John Rieder argues that "the story serves as a deeply symptomatic fantasy of colonial appropriation," and that the entire novel addresses Africa and Africans in terms of white colonial supremacy, a tendency suggestive of colonial attitudes prevailing at the time.[109]

The adventurous tone of Verne's work reflected a deeper internalization of Africa as a space devoid of culture, religion, and civilization and in utmost need for European intervention. Thus, by the end of the 19th century, such misconceptions were clearly present in imperial justification literature. In this respect, Rudyard Kipling's seminal poem "The White Man's Burden," emerged as a poignant representation of this European paternalistic logic. Although Kipling wrote this poem in response to the US taking over the Philippine Islands following the Philippine-American War (1899–1902), Spurr argues that the poem "serves as a model of the rhetoric of affirmation in its techniques of self-idealization and repetition."[110] In other words, Spurr reflects the prevailing 19th-belief about the need to disseminate European culture and civilization to non-European parts of the world, including Africa. Reflecting this cultural and social hierarch, Kipling writes:

> Take up the White Man's burden -
>
> Send forth the best ye breed -
>
> Go bind your sons to exile
>
> To serve your captives' need;
>
> To wait in heavy harness
>
> On fluttered folk and wild -
>
> Your new-caught sullen peoples,
>
> Half devil and half child.[111]

What Kipling writes can be clearly interpreted as a reflection of the colonial propaganda of showing colonialism as a 'civilizing' mission. In addition, by showing all the non-whites as "half devils and half children," he reflects the dehumanizing aspect that governed and shaped European mentality of the time.

The turn of the 20th century was also the period which marked the emergence of modernist literature as space for critique and ambivalence, most notably Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), though which Conrad questions the very foundations of the so-called civilizing mission while nonetheless reflecting racial and dehumanizing assumptions. While Conrad's work can be studied as a critique of the moral and psychological corruption that

---

[108] Verne, *Five Weeks in a Balloon*, 149.
[109] John Rieder, "An Image of Africa From the Sky: Jules Verne's 'Five Weeks in a Balloon'," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, April 1, 2017, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/an-image-of-africa-from-the-sky-jules-vernes-five-weeks-in-a-balloon/ (accessed May 11, 2023).
[110] David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993), 113.
[111] Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," The Kipling Society, accessed May 01, 2023, https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_burden.htm

underline imperialism, it is also often criticized for its degrading and alienating depictions of Africans. It is through Marlow's journey that Conrad depicts Africa as prehistoric, dark, and hostile, inhabited by people who are cannibals, barbaric, and even denied of their human quality and described as mere "black shapes."[112] In describing Marlow's first encounter with the natives, Conrad degrades African natives to the status of fragments rather than fully human beings. Marlow describes the group of natives he meets as

> a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping. of feet stamping, of bodies swaying of eyes rolling… a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell?...[we were] as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse… but there— there you could look at a thing monstrous and free… the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one.[113]

Describing the natives as "prehistoric," "monstrous," and "inhuman," Conrad, Frances Singh argues, "equates the primitive with the evil and physical blackness of Africans with a spiritual darkness."[114] Further, Conrad's description of the African natives prompted Chinua Achebe to describe him as a "purveyor of comforting myths."[115] Thus, it can be safely said that Conrad's mode of representation perpetuates and promotes Hegelian, Kantian, and other European ethnocentric tendencies of negative stereotypes that clearly uncover the colonial mindset in representing Africans through a series of myths that would comfort European readers and make them embrace the idea of their superior race and culture compared to those of the natives. Moreover, Conrad's racist depiction of Africa can be seen in his treatment of Mr. Kurtz, who is initially described as a "first-class agent" and a "very remarkable man."[116] However, this refined and well-mannered man returned to his wild primitive state when he went native and took " a high seat amongst the devils of the land"[117] In discussing the relationship between the decline of Kurtz's mental state and his relationship with natives, Patrick Brantlinger argues that Conrad associates evil with Africa and that the degradation of Kurtz was not a personal flaw in his personality but rather a result of a European white man behaving like African natives in the heart of African incomprehensible darkness.[118]

Apart from fiction, colonial memoirs formed a very powerful tool in staining the negative representation of Africa in colonial literature. Unlike fiction, colonial memoirs were associated with a higher probability of acceptance by Western audiences because they were regarded as actual and genuine depictions of the continent and its people, apart from any romanticized modes or the language of representation. *My African Journey* (1908), by former

---

[112] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Hampson and Owen Knowles (London, England: Penguin Classics, 2007), 25.
[113] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 57-58.
[114] Frances B. Singh, "The Colonialistic Bias OF 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Conradiana* 10, no. 1 (1978): 44, accessed May 10, 2023, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24633981.
[115] Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Heart of Darkness," in *Postcolonial Criticism*, ed. Brat Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley (New York: Routledge, 2013), 115.
[116] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 28.
[117] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 80.
[118] Patrick Brantlinger, "'Heart of Darkness': 'Anti-Imperialism, Racism, or Impressionism?'" *Criticism* 27, no. 4 (1985): 371, accessed May 10, 2023, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23110450.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, offers a great example of a colonial memoir in which the author details his journey through the British East Africa Colony in 1907. While Churchill's memoir appears to be a record of personal observations of African environment, people, political and social structures, it rather reflects the colonial tendencies of the time which approaches Africa as the barbaric, chaotic, and primitive land. Speaking of the so-called civilizing mission, Churchill argues that "Civilization must be armed with machinery if she is to subdue these wild regions to her authority."[119] Further, in depicting the native Kenyan tribes(the Kvirondo), Churchill seems to reiterate the Hegelian discourse on Africans by suggesting that "the Kavirondo are naked and unashamed. Both sexes are accustomed to walk about in the primitive simplicity of Nature."[120] Like any other colonial administrator, Churchill propagates colonialism as a civilizing and peaceful mission when it comes to dealing with natives. For example, in depicting the Baganda people (an ethnic group forming the Buganda kingdom in Uganda), Churchill suggests that after the colonial mission, they are "leaving their past behind them… they laugh at their old selves," for their cultural and social expressions before the colonial encounter were limited to dances in which "two or three thousand men, naked and painted for war, rushed frantically to and fro to the beating of drums and barbaric music."[121]

Along with political memoirs in the early 20th century, Vachel Lindsay's poem "The Congo" (1914) offers another example of depicting Africa using racial and colonial attitudes in colonial poetry. What is remarkable about this poem is its subtitle, "A Study of the Negro Race", which takes the poem from the literary realm and endows it with an anthropological mode of study and representation of African people. The tone of the poem is immediately set by the title of its first section, "Their Basic Savagery", in which Lindsay introduces the nature of African people as wild, animalistic, and "tattooed cannibals."[122] Another example is when describing African languages, Lindsay employs diction such as "Mumbo Jumbo" in his poem as a tool for stressing the negative African stereotypes, degrading their shapes, lives, language, and cultural and religious traditions to the level of mere barbarianism. Thus, whether through Churchill's political racialization or Lindsay's poetic exoticization, the dissertation illustrates how the literary productions during the height of European colonialism were dominated and structured by a racial and exclusionist discourse.

In brief, by highlighting the examples cited above from a variety of literary genres, the dissertations demonstrates how the negative representations of Africa were not the product of a single author, genre, or cultural tradition, but rather emerged and transmitted through generations. For over two centuries, these depictions have created and fostered in the Western mind an imagr of Africa as the place of chaos, anarchy, ignorance, superstitious beliefs, and savagery. This idea is clearly articulated by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who asserts that in colonial discourse "the richness of Africa's cultural heritage [was] degraded, and her people labelled

[119] Winston S. Churchill, *My African Journey* (Toronto: William Brigs, 1909), 51.
[120] Churchill, *My African Journey*, 54.
[121] Churchill, *My African Journey*, 68.
[122] Lindsay, Vachel. "Congo and other poems." *American Verse Project*. n.d. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAH8721.0001.001/1:8?rgn=div1;view=fulltext (accessed May 1, 2023), Line 16.

as primitive and savage. The colonizer's values were placed in the limelight, and in the process, evolved a new African who denied his original image."[123] Against this backdrop, chapter 1 will address the rise of postcolonial literature as a means of questioning and interrogating dominant colonial narratives, highlighting the counter-discursive strategies, with a particular focus on Achebe and Coetzee.

4. Overview of Chapters

The first chapter attempts to offer a comprehensive understanding of "postcolonialism," shedding light on the controversy surrounding the term and its applications. It then delves into the rise of postcolonial literary theory and its major concepts, thus paving the way to examine how postcolonial literature performs as an antithesis questioning and interrogating dominant colonial narratives. After clarifying the theory and practice of postcolonialism in literature, the chapter then offers a short biography of Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee, focusing on their selected works, and how both authors could be situated within this large literary landscape. By showing how both authors were in a "crossroads" of cultures, the chapter allows readers to grasp a better understanding of the interconnectedness of their literary themes despite their paradoxical positions as a Black colonized and liberal white colonizer.

Chapter two addresses the issue of the 'other' identity formation, analyzing the theoretical, epistemological, and psychological was through which the identity of the colonized 'other' is marginalized and oppressed in colonial frameworks. Drawing insights from Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Frantz Fanon, this chapter allows readers to formulate a thorough understanding of the oppressive and manipulative nature of colonial identity formation. Thus, the chapter explores the ways in which the 'other' is textually and epistemologically oppressed, and paves the way to approach the works of Achebe and Coetzee in terms of how they respond to such (mis)representations.

The third chapter deals with the reformation and regeneration of postcolonial identity in the selected works of Achebe and Coetzee. Through a three-layered reading of pre-colonial life to colonial intrusion and finally Achebe's vision for a reformed Igbo identity, the chapter highlights how Achebe's approach calls for a cultural reclamation of identity through a blend between ancestral values and colonial influences. On the other hand, the chapter examines Coetzee's approach that relies on the role of physicality in shaping postcolonial Black identities, thus focusing on physical rather than cultural reclamation. Building on the analysis of Said, Bhabha, Fanon, and other postcolonial scholars, the chapter aims to offer a comparative analysis of the efforts through which both authors embark on a journey to redefine and regenerate African identities in the aftermath of colonial encounters.

Chapter four focuses on reading the selected works in terms of resistance to the Western literary canon. The chapter reveals how Achebe uses an authentic African voice to represent what Mary Louise Pratt defines as "autoethnographic texts." Through his texts, Achebe

[123] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Publishing House (Pvt.) Ltd., 1987), 100.

resists the canon through two major strategies; the first is indigenizing the canon through linguistic Africanization, while the second strategy is his reliance on oral traditions to defy and challenge the written tradition. The second part of the chapter highlights how, unlike Achebe, Coetzee's approach to resistance focuses on the subversion and reconfiguration of canonical literary genres such as picaresque and adventure narratives. The chapter also reveals how Coetzee's engagement with intertextuality adds further layers of complexity to his texts, allowing them to escape the confinements of South African setting. Through this comparative analysis between a colonized and a colonizer response, the chapter reveals the distinct yet interconnected approaches of Achebe and Coetzee in offering a more inclusive and diverse literary canon.

Chapter 1: Postcolonialism and the Literary Revolution

This chapter is intended to examine the emergence of postcolonialism as an academic discipline and how the development of postcolonialism has led to a kind of literary revolution that elevated postcolonial narratives and discourse to the level of antithesis questioning and interrogating dominant colonial narratives. The chapter begins by generally examining the meaning of postcolonialism and its historical foundations. It then examines the rise of postcolonial theory in literature, its major notions, and the distinctiveness of postcolonial literature in challenging and subverting the dominant colonial discourse. Highlighting the prominence of postcolonial African literature as a major example of a powerful counter-discourse, the analysis will explore the essential role that Chinua Achebe played in engendering African literature, along with analyzing the literary oeuvre of J. M. Coetzee as a prominent white voice within the postcolonial literary realm. By analyzing their respective positions as a Black colonized Nigerian and a liberal white South African, the chapter will demonstrate how both authors were in a "crossroads" of cultures, and how this dilemma of belonging affects their literary oeuvre.

2.1. Literature Review: Introducing the Dynamics of Postcolonialism

As has been noted in the introduction, the era of European colonialism and imperialism marks the basic historical foundation of postcolonialism. This dark period of political control, economic exploitation, and inhuman treatment and representation of the colonized natives was the backdrop of all postcolonial or anticolonial literary, political, and cultural movements. At this point, it becomes necessary to define postcolonialism, even though, as Tariq Jazeel states, "Defining postcolonialism is a notoriously difficult task. And so it should remain."[124] However, the notion of 'postcolonialism' can be traced back to a period in the mid-20th century characterized by a huge wave of decolonization and independence-oriented movements that led to the disintegration of colonially established empires. Since previously colonized nations gained their autonomy and sought to reconstruct their political, legal, and socioeconomic systems, postcolonial intellectuals led several cultural and academic movements that emerged as a body of criticism and assessment seeking to analyze the impacts of imperialism and colonialism on their newly independent states in attempts to understand and shed light on the experiences of previously colonized cultures and societies.

In this context, the question arises: What is postcolonial theory? Postcolonial theory spans a variety of academic fields, including history, literature, cultural studies, anthropology, political science, and sociology. It highlights and analyzes how colonialism affected and reshaped social structures, national economies, and indigenous identities while imposing compulsory political, cultural, and economic systems that paved the way for exploiting colonized lands and establishing hierarchical power relations. Through the interdisciplinary lens of postcolonialism, postcolonial scholars were able to conduct a comprehensive examination of the lasting colonial impacts on indigenous societies in all possible dimensions, as well as highlight indigenous movements that sought to resist and subvert

[1] Tariq Jazeel, *Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1.

dominant colonial systems, whether culturally, physically, economically, or through any other form of resistance and rejection of colonial normalization.

In this dissertation, the use of postcolonial theory will be primarily centered around its application in literature and literary criticism and how it paves the way for a clear understanding of how power structures, colonial strategies, and cultural negotiations are instilled and simultaneously contested within the literary discourse. The use of postcolonial theory as a literary approach seeks to decipher the complex realities of colonial and postcolonial experiences depicted in literary works and how postcolonial thinkers and writers attempt to subvert, resist, and respond to colonial hegemonic legacies while simultaneously attempting to reveal obscured and marginalized voices as well as challenge dominant colonial narratives. As B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin suggest, "We use the term 'post-colonial'…to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day."[125] Therefore, the importance of postcolonialism in literary discourse stems from a deep understanding that the dangers of the colonial enterprise were not mainly intended for territorial control but were centered around imposing colonial languages, cultures, and social values on colonized communities. In other words, the literary and cultural discourse in postcolonial theory serves as the foundational premise for resisting the colonial agenda since, as the majority of postcolonial thinkers and authors believe, decolonizing the mind is far more essential than gaining territorial independence.

At this point, and prior to examining the major principles and themes in postcolonial literary theory, it is pertinent to highlight the contentious nature of the term 'postcolonialism', and, more precisely, the signification that the prefix 'post' adds to the term itself. As Ania Loomba states, "It might seem that because the age of colonialism is over, and because the descendants of once-colonized peoples live everywhere, the whole world is postcolonial."[126] However, the use of the prefix 'post' has been a subject of an ongoing debate among scholars concerning the meaning of the prefix itself for it implies a sense of completion suggesting that the era of colonialism has come to an end and was followed by an era characterized by, as Leela Gandhi describes it, "a change of heart and the emergence of a new and better world,"[127] an issue that Loomba sees as further complicating the matter since it implies the aftermath of colonialism in two senses– temporal, as in coming after colonialism, and ideological, as in replacing colonialism.[128]

The view that using the term 'postcolonialism' to indicate its emergence after the total end of colonialism has been contested for overlooking the direct and indirect legacies of colonialism resulting from ages and centuries of colonial control. In other words, critics of this view suggest that while using the term in such a context implies mere political independence, it forms what can be called historical amnesia and a clean break from the colonial past, or the

[125] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London – New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.
[126] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 12.
[127] Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 175.
[128] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism.* 12.

"overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination."[129] However, it is crucial to address and understand postcolonialism as a term covering "all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact."[130] Thus, major postcolonial critics, authors, and thinkers started to employ postcolonialism as a discourse and a way of thinking that is "primarily concerned to examine the processes and effects of, and reactions to, European colonialism from the sixteenth century up to and including the neo-colonialism of the present day."[131]

Another controversy surrounding postcolonialism in critical discussion is regarding whether it should be written with a hyphen, as in 'post-colonialism,' or without. As C.L. Innes argues, the hyphenated form of the word is viewed by historians as specifically referring to the period after " a country, state or people cease to be governed by a colonial power …, and take administrative power into their own hands."[132] Put differently, historians adopt the hyphenated form only when referring to the idea of territorial colonization and the physical presence of colonial personnel on foreign lands. Proponents of the hyphenated form believe that it sheds light on the hyphenated identities and societies that emerged as a result of colonialism, as B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin contend that "for us, the hyphenated form of the word 'post-colonial' has come to stand for both the material effects of colonisation and the huge diversity of everyday and sometimes hidden responses to it throughout the world."[133] However, critics of the hyphen believe that it creates a kind of disconnection or dissociation between the colonial and post-colonial eras and that the hyphen limits the term to a single temporal connotation, denoting a transition from one period to another and ignoring any form of historical interconnectedness.

In this respect, Tariq Jazeel argues that "'postcolonialism' (written this time without a hyphen)…is a term that does a lot more than simply signal a time period *after* colonialism…[it aims] at recognizing the continued and troubling presence and influence of colonialism within the period we designate as after-the- colonial."[134] Therefore, proponents of omitting the hyphen believe that such an absence can convey a true sense of continuity as well as historical, social, and political interrelation, indicating that postcolonialism is an extension of colonialism rather than being a separate entity itself. However, such debates surrounding the prefix 'post' and the use of the hyphen might not be easily resolved. Nonetheless, the current conceptualization of postcolonialism must be directed at addressing "European colonialist histories and institutional practices, and the responses (resistant or otherwise) to these practices on the part of all colonized peoples" as the fundamental basis of conducting research and analysis in the field of postcolonialism.[135] Ania Loomba further supports this interconnectedness between colonial history and post-colonial legacies,

---

[129] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*(London – New York: Routledge, 1995), 2.
[130] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader,* 2.
[131] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Postcolonial Studies : The Key Concepts* , 3rd ed.(London – New York: Routledge, 2013), 215.
[132] C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.
[133] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader,* 3.
[134] Tariq Jazeel, *Postcolonialism* , 5.
[135] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Postcolonial Studies : The Key Concepts* , 207.

suggesting that it is more convenient to "think of postcolonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism."[136]

While the debates surrounding the use of the prefix 'post-' and whether a hyphen should be added or not remain unresolved to the present day, it is noteworthy to highlight another major controversy surrounding the term 'postcolonialism' regarding its conceptual framework. In other words, several authors and writers have rejected being labeled 'postcolonial', believing that the term creates a sort of essentialism by almost unifying all postcolonial experiences around the globe while overlooking the complex pre-colonial histories and individual identities of once colonized communities. For example, the Indian writer Nayantara Saghal dislikes the term, suggesting that it gives the impression that the British colonization of India was the only landmark of Indian history and that it denies India and Indians the possession of pre-colonial history and cultural traditions.[137] Moreover, some writers and critics believe that the term 'postcolonialism' can be misleading in suggesting the complete political, cultural, and economic independence of former colonies, now considered autonomous and self-dependent in their governance and legal framework.

In light of such debates, the former Ghanaian President, Kwame Nkrumah, contends that the majority of former colonies are not postcolonial in a literal sense, meaning that they are not completely independent in their political, cultural, educational, economic, and other administrative systems but are still under the claws of indirect colonial control. This is what prompted Nkrumah to coin the term "neo-colonialism", which he uses to describe the doubtfulness surrounding the independent (or post-colonial) state of former colonies. Nkrumah argues that:

> In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism.
>
> The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.[138]

For Nkrumah, independence is a process or a state that never truly exists in former colonies, as the economic, political, and thus cultural domination of colonial powers continues to be imposed by former colonial powers using indirect means of control and manipulation. Neo-colonialism can be felt through the establishment of economic relations that allow colonial powers to manipulate the markets, resources, and labor of postcolonial nations. Political neo-colonialism occurs when former colonial powers instill and support domestic political authorities that function as puppet governments that serve colonial interests. Subsequently, economic and political neo-colonialism would result in cultural domination and control, a

---

[136] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism,*16.
[137] C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* , 2.
[138] Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1965), ix.

process in which colonial powers attempt to foster their languages, values, culture, and traditions while simultaneously oppressing indigenous languages and cultural traditions.

In addition, it is worth noting that scholars also expressed their concern regarding the use of the term 'postcolonialism' in a generalized form, suggesting that it might conceal the varied experiencess of different colonies in their colonial and postcolonial experiences, especially in terms of cultural and historical dimensions.[139] In this context, it becomes necessary to highlight the difference between the two different types of colonies: settler colonies and colonies of occupation (or invaded colonies). A settler colony, such as Canada, Australia, and the United States, is a type of colony where people of a colonizing nation move to a certain land and establish a permanent settlement there, a process that is often accompanied by a complete displacement and marginalization of local indigenous communities. In such colonies, settlers managed to establish their own cultural and social systems, while erasing and deliberately marginalizing indigenous languages, cultures, and social traditions. In the case of colonies of occupation, such as Nigeria and India, where "indigenous people remained in the majority but were administered by a foreign power,"[140] and where the aims of colonial powers were not directed at establishing permanent settlements there but were focused on using the colony as a strategic military base and a mine of natural resources to be exploited. Furthermore, the people of such colonies managed to get political independence by taking back the reins of their country while also reasserting their indigenous languages, cultures, and social values.

In this regard, scholars argue that colonies like Nigeria and Australia, for example, cannot be grouped under the same categorization, for although both types of colonization involve interaction with indigenous communities, they differ in terms of colonial objectives, power dynamics, and the colonizer-colonized relationship. Moreover, within the realm of settler colonies, scholars assert that not all settler colonies should be grouped under the same historical and demographic status. For example, although Australia and Canada were settler colonies where indigenous communities are barely traceable now, they should not be grouped with Jamaica and Kenya, where, though they were settler colonies, indigenous Jamaicans and Kenyans achieved political independence and took back control of their countries.[141] In this context, Stuart Hall remarks that "Not all societies are "post-colonial" *in the same way* . . . But this does not mean they are not "postcolonial *in any way*.'"[142] Interestingly, C. L. Innes further argues that based on such distinctions, "countries such as Australia and Canada should be classified as not 'post-colonial' but 'colonial'," given the fact that Australian Aborigines and Native Americans did not gain their independence and yet had to fight for it.[143] Furthermore, Innes contends that certain countries might carry the dual status of being colonial and postcolonial at the same time. For example, the British settled in, shaped, and governed Ireland since the 12th century, and thus the dual identity of Ireland emerged as a

[139] C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial* , 2.
[140] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Postcolonial Studies : The Key Concepts* , 236.
[141] C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge* , 2.
[142] Stuart Hall, "When Was 'the Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit", quoted in C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3.
[143] C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge* , 2.

postcolonial state in the south juxtaposed with the undeniable status of being a British colony in the north.[144] Indeed, the controversy surrounding the use of the term 'postcolonial', its application, and interpretation varies greatly depending on the cultural, political, social, and other contexts of different countries. However, it highlights the ongoing debates as well as the necessity of avoiding universalization and the need to recognize the distinctions and complex experiences of different colonized countries.

2.2. From Colonial Echoes to Postcolonial Voices: Postcolonialism in Literature

As an academic approach, postcolonial literary theory emerges as a mode of examining literary works produced by previously colonized societies or communities with the main aim of analyzing how literature reflects and responds to the legacies of colonialism. Postcolonial literary theory highlights the effects colonialism had on reshaping the cultures, identities, and languages of the colonized natives as well as the newly established power dynamics. However, it is worth mentioning that although the main focus of postcolonialism as a literary approach is directed at analyzing the works produced by colonized societies as a response to colonialism, or, as Robert J. C. Young suggests, "looking from the other side of the photograph"[145], postcolonialism also examines works produced by Western colonial powers, especially in their treatment of native cultures and peoples. Therefore, postcolonial literary theory analyzes discourses from both sides of the colonial encounter, shedding light on and attempting to deconstruct and critique Western representations of the natives while also showing how the discourse of the colonized can resist, subvert, and challenge the dominant colonial discourse.

As Ashcroft et al. contend, "The idea of 'post-colonial literary theory' emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing."[146] In other words, molded by Western colonial mentality, European literary theory had its reservations about and limitations in treating postcolonial literary writings, especially when applying Eurocentric values to the body of literary works produced in non-Western territories, which, of course, resulted in misunderstanding the core of such works and the unique messages they are trying to express. Examining postcolonial literature, European literary theory completely ignored the cultural, historical, and linguistic distinctiveness of different cultures, since "White culture was regarded (and remains) the basis for ideas of legitimate government, law, economics, science, language, music, art, literature - in a word, civilization."[147] Therefore, postcolonial texts were treated with a stereotypical reception that mirrored the stereotyping of the people who produced such works, that is, the marginalization of such texts on the basis that they are inferior and nonintellectual compared to Western literature, a belief clearly expressed by the words of the British politician and historian Thomas Babington Macaulay when he arrogantly proclaimed that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native

---

[144] C. L. Innes, *The Cambridge* , 2.
[145] Robert C. J. Young, *Postcolonialism- A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.
[146] Bill Ashcroft, et al., *The Empire Writes Back*, 11.
[147] Robert C. J. Young, *Postcolonialism- A Very Short Introduction* , 3.

literature of India and Arabia."[148] In response to such a deliberate marginalization and exclusion of Third World literacy, postcolonial literary theory evolved as a field that concerns itself with the study of the complex legacies of colonialism and imperialism, providing a detailed examination of the literary and cultural history of Third World countries across the globe and paying special attention to the analysis of "metaphysical, ethical and political concerns about cultural identity, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, subjectivity, language and power."[149]

At this point, it is pertinent to highlight some of the key concepts that underpin this field. These concepts serve as the theoretical framework through which postcolonial authors and scholars approach the dynamics of colonial and postcolonial literary expressions. In the context of the present dissertation, shedding light on these concepts is not intended to be a mere theoretical survey, but rather a central and targeted tool to the understanding of the motifs, themes, and ideological orientations of the influential literary works produced by J. M. Coetzee and Chinua Achebe. Rooted in the South African context and postcolonial Nigeria, the oeuvre of Coetzee and Achebe serves as a remarkable literary field of examination in which such concepts are not only explored but artistically exemplified in diverse postcolonial settings. By highlighting these concepts, the dissertation aims to provide the basis for understanding how both Achebe and Coetzee reconstruct postcolonial identities, challenge colonial domination, and interrogate literary traditions.

Central to the postcolonial theory is the concept of 'othering', which colonizers employ as a mode of representation and categorization of colonized peoples as exotic, inferior, or different. Coined by Gayatri Spivak, othering "refers to the social and/or psychological ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group."[150] Therefore, the concept of othering can be treated as the process(es) through which the colonized subject is dehumanized and produced as the inferior, demonic, and exotic other. In this regard, postcolonial theorists examine and analyze how such processes of othering have created certain colonial stereotypes that were used to justify colonial dominance and how such stereotypes impact the representation of the colonized in the literary discourse. Hence, this dissertation will examine the interrelationship between colonial discourse and othering evident in the selected works of Achebe and Coetzee. The concept will be mainly used to highlight how both authors confront the process of colonial othering of the native subject, and how their works respond, challenge, or subvert such depictions..

Additionally, the concept of decolonization, both as a literary motif and a historical progression, is at the core of postcolonial literary theory. Decolonization can be seen as encompassing all the processes directed against the confrontation of colonialism, whether in literary, physical, or any other form of resistance, with the main aim of "revealing and

---

[148] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Education" (1835), in *Complete Works of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, (Hastings: Delphi Classics, 2016), 122.
[149] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonialism" Literary Theory and Criticism, April 6, 2016, https://literariness.org/2016/04/06/postcolonialism/?_ga=2.216917782.1868114732.1697399614-793623725.1697399602 (accessed Oct 16, 2023).
[150] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Postcolonial Studies : The Key Concepts* , 188.

dismantling colonialist power in all its forms."[151] However, in postcolonial literary studies, the meaning of decolonization is usually associated with the "the cultural-intellectual-philosophical attempt to escape colonial forms of thinking."[152] In other words, many postcolonial authors and critics, including Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Raja Rao, Chinua Achebe, and others, have addressed in their works the idea of intellectual and epistemological colonization and the utter need to resist such type of colonial hegemony. Postcolonial theory, authors, and critics stress the importance of decolonization and the pressing need to change the way colonized peoples see and think of themselves. Since all negative stereotypes are instilled in their minds through European law, literature, and education, colonial and postcolonial communities were programmed to see themselves through imperial colonial eyes.[153] One of the most important approaches to literary decolonization is the practice of counter-narratives, in which postcolonial authors, even when using the colonizer's language, challenge dominant colonial narratives and provide alternative perspectives on the history and culture of native colonial subjects. Thus, by understanding the process of decolonization not only as a historical discontinuity but as a form of literary resistance, the following chapters of the dissertation will attempt to reveal the ways in which Achebe rewrites colonial history from within, while Coetzee questions narrative authority through literary decolonization. Through the counter-naratives they offer, the dissertation offers a comparative examination of interrogating colonial historiography and literary forms.

Furthermore, the concepts of nation and nationalism are central to understanding postcolonial theory and experience. As an outcome of decolonization, nationalism emerged as an ideological response to the legacies of colonialism, calling for "a sense of common belonging, of shared identity – an identity defined in terms of ethnic, racial, geographical or cultural criteria."[154] Postcolonial theory stresses the role of authors and critics in the nation-building endeavor, an attempt to erase the colonially imposed identity of the native as a savage 'Other'; for, Partha Chatterjee asserts, "nationalist thinking is necessarily a struggle with an entire body of systematic knowledge, a struggle that is political at the same time as it is intellectual. Its politics impels it to open up that framework of knowledge which presumes to dominate it, to displace that framework, to subvert its authority, to challenge its morality."[155] Thus, the formation of postcolonial national identities is at the heart of postcolonial theory, and regardless of the potential conflicts that arise within newly formed nations, including regional, ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences, postcolonial theory views nationalism as a "discourse of power,…a positive discourse which seeks to replace the structure of colonial power with a new order, that of national power."[156] Thus, the very idea or concept of postcolonial nationalism provides a framework for analyzing the ways in which Achebe's works call for a cultural re-construction of a Nigerian national identity. On the other hand, the issue of nationalism in Coetzee's works will be mainly used to show how, in a

[151] Bill Ashcroft, et al., *Postcolonial Studies : The Key Concepts* , 73.
[152] Pramod K. Nayar, *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary* , (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), 74.
[153] Pramod K. Nayar, *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary* , 74.
[154] Pramod K. Nayar, *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary* , 109-10.
[155] Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, (London: Zed Books, 1986), 41.
[156] Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought,* 42.

fractured apartheid South Africa, Coetzee offers a critical deconstruction of national belonging and social integration.

Additionally, in the broader context of postcolonial theory, the concept of "subaltern" plays a pivotal role in understanding power dynamics as well as redefining colonial history. Postcolonial theory employs the term 'subaltern' to address and unveil all the experiences of individuals and communities who were marginalized and oppressed within the context of colonialism. The notion of "subaltern" was first referred to by the Italian political activist and Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci in "The Prison Notebooks", a series of essays written when Gramsci was imprisoned by the Fascist regime in the 1930s, in which he used the term within the context of Fascist Italy to refer to the non-hegemonic groups or classes of workers and peasants suffering under the oppression and discrimination of the Fascist Party leader, Benito Mussolini.[157] Gramsci writes, "The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a "State": their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of States and groups of States."[158] Gramsci's words here underscore the interconnectedness between the subaltern, political power, and the diversity within subaltern classes, whose freedom is directly related to escaping the cultural hegemony of the ruling class.[159]

The Gramscian conceptualization of the subaltern was later adopted by a group of South Asian scholars who formed the Subaltern Studies Group, or Subaltern Studies Collective, in the 1980s. The group was formed by scholars interested in postcolonial societies, and its members included eminent figures such as Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Shahid Amin, among others. In his essay, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", Guha treats the concept of subaltern as the exact opposite of the term 'elite', suggesting that " the historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism."[160] Interestingly, Guha suggests that the elite is not constituted of only European colonizers but includes indigenous Indian groups who had access to power and hegemony, whether through their western education, wealth, or association with colonial government, to name a few. Thus, the subaltern for Guha does not pertain to a particular class or race but denotes a void of political or social agency, representing a space of weakness, vulnerability, and disempowerment in which everything stands in sharp contrast to the elite.

While Gramsci's focus is directed at how culture is used as a means to control the subaltern, Guha addresses the historical agency of subaltern groups. In contrast, the Indian literary theorist Gayatri Spivak is more concerned with the ways in which subaltern voices are represented in academic contexts. In an interview with Leon De Kock, Spivak asserts that

---

[157] El Habib Louai, " Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical developments and new applications" *African Journal of History and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2012): 5, DOI: 10.5897/AJHC11.020

[158] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), 202.

[159] El Habib Louai, " Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical developments and new applications" , 5.

[160] Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies 1: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1.

"everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern."[161] Spivak here differentiates between the working class and the subaltern, suggesting that the subaltern is a person whose voice cannot be heard and is deliberately excluded from the capitalist bourgeois context. However, Spivak's revolutionary thoughts are directly related to her seminal essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in which Spivak declares that the subaltern cannot speak, and speaking here is not meant to be the actual act of speaking but the ability, in Foucault's terms, to construct a meaningful utterance or to generate autonomous discourse.[162] Therefore, Spivak's view of the subaltern suggests that since the subaltern cannot speak, it cannot be heard either since their speech is never accepted and marginalized. It is worth mentioning that Spivak's work was mainly directed to address the issues of women in colonial India, most precisely the practice of Sati, in which, Spivak suggests, the voice of the Hindu women has been lost between the British humanist discourse that condemned this act and the Hindu native policy, which considered such an act voluntary, depriving Hindu women the agency to express their own voice. In this context, it is essential to highlight that the concept of the subaltern will be explored in the present dissertation through two different literary approaches. The first entails an examination of the subaltern expressing their authentic voices, which is evident in the works of Chinua Achebe. On the other hand, the second approach projects instances where the subaltern is not given a voice but rather situated in a narrative that questions the very claim of speaking for the silenced and oppressed—a theme evident in the works of J. M. Coetzee. Through these two different approaches, the dissertation will comparatively examine the place and role of the subaltern in literature, especially in postcolonial discourse.

The concepts addressed above will be applied to explore how both Achebe and Coetzee, in their different context, address subaltern positions, resist colonial narratives, and question narrative authority. In this regard, it is important to note that while these concepts are major, they do not stand alone in postcolonial theory, for there are numerous concepts, ideas, and notions that contribute to the richness of this field, although due to limitations of length and focus, not all can be covered within the scope of this dissertation.

2.3. Postcolonial Literature as an Antithesis

> "There is that great proverb–that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."[163]

As outlined in the introduction, colonial literature and discourse emerged as a result of the interconnectedness and complex interplay between discourse, ideology, and power. The univocal approach of colonial literature was present as a manifestation of Eurocentric

[161]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Leon De Kock , "Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa " *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 23, no.3 (1992): 45-46.
[162] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 73.
[163] Chinua Achebe. "Chinua Achebe, The Art of Fiction." Interview with Jerome Brooks. *The Paris Review*, no 139. 133 (1994): 15.

essentialism and ethnocentrism, as almost all Western literature produced during the colonial era essentialized and dehumanized colonial subjects while at the same time glorifying and blessing European colonizers as part of the colonial project. Such colonial representations emerged in the form of a grand narrative that was disseminated and accepted as the one authentic source of information that accepted neither contestation nor interrogation. In this regard, postcolonial literature emerged as an antithesis against such biased representations and as a response to the historical experiences of colonization. The term 'postcolonial literature' can be used to refer to the body of work produced by authors who descend from countries that were previously colonized by European powers. This literary category primarily focuses on the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized, shedding light on the impacts that colonialism had on native cultures, societies, and individuals while projecting themes of physical and cultural resistance, deconstruction of colonial stereotypes, historical revisionism, and independence, among others.

In our present discussion, the use of the term 'postcolonial literature' will be centered around literatures produced in English from different cultures, especially African, that were affected by the colonial process from the beginning of colonization to the present day. In this regard, Ashcroft et al. suggest that "literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all postcolonial literatures."[164] Postcolonial literatures developed as a form of decolonization and a mode of reclaiming narratives that offer a voice to the deliberately silenced colonized subjects and directly challenge dominant colonial discourse. This particular form of decolonization, Helen Tiffin argues, is "process, not arrival; it invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them; between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dis/mantling."[165] In other words, the revolutionary nature of such literature is its ability to challenge and resist colonial narratives, history, and power structures, especially when depicting stories of indigenous cultures and civilizations that were marginalized by colonial discourse, and also through highlighting the resistance exhibited by native individuals and communities. In this respect, Edward Said suggests that postcolonial literature can achieve what he calls an "ideological basis for a wider unity," which, for Said, can be found in "the rediscovery and repatriation of what had been suppressed in the natives' past by the processes of imperialism."[166] By so doing, postcolonial literature interrogates colonial supremacy, challenges colonial hierarchies, and questions the very legitimacy of colonial projects.

Moreover, postcolonial literature actively resists colonial stereotyping and the cultural assimilation propagated in colonial discourse. It reasserts indigenous cultures, languages, heritage, and tradition, thus representing a direct antithesis against the direct and continuous attempts of colonial narratives to negate and erase natives' cultural identity. It is through

---

[164] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London – New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.
[165] Helen Tiffin, "Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse," in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 95.
[166] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 210.

recognizing the binarisms of self/other, civilized/uncivilized, us/them that postcolonial writers approach colonial texts, making such texts subject to interrogation and subversion.[167] Additionally, while colonial literature often marginalizes or silences the voices of colonized peoples, postcolonial literature offers an avenue or a space for the deliberately marginalized voices to express themselves or be expressed through some authorial voice. Rather than projecting the colonial one-dimensional perspective, postcolonial literature offers diverse perspectives, including those of minorities, the oppressed, women, and others who were historically and racially excluded.

Within the realm of history, one of the most important aims of postcolonial literature is to address historical revisionism, or the attempt to achieve a recovery of lost histories. Through their literature, the majority of postcolonial authors attempt to engage in a process of recovery directed at unveiling suppressed and distorted histories. Their literature thus becomes a medium to subvert and rewrite colonially misrepresented histories. In addressing the subversive nature of postcolonial literature, Helen Tiffin argues that "these subversive manoeuvres, rather than the construction or reconstruction of the essentially national or regional, are what is characteristic of post-colonial texts, as the subversive is characteristic of post-colonial discourse in general."[168] In this regard, postcolonial literature can be viewed as the revival and revitalization of subaltern histories that were often overlooked and dismissed in the colonial grand narrative. Postcolonial authors attempt to recover and represent the indigenous version of history, one that objectively reveals the experiences, cultures, traditions, and histories of native peoples, challenging the Eurocentric lens through which the histories of those communities were depicted in colonial discourse.

In terms of culture, postcolonial literature emerges as one of the best modes of cultural resistance. Through their writings, postcolonial authors attempt to reclaim, rewrite, and re-form the denied and misrepresented cultures of the colonized subjects. While the majority of biased colonial literature showcased native cultures and peoples as primitive, barbaric, and uncivilized, postcolonial literature goes beyond literary expression and becomes an area of resistance where authors and writers assert their cultural heritage and practices. Taking the African context as an example, Chinua Achebe suggests that while there are multiple issues and themes that postcolonial writers may address, African writers must always reassert the cultural dignity of African communities and show that Africans are not savages and barbaric and that they "did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; …[they] had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity."[169] Indeed, Achebe's insight here is not limited to the African community but can encompass all colonized societies aiming to achieve cultural autonomy through highlighting the vibrancy of their cultural traditions and folklore in the face of colonial essentialism and ethnocentrism.

---

[167] Bill Ashcroft et al. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 8.
[168] Helen Tiffin, "Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse", 95.
[169] Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," in *African Writers on African Writing*, ed. G. D. Killam (London : Heinemann, 1973), 8.

Being a rich, complex, and diverse literary field, postcolonial literature extends beyond the literary limits of a single genre. The echoes of postcolonial voices reach far beyond the prose of novels, encompassing dramatic performances as well as rhythmic poetic expressions. Indeed, a comprehensive understanding of postcolonial literature necessitates an exploration of its manifestations through various literary genres, each contributing to enhance the postcolonial discourse as well as the ongoing debate surrounding the legacies of colonialism. However, before investigating the works of our two main authors, Achebe and Coetzee, the present dissertation will traverse through select examples of postcolonial literature, with a specific emphasis on the African context. The objective is to highlight how such works stand as counterpoints to colonial literature, offering alternative modes of exploration through which readers can approach and understand the complex aftermath of colonial encounters. By examining these antithetical narratives, the dissertation aims to unveil the complex layers of postcolonial discourse and how postcolonial narratives perform as literary instruments that actively resist historical misrepresentation and play a pivotal role in the process of re-forming historical authenticity and counter-narratives.

In postcolonial drama, Aimé Césaire's play *Une Tempête* (*A Tempest,* 1969) stands as a compelling example of antithetical literary text challenging colonial insights and subverting despotic themes inherent in William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. As Rex Gibson argues, Shakespeare's text "reflects much of colonial experience, especially in the relationship of European and native as master and servant or slave… the story is told only from Prospero's point of view. Caliban has only limited opportunities to tell his side of the story of harsh subjugation."[170] Indeed, Prospero, representing the typical European colonizer, addresses Caliban with a Eurocentric tone, calling him a "poisonous slave, got by the devil himself."[171] However, Césaire's postcolonial adaptation not only dismantles stereotypical representations but also empowers marginalized characters with agency and resistance. An example of colonial themes in Shakespeare's text can be seen in the issue of colonial language and the idea that the natives do not possess a language until they are taught one by the Europeans; otherwise, they are speechless.[172] This idea is evident in Caliban's words when he addresses Prospero, saying, "You taught me language," a declaration that signifies the cultural imposition and control of the colonizer.[173]

While Shakespeare's Caliban ultimately concedes defeat against Prospero, Césaire's Caliban is portrayed as a revolutionary figure rejecting Prospero's colonial language. In Act 1, Scene 2, Caliban revolts against his colonized identity, addressing Prospero, saying, " Call me X. That would be best. Like a man without a name. Or, to be more precise, a man whose name has been stolen."[174] By choosing "X" as his name, Caliban reclaims a sense of agency over his own identity, rejecting the idea of his 'stolen' identity and asserting a sense of self-reclamation. In his linguistic revolt, Karen Hui suggests, "Caliban rejects his given, "slave"

[170] Rex Gibson, *Cambridge Student Guide to The Tempest* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 74.
[171] William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Peter Holland (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), Act 1. Scene 2. Line 320.
[172] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction,* 42.
[173] Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act 1. Scene 2. Line 364.
[174] Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest,* trans. Richard Miller (New York: Ubu Repertory Theater Publications, 1992), 15.

name, calling it an "insult" every time it is said. For Caliban, "X" is his attempt to recreate himself in his own terms, that beyond an idea of freedom, is to create agency for himself."[175] Thus, rather than showing Shakespeare's subservient and submissive Caliban, Césaire represents the character in a revolutionary mode, serving as an exemplary figure of decolonization and the assertion of the need for a postcolonial cultural identity in the face of colonial cultural oppression.

Another prominent example of postcolonial drama is *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976), a play co-authored by the two Kenyan authors Ngugi wa Thiongo and Micere Githae Mugo. The play revolves around the trial of Dedan Kimathi, the celebrated Kenyan hero who led the Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule in Kenya during the 1950s. As C. L. Innes argues, " this play sought to overturn the representation of the Mau Mau leader Kimathi as merely crazed and brutal in Kenneth Watene's 1974 play of the same name."[176] Indeed, the life of Kimathi has been the subject of colonial misrepresentation, which depicted him as a terrorist and lunatic person seeking to achieve personal interests. However, from a Kenyan perspective, Kimathi was regarded as a national hero and a highly respected figure of resistance who refused the constraints of British colonialism and their version of Kenyan history, which, Oyeniyi Okunoye argues, "presents Kimathi…as a villain, whereas he was and remains a hero to the Kenyan masses."[177]

Therefore, the work of Thiongo and Mugo sought to recreate the history of the national leader as "a man committed to the freedom of his country and his people, the courageous hero of folk memory."[178] Although the play offers a subtle critique of Kenyan society in certain aspects, it stands as a tool for reconstructing Kenyan history, a history that has been colonized and misrepresented by colonial literature, especially when depicting native Kenyans who fought for the independence of their country. The importance of this play lies in its ability to perform historical revisionism and ignite national consciousness, offering a model for postcolonial authors who "are often confronted with the task of redefining the identity of their people with the intention of interrogating their misrepresentation."[179] In fact, works such as *A Tempest* and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* offer a dramatic resistance, which Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965), advocates over novels and poetry as the primary tools for igniting the spirit of national consciousness, especially when dealing with anticolonial struggle. However, is essential to mention that the above-discussed examples are not exhaustive representations of postcolonial drama and that they do not negate the significance of other relevant works in the field, which cannot all be highlighted for the sake of brevity and focus of our present discussion. Indeed, works such as W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*

---

[175] Karen Hui, "Call me X: Post-Colonialism and Resistance in Aime Cesaire's A Tempest" Word Press, March 8, 2016, https://karenhui.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/call-me-x-post-colonialism-and-resistance-in-aime-cesaires-a-tempest/ (accessed Nov 17, 2023).

[176] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in* English , 26.

[177] Oyeniyi Okunoye, "Dramatizing Postcoloniality: Nationalism and the Rewriting of History in Ngugi and Mugo's The Trial of Dedan Kimathi," *History in Africa* 28 (2001): 230, doi:10.2307/3172216.

[178] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in* English , 26.

[179] Oyeniyi Okunoye, "Dramatizing Postcoloniality: Nationalism and the Rewriting, 237.

(1975), Ngugi wa Thiongo's *The Black Hermit* (1962), Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970), and Brian Friel's *Translations* (1980), among others, further exemplify the diverse range of perspectives and styles within postcolonial dramatic literature.

Now, as the discussion shifts from postcolonial drama to postcolonial novels, the examples that will be given will also continue to highlight the theme of challenging colonialism in various ways. While postcolonial drama offers a space for dramatic resistance, postcolonial novels emerge with a larger narrative canvas, addressing the issues of character development, psychoanalysis, and the depiction of colonial encounters and postcolonial communities. Due to their capacity for more extensive exploration, postcolonial novels offer a larger space for exploring the anti-colonial struggle, modes of resistance, historical revisionism, and narrative autobiographical annexations, especially when attempting to capture both the colonial and postcolonial experiences.

In the African context, for example, it is crucial to recognize how representations of Africa and Africans in colonial literature, as explored in Chapter One, were predominantly rooted in a Eurocentric and ethnocentric perspective that characterized African societies as barbaric, primitive, and inferior. Colonial literature, including the works of Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Joseph Conrad, among others, often neglected, and even denied, the existence of any cultural, religious, or social norms in Africa. This Eurocentric and ethnocentric discourse on Africa was disseminated and circulated as essential knowledge and facts that formed the imposed reality of African peoples among international, especially Western, readership.

In this respect, there was a pressing need for postcolonial African writers to formulate a counter-discourse that aimed at revealing the falsified truths about Africa as well as restoring the African dignity that was misrepresented, undervalued, and falsified by colonial literary discourse. Postcolonial African writers aimed at restoring African autonomy in different facets, including culture, social traditions, religion, civilization, language, and all other possible manifestations that countered colonial misrepresentations. In describing the counter-discursive nature of postcolonial African novels, Ayobami Kehinde writes

> Post-colonial African novels have become veritable weapons used to dismantle the hegemonic boundaries and determinants that create unequal relations of power, based on binary oppositions such as Us and Them, First World and Third World, White and Black, Colonizer and Colonized, etc. Actually, the African novel occupies a central position in the criticism of colonial portrayals of the African continent and people. It has been crossing boundaries and assaulting walls imposed by history upon the horizon of the continent whose aspirations it has been striving to articulate.[180]

The importance of postcolonial African novels as a counter-discursive practice, particularly in comparison to drama and poetry, lies in their ability and capacity for expansive narrative exploration. Such novels paved the way for postcolonial African writers to reform, re-form,

[180] Ayobami Kehinde, "Post-colonial African Literature as Counter-discourse: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Reworking of the Canon," *Ufahamu* 32 (2006): 92.

and retell their own stories and histories using their own voices—the voices of African subjects that were once marginalized and neglected. The medium of the novel, Schipper writes, " proved very suitable to the needs of African writers who wanted to address colonial reality as they have experienced it."[181]

In the realm of postcolonial novels, *Our Sister Killjoy: or Reflections from a Black-eyed Squint* (1977) by the Ghanaian author and poet Ama Ata Aidoo offers a compelling example of antithetical postcolonial novels and the ways in which literature navigates and provides modes of resisting and challenging colonialism. Aidoo's work can be viewed as one of the postcolonial responses to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, for the novel depicts the journey of Sissie, a Ghanaian woman, into the heart of Europe. While Conrad's Marlow travel to Africa to explore the 'heart of darkness', Aidoo replaces Conrad's protagonist with Sissie, who visits multiple European locations including Germany, England, and Switzerland to explore and expose the 'heart of Whiteness'.[182] Through Sissie's journey, Innes argues, Aidoo "shares…a commitment to changing and redeeming Africa, a change which can be brought about in part through narration and the retelling of history."[183] First and foremost, Aidoo employs her narrative structure as a form of decolonization; her choice of blending the genres of poetry and prose into a single work challenges Western narrative conventions in a way that decolonizes literature from Western hegemonies. Another example of literary decolonization, according to C.L. Innes, is the way Aidoo replaces the univocal male narrative of Marlow with the multivocal female narrative of Sissie, using a series of dialogues and debates between the protagonist and other characters.[184]

Aidoo challenges the Eurocentric view and representation of Africa as a place of chaos and Africans as barbaric and ignorant. In other words, Aidoo criticizes the discourse of Orientalism, which represents the Europeans as educated and all-knowing while, on the other hand, depicts Africans, the Orient, as passive, uneducated, and lacking the very initial principles of culture. This idea is exemplified in a conversation between Sissie and one of her German friends, named Marija, in which Marija shows her ignorance of geographical knowledge by asking Sissie whether Ghana is near Canada and later pronouncing the name of the Ghanaian president as "Nukurumah." In this respect, Wesley Macheso argues that "By exposing Marija's lack of knowledge in geography, Aidoo challenges the discourse of Orientalism by showing that the supposed knowledge about the Orient generated by the Occident is a farce since the colonizers cannot even locate some of the lands they dominated on the map."[185]

---

[181] Minneke Schipper, *Imagining Insiders: Africa and the Question of Belonging* (London: Cassell, 1999), 37-38.
[182] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, 49.
[183] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, 48.
[184] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*, 49.

[185] Wesley Macheso, "The African Novel as a Strategy for Decolonization in Ama Ata Aidoo's 'Our Sister Killjoy'" African Writer Magazine, November 9, 2015 https://www.africanwriter.com/the-african-novel-as-a-strategy-for-decolonization-in-ama-ata-aidoos-our-sister-killjoy/ (accessed Nov 20, 2023).

Additionally, Aidoo implicitly criticizes the practices of Africans and their futile lives in Europe, suggesting that the lives of African immigrants there can be summarized as "running very fast just to remain where they are" and that "in a cold land, poverty shows as nowhere else." Aidoo adds to her criticism that the Africans adulation of Europeans and idolization of Europe in general would only result in bad consequences, suggesting that "for the slave , there is nothing at the centre but worse slavery."[186] However, it is through Sissie's journey that Aidoo unravels the myth of Europe as the utopian land of opportunities. Aidoo depicts the coldness of Europe as engulfing each and every part of life, including relationships, food, life, and weather, wondering why Africans would leave Africa for such a cold and dull place. Thus, Aidoo uses the novel as an active mode of decolonization, for she resists and subverts colonial and imperial biases through asserting and defending her difference and autonomy. In other words, Macheso argues, "Aidoo reverses the Western conception of Africa as a land of darkness and death by presenting Europe as a land of dead things."[187]

Similarly, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) by the South African author J. M. Coetzee stands as another prominent example of postcolonial literature that serves the theme of resisting colonialism and colonial narratives. While Aidoo navigates postcolonial themes through exploring the 'heart of Whiteness', challenging the discourse on Orientalism, and employing narrative structure as a mode of resistance, J. M. Coetzee takes a different yet equally important approach to challenging the colonial project. In his novel, Coetzee employs the character of the magistrate as a lens through which he criticizes colonialism, referred to as 'Empire', from within. While the novel is not explicitly set in South Africa, Dominic Head argues that the novel portrays obvious allusions to the South African apartheid during the 1980s.[188] The universal allegory of the novel can be seen in the setting, where the events take place in one part of 'Empire' and here, Head argues, "The omission of the definite article is one of the features that help cultivate the air of a universal allegory: 'Empire' seems to represent imperialism *per se*."[189]

Coetzee criticizes colonial oppression through the personal, yet painful, awakening of an unnamed magistrate, who ultimately rejects the colonial project, declaring, "I wanted to live outside history. I wanted to live outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects. I never wished it for the barbarians that they should have the history of Empire laid upon them."[190] The magistrate is supposed to be a representative of 'Empire'; however, when his deeds and desires contradict with those of Empire, he experiences the true nature of the colonial project through torture, oppression, and humiliation. As the novel unfolds, readers are introduced to the character of Colonel Joll, a narcissistic and ruthless colonial administrator who is in control of Empire and is interrogating and torturing the

---

[186] Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy* (Harlow: Longman, 1977) , 88-89.

[187] Wesley Macheso, "The African Novel as a Strategy for Decolonization in Ama Ata Aidoo's 'Our Sister Killjoy'"

[188] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 48.

[189] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 48.

[190] J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Vintage Books, 1980), 169.

'barbarian' natives based on news that they will launch an attack against Empire. The magistrate's defiance of Empire's orders represents resistance from within, for the magistrate, being a representative of colonial power, refuses to participate in torturing the 'barbarians' yet he even helps a barbarian girl take her back to her family after being brutally tortured, an act for which he receives severe humiliation and torture. In this regard, Head argues

> While Colonel Joll is waiting for the barbarian other, however, the magistrate has been waiting for a different manifestation of barbarism. Where Joll…needs to discover barbarians to validate his mission and the existence of Empire, the magistrate finds barbarism in the activities of Joll…for him, the waiting has been for the true nature of Empire to be revealed and, following the revelation, he begins the difficult process of disentangling himself from its ideological control.[191]

It is through the magistrate's moral evolution and revolution that Coetzee criticizes the assumptions, practices, and justifications of colonial rule in South Africa, for, Head asserts, "it is impossible not to agree with David Attwell, that Coetzee's Empire is a parody of the apartheid regime, in its paranoia and attempted control of history."[192] Therefore, Coetzee's revolutionary resistance to colonial domination lies not only in his criticism of colonial practices but also in his use of a seemingly colonial figure to expose the inherent brutality and immorality of the colonial project. Although *Waiting for the Barbarians* would have offered a significant area for further analysis in this dissertation, it was not included among the selected novels of Coetzee because this study is mainly directed at examining the regeneration of Black identity through the body, as well as resisting the Western literary canon through intertextuality and rewriting canonical literary genres. While *Waiting for the Barbarians* explores themes of colonial violence and questions the issue of complicity under colonial rule, it does not represent the Black body as a site for reconstructing a postcolonial identity, nor does it attempt to engage with or subvert canonical literary genres such as picaresque and adventure narratives.

In the expansive realm of postcolonial novels, numerous other works emerge as compelling antitheses, challenging entrenched colonial narratives and offering alternative perspectives. Noteworthy among such works are Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Tayeb Salih's *Seasons of Migration to the North* (1966), Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), and Ngugi wa Thiongo's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), among others. These works collectively serve as a powerful instrument in deconstructing the narratives propagated by colonial literature and emerge as voices that speak for the oppressed and colonized communities, resisting, critiquing, and reimagining the historical and cultural dimensions often misrepresented in colonial literary discourses. In other words, while postcolonial novels offer a reevaluation of literature, they do transcend the literary realm, offering a medium for preserving and

[191] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 50.
[192] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 50.

transmitting cultural heritages, thus becoming essential instruments for shaping the collective consciousness of postcolonial communities.

2.4. Chinua Achebe: Engendering Postcolonial African Literature

This subchapter aims to highlight Chinua Achebe's pivotal role in reshaping the landscape of postcolonial African literature. It examines his profound influence on African literary evolution, evident in literary portrayals that navigate the complexities of postcolonial African societies. Starting with a brief biography that underscores the literary, social, political, and linguistic influences he experienced under British colonialism, the subsequent portions will investigate Achebe's oeuvre while devoting special attention to *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964). Through this thorough examination, this subchapter will attempt to provide a clearer picture of Achebe's literary contributions to the advancement of African literature within both the African and international landscapes. Additionally, it aims to explore the role Achebe played in elevating African literature to a globally esteemed platform.

Chinua Achebe was born into an Igbo family on November 16, 1930, in Ogidi, located in what is now eastern Nigeria. It is noteworthy that Achebe's birth occurred when Nigeria was under British colonial rule and when Christian missionaries were actively spreading Christianity across the country. This interplay between traditional Igbo culture, colonialism, and Christianity is crucial to understanding the cultural clashes, identity struggles, and literary orientations that shaped Achebe during his early years. While Achebe's father later abandoned Igbo religious traditions and converted to Christianity, Achebe's rootedness in Igbo culture and traditions can be detected through the name he was given and the name that he chose to be identified with, for although he was christened Albert Chinualumogu Achebe, where 'Chinualumogu' means "May God fight on my behalf", Achebe chose to be referred to by his Igbo name, Chinua Achebe, in both personal and professional contexts, showing an innate desire to embrace and celebrate his cultural identity.[193]

Since Nigeria was under British colonial rule, Achebe's early education in Ogidi primarily took place in church schools, where children were forbidden to speak Igbo. Thus, Achebe grew up absorbing and learning the language of the colonial ruler rather than his native Igbo language, an issue that ultimately shaped his formative years through the cultural, linguistic, and political dynamics of colonial rule. During his early years, Achebe witnessed firsthand the cultural and religious clash between his indigenous Igbo culture and the cultural values imposed by the colonizer. The imposition of British colonial rule exerted a profound influence on traditional Igbo traditions, customs, beliefs, and social structures, thus leading to the dismantling of established social and religious systems that had previously defined and preserved the fabric of Igbo society. However, Achebe persisted in his fascination for the Igbo culture and traditions despite being exposed to and immersed in the English language and Western education. In describing the Igbo-Christian dichotomy that he lived through and how he was more apt to embrace his Igbo roots, Achebe writes

[193] Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), 7.

> We lived at the crossroads of cultures. We still do today; but when I was a boy one could see and sense the peculiar quality and atmosphere of it more clearly . . . On one arm of the cross we sang hymns and read the Bible night and day. On the other my father's brother and his family, blinded by heathenism, offered food to idols . . . What I do remember is a fascination for the ritual and the life on the other arm of the crossroads.[194]

Due to his excellence in all subjects, Achebe was later awarded a scholarship to study at the Government College in Umuahia. Subsequently, he received another scholarship at the University College of Ibadan (now the University of Ibadan), from which he graduated in 1953 with a degree in English literature, religious studies, and history.[195] Following graduation, Achebe worked as a teacher for a short period before becoming an editor for the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1967. However, during his studies, Achebe engaged with Western modes of education as well as Western literary traditions and critical thinking, especially in the English literature courses he attended, which exposed him to the works of eminent European and American literary figures, including Joseph Conrad, John Milton, Daniel Defoe, William Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Ernest Hemingway, to name a few. However, what deeply affected Achebe's literary motifs were the novels that misrepresented and dehumanized the African continent and its people, especially the African-related novels of Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene, and Joyce Cary.[196]

Although Achebe was a remarkable student, he did not discern any dehumanizing or ethnocentric tendencies in colonial literature during his schooling days at Umuahia Government College, an institution entirely operated by English colonial personnel. His readings of the texts were still neutral and uncritical, despite the fact that such texts were extremely racist and portrayed Africa and Africans in a degrading manner. Describing his literary naivety and impersonal approach towards colonial texts, Achebe explains

> I took sides with the whitemen against the savages. In other words I went through my first level of schooling thinking I was of the party of the white man in his hair-raising adventures and narrow escapes. The white man was good and reasonable and intelligent and courageous. The savages arrayed against him were sinister and stupid or, at the most, cunning. I hated their guts.[197]

While Achebe's encounter with colonial literature can be described as innocent, such innocence was later transformed into a powerful counter-discourse with which Achebe challenged and responded to colonial tendencies projected in such literature. Reflecting on

---

[194] Chinua Achebe, "Named for Victoria, Queen of England," in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, (New York : Anchor Books, 1976), 98-99.
[195] David Whittaker and Mpalive- Hangson Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 4.
[196] Whittaker and Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, 4.
[197] Chinua Achebe, 'African literature as restoration of celebration', in Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford, eds, *Chinua Achebe: A Celebration* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books, 1991), 7, as cited in Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), 27.

the journey of his literary maturity, Achebe argues that his engagement with different colonial texts "all added up to a wonderful preparation for the day we would be old enough to read between the lines and ask questions."[198] What can be described as Achebe's literary maturity started at the University College of Ibadan, more specifically, in the Department of English, when Achebe was attending lectures related to Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939). Cary's colonial approach towards Africa began to be felt by Achebe, who "was one of the students who realized that there could be misjudgment and even straightforward discrimination and distortion."[199] It is at this point that Achebe developed his ability to read between the lines, for stories such as Cary's were no longer perceived with the same innocence projected during secondary school; an innocence that started to fade when Achebe began to discern the biased stances conveyed in the stories he read.[200] Achebe's literary mentality was deeply shaped by the colonial educational system at the University College of Ibadan, where, apart from the curriculum he studied, he experienced several other attitudes where colonial facets were tangible. For example, Achebe recalls a meeting with the vice-principal, who disrespectfully addresses Achebe, saying, "I am an Englishman, you see. You are African, you know…We cannot teach you how to manage your affairs. We are not experts in African religion or anything. We may not be able to teach you what you want or even what you need. We can only teach you what we know."[201] For Achebe, this situation was exemplary of true colonial speech, where the colonial mindset was laid bare and exposed him to the prejudices as well as the evils of the colonial educational system in Nigeria.

Another major influence on Achebe's literary themes was the Nigeria-Biafra War, also known as the Nigerian Civil War. Following independence in 1960, the situation in Nigeria was marked by ethnic and regional tensions as well as political instability featuring multiple coups and counter-coups, which eventually broke into what was known as the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) that occurred between the secessionist state of Biafra and the Nigerian federal government. The state of Biafra was predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethic group, which, facing marginalization and economic inequality compared to other ethnicities, declared Biafra an independent state. In his part, Achebe, being rooted in and supportive of the Igbo community, first supported the Biafrans call for independence and acted as a cultural ambassador between the two conflicting governments. The war was catastrophic, leading to famines, mass destruction, the spread of diseases, and the deaths of more than three million Biafrans. However, having personally lived the repercussions of war and ultimately discovered that such a conflict was based on personal interests rather than national or collective ones, Achebe regretted his sojourn in politics, a period that he describes as "marked by disappointment, frustration, and the realization that . . . the vast majority of the

[198] Chinua Achebe, 'African literature as restoration of celebration', 7, as cited in Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*, 27.
[199] Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*, 44.
[200] Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*, 44.
[201] Robert Wren, *Those Magical Years* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1991), 69, as cited in Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), 44.

character I encountered in the political circles were there for their own selfish advancement."[202]

Achebe's literary career finds its roots in the year 1950 at Ibadan University College, where he published an essay titled "Polar Undergraduate" in the *University Herald*, a university-sponsored magazine. Blending elements of both essay and story, "Polar Undergraduate" highlights Achebe's ironic style of writing as it features the lives of a group of notorious undergraduate students and ultimately exhibits Achebe's excellent observational skills.[203] However, by 1951, Achebe's writing skills were enhanced, and thus he started to produce literary pieces that marked a division between normal essays and creative works. This transition was marked by the publication of "Philosophy," an essay published in a campus magazine named *The Bug*, as well as the publication of "Argument Against the Existence of Faculties," published in the *University Herald.*[204] However, Achebe further broadened his literary scope and ventured into the realms of short stories and poetry. In 1951, he authored a short story entitled "In a Village Church" as well as a poem titled "There Was a Young Man in Our Hall" both of which were published in the *University Herald*. The diversification of genres evident in Achebe's literary pursuits highlighted not only his literary versatility but also his adeptness in experimenting with different techniques and thematic concerns, an issue that foreshadowed Achebe's distinctive literary sensibility that was evolving within the African literary landscape.

2.4.1 A Literary Rebellion: *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964)

Although Achebe had already established himself in the literary field as a promising writer during the early 1950s, it was not until 1958 that the publication of his magnum opus and first debut novel, *Things Fall Apart*, elevated his literary rankings to world-class levels and honorably introduced Achebe to the galaxy of the 20th century's most eminent authors in the field of Nigerian and African literature. During his visit to London to attend a course at the BBC, Achebe's manuscript came into the hands of the novelist and literary critic George Phelps, who served as one of Achebe's course tutors and who, upon recognizing the exceptional quality and uniqueness of Achebe's writing, recommended the novel for publication.[205]

Set in pre-colonial Nigeria during the late 19th century, *Things Fall Apart* depicts the lives, traditions, and customs of the fictional Igbo clan of Umuofia, featuring the dynamics and cultural richness of this community before the arrival of British colonialism. The central focus of the novel revolves around the transformation that occurs in the life of the protagonist, Okonkwo, who is the leader of the fictional Igbo clan of Umuofia, and how the advent of colonial rule ultimately reshapes the village, including its already established social norms, cultural traditions, and religious beliefs. Achebe divides the novel into a tripartite

[202] Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 244.
[203] Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*, 40
[204] Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*, 40.
[205] Whittaker and Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, 4.

structure, where Part One is the longest with thirteen chapters through which Achebe introduces readers to the traditions, customs, and culture of Umuofian society as well as the place of Okonkwo in his clan before the arrival of colonialism until his exile from the village, setting the stage for the change that will unfold. Part two of the novel continues to explore Okonkwo's life in exile and sets the stage for the early presence of the white man in the village of Umuofia and the cultural clashes that such a presence brings to the village's traditional ways of life. However, Part Three brings the narrative to a climax, highlighting the return of Okonkwo from exile and the changes that were implemented due to the presence of European colonizers. It also features the first instance of a clash between the people of Umuofia and Christian missionaries, while also showing Okonkwo's revolutionary behaviour, disappointment, and demise.

The revolutionary aspect of *Things Fall Apart* lies in its profound challenge to Western colonial narratives that feature representations of Africa and Africans. Through this novel, Achebe provides a complex depiction of the traditional life of Igbo society before the arrival of colonialism, highlighting the complex structure of Igbo cultural traditions, customs, and social norms. Achebe challenges colonial narratives and stereotypes prevalent in Western literature, with the main aim of showing that Africans "did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; …[they] had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity."[206] By placing African culture at the forefront, Achebe challenges the one-dimensional Eurocentric narratives that accept neither interrogation nor falsification and reclaims the narrative authority that had always been denied to Africans for expressing a true and realistic version of their cultures and societies. In other words, Jay Lynn argues, "Achebe interrupts the encoding of power that supported colonialism and other forms of Western cultural domination in Africa."[207]

However, although Achebe critiques and challenges colonial portrayals of pre-colonial African societies, he simultaneously avoids romanticized descriptions that idealize Igbo society, recognizing the importance of refraining from presenting an overly positive view. In his depiction of Umuofia, Achebe utilizes the village as a microcosm to represent the broader African, and more specifically, Nigerian context. Therefore, Achebe assumes a sort of national obligation that, as a writer, demands he address the defects and pitfalls that endanger the social fabric of the Igbo society. In this regard, Whittaker and Hangson Msiska argue, "Achebe's significant achievements in the novel is the way he succeeds in depicting Umuofia as a vibrant and sophisticated society, with its own complex culture and elaborate moral and ethical codes, while never succumbing to a desire to portray it as an idyllic pre-colonial utopia."[208]

What is remarkable about Achebe's novel is that it offers a look from the inside, from the interior of the colony that has always been (mis)represented by others and spoke for on its behalf. In other words, Achebe approaches the project of rewriting colonial history, which has been shaped by biased colonial texts, using a purely African perspective of

[206] Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," 8.
[207] Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2.
[208] Whittaker and Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, xii.

representation. In doing so, he offers a completely different image of Africa that opposes, challenges, and deconstructs the preconceived image of African barbarism, primitiveness, and total absence of cultural and civilizational traces. In an interview, Achebe clearly projects his literary approach to redefining colonial history

> One big message, of the many that I try to put across, is that Africa was not a vacuum before the coming of Europe, that culture was not unknown in Africa, that culture was not brought to Africa by the white world…[Europeans] came to Africa and said, "You have no history, you have no civilization, you have no culture, you have no religion. You are lucky we are here. Now you are hearing about these things from us for the first time." Well, you know, we didn't just drop from the sky. We too had our own history, traditions, cultures, civilizations. It is not possible for one culture to come to another and say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; there is nothing else but me." If you say this, you are guilty of irreverence or arrogance. You are also stupid. And this is really my concern.[209]

To be more precise, Achebe wrote this novel in response to two influential works that depicted Africa from a Eurocentric and ethnocentric perspective: Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Cary tells the story of a young Nigerian who has a deep affection for the colonial District Commissioner and always aspires to be like the British, especially when wearing Western clothes and trying to force his young bride to do the same. Cary represents Mister Johnson as a character eager to embrace British colonial traditions even at the expense of his own identity, for his imitation and cultural hybridity degrade him to the level of naivety and comical imitation, thus reinforcing Eurocentric notions of the primitive African who has no culture, no customs, and no identity to embrace. Indeed, what actually provoked Achebe was that Cary was an alien to Africa and had never stepped a foot on the continent; thus, Achebe found Cary's portrayal of Africa rather "inauthentic and thus helped motivate [Achebe]… to portray his native land "from the inside" and "to show what was false" in European representations of Africa."[210] Unlike the one-dimensional representation of Mister Johnson, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* depicts the complex and multifaceted nature of the characters, highlighting a more complex image of African society. This idea is evident in the portrayal of Okonkwo, who is depicted as a multifaceted character, courageous, ambitious, resilient, and strong-willed, while at the same time showing traits of violence, impatience, arrogance, and stubbornness.

Similarly, Achebe's novel is largely considered a response to the racist and colonial tendencies of Joseph Conrad that he depicts in his *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Indeed, Achebe dedicated a full essay entitled "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (1977), in which he critiques colonial misrepresentations of Africa and Africans and

---

[209] Chinua Achebe, as cited in Bernth Lindfors, Ian Munro, Richard Priebe and Reinhard Sander, eds., *Palaver; interviews with five African writers in Texas: Chinua Achebe, John Pepper Clark, Dennis Brutus, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Kofi Awoonor* (Austin: African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin, 1972), 153.

[210] Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe*, 108.

ultimately declares that Conrad is a "thoroughgoing racist."[211] Achebe criticizes Conrad's novel, suggesting that it "projects the image of Africa as 'the other world', the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality."[212] Achebe refers to a certain passage in the novel, where Conrad through his protagonist Marlow, describes the first colonial encounter with the African natives. In this passage, Marlow depicts the settings and the natives using phrases such as "prehistoric earth," "prehistoric man," "unknown planet," "a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling," "madhouse," "this suspicion of their not being inhuman," and finally describing the whole situation as an "incomprehensible frenzy."[213] For Achebe, such a racist and biased depiction becomes representative of the concept of darkness that inhabits Western minds in relation to Africa. Additionally, Achebe extends his criticism of Conrad's dehumanization of Africans in his denial of giving them a voice or the ability to speak. In *Heart of Darkness*, what Marlow perceives from African characters is neither words nor proper speech, but a "violent babble of uncouth sounds" and "short, grunting phrases."[214] It is this linguistic denial and characterization that Achebe attempts to resist in *Things Fall Apart*, shedding light on the broader issue of marginalizing African voices in colonial literature.

In response to the Conradian version of Africa, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* attempts to provide a counter-narrative that profoundly rewrites and questions Eurocentric representations. Indeed, much of Part One in Achebe's novel is dedicated to depict the everyday lives of Igbo society, highlighting their traditions, customs, celebrations, and dialogues. Emphasizing the richness and complexity of Igbo culture presented in Part One, Abdul JanMohamed observes, "Out of the one-hundred-and-eighteen pages that comprise part one of the novel only about eight are devoted, strictly speaking, to the development of the plot."[215] It is through Part One that Achebe depicts the vibrancy and cultural richness of the Igbo society including funerals, wrestling matches, ceremonies, rituals, and other events that provide readers with a clear understanding of the culture that produced Okonkwo and the social, political, religious, and other influences that shaped his destiny. In other words, Achebe's opening part attempts to restore the dignity and self-respect of African people by dismantling and subverting the racial codes of Conrad's text.[216] Thus, the significance of such a lengthy description of Igbo society is the literary and historical space it offers and through which Achebe attempts to convey an authentic, counter-Conradian, and anti-Eurocentric portrayal. In this endeavor, Achebe assumes the dual role of a patriotic Nigerian and an author who, as Whittaker and Msiska assert," is primarily concerned with the restoration of

---

[211] Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Heart of Darkness," in *Postcolonial Criticism*, ed. Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton, and Willy Maley (New York: Routledge, 2013), 119.
[212] Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa", 114.
[213] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*. Edited by Robert Hampson and Owen Knowles.(London: Penguin Classics, 2007), 57-58.
[214] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 28-65.
[215] Abdul R. JanMohamed, "Sophisticated Primitivism: The Syncretism of Oral and Literate Modes in Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*"." *Ariel-a Review of International English Literature* 15 (1984): 31.
[216] Whittaker and Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's,* 107.

humanity to African society through the recreation of pre-colonial social, political, and religious institutions."[217]

In fact, Chinua Achebe did not hold the distinction of being the first West African author to write a novel in English, for the first modern novel in West Africa written in English was *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town* (1952) by the Nigerian author Amos Tutuola. However, Whittaker and Msiska argue, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is widely accepted and discussed as the first African novel that 'writes back' to the empire or the colonial center, challenging and subverting colonial discourses within the literary framework of the African Anglophone novel.[218] Therefore, Achebe's deliberate choice of confronting and challenging colonial representations can be seen as a catalyst for reshaping the African literary landscape, establishing a literary role model for subsequent African writers who endeavor to rewrite their histories and reclaim their stolen voices and stories.

Having highlighted the thematic layers of Achebe's interest in the revival of native cultures and the deconstruction of colonial perspectives, his style of literary resistance extends seamlessly to his third novel, *Arrow of God* (1964), in which Achebe maintains a sort of thematic continuity by re-exploring features, themes, and settings akin to those present in *Things Fall Apart*. *Arrow of God* similarly explores the interplay between tradition and external colonial pressure, between continuity and change, offering a precise examination of the effects that colonialism had on native Igbo communities. These two novels, with *No Longer at Ease* (1960) positioned between these two seminal works and set in the late colonial period during the 1950s, form what is known as Achebe's *African Trilogy*. Together, these three novels offer a comprehensive depiction of colonialism in its various manifestations, capturing the rhythms of African indigenous communities as well as the effects that British colonialism exerted on the dynamics of Nigerian society in various historical settings.

Sharing similar settings with his first novel, Achebe's *Arrow of God* is set in Nigeria during the British colonial period and highlights the lives and times of an Igbo community inhabiting the fictional village of Umuaro. The novel is divided into nineteen chapters and centers around the character Ezeulu, the chief priest of god Ulu, following his life and struggles within his own community as he navigates the complex outcomes of colonialism and the cultural clashes it imposes on the village of Umuaro. Also, similar to *Things Fall Apart*, the novel depicts the traditional life of an Igbo society before the arrival of colonial influences, immersing the reader in a community deeply rooted in their religious practices and customs, where the role of Ezeulu is presented as the spiritual pillar holding the fabric of the community. However, the novel opens with a depiction of a conflict between Ezeulu's village and a village named Okperi, an internal conflict that immediately ends with an external colonial intervention. Subsequently, the religious peacefulness in the village is interrupted

[217] Whittaker and Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's*, 107.
[218] Whittaker and Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's*, 21.

with the arrival of Christian missionaries, attempting to convert people to Christianity, an act that is followed by colonial attempts to enact indirect rule in the village.

Much like *Things Fall Apart* but with even greater intensity, Achebe in this novel lays heavy emphasis on the infighting and internal conflicts within the Igbo community as well as the rivalry between different priests in the village, an issue that C. L. Innes views as one of the main differences between the novels, for "the stress on complex relationships and rivalries, the jealous concern for status…influences almost every social contact in *Arrow of God.*"[219] However, similar to the dramatic change that takes place after Okonkwo's return from exile, *Arrow of God* highlights the upheaval following Ezeulu's release from prison, including his rejection to call the New Yam Feast—an issue that Christian missionaries take advantage of by approaching more Igbo followers. In parallel to the downfall of Okonkwo depicted in the concluding part of *Things Fall Apart*, the novel depicts the deterioration of Ezeulu's mental status and spiritual position, for he loses his religious and spiritual standing in the village along with falling into madness after the death of his son.

This downfall of both protagonists, who are not only the main characters but are also the representatives and leaders of their clans, urges scholars and critics to consider the two novels as representatives of the tragic consequences and traumatic experiences of colonialism. In this regard, Abiola Irele argues

> The immediate subject of Chinua Achebe's novels is the tragic consequences of the African encounter with Europe–this is a theme he has made inimitably his own. His novels deal with the social and psychological conflicts created by the incursion of the white man and his culture into the hitherto self-contained world of African society, and the disarray in the African consciousness that has followed.[220]

Although Achebe stresses the "tragic consequence" of colonialism and its impact on African natives, he interestingly utilizes these consequences to highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of Africans, challenging colonial stereotypes of naivety and simplicity while simultaneously underscoring the need to address and clarify the downfalls of African communities. In this respect, *Arrow of God* shares another similarity with *Things Fall Apart* in terms of character portrayal. For example, the multifaceted nature of Okonkwo's character and the complex characterization of his virtues and flaws can also be traced in Achebe's depiction of Ezeulu. Despite the undeniable spiritual dedication, courage, and commitment to tradition, Ezeulu, Ibe Nwoga argues, " is not a likable man… He manifests in his public conduct a proud confidence in his self-justified opinions…He also has impatience…that leads him to be harsh and unfair sometimes…He is certainly obsessed with the idea of leadership."[221] Additionally, the complex nature and depiction of Ezeulu led to various

---

[219] C. L. Innes, *Chinua Achebe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 71.
[220] Abiola Irele, "Chinua Achebe: The Tragic Conflict in his Novels," in *Introduction to African Literature*, eds. Ulli Beier (London: Longman, 1967), 167. As cited in Onyemuche Anele Ejesu, "Achebe's Arrow of God, the Anti-Promethean Figure and Lukács's Sociological Approach to Tragedy," *Okike: An African Journal Of New Writing*, no.52 (2014), 258.
[221] D. Ibe Nwoga, "The Igbo World of Achebe's 'Arrow of God.'" *Research in African Literatures* 12, no. 1 (1981), 27. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818550.

critical receptions of his character, especially concerning his refusal to call the New Yam feast. Addressing this concern, Onyemuche Ejesu contends that Ezeulu's contentious behavior sparked a spectrum of contrasting responses from critics, for "whereas Dabaleena Dutta would argue that Ezeulu's bringing of his people to ruin is not 'out of intentionality'… S. Syed Fagrutheen indicts him of a sort of intentional villainy."[222] Moreover, just like *Things Fall Apart* was studied and analyzed as a response to the simplistic and stereotypical portrayal of Africans in Cary's *Mister Johnson*, C. L. Innes argues that " *Arrow of God* can be seen as yet another response by Achebe to *Mister Johnson* and the literary and historical perspective it represents."[223] Thus, Achebe's craftsmanship and pioneering effort in postcolonial African literature can be traced through his portrayal of Okonkwo and Ezeulu, the protagonists, and, most importantly, African natives, who emerge as multidimensional figures challenging and deconstructing stereotypes prevalent in colonial depictions of indigenous African communities.

In the context of this dissertation, a comprehensive exploration of language-related aspects will be addressed in the following chapters, particularly those dedicated to the exploration of postcolonial African resistance and identity. Nevertheless, it is essential to briefly shed light on the linguistic texture that Achebe employs in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, where he creates a notable fusion of linguistic diversity, seamlessly blending together English, Igbo, and Nigerian Pidgin English, thus reflecting the complex socio-cultural reality of his Igbo community. As already indicated, Achebe was not the first African author to write in English; he was also not the first to employ Nigerian Pidgin English; however, Jay Lynn argues that "the literary quality, variety, and substantive implications of his use of Pidgin constitute one of the pioneering contributions in this area."[224] This linguistic amalgamation that Achebe projects in his works prompted the scholar Thomas Jay Lynn to argue that Achebe is "*Envisioning* [a] *Language*" that "implements a constructive dialogue between Igbo language traditions and literary English in varied ways."[225]

Achebe's literary oeuvre was not limited to the *African Trilogy*, for he also published several other influential works, including novels such as *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), children's books, namely *How the Leopard Got His Claws* (1972), *The Flute* (1977), and *The Drum* (1977). He also published and edited several non-fiction books, including *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1984), *Hopes and Impediments* (1988), and *Beyond Hunger in Africa: Conventional Wisdom and an African Vision (1991).* Achebe also entered the realm of short stories and published a prominent collection entitled *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972). Indeed, Achebe's full literary bibliography cannot be listed here for the sake of length and volume. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned works are provided to serve as a representative glimpse into the rich tapestry of Achebe's literary world and to highlight his profound impact on the postcolonial literary landscape in Africa. Achebe's literary role was even admitted and recognized by

[222] Onyemuche Anele Ejesu, "Achebe's Arrow of God, the Anti-Promethean Figure and Lukács's Sociological Approach to Tragedy," *Okike: An African Journal Of New Writing*, no.52 (2014), 259.
[223] C. L. Innes, *Chinua Achebe* , 64.
[224] Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics,* 99.
[225] Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics,* 2.

those who had some critical observations regarding his literature, notably Ngugi wa Thiongo, who, despite his criticism of Achebe's position on the English language, asserts that Achebe "was the single most important figure in the development of modern African literature as writer, editor and, quite simply, a human being… he embodied wisdom that comes from a commitment to the middle way between extremes. And, of course, courage in the face of personal tragedy!"[226] Ngugi's delineation of Achebe reflects the profound impact that Achebe had on African literature, an impact that was further supported and enriched by later literary scholars who characterized Achebe's body of work, especially *Things Fall Apart*, as "the progenitor of a whole movement in fiction, drama and poetry that focuses on the revaluation of traditional African cultures."[227]

In addition to his literary oeuvre, Achebe's editorial role in the African Writer Series (AWS) issued by Heinemann Educational Books in 1962 was central to elevating African literature. Found by Alan Hill and Van Milne, the first issue of the AWS featured four works, namely Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*, Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass*, and Kenneth Kaunda's *Zambia Shall Be Free*.[228] The series aimed at establishing a platform for publishing the works of African writers, allowing them to showcase their literary achievements and promote African literature on an international level.[229] Achebe was appointed as the series editor for a decade, where he, Alan Hill argues, had a crucial role in" identify[ing] good new authors for the series. His very presence was a magnet for would-be writers during the ten years of his editorship."[230] It is through the AWS that works by authors such as Ngugi wa Thiongo, Buchi Emecheta, and Wole Soyinka, among others, became accessible, thus contributing to the recognition, dissemination, and appreciation of various African literary voices on a global scale, depicting the vibrancy of African literature in the postcolonial era. Achebe's reputation as a father figure in African literature was not just limited to his ability to discover prominent authors but was clearly linked to his altruistic behavior towards the promotion of African literature, an initiative that Hill asserts by noting that during his tenure as the editor in the AWS, Achebe "did all this work for nothing. He did it for the good of African literature."[231]

2.5. The White Voice: J. M. Coetzee

This subchapter is intended to introduce John Maxwell Coetzee as one of the most prominent literary figures in the South African postcolonial landscape. It examines the intersection between Coetzee's literary themes and ethnic background within the broader scope of South African apartheid. After introducing his ethnic, educational, and political backgrounds, as well as a short overview of his major writings, this subchapter shifts its focus to Coetzee's novels *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986). Through this examination, the

[226] Ngugi wa Thiongo, as cited in Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 12.
[227] Whittaker and Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's*, xi.
[228] Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*, 92
[229] Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*, 92.
[230] Alan Hill, as cited in Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), 92.
[231] Alan Hill, as cited in Ezenwa Ohaeto, *Chinua Achebe: A Biography*, 93.

dissertation seeks to offer a clearer understanding of Coetzee's position as a liberal white literary figure in South Africa under apartheid regime. Moreover, we will endeavor to form a comprehensive image of his revolutionary role as exemplified in the themes and struggles he depicts in both novels.

The South African-Australian novelist John Maxwell Coetzee was born in Cape Town on February 9, 1940, a period when South Africa was still considered a colony under the reign of British colonial rule; thus, he grew up in a tumultuous historical period and witnessed firsthand the shades of colonial rule being intermixed with the rise of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Coetzee's family background had a profound influence on his social, linguistic, and literary preferences, for his father was of Dutch descent while his mother was of German and Polish ancestry, an issue that infused Coetzee's mind with a vibrant mixture of cultural backgrounds. However, what is interesting about Coetzee's family is that they spoke English at home while using Afrikaans as a medium of interaction with their relatives and other Afrikaners.[232] In other words, Coetzee's boyhood was dominated by cultural conflicts, deriving from his skin color and language use, as an English-speaking white South African, or more precisely, Afrikaner.

Coetzee completed his schooling in 1959 at St. Joseph's College in Rondebosch, one of the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. He then joined the University of Cape Town, where he studied English and mathematics and displayed remarkable excellence in his academic pursuits, receiving two B.A. degrees with honors, one in English in 1960 and another in mathematics in 1961. Upon his graduation, he moved to the United Kingdom and worked there as a computer programmer for four years. During his stay in the UK, Coetzee wrote a Master's thesis on the works of the English novelist Ford Madox Ford, for which he was awarded an MA degree by the University of Cape Town in 1963.[233] In 1965, Coetzee moved to the US, where he pursued his Ph.D. in literature and wrote his doctoral dissertation about the style of Samuel Beckett, receiving his doctoral degree in 1969. Following the rejection of his application for a residence permit in the US, which is partially due to his protest against the war in Vietnam, Coetzee returned back to South Africa in 1972, where he held a teaching position at the University of Cape Town and was promoted progressively until he attained a professor emeritus status in 2002 upon his retirement.[234] It was also in 2002 that Coetzee emigrated to Australia assuming the position of an honorary research fellow at the University of Adelaide. He obtained citizenship in 2006, and up to the time of writing this dissertation, Coetzee is still listed on the university's website under the position of 'University Professional Research Fellow' in the School of Humanities.[235] It is noteworthy to mention that details about Coetzee's private life are considered scarce, for he has maintained a considerable degree of privacy throughout his career, a preference that Dominic Head

[232] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 1.
[233] Dominic Head, *J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 1.
[234] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 2.
[235] "Professor John Coetzee." Staff Directory | Professor John Coetzee. Accessed December 20, 2023. https://www.adelaide.edu.au/directory/john.coetzee.

ascribes to the fact that "Coetzee is a very private person, who has a reputation for being unforthcoming with interviewers."[236]

It was in the late 1960s that Coetzee began his journey of writing novels, and his literary pursuits extended to encompass autobiographical fiction, short stories, and translations from Dutch and Afrikaans. Although this dissertation will focus on Coetzee the novelist, it is important to acknowledge that, as Head argues, Coetzee is "an accomplished essayist" who produced several essays distinctive by their elegance and fluidity and which cover a wide spectrum of contemporary concerns.[237] Coetzee's debut novel was *Dusklands* (1974), which is widely considered a milestone in the postmodern history of South African fiction.[238] He then published *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), for which he was awarded the CNA Prize, which was South Africa's then most prestigious literary award.[239] In 1980, he published *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the novel that marked the beginning of his global recognition. It was three years later when Coetzee published *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), the novel for which he received the Booker Prize and through which he confirmed his international craftsmanship in literature. Subsequently, he published *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), *Disgrace* (1999), for which he received his second Booker Prize, *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), the year in which he received the Nobel Prize in Literature, *Slow Man* (2005), *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), and most recently, *The Pole* (2023). Furthermore, Coetzee also wrote an autobiographical series of fictionalized memoirs titled "Scenes from Provincial Life," comprising four books, namely *Boyhood* (1977), *Youth* (2002), *Summertime* (2009), and *Scenes from Provincial Life* (2011). It is through this collection that Coetzee offers reflective narratives that shed light on his personal experiences and observations in both South Africa and London.

Coetzee's literary themes are heavily influenced by his question of literary and ethnic identity. Having lived and worked in South Africa under the apartheid regime for quite a long period, Coetzee absorbed the evils of apartheid and witnessed discriminatory practices that permeated the social structure of South Africa for over forty years. Being an English-speaking and liberal white South African, Coetzee was at the very same "crossroads of cultures" that Achebe experienced in Nigeria under British colonial rule. Indeed, the extent to which Coetzee considers himself an Afrikaner has shaped his literary identity. As John Gamgee observes, "Coetzee has always been suspicious or skeptical of belonging to a certain group that would limit his individual freedom."[240] Further, in an interview with David Atwell, Coetzee describes the complex situation of his identity

> No Afrikaner would consider me an Afrikaner. That, it seems to me, is the acid test for group membership, and I don't pass it. Why not? In the first place, because

[236] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 1.
[237] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, x.
[238] Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, 2.
[239] J. M. Coetzee, Biographical, Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2023, accessed December 21, 2023, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2003/coetzee/biographical/.
[240] John Gamgee, "The White Tribe: The Afrikaner in the Novels of J. M. Coetzee," in *Towards a Transcultural Future: Literature and Society in a 'Post'-Colonial World*, ed.Geoffrey V. Davis et al (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi BV, 2005), 69.

> English is my first language, and has been since childhood… In the second place, because I am not embedded in the culture of the Afrikaner …and have been shaped by that culture only in a perverse way.[241]

What is remarkable in Coetzee's words here is the double sense of rejection and complicity, the state of being "inside" and "outside" this metaphoric wall of apartheid. His desire to be completely detached from certain practices of Afrikaner community is evident in his denial of being "embedded" in Afrikaner culture. However, his sense of complicity, the sense that he always attempts, or wishes, to dismiss, emerges in the "perverse way" that Afrikaner culture has shaped his life. Additionally, John Gamgee skillfully highlights an extract from Coetzee's interviews with David Attwell, in which Coetzee shares additional information and preferences about his Afrikaner allegiance. Speaking about the idea of belonging, Coetzee wonders: "is it my heart's desire to be counted apart? Not really."[242] It is this "not really" or irresolution that Gamgee refers to as Coetzee's ambivalence in embracing personal and collective identity, a dilemma that he clarifies in his *Boyhood*.[243]

The ambivalent status of Coetzee's Afrikaner identity and how he is simultaneously "inside" and "outside" the walls of apartheid can be better understood through his embracement and rejection of certain Afrikaner traits and preferences. Coetzee's insecure position of Afrikaner identity is best represented in his autobiographical novel *Boyhood*, where, Gamgee argues, he depicts how the young John Coetzee "neither can nor wants to reject the Afrikaners in their entirety."[244] Gamgee also highlights Coetzee's split world views of Afrikaner identity, for the young Coetzee aspires to embrace English identity and traditions[245] while not completely rejecting his Afrikaner ethnicity. In this regard, Gamgee explains how the young Coetzee admires some Afrikaner traits such as "the inner strength of this filiation through the earth, the tacit solidarity of the Afrikaans family," while he, on the other hand, "is terrified at the thought of being transferred to an Afrikaans class. He feels that Afrikaners are ignorant, insensitive, pitiless, in the image of their leader."[246] In fact, Coetzee's depiction of the preferences pertaining to his younger self continues to shape his literary and personal identity choices, for while he never denies his Afrikaner ethnicity, he strongly criticizes and rejects the oppressive ideologies of apartheid as well as the moral flaws and ethical dilemmas of the Afrikaner community. Therefore, Coetzee's rejection can be better understood not as a total dismissal but rather as a careful refusal to conform to social, ethnic, and racial norms that underline the apartheid system.

---

[241] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992), 341.

[242] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, 343.
[243] John Gamgee, "The White Tribe: The Afrikaner in the Novels of J. M. Coetzee," 70.
[244] Gamgee, "The White Tribe,"75.
[245] Coetzee's parents both spoke English as a second language. However, his mother was more fluent in English, always conversed with her son in English inside the household, and made sure that her son received his education in English. Therefore, Coetzee had a strong feeling of association established between English and his maternal side, while, for him, his father is more linked to Afrikaner and the Afrikaans language.
[246] Gamgee, "The White Tribe,"75.

According to Dominic Head, until Coetzee's immigration to Australia in 2002, it was South Africa and its sociopolitical context that permeated his writing.[247] Nevertheless, the aestheticism that marks Coetzee's works and distinguishes them from other political writings is reflected the independence such works exhibit when compared to other works about South African politics. Coetzee's works exhibit a unique blend of precise language and profound thematic explorations that elevate his works beyond mere political discourse. This aesthetic distinction mirrors the independence of Coetzee's approach, for his works transcend established conventions and, as Dominic Head argues, "represent an implicit challenge to the orthodox privileging of realism in the South African novel."[248] Addressing Coetzee's departure from the realistic tradition of South African novel and his adoption of a more 'autonomous' approach, Minna Niemi argues

> The South African literary scene during the apartheid period was faced with similar issues to the ones confronting Sartre and Adorno during the aftermath of the Second World War—namely, what is the value of literary production in the face of brutal state violence? Many authors, encouraged by literary critics, followed Sartre's idea of committed art. Yet even if resistance literature was the paradigmatic mode of evaluating literary value, some authors, like Coetzee, embraced a vision more closely aligned with Adorno's notion of autonomous art, which seeks to complicate the relationship between art and society by addressing the problem of establishing one's authority as a writer within the context of persistent state violence.[249]

Coetzee's oeuvre can be better assessed as a postcolonial revolution as well as a South African literary evolution. This issue can be traced in Coetzee's treatment of realism in his novels, which clearly depart from employing strict realism by incorporating allegories, metafiction, and thematic choices. Unlike the straightforward realism displayed in select novels by Nadine Gordimer, Zakes Mda, and Andre Brink, among others, Coetzee's preferences for literary realism are often blended with symbolism and allegory that allow his works to transcend immediate political and geographical settings, approaching a more philosophical and existential realm. Highlighting Coetzee's revolutionary role in South African literature, Stephen Watson argues that " never before had a South African novel broken so obviously, even self-consciously, with the conventions of realism and so candidly announced its own artificiality, its own fictionality."[250] Pertaining to this, Head asserts that Coetzee " was the first South African writer to produce overtly experimental and self-conscious fictions that draw their energies from the intellectual charge of the postmodernist/post-structuralist moment."[251] Coetzee's literature transcends the South

---

[247] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 22.
[248] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 24.
[249] Minna Niemi, "A dynamic of blaming and counterblaming: J. M. Coetzee's Analysis of Self-deception in South African Resistance Literature," *Pivot: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies and Thought* 1, no. 1 (2011): 138.
https://pivot.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/pivot/article/download/32162/293812011.
[250] Stephen Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee." *Research in African Literatures* 17, no. 3 (1986): 371. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3819221.
[251] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 23-24.

African context through its exploration of universal issues, including, for example, questions of morality and power dynamics, thus reaching a level of global relevance and universality.

Another important aspect of Coetzee's fiction is that it clearly challenges colonial discourse and history, offering a comprehensive depiction of colonial and postcolonial conditions that spark a sharp contrast with colonially-disseminated narratives and history. In this respect, Coetzee's abandonment of standard realism in fiction and his embrace of critical realism as a narrative strategy can be seen as his method of resisting history. Clarifying his stance on the relationship between history and the novel, or, more precisely, the role of the novel in relation to history, Coetzee argues that "the novel… has only two options: supplementarity or rivalry."[252] Coetzee believes that a novel must never be a supplementary account of history; rather, a novel must always be in "rivalry with historical discourse."[253] In their rejection of supplementarity, Coetzee's works assume a dual challenge to both the history of apartheid in South Africa as well as the broader historical context of colonialism represented by colonial discourse. Highlighting the interconnectedness between European colonialism in its broader sense and the history of apartheid in South Africa, Coetzee affirms that "I'm suspicious of lines of division between a European context and a South African context, because I think our experience remains largely colonial."[254] Coetzee's oeuvre explores power dynamics, individual experiences, language and speech issues, and other thematic concerns that enable him to actively confront narratives imposed by apartheid and colonial discourses. In other words, Coetzee tends to deconstruct historical narratives of power and injustice, offering an alternative perspective that counters the dehumanizing colonial and apartheid ideologies.

2.5.1. Whispers of White Revolt: *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986)

As noted in the preceding discussion, Coetzee's first six novels are permeated with issues of apartheid, oppression, and state control in South Africa. Nevertheless, apartheid serves not only as a backdrop against which Coetzee sets his novels but rather as a microcosm through which he addresses the broader issue of colonial discourse. Despite the fact that the evils of apartheid and its consequences for both whites and blacks in South Africa have affected his literary preferences, it is noteworthy that Coetzee addresses the broader issues of responding to, rewriting, or reimagining texts and contexts that have significantly shaped the literary and social landscapes in terms of propagating colonial ideologies of supremacy and misrepresentation. In this respect, Coetzee's distinct yet interconnected novels *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986) offer a profound critique of both apartheid and colonial discourse, deconstructing power hierarchies and social structures, amplifying marginalized voices, and calling for a model of universal resistance.

Life and Times of Michael K is Coetzee's fourth novel and is notably the first to earn him global recognition, as evidenced by his winning of the Booker Prize in 1983. The novel is set

---

[252] J. M. Coetzee, "The Novel Today", *Upstream*, 6 (1988), 3, as cited in Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 24.
[253] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 28.
[254] J. M. Coetzee, as cited in Stephen Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee." *Research in African Literatures* 17, no. 3 (1986): 370. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3819221.

in apartheid South Africa amid a fictitious civil war during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The narrative tells the story of the eponymous character Michael K, a simple, non-white South African, who, during the unstable conditions and the turmoil of the civil war, decides to undertake an onerous journey from Cape Town to his mother's birthplace in Prince Albert. During his journey, K is faced with many hardships and obstacles, beginning with the constraints on his freedom to travel, followed by his mother's death, his multiple incarcerations against which he exhibits remarkable resistance, and culminating in the decline of his health conditions.

Coetzee divides the novel into a tripartite structure, where Part One constitutes approximately two-thirds of the novel and explores K's early life, providing details of his sick mother, Anna K. Part One also highlights the political unrest in Cape Town and the decision that K and his mother make to leave the town using a barrow following his inability to obtain travel permits. However, Michael K's journey is cut short by the death of his mother, leaving him to face the atrocities of the civil war and apartheid, for he is then faced with the first experience of state control and detainment, marked by his arrest and the way he is forced to work in railways. Part one also shows the first instances of K's life as a cultivator and how he is then taken by authorities to two different concentration camps (Jakkalsdrif and then Kenilworth). Part Two of the novel opens with malnourished K inside Kenilworth camp, where, interestingly, the entire part is narrated by a medical officer who is responsible for the inmates health and who shows remarkable interest in K and attempts to help him despite the fact that K finally manages to escape on his own. However, the narrative comes to a conclusion in Part Three following K's escape and his return to Cape Town, where he meets a group of people with whom he shares food and his personal story, and then returns to the room where his mother used to live, contemplating the time he spent farming in Prince Albert.

Life and Times of Michael K can be viewed as medium for Coetzee to assert the liberal white voice, which directly attacks, resists, and attempts to subvert the oppressive and discriminatory history of the apartheid system in South Africa through the lens of the non-white Michael K and his interactions with the white-controlled society. Coetzee's criticism of the dehumanizing aspects of apartheid regime is discernible in his portrayal of institutionalized racism practiced against K, especially in terms of state control, manifested in the way the government attempts to regulate each and every aspect of K's life based on his physical appearance and non-white skin color. Coetzee's mastery in this novel is evident in the way he personalizes and individualizes the impact of apartheid through a single character rather than presenting a broader historical overview, and it is through this individualization that Coetzee manages to subvert the generalization of apartheid history. Raising this concern, Head argues that the title of the novel is challenging in itself,

> it alludes directly to a tradition of thinking about individual identity in relation to history…[the novel] proclaims itself as having an involvement with this tradition in which the individual life is held to interact intimately with social and political development. The challenge is that the novel ironically undermines the association by

> presenting the life of an anti-hero who resists all obvious contact with the social and political milieu.[255]

Moreover, despite his physical disability—being born with a cleft lip—the representation of Michael K challenges portrayals and preconceived notions of disability that are prevalent in both colonial and postcolonial contexts. Rather than showing K's deformity as a sign of incapacity, Coetzee ultimately turns it into a sign of individuality and resistance in the face of predominant social and political norms. Thus, Coetzee projects a postcolonial form of humanism in his literature, an approach that Ayobami Kehinde highlights, reporting Per Wastberg, who argues that "Coetzee sees through the obscene poses and false pomp of history, lending the voice to the silenced and the despised."[256] In this respect, Kehinde further affirms that although Michael K is born with a disability, Coetzee endows this character with a personal space and unique identity, for K is "the eponymous hero of the story, a noticeable deviation from some precursor African texts."[257] Therefore, Coetzee's employment of K as a protagonist in this novel can be regarded as a metaphoric resistance against the moral degradation and dehumanizing effects of apartheid system, a system that represents historical narratives and accounts that often dehumanize and marginalize people with disabilities. In this way, the criticism that *Life and Times of Michael K* offers transcends the historical and sociopolitical contexts of South Africa, reaching a broader attitude towards disability, thus calling for a universal approach that recognizes and appreciates individual differences.

Although issues of postcolonial identity and resistance in *Life and Times of Michael K* will be further elaborated and more closely examined in the following chapters, it is essential now to briefly highlight how Coetzee's criticism of the dehumanizing and oppressive practices of apartheid system in South Africa serves as a vehicle to attack and subvert the broader themes of colonialism and colonial discourse. Addressing this concern, Watson emphasizes that *Life and Times of Michael K* engages with the thematic underpinnings of colonialism, for "its protagonist is a man intent on eluding colonization whether it be the colonization of the body (through labor camps) or the colonization of the mind."[258] One important instance wherein Coetzee brings out colonial contexts is through K's interactions with the medical officer, an interplay that enables Coetzee to question issues of power dynamics, resistance, and freedom within colonial structures. While the medical officer, being a representative of apartheid oppressive regime, assumes the role of broader colonial personnel within the context of colonialism, K's position as a non-white South African within the context of apartheid represents the subjugated, oppressed, and marginalized colonial subjects.

Based on such classifications, the relationship between K and the medical officer typifies a colonizer/colonized and oppressor/oppressed relationship—one that is based on supremacy

---

[255] Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, 93.
[256] Per Wastberg, (2004), 18. As cited in Ayobami Kehinde, "Ability in disability: J. M. Coetzee's Life & Times of Michael K and the empowerment of the disabled," *English Academy Review: Southern African Journal of English Studies* 27, no. 1 (2010): 64, DOI: 10.1080/10131751003755948.
[257] Ayobami Kehinde, "Ability in disability: J. M. Coetzee's Life & Times of Michael K and the empowerment of the disabled," *English Academy Review: Southern African Journal of English Studies* 27, no. 1 (2010): 64, DOI: 10.1080/10131751003755948.
[258] Stephen Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee." 370.

and an already-established power hierarchy. Colonial tendencies of racism and prejudice can be clearly seen in Part Two of the novel, in which the narrative voice shifts to the medical officer, who, upon his first meeting K, tends to depict him as "a wretched man, turning him into a malleable symbol," an attitude that allows the medical officer to strengthen his position of supremacy while asserting K's as "as a sub-human, inferior being."[259] In fact, the medical officer's attitude towards K serves as a microcosm of the broader colonial mindset that tends to dehumanize colonial subjects and assert their inferiority within colonial systems of power hierarchy. In this respect, the medical officer's intent clearly recalls Hegelian racial prejudices towards non-whites, whom he views as "completely wild and untamed."[260] However, the subtle yet comprehensive twist that Coetzee offers can be perceived in through transformation of the medical officer, whose "so-called superiority is deflated later in his own comments."[261] Indeed, it is K's passive resistance and struggle for autonomy that creates a reversal of roles between the medical officer and K, between the colonizer and the colonized, thus challenging and deconstructing already-established power structures and social hierarchies.

Interestingly, the apolitical withdrawal that Coetzee endows K with allows the novel to transcend the South African context and escape the confinements of settings, creating a narrative that resonates with the broader issue of colonialism and colonial discourse. It is through *Life and Times of Michael K* that Coetzee provides "more insight into the colonizing mind, as well as the dissenting, colonizing mind, than any of his contemporaries."[262] Further stressing the universal notions that the novel offers, Dominic Head argues that although K's defiance is clearly connected to the context of South African apartheid, "his symbolic challenge inevitably connotes resistance to…late colonial oppression."[263] It is through the exploration of the colonizing mind, diverse modes of resistance, and the transcendence of temporal and spatial origins that Coetzee masterfully crafts a narrative that reshapes the role of literature in understanding the sociopolitical dynamics of colonialism and offers unconventional methods of opposing colonial oppression.

Now, having briefly highlighted the thematic interconnectedness between apartheid and colonialism in *Life and Times of Michael K* and how Coetzee transgresses the boundaries of time and space, our discussion will now shift to Coetzee's subsequent novel *Foe*, which offers a unique literary landscape that shares similar characteristics of colonial and apartheid contexts, yet with a narrative twist that places more emphasis on confronting colonial discourse. Addressing this issue of "duality" in both works and how *Foe* offers a more prominent criticism of colonialism and colonial discourse, Head argues that while *Foe* also creates an analogous symbolic connection to the South African context, it projects a more

[259] Ayobami Kehinde, "Ability in disability," 66.
[260] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 111.
[261] Ayobami Kehinde, "Ability in disability," 66.
[262] Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee." 390.
[263] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 60.

"poignant evocation of oppression, which is made to speak simultaneously to the business of literary history and to the problem of how the colonized other is silenced."[264]

Foe (1986) is Coetzee's postcolonial reworking of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and is written from the perspective of Susan Barton, a newly introduced character to the classic realm of *Robinson Crusoe*, whom Coetzee places alongside Cruso and Friday in his reimagining of the famous island. The novel, Alexandra Effe argues, includes several allusions to other works by Defoe, it engages with "*Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxana*,[where] characters and events from these novels cross the boundary between Defoe's and Coetzee's storyworlds."[265] In its exploration of the idea of oppression through interactions between the characters Susan Barton, Foe, Cruso, and Friday, *Foe* is a story of authorial supremacy and power, a battle between attempts to define and efforts to resist being defined. The novel revolves around Susan Barton and her persistent attempts to get her story on the island recorded and published; however, she faces two obstacles. The first is from the famous author Daniel Foe, who later becomes her lover, when he suggests that Barton's story lacks the excitement and importance to be released as an independent work. The second obstacle is Friday's "tonguelessness," a deformity that prevents Barton from knowing a story that would ultimately enrich hers with the "substance" she seeks.

Coetzee divides his novel into a quadpartite structure, in which Part One marks Barton's arrival on an island inhabited by Friday and Cruso, where she narrates the story of her abducted daughter to Cruso and how she ended up being washed ashore on the island he inhabits. It is in this part that readers are introduced to Friday's alleged "tonguelessness" and are given more details about the character of Cruso. Following their rescue and Cruso's death, Part Two opens with the arrival of Barton and Friday to England, unfolding the experiences of the two in London and how Barton finally succeeds in meeting the famous writer, Daniel Foe. This part also highlights Barton's endless attempts at persuading Foe to write her story despite the fact that he shows disinterest in her island story while, on the other hand, projecting a serious curiosity for her story before arriving on Cruso's island. It is in this part also that Barton attempts to "teach" Friday basic things like how to wash clothes and to use a spade, ending in Barton's meeting with a girl named "Susan Barton," claiming to be her daughter. Part Three continues with the battle of authorial supremacy between Foe's interest in Barton's earlier story and the latter's continuous stubbornness in diverting his attention to her island story. This part also features Foe's suggestion to make Barton teach Friday how to write, a lesson that ends up with Friday's rejection to show his writing, wiping out all that he has drawn. The novel comes to an end with Part Four, which opens with an unnamed narrator featuring a dream-like setting in which he views Foe, Barton, and Friday together. However, the narrative voice shifts back to Susan, who, in a surreal experience, dives into the depths of the ocean where she finds the chained Friday and finally becomes able to know where "the home of Friday"[266] is and what his voice sounds like.

---

[264] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 62.
[265] Alexandra Effe, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Narrative Transgression : A Reconsideration of Metalepsis* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 26.
[266] J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 157.

While Coetzee in *Life and Times of Michael K* uses the South African context amid a fictitious civil war as a setting to evoke a larger colonial situation, he, on the other hand, takes a different approach in *Foe*, where he highlights a colonial situation based on Defoe's canonical text to draw parallels with the South African context. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that Daniel Defoe is often considered as the father of the English novel, and his *Robinson Crusoe* is largely perceived as a novel that represents Western imperialism and the Eurocentric belief in the superiority of Western civilization and its mission to 'civilize' the 'uncivilized' societies.[267] It is this correlation between cultural and political colonialism that Head underscores in Coetzee's approach, suggesting that

> It is this taint of colonialism that serves Coetzee's purpose particularly well…*Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719, which is also the era of early Dutch settlement in South Africa…This suggests an association between the origins of the English novel and the origins of colonialism in South Africa, both emanations of European imperialism – one cultural, the other political – with a common ideology of superiority.[268]

One of the many differences between Coetzee's *Foe* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* is the issue of Friday's silence. In Defoe's story, Friday is represented as the classic black slave and subservient savage, a character with very limited agency and a voice that only allows him to respond to his colonial master's questions and orders, never questioning or criticizing their legitimacy. However, on the contrary, Coetzee's Friday is represented as a silent figure whose silence is first introduced to Susan by Cruso, who clarifies that Friday " has no tongue…That is why he does not speak. They cut out his tongue."[269] Nevertheless, Friday's silence in Coetzee's story is given a new dimension and significance, for Coetzee deliberately articulates this silence as a mode of resistance that subverts representations of power hierarchies in traditional colonial narratives.

Another major difference between the two stories is Coetzee's incorporation of Susan Barton into the novel, representing a clear departure from and a criticism of Defoe's treatments of gender roles, evident in the marginalization or omission of female voices. Interestingly, the character of Barton draws parallels with the medical officer in *Life and Times of Michael K*, who represents the role of a liberal white who witnessed the oppression of blacks in South Africa and exhibited a sympathized approach towards Michael K. Similarly, Susan Barton, as a white character, demonstrates equal sympathy for Friday, especially in her attempts to protect him, taking him back with her to London after Cruso's death and refusing to send him on a ship, believing that he will be sold into slavery again.

Coetzee's postcolonial reworking of Defoe's text extends beyond mere rewriting and performs as a powerful critique and challenge to the imperial and exclusionary practices embedded within the Western canon. Through Friday's silence as well as the selection of a female narrator, Susan Barton, Coetzee is able to unsettle and challenge the narrative

---

[267] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 62.
[268] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 62.
[269] J. M. Coetzee, *Foe*, 23.

authority of the colonial master figure of Defoe's Crusoe and redistributes such authority among the silenced voices. By situating his text within a framework that problematizes colonial history as well as literary tradition, Coetzee's work highlights the structural oppression embedded in acts of representation. That is to say, by refusing to give Friday a definitive voice or history and through the failed attempts of Susan Barton to tell his story, Coetzee questions and challenges the authority of white-written histories in appropriating Black experiences under colonial domination and apartheid tyranny.

Chapter 2: Colonial Discourse and the Formation of the Other: Said, Bhabha, and Fanon in Context

Prior to engaging with the works of Achebe and Coetzee, wherein their literary contributions in the process of identity regeneration and reformation will be examined, it is essential to explore the formation of the 'other' in Western colonial discourse and what that 'other' stands for. This investigation draws on insights informed by the seminal works of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Frantz Fanon, each shedding light on a different facet of the oppressive nature of 'othering'. The selection of Said, Bhabha, and Fanon in this specific order is not arbitrary but is based on the fact that Said's *Orientalism* provides the starting point and lays the groundwork for understanding the fixed cultural framework and hierarchies through which colonial powers operate in terms of representation. What Bhabha later offers in his *The Location of Culture*, complicates Said's notions by investigating how the colonial discourse and the fixed cultural hierarchies that Said establish are neither fixed nor absolute but rather susceptible to change and subversion through creating hybrid identities and other strategies. In this respect, Bhabha's notions perform as a conceptual bridge from Said's binarisms to Fanon's psychological dimensions of identity formation. In other words, Fanon's psychoanalytical approach to Black identity formation can be seen as the culmination of this theoretical interplay between the three theoreticians, grounding it in the realities and lived experiences of Black colonized subjects. By understanding the origins and implications of 'Otherness', it becomes possible to formulate a perception of the ways through which both Achebe and Coetzee navigate, challenge, and reform already established identities and stories in their own literary worlds.

2.3. Said's *Orientalism*: Unveiling the Dynamics of 'Otherness' in Western Discourse

In general terms, the notion of 'Orientalism' refers to the examination, studies, interpretations, and representations of the cultures, religions, practices, social structures, and communities of the East, most specifically, the people of the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia, by all scholars, missionaries, artists, academics, and writers from the West who are referred to as 'Orientalists'. Accordingly, the scholarly and epistemological body of work produced by Western people studying the Orient culminated over the years and formed what is known as the Orientalist approach, which is a systematic mode of approaching the Orient through stereotyping and essentializing non-Occidental (non-Western) cultures into a fixed set of exoticized and Eurocentric representations that foster the otherness, inferiority, and backwardness of the Orient compared to the supremacy and development of everything related to the Occidental world.

In his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said offers a critical examination of the Orientalist approach, linking it with colonial and imperialist tendencies in the Western discourse about the Orient, which Said never sees as a neutral academic pursuit but rather a systematic approach contributing to the formation of cultural imperialism over the Orient. Said defines Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and

epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident."[1] Further expanding his theory, Said adds that Orientalism is

> a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient… I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse…to identify Orientalism…without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively… because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.[2]

In this regard, it becomes essential to recall Foucault's definition of discourse as "the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements."[3] However, what Said does in *Orientalism* is that he takes the generalized Foucauldian concept of discourse and relocates it within a specific context of European domination over the Orient. In other words, Said's main interest in the discourse-Orient relationship is the power that such discourse embodies, for, in Foucault's words, "discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it."[4] In addressing European attitudes and cultural tendencies towards the Orient, Said adds that "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."[5] What Said highlights here is the process of differentiation that European culture underwent to establish itself in contrast with the Orient. Additionally, the process through which European culture sets it self "off against the Orient" implies an act of 'othering' where the Orient is represented as the inferior 'Other' compared to its Occident counterpart. Now, in this Orient-Occident dichotomy, the relationship is never one of mutual understanding and assessment but, Said argues, is " a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony."[6]

Said argues that "the representations of Orientalism in European culture amount to what we can call a discursive consistency, one that has not only history but material (and institutional) presence to show for itself."[7] What is interesting in Said's description here is the labeling of Orientalism as " a discursive consistency" through which the Orient, or non-European Other, is consistently degenerated and essentialized to certain stereotypes that sustain European superiority while simultaneously disseminating the Other's inferiority. In this regard, Said underscores the power and historical persistence of Orientalism as an approach that relies "on its internal, repetitious consistency about its constitutive will-to-power over the Orient. In such a way Orientalism was able to survive revolutions, world wars, and the literal

---

[1] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 3.
[2] Said, *Orientalism*, 3.
[3] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 73.
[4] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 101.
[5] Said, *Orientalism*, 3.
[6] Said, *Orientalism*, 5.
[7] Said, *Orientalism*, 273.

dismemberment of empires."[8] It is this consistency evident in art, literature, media, and popular culture that Said underscores here as emblematic of the complex nature of Orientalism within the European agenda of approaching the Orient and creating the Other, an agenda that Said ultimately describes as a "political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")."[9] In other words, Pinggong argues,

> Said maintains that representations of the "Orient" in European literary texts, travelogues and other writings contributed to the creation of a dichotomy between Europe and its "other"… Said presents that this dichotomy or opposition is crucial to the self- establishment of Europe: if colonised people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilised.[10]

This political vision based on binary oppositions is what Said refers to as the discourse of Orientalism, which is interwoven with the post-16th century expansion of European colonialism. In other words, Said argues that the dissemination of the discourse of Orientalism went hand in hand with colonialism, for it justified colonialism as a noble civilizing mission aimed at saving and developing non-European Others. In this regard, Said stresses the role of literary texts as important tools in the hands of colonizers for representing and 'othering' the Orient. Interestingly, Said suggests that the discourse of Orientalism is not a modern phenomenon but can be traced back to literary texts from the 5th century BCE, more specifically, Aeschylus's *The Persians* and *The Bacchae* of Euripides. In both plays, Said detects Orientalist tendencies toward representing the Other, for in such earlier works about Asia or the Orient in general, "Asia speaks through and by virtue of the European imagination, which is depicted as victorious over Asia, that hostile "other" world beyond the seas. To Asia are given the feelings of emptiness, loss, and disaster."[11] Thus, such discourse on Orientalism "was able to survive revolutions, world wars, and the literal dismemberment of empires," because it has never been a recent and modern incident, but one that is embedded in the European subconscious thought of imagining the Orient. It is this persistence and power that enabled such a discourse to span over the period of 15 centuries, starting with the earlier examples of Aeschylus and Euripides and reaching the 19th and 20th century novels of Joseph Conrad, Gustave Flaubert, and the like.

At this point, it becomes necessary to highlight the relationship between culture and cultural imperialism as expressed by Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), where he further elaborates on the dissemination of colonial discourse of othering the Orient and the way it went hand in hand with colonial expansion. In emphasizing the continuous and inseparable relationship between the past and the present, Said suggests that "appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present." However, Said questions the 'pastness' of the past, suggesting that such a relationship between the past and

---

[8] Said, *Orientalism*, 222.
[9] Said, *Orientalism*, 43.
[10] Zhang Pinggong, "Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient—On Edwad W. Said's Orientalism," *Comparative Literature: East & West*27,vol.4, no. 1 (2002): 179-180, DOI: 10.1080/25723618.2002.12015317
[11] Said, *Orientalism*, 56.

the present relies on a particular uncertainty "about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues."[12] To further elaborate on this interrelationship, Said quotes T. S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and Individual Talent", in which Eliot asserts that no artist works in a state of autonomy; rather, he or she is forcefully placed in a succession of predecessors and successors, thus "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone."[13] Therefore, this interplay between past and present is what informs Said to argue that "Neither past nor present, any more than any poet or artist, has a complete meaning alone."[14]

Based on this network of interrelations between the past, the present, literary traditions, and subsequent literary productions, Said underscores the historical continuity of the discourse on Orientalism, highlighting that the idea of othering the Orient is closely linked with the process of colonial expansion and the interconnectedness between culture and imperialism. Said departs from conventional definitions of imperialism that concern political and economic dimensions and calls for an examination that deciphers the often neglected bond between imperialism and culture. Highlighting the historical disconnections made by literary historians, Said gives an example about the way Edmund Spenser was studied through a context completely void of his colonial tendencies. To Said, literary historians "do not connect his [Spenser's] bloodthirsty plans for Ireland, where he imagined a British army virtually exterminating the native inhabitants, with his poetic achievement or with the history of British rule over Ireland, which continues today."[15]

Said's argument here echoes Chinua Achebe's views on the racism displayed by Conrad in his *Heart of Darkness*, where literary historians admired Conrad's literary achievement and narrative artistry, yet they ignored or failed to discern the fact that he was, Achebe argues, a "thoroughgoing racist."[16] Therefore, Said contends that the process of imperial domination over other lands is a complex struggle that "is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings."[17] The "ideas," "forms," "images," and "meanings" that Said refers to form what can be defined as the literary and epistemological apparatus through which the Orient can be approached and assessed only as the non-Occidental Other. The Orient, Said adds

> is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.[18]

---

[12] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 4.
[13] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent", as cited in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 4.
[14] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 4.
[15] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 7.
[16] Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Heart of Darkness," 119.
[17] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 7.
[18] Said, *Orientalism*, 1-2.

Said's exploration of Orientalism reveals that the Other, rather than being limited to a physical entity, is an ideological formation constructed as a product of colonialism and imperialism and shaped by power dynamics, cultural imperialism, and binary oppositions. The formulation of the Other is closely related to the cultural formations of imperialist cultures, whose vocabulary when dealing with the Orient/Other "is plentiful with words and concepts like "inferior" or "subject races," "subordinate peoples," "dependency," "expansion," and "authority."[19] Thus, Said argues that the Other identity production cannot be limited to a single specific mechanism; rather, it is a comprehensive linguistic, ideological, political, and epistemological process that controls and disseminates the Other identity through various mediums of representation that maintain the dichotomy and binarism between Europe and its Others.

2.4. Beyond Binaries: Homi Bhabha and the 'Other' identity

In the vast realm of postcolonialism, it is widely accepted that Edward Said's conceptualization of Otherness in *Orientalism* had set the tone for understanding the idea and position of the Other/Orient in terms of the binary oppositions and the fixity of us/them, inferior/superior, powerful/powerless, and civilized/uncivilized. However, Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), takes an entirely different approach and explores the complexities of the Other identity formation, rejecting the already accepted notions of fixed categories and binarisms. Bhabha's postcolonial notions such as "Third Space," "Hybridity," and "Mimicry" suggest that although colonial discourse aims to create a fixed set of dehumanizing identities of the Other, the 'ambivalence of colonial discourse' itself renders such identities inactive and, interestingly, destabilizes the fixed and subservient position of the colonized Other, turning such position into an active participation in the process of identity formation.

Bhabha's criticism stems from the role that culture undertakes in establishing, reinforcing, and disseminating identities. Therefore, Bhabha argues that we should "rethink our perspective on the identity of culture,"[20] for representations of traditional cultures are not passive neutral entities but active agents in the conceptualization of identities. To further support his position, Bhabha questions the legitimacy of naming cultural theory as 'Western', arguing that "what is at stake in the naming of critical theory as 'Western'? It is, obviously, a designation of institutional power and ideological Eurocentricity."[21] In this regard, Bhabha advocates for a subtle distinction between "cultural diversity" and what he calls "cultural difference." Bhabha's conceptualization of cultural diversity entails a dualistic character, concurrently representing both inclusiveness and separatism. Bhabha asserts

> Cultural diversity is the recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs; held in a time-frame of relativism it gives rise to liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange or the culture of humanity. Cultural diversity is also the representation of a radical rhetoric of the separation of totalized cultures that live

[19] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 9.
[20] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 52.
[21] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 45.

> unsullied by the intertextuality of their historical locations, safe in the Utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective identity.[22]

What Bhabha argues is that although cultural diversity, even within the context of relativism, calls for a multicultural and inclusive approach to cultural ratification, it nevertheless might be perceived as an expression of a radical discourse of segregation and separatism. The radical discourse of cultural diversity can be seen in "the separation of totalized cultures" within a multicultural context, in which such cultures emerge as a form of cultural imperialism and hegemony, establishing themselves as the unquestionable norm compared to other cultures that are neglected, marginalized, and suppressed. Therefore, Bhabha leans to characterize the phenomenon as cultural difference rather than "cultural diversity," arguing that cultural difference "focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the *name* of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation."[23]

Bhabha views cultural difference as a polarizing and discriminating phenomenon, established to create binarisms between cultures. For him, cultural difference

> is a particular constructed discourse at a time when something is being challenged about power or authority. At that point, a particular cultural trait or tradition–the smell of somebody's food, the color of their skin, the accent that they speak with, their particular history…becomes the site of contestation, abuse, insult, and discrimination.[24]

For Bhabha, the strategy of cultural difference within Western discourse echoes Said's binarisms of us/them, superior/inferior, civilized/uncivilized, etc. Therefore, Bhabha links cultural difference with the issue of creating the Other identity of inferiority and subservience. Since Bhabha associates cultural difference with "power or authority," he highlights the role that dominant cultures play in defining and limiting the dimensions of other cultures. Bhabha raises this issue within the vast realm of cultural diversity propagated by dominant cultures, which, despite acknowledging the existence of other cultures, infer that "these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid."[25] It is this paradox of holistic enclosure that Bhabha critiques in cultural diversity and cultural difference, suggesting that Western forms of multiculturalism are discursive techniques directed towards the " *creation* of cultural diversity and a *containment* of cultural difference."[26]

It is cultural difference that Bhabha sees as the main source of cultural binarism, especially when related to issues of power, authority, and representation between cultures. According to Bhabha, "the enunciation of cultural difference problematizes the binary division of past and

---

[22] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 50.
[23] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 50-51.
[24] Homi K. Bhabha, "Staging the Politics of Difference: Homi Bhabha's Critical Literacy," by Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham, *JAC* 18, no. 3 (1998): 371,72. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866193.
[25] Homi K. Bhabha. "The Third Space Interview with Homi Bhabha" by Jonathan Rutheford. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutheford (London, Lawrence and Wishart: 1990), 208.
[26] Homi K. Bhabha. "The Third Space Interview with Homi Bhabha," 208.

present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address."[27] In this past/present and tradition/modernity relationship, the role of dominant cultures takes its toll on the politics of Other identity formation and production, where dominant cultures assume the position of "past" and "tradition" compared to the rest of other cultures that are ideologically and theoretically ascribed to situations of "present" and "modernity," thus representing a subservient role within a larger system of cultural hierarchy based on power dynamics. Stressing this issue, Bhabha contends that "in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic."[28]

Now, in this context of cultural perception, Bhabha introduces his concept of "Third Space," which is not a physical space in a literal sense but rather a theoretical and metaphorical space that often marks the gap or moment of encounter between two cultures. Therefore, within the hierarchical context of past/present and tradition/modernity, Bhabha argues that "the production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space,"[29] for "the intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code."[30] Bhabha's Third Space challenges the fixity and binary oppositions of cultural identities, calling for an approach to understanding such identities through a process of continuous negotiation and flexibility. This Third Space, Bhabha adds, "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew."[31]

In order to better apprehend the concept of Bhabha's Third Space in relation to the context of binary oppositions, it is pertinent to highlight Mary Pratt's notion of "contact zones," that is, "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination–such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today."[32] Pratt further adds that contact zones are "the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."[33] Therefore, Bhabha's Third Space stems from the contact zones that Pratt highlights, especially in terms of colonizer/colonized, power/powerless, and dominant/submissive contexts. In such contexts, Bhabha asserts, the notion of "cultural hybridity" emerges as a process that occurs in the Third Space, where there is neither

[27] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 51-52.
[28] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 52.
[29] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 53.
[30] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 54.
[31] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 55.
[32] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (New York, Routledge: 2008), 7.
[33] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 8.

assimilation of one culture by another nor an imposition of one culture by another; it is rather a space that creates hybrid forms of cultures and identities. Highlighting the inextricability between the Third Space and hybridity, Bhabha argues

> for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.[34]

Accordingly, Bhabha asserts that the Third Space "may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*."[35] It is this hybridity that challenges the fixity and binary categorizations of cultural identities, thus deconstructing the notions of cultural purity and dominance and urging the recognition of the complex interplay between cultures that resists any form of dominance or categorization.

Central to Bhabha's discussion of 'Otherness' or the 'Other' identity formation is the notion of "fixity" that colonial discourse implements as an approach to understanding and representing the colonial subject (Other). Bhabha explains the "fixity" employed by colonial discourse as a discursive tendency to undermine and essentialize colonial subjects and cultures, reducing their vibrancy and complexity into static, fixed, and simple entities. For Bhabha, "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."[36] In this context, Bhabha highlights the ambivalence of colonial discourse, wherein the degeneracy and disorder of colonial subjects are fixed and unchanging; nevertheless, they need to be endlessly repeated. Bhabha further links the concept of fixity with stereotypes produced by colonial discourse; the colonial stereotype, he adds, is the "major discursive strategy" of colonial discourse and forms a "knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated."[37]

Bhabha further argues that colonial stereotypes thus rest on a continuous and endless interplay between fixity and repetition, a paradox that underlines the ambivalence of colonial discourse, an ambivalence whose force "gives the colonial stereotype its currency."[38] In this respect, Bhabha asserts that such ambivalence of colonial discourse is not only paradoxical but also "productive" in that it generates and disseminates discursive knowledge-formation, that is, the colonial subject or the 'Other' identity formation. Now, in this discourse-knowledge relationship, Bhabha views colonial discourse as "an apparatus of power… that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/ historical differences."[39] Bhabha

[34] Homi K. Bhabha. "The Third Space Interview," 211.
[35] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 56.
[36] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 94.
[37] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 94.
[38] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 95.
[39] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 100.

again refers to the ambivalence of colonial discourse inherent in the representation of colonial subjects. However, the power dynamics of such a discourse, Bhabha contends, are not mere reflections of power structures but active participants in the production, maintenance, and dissemination of those structures. Bhabha further emphasizes that, as an apparatus of power, colonial discourse "seeks authorization for its strategies by the production of knowledges of colonizer and colonized which are stereotypical but antithetically evaluated."[40] It is this knowledge that Bhabha stresses as not being mere information but a systematic mode of controlling and subjugating the colonized 'Other' through an epistemic and ontological form of hegemony that attributes colonizer and colonized identities based on antithetically evaluated stereotypes of superior/inferior, powerful/powerless, civilized/uncivilized, etc.

Having highlighted the concepts of 'Third Space' and 'hybridity', our discussion now shifts to another major element in Bhabha's theoretical framework on the Other identity formation, that is, the concept of mimicry. Bhabha's basic argument revolves around the process of mimicry, through which colonized subjects mimic or imitate the language, dress, attitude, or any other traits of their colonizers. For Bhabha, "mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge."[41] Indeed, mimicry was implemented by colonial powers in colonized territories as a tool to facilitate their dominance and control over colonized societies. Colonial powers forced their cultures, languages, religions, and social and ethical norms onto indigenous ones; thus, colonized societies were forced to abandon and suppress their own cultures, languages, traditions, and identities while embracing those of the colonizer. Therefore, mimicry emerges as an essential tool for controlling and expressing power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized, between what is considered as the 'norm' and what is perceived as 'deviation' from that norm. It constitutes a relationship based on binary oppositions of the original vs. the imitator, in a way that maintains the power hierarchy, difference, and perceived inferiority of the colonizer imitator or Other.

Highlighting the driving force behind colonial mimicry, Bhabha asserts that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*."[42] In this context, Bhabha clearly expresses colonial interests in implementing mimicry as a strategic tool for controlling colonized subjects in a way that marks them as 'Others' who share almost all of the colonizer's traits but can never be assimilated into the colonizer's status of cultural superiority. In other words, no matter what degree of similarity colonized subjects reach in copying their colonial masters, they will never be accepted as equals and will always be treated as "subjects of difference," an idea that is also asserted by Edward Said, who argues that colonial powers attempt to make the colonized like them, however, an "imperfect version" of them.[43] This ideology of colonial mimicry is best expressed in the words of Lord Macaulay, who, in his infamous "Minute on Education," clearly expresses the British scheme behind teaching Indians the English language, morals, and lifestyle, declaring that "we must at present do our best to form a class

[40] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 101.
[41] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.
[42] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.
[43] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 28.

who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, -a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."[44] Commenting on Macaulay's perceptions, Bhabha highlights that those "interpreters" are the desired outcome of colonial mimicry, through which colonial discourse maintains its dominance via a process of 'othering', for they constitute "appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness."[45]

Interestingly, Bhabha argues that mimicry is not a simple replication but a process governed by ambivalence, partialness, and a sense of incompleteness, for he asserts that "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace."[46] What Bhabha suggests here is that mimicry can be unintentionally subversive of colonial discourse, for while copying the colonizer, colonized subjects reach a certain level of equality where they can challenge imposed authority and show how hollow and simple colonial superiority is. Therefore, Bhabha asserts that " the *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority."[47] The tension that mimicry carries is embedded in the ambivalence it entails, for "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."[48] In other words, the ambivalence of mimicry can be seen in the colonial assumption of complete and total control over colonized mimic subjects, while, indeed, those mimic subjects offer a degree of deviation from the very act of mimicry, thus disrupting the colonial discourse of completeness in terms of control and authority.

The "slippage" that Bhabha speaks of is the colonizers attempt to create "almost the same, but not quite" copies of themselves to maintain control in this power-hierarchy relationship. However, by allowing this "slippage," colonizers are not fully converting the colonized but are making them pretend to be like them, a process that undermines the entire mission of colonial conversion. Therefore, Bhabha argues, "the success of colonial appropriation depends on … its strategic failure."[49] For Bhabha, mimicry undermines the authority of the colonizer, for mimicry is only a hollow imitation that lacks a stable and fixed identity. Therefore, Bhabha compares mimicry to camouflage, suggesting that "mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part."[50] Additionally, Bhabha contends that "the ambivalence of mimicry – almost but not quite – suggests that the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal."[51] Thus, the menace of mimicry lies in its potential subversion of colonial interests, especially when colonized subjects disavow their assigned 'otherness' given to them by the colonizers, thereby minimizing their power. In other words, when colonial subjects mimic only certain

[44] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Education" (1835), 128.
[45] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 126.
[46] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 123.
[47] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 126.
[48] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.
[49] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 123.
[50] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 128.
[51] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 129.

elements of colonial culture and reject others, they assert the performativity of their identity, thus challenging the colonially-imposed fixity and stability of the Other identity.

2.5. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance: Fanon and the Dialectics of Identity

Having addressed Edward Said's insightful perspectives on Orientalism and Homi Bhabha's theories of Third Space, hybridity, and mimicry and how both scholars shed light on the Other identity formation in colonial discourse, the analysis now shifts to Frantz Fanon and his psychological oeuvre, which delves deeply into the dynamics of the Other identity formation prevalent under colonial domination. Being a psychiatrist and philosopher, Frantz Fanon employs a psychoanalytical approach in examining the effects of colonialism on the psyche of colonized subjects and the way they internalize their self-image under the shadow of colonialism. Fanon's oeuvre, exemplified in his seminal works *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), addresses the complex intersection of race, identity, and colonialism, highlighting the dynamics of colonialism, or more precisely, colonial psyche, in creating, maintaining, and disseminating distorted identities of the colonized Other laden with colonial prejudice.

Unlike works by Said, Bhabha, and other eminent postcolonial scholars, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* takes an entirely different and distinctively psychoanalytical approach to treating the effects of colonial subjugation, thus establishing Fanon's mastery in producing the first scholarly work that explores the psychology of colonialism.[52] Although Fanon's work mainly centers around the dehumanizing experiences of black people from Caribbean islands who migrated to France, the insightful observations he offers transcend geographical boundaries and national limits to reach and address all colonized peoples across the globe. Drawing from these premises, Ziauddin Sardar asserts that *Black Skin, White Masks* addresses " the anger of all whose cultures, knowledge systems and ways of being that are ridiculed, demonized, declared inferior and irrational, and, in some cases, eliminated."[53]

Fanon argues that in the context of colonizer/colonized or white/black relationships, there is a sort of psychological narcissism within the white colonial mentality. For Fanon, the black-white relation exists in two extremely distinct spaces: "The white man is sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness."[54] This narcissistic attitude creates a psychological hierarchy of supremacy and inferiority in the minds of the colonizers, who establish a fixed belief in their supremacy while, on the other hand, forcing and fostering a counter-belief in black inferiority that also shapes the colonized mindset. Thus, Fanon contends, colonial mentality undermines the humanity of the colonized Other and limits their roles to a process of vindication where "black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect."[55]

---

[52] Ziauddin Sardar , foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, by Frantz Fanon, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), x.
[53] Sardar, foreword, vi.
[54] Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.* trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 3.
[55] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 3.

Fanon ascribes a significant role to language in his examination of the Other identity formation, for he believes that language shapes "the colored man's comprehension of the dimension of *the other*."[56] For Fanon, colonial powers impose their languages on colonized people not only as a tool of control but also as a medium of identity transformation and annihilation. For the colonized, language becomes an essential medium for 'coming closer to whiteness', and it is through mastering such a language that colonized Others can 'partially' get rid of their 'otherness' and "be proportionately whiter…[and] come closer to being real human being[s]."[57] Therefore, learning and mastering the colonizer's language echoes the complete alienation, annihilation, and erasure of the culture and identity of the colonized Other. Describing the danger of colonial linguistic hegemony in relation to indigenous cultural elimination, Fanon asserts:

> Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.[58]

Fanon asserts that even though colonized peoples might master the language of the colonizer, they will never be accepted as equals and will always be addressed using childish, incomplete, and Pidgin language in a way that always asserts and reminds them of their inferiority. When the colonized adopt the colonizer's language and abandon their own, as Fanon argues, they will never be treated with a sense of respect; rather, they will affirm their cultural inferiority and depravity and be treated as having "no culture, no civilization, no long historical past."[59] This linguistic dilemma leads to a clash of cultural identities, where the colonized abandon their cultural identity and face the expectations of the colonizer or the dominant culture. It is this status of culture and identity alienation that Fanon figuratively describes as black people wearing white masks to hide their accepted inferiority in the face of white superiority. However, Fanon contends, this process of 'masking' identity is never accepted as assimilation; rather, it establishes demarcation between the "us" and "them" and deepens the erasure of authentic cultural identity and authenticity, thus fostering the colonially imposed 'Other' identity.

Now, it is essential to mention that although Edward Said and Frantz Fanon both wrote about colonial situations and the suffering of colonial subjects under colonialism in different contexts and geographical settings, their criticism of colonialism and the process of the Other identity formation might share certain thematic commonalities, especially in terms of binary relations between the colonizer and the colonized. For Said, the colonial/Orientalist approach of creating the Other identity is rather a "political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient,

[56] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 8.
[57] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 8.
[58] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 9.
[59] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 21.

the East, "them")."[60] Similarly, Fanon views the colonizer/colonized or white/black relationship as one that is based on binary oppositions of segregation and discrimination. As Sardar argues, "whiteness, Fanon asserts, has become a symbol of purity, of *Justice, Truth, Virginity*. It defines what it means to be civilized, modern and human…Blackness represents the diametrical opposite: in the collective unconsciousness, it stands for *ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality*."[61] However, while Said believes that this hierarchical and binary-opposed relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is solely a Western political process of creating dichotomies, Fanon, on the other hand, adds that the colonized, with their inferiority complex, also contribute to this system of separation. For Fanon, this inferiority complex is the outcome of what he terms "the epidermalization" of this inferiority.[62] It is this process of epidermalization that becomes a stigmatizing factor in sustaining the black or colonized inferiority. As Sardar argues, epidermalization occurs when the black man believes in his inferiority as a position that accepts neither change nor negation, resulting in a complete loss of personal ego and self-esteem, evident in the constant efforts of imitating the white man and thus being accepted as a human being rather than an Other.[63]

Interestingly, Fanon also adds that the inferiority complex felt by blacks when comparing themselves to whites not only segregates the two races but might also transform into delusions of grandeur that create a line of demarcation within the black race itself. For Fanon, the biased approach within the colonial psyche extends to infect the mentality of the colonized, who subconsciously adopt the colonial mentality of superiority, however, within the very 'epidermal' category for which they are perceived as Others. Highlighting this issue, Fanon argues

> I have known, and I still know, Antilles Negroes who are annoyed when they are suspected of being Senegalese. This is because the Antilles Negro is more "civilized" than the African, that is, he is closer to the white man;… I was talking recently with someone from Martinique who told me with considerable resentment that some Guadeloupe Negroes were trying to "pass" as Martinicans. But, he added, the lie was rapidly discovered, because they are more savage than we are.[64]

What Fanon contends is that being closer to the white man is considered the norm for defining what is Other and what is not. Rather than defying their status of perceived inferiority and Otherness, black communities foster their dependent position through the degradation and devaluation of their fellow black societies, thus creating a cycle of perceived inferiority. This process of establishing pseudo-superiority based on the varying levels of savagery is what Fanon sees as creating an internal hierarchy that fosters colonial ideological beliefs in the bestiality and savagery of the Other while simultaneously consolidating the ultimate superiority of the colonizer.

---

[60] Said, *Orientalism*, 43.
[61] Sardar, foreword, xiii.
[62] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 4.
[63] Sardar, foreword, xiii.
[64] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 15.

Resonating with Edward Said's description of the Orient/Other as an entirely European product of epistemic categorization, Fanon challenges the assumption of the psychoanalyst and ethnologist Octave Mannoni that "the inferiority complex is something that antedates colonization"[65] and rather affirms that the inferiority complex felt by blacks or the colonized is not innate but rather a systematic process of colonizing their minds to assert their position as inferior Others. For Said, the Orient stands as Europe's "cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other…the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.[66] Similarly, Fanon argues that "the feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European's feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: *It is the racist who creates his inferior.*"[67] In other words, both Said and Fanon's arguments suggest that the position of otherness and the status of inferiority ascribed to the colonized are products of a European process of othering, wherein the approach is guided by tendencies of segregation and demarcation. Just like the inferior position of the black is required to create and assert white European superiority, the existence of the Orient/Other is a prerequisite for the Occident to happen, especially by serving as a counter-image of whatever Europe or the Occident stands for, including morality, civilization, wisdom, courage, etc.

Fanon characterizes the technique adopted in the process of the Other identity formation as one governed by categorization and limitation, where the blacks/colonized are forced to see themselves in the eyes of the colonizers/whites as something different or Other. Recalling a personal experience in France, Fanon narrates how he was referred to by a young white child, who tells her mom, " "Look, a Negro!"… "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" Commenting on this experience, Fanon argues, "I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all *historicity*."[68] Fanon elaborates on the resonance that such objectification and dehumanization left in his mind, suggesting that "I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors."[69] Thus, Fanon contends that the process of the Other identity formation is an accumulation of stereotypes passed down from one generation to the other and is embedded in the white subconscious as historical and epistemic authenticity rather than mere discrimination and bias. Additionally, Fanon highlights that in the European gaze towards the Other, individuality is completely oppressed, ignored, and degraded into mere categorization based on skin color. It is this categorization that Fanon describes as a thorough negation and objectification of black individuality, reducing them into a group or race instead of recognizing them as unique and independent human beings. Therefore, Fanon believes that within a white society, "[blacks are] given no chance. ..[they are] overdetermined from without…[they are] the slave not of the "idea" that others have of…[them] but of …[their] own appearance."[70]

---

[65] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 62.
[66] Said, *Orientalism*, 1-2.
[67] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 69.
[68] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 84.
[69] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 84.
[70] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 87.

The theoretical and experimental perspectives outlined by Said, Bhabha, and Fanon offer a comparative framework through which the dissertation will address the interrogation of colonial misrepresentations as well as the reconstruction of postcolonial identity in the selected works. In what follows, the analysis will shift to Achebe's responses to cultural disruption and identity reformation, before turning to Coetzee and his critique of colonial representation and the role of physicality in reshaping postcolonial Black identities.

Chapter 3: In the Shadow of 'Othering': Contesting Colonial Identities in Achebe and Coetzee's Worlds

As has been established in the introductory chapter, colonialist literature was produced as a part of a larger colonial agenda that sought to defend, promote, and justify colonial occupation, often by degrading and dehumanizing the natives while promoting the social, religious, and technological advancement and superiority of the colonizer. Subsequently, it was in this process of defining the colonized natives and limiting their existence to barbarism, chaos, and irrationality that the identities of such peoples were confiscated, degraded, misrepresented, and disseminated as inarguable facts through Western colonial discourse. Against this background of identity (mis)formation, postcolonial literature emerged as a response to such biased misrepresentations and one-dimensional discourse, offering an avenue for postcolonial authors to redefine and regenerate native identities that had been colonized and appropriated by precursor canonical colonial texts. The chapter begins by briefly shedding light on the crisis of identity in postcolonial literature and the essential role that literature undertakes in forming and re-forming postcolonial identities independent of colonial tags. In this respect, the focus of this chapter will shift to examine the selected works of Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee as exemplary efforts through which both authors embark on a journey to redefine and regenerate African identities in the aftermath of colonial encounters.

Within the broader scope of postcolonialism, the role of postcolonial authors can be seen as that of reformers who invest their literary efforts to regenerate, reconstruct, and redefine the identities propagated through Western discourse—an endeavor that Albert Paolini sees as representing the essence of postcolonialism in "resisting the power/knowledge of occidental universalism and staking out a space for differentiation in its constitution of an autonomous identity."[71] Postcolonial writers, particularly those of African descent, were confronted with a substantial challenge to reform and re-form what had been misrepresented for ages. Highlighting this issue, Helen Tiffin argues that postcolonial writers are motivated by an incentive

> to establish or rehabilitate self against either European appropriation or rejection…such establishing or rehabilitation of an independent identity involves the radical interrogation and fracturing of these imposed European perspectives, and their "systematic"… replacement by an alternative vision, or the attack on or erosion of the very notion of system and hegemonic control itself.[72]

The dilemma of identity was both at an individual and collective level for postcolonial authors, who were not only reforming their own identities or those of specific individuals but were also representatives and spokesmen of entire communities whose identities were colonized and misrepresented. In such an endeavor, Paolini adds, "the need for an

---

[71] Albert J. Paolini, *Navigating Modernity: Postcolonialism, Identity, and International Relations*, edited by Anthony Elliot and Anthony Moran, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1999), 63.
[72] Helen Tiffin, "Post-Colonialism, Post-Modernism and the Rehabilitation of Post-Colonial History," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 23 (1988): 1.

independent identity and the empowerment of the (post)colonial agent become the raison d'être."[73]

Since colonialism and colonial discourse rejected any form of individuality in colonial communities and degraded them into fixed stereotypical identities, postcolonial authors laid heavy emphasis on the issue of collective identity in an attempt to retrieve its essence from the historical trauma of colonialism. Therefore, writing postcolonial literature was not merely an artistic and literary production but an active mode of resisting imperial stories and identities that faced neither contestation nor negation and were accepted as given facts. In other words, postcolonial authors took the initiative to tell the stories and histories of their communities in their own voices and from their unique perspectives, an issue that Achebe, for example, clearly asserts in the process of becoming a postcolonial writer, suggesting that there are many reasons for becoming a writer, the first of which is that there is "an overpowering urge to tell a story."[74] Moreover, Simon During adds that the process of writing postcolonial literature that rejects a misrepresented identity and attempts to create a liberated one is representative of "the need, in nations or groups that have been victims of imperialism, to achieve an identity uncontaminated by universalist or Eurocentric concepts and images."[75] Therefore, the mission of postcolonial African writers was of dual nature, for they were faced with the effort of not only retrieving their colonially appropriated identities but also reshaping, reconstructing, and regenerating them.

For postcolonial writers, writing postcolonial literature emerges as a medium for self-expression and reclaiming agency in a history that is governed by power hierarchies and fixed modes of identification. In other words, postcolonial writers ultimately challenge the fixed and static identities imposed by colonial discourse and call for a recognition and reclamation of the cultural vibrancy and hybridity within colonial communities. Addressing this matter, C. L. Innes argues that "postcolonial rewritings reject the very concept of fixed oppositions and hierarchies. For their authors are also laying claim to a double or multiple inheritance… expressing a mixture of cultural interchanges and interactions through time, rather than affirming a fixed ancestral identity."[76] Rejecting colonial discourse of dehumanization, postcolonial writers celebrate their cultural roots and traditions prevalent in the pre-colonial era, and in such a reclamation, they reflect the richness of these cultures and the diversity of native identities, especially through recalling indigenous myths, folklore, and oral traditions. While postcolonial authors celebrate pre-colonial identities, they never claim that such identities were original, pure, and intact; on the contrary, they acknowledge the hybridity of native identities, especially within African communities. Through their writings, postcolonial writers depict the interconnectedness and mixedness of identities, whether they are a product of intra-African or extra-African interaction. In this way, the imperative of identity re-formation in postcolonial literature serves not only to elucidate the nature of pre-colonial

[73] Paolini, *Navigating Modernity: Postcolonialism, Identity, and International Relations*, 64.
[74] Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38.
[75] Simon During, "Postmodernism or Post-colonialism Today," in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, ed. G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin and B. Ashcroft (London: Routledge, 1985), 125.
[76] C. L. Innes, "The Politics of Rewriting", in *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature*. Edited by Shirley Chew and David Richards.(Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 75.

identity but also as a confirmation of the existence of such vibrant identities, thus rejecting the colonial discourse shaped by denial, fixity, and degradation of colonially imposed identities.

3.1. From Tradition to Transformation: Negotiating Identity in Achebe's Igbo World of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*

The issue of identity in Achebe's seminal works *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* is not depicted as a static and simple question but rather emerges as a profound concern staggering over the precipice of change. Set in pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria, Achebe skillfully depicts the vibrancy and different facets of identities in the pre-colonial Igbo community, subsequently shifting his focus to the battering that such social serenity and harmony receive due to the intervention of colonial forces and Western ideologies. Indeed, it is the cultural clash between tradition and modernity that Achebe portrays as having a transformative and oppressive impact both on individual and collective levels, forcing characters like Okonkwo and Ezeulu to confront the decline of their traditional roles and positions in a shattered community that is losing the grip of its own identity. Torn between the traditions of their cultural heritage and the imperatives of an entirely new colonial paradigm, both characters struggle to define their identity and position in a world where the once-customary has been irretrievably altered.

Besides being a response to misrepresentations of African natives in colonial discourse, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are first and foremost directed toward an African audience. For Achebe, one of the most important duties of writing such novels is to instill in Igbo natives a renewed sense of pride in their colonized identity and history. In his essay titled "The Novelist as Teacher," Achebe considers the process of writing itself as an "adequate revolution," aiming to, he asserts

> help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement…For no thinking African can escape the pain of the wound in our soul…I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.[77]

Achebe's exploration of identity extends beyond the realm of individual identities and the personal level, incorporating social, religious, and cultural dimensions of both characters' worlds. It is through this examination that Achebe presents his critical interrogation of identities disseminated by colonial discourse, besides representing an alternative (hi)story of pre-colonial Africa. Shedding light on the lives and times of the pre-colonial Igbo community, Achebe offers an alternative version of such identities while also acknowledging the inevitability of change brought about by colonial intervention.

---

[77] Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher," in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, (New York : Anchor Books, 1976), 58-59.

3.1.1 The Clash of Cultures and the Crisis of Igbo Identity

3.1.1.1 Pre-Colonial Identity

Prior to the arrival of the colonizers, Achebe depicts a vibrant picture of the pre-colonial life and social structures of the Igbo society in the two fictional villages of Umuofia and Umuaro. He clearly portrays a strong and complex cultural identity governed and shaped by elaborate indigenous social structures, including political systems, judicial powers, oral traditions, rituals, and religious ceremonies. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe describes how the village of Umuofia is governed by a council of elders, or *ndichie,* who hold hereditary titles in the village, especially pertaining to taking public decisions and enforcing laws, thus representing the judicial power in the village. For example, when a clash between the two villages of Umuofia and Mbiano takes place following the murder of a Umuofian woman, the elders send Okonkwo as an emissary, who returns with a young lad (Ikemefuna) and a virgin girl. Upon hearing Okonkwo's report, the elders decide that "the girl should go to Ogbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife. As for the boy… Okonkwo was, therefore, asked on behalf of the clan to look after him in the interim."[78] Moreover, Achebe depicts the village as having a system of titles and honors that individuals can earn based on their merits and achievements. For example, the novel opens with the narrator celebrating Okonkwo's prowess as a wrestler and a farmer in a way that highlights how social values are placed on strength and hard work, for Okonkwo's "fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat… Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan."[79] The narrator further praises Okonkwo for his agricultural success, adding that Okonkwo" was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams…he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars."[80] In this regard, C. L. Innes argues, "The Igbo community presented to us in *Things Fall Apart* is one which has established a balance, though sometimes an uneasy one, between the values clustered around individual achievement and those associated with community."[81]

Similarly, Achebe draws a vivid picture of pre-colonial life in *Arrow of God*, where he continues to explore the complex structure of the Igbo community of Umuaro. Like Umuofia, Umuaro is also governed by a group of *ndichie*, or elders, who also hold pivotal roles in the decision-making process and are represented as the guardians of Igbo customs and traditions. For example, the elders and men of title, also representing judicial power in the village, gather to decide whether the village should go into war against Okperi regarding a land dispute. However, unlike *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe highlights the internal struggle within the Igbo community in *Arrow of God*, an idea clearly depicted in the land dispute scene. Although Ezeulu rejects the war and tells the men of the village that " Ulu would not fight an unjust war,"[82] the narrator states that " Umuaro was divided in two. Many people gathered

[78] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York : Anchor Books, 1994), 12.
[79] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 3.
[80] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 8.
[81] C. L. Innes, *Chinua Achebe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25.
[82] Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (New York : Anchor Books, 1969), 15.

round Ezeulu and said they stood with him. But there were others who went with Nwaka."[83] However, in parallel with his celebration of indigenous social norms and traditions in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe showcases how the village of Umuaro has a system of titles and reverence that reflects the cultural and social intricacies of the Igbo people. This idea is evident in the character of Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu, the highest deity in Umuaro. Being the Chief Priest, Ezeulu represents the highest spiritual position in the village and is deemed a mediator between the spiritual and earthly realms. The villagers hold Ezeulu in high esteem, a position that Ezeulu himself contemplates with astonishment at its power and responsibility, as the narrator asserts, " Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people he wondered if it was real."[84] Thus, through this symbiotic relationship between spirituality and social commitment, Achebe highlights the Igbo's deep connection to their deity and spiritual beliefs while also showing their adherence to communal dynamics.

At this point, it becomes essential to recall Said's assertion that "because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.[85] Said's theorization here is directly related to the ways in which the Orient was dehumanized, alienated, and essentialized in imperial discourse to a fixed object that shaped the mentality of Western thought. However, Achebe's clear depictions of the rich and complex pre-colonial life of both Igbo villages endows his texts with a narrative counter-discourse that seeks to dismantle, challenge, and subvert colonial misconceptions created and fostered through literary (mis)representations.

Achebe also sheds light on the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo community in both novels by stressing the importance of proverbs, folktales, and songs in preserving and transmitting indigenous Igbo knowledge, culture, and history across generations. Achebe infuses the novel with a set of Igbo proverbs that explicitly reflect their culture. One proverb states " As the lbo say: "When the moon is shining the cripple becomes hungry for a walk.""[86] Another proverb advises, "As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness."[87] The concept of destiny is also reflected in the proverb, "the lbo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi[88] says yes also."[89]. Finally, a proverb about learning through observation states, "As our people say, 'When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth'."[90]

Reflecting upon this issue, C. L. Innes argues that by bringing to focus the issue of proverbs and orality, Achebe "speaks *for* his society, not as an individual apart from it - he is the chorus rather than the hero. As such he embodies not only the values and assumptions of his

[83] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 26.
[84] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 3.
[85] Said, *Orientalism*, 3.
[86] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 7.
[87] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 19.
[88] Chi: is the personal god in Igbo culture.
[89] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 27.
[90] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 70-71.

community, but also its traditions, its history, its past; and the present."[91] The importance of stories in the novel transcends the level of entertainment to reach a level of education and cultural preservation. For example, whenever Okonkwo wants to teach his sons the Igbo values of masculinity, he invites them to sit with him in his *obi*, (hut) and tells them "stories of the land-masculine stories of violence and bloodshed."[92] Additionally, the story that Ekwefi, Okonkwo's wife, tells her daughter Ezinma about the tortoise and the birds carries important lessons regarding the dangers of arrogance and greed as well as the importance of cohesion within the community.

Likewise, Achebe continues to stress the importance of orality, including proverbs and storytelling, as mediums of cultural exhibition and preservation in *Arrow of God*. Achebe represents proverbs and oral traditions as the essence of maintaining an indigenous pre-colonial Igbo identity and as a medium for transmitting knowledge and history across generations. For example, one proverb states, "the people of Umuaro had a saying that the noise even of the loudest events must begin to die down by the second market week."[93] Another proverb warns, "it looks like the saying of our ancestors that when brothers fight to death a stranger inherits their father's estate."[94] A similar message is conveyed in the proverb: " we have a saying that a toad does not run in the day unless something is after it."[95] In *Arrow of God*, Chief Priest Ezeulu becomes a symbol of the power of orality and rhetoric, where he primarily functions as a medium to interpret the will of the god Ulu over different disputes and matters. For example, when he chastises his fellow villagers for waging an unjust war against the village of Okperi, Ezeulu perceives such an action as " the ruin of the world."[96] He clearly and bravely confronts the village men, saying that such a war is unlawful and against the will of gods, stating, " If you choose to fight a man for a piece of farmland that belongs to him I shall have no hand in it." [97]

Despite the vulnerability of oratory and the fact that Ezeulu fails to convince the villagers not to indulge in this war, Ezeulu's role can be seen as an interpreter of the past and a medium through which historical knowledge and traditions are passed orally through generations. Ezeulu's role primarily functions as a reminder for his Igbo community to remember their history and cultural identity and maintain a form of social cohesion. As for folkloric stories, Achebe does not directly include full stories like those narrated in *Things Fall Apart*. However, he infuses the characters' conversations and speeches with Igbo folkloric tales as a means of preserving values and cultural memory. For example, in a conversation between Nwaka and Ezidemili (the Chief Priest of god Idemili), the latter narrates some folkloric stories about the origin of Idemili: "I heard it from the mouth of the last Ezidemili just before he died… Idemili means Pillar of Water. As the pillar of this house holds the roof so does

[91] Innes, *Chinua Achebe* , 32.
[92] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 53.
[93] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 92.
[94] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 220.
[95] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 20.
[96] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 15.
[97] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 15.

Idemili hold up the Raincloud in the sky so that it does not fall down. Idemili belongs to the sky and that is why I, his priest, cannot sit on bare earth."[98]

Beyond individual stories and folkloric tales, Achebe emphasizes the role of rituals and religious ceremonies in maintaining the social cohesion and cultural identity of the Igbo community depicted in both works. In *Things Fall Apart*, the depiction of the *egwugwu*[99] rituals is representative of the Igbo's deep connection to their forefathers and cultural norms. Describing the *egwugwu* ritual performed to solve the dispute between a woman and her husband, the narrator describes : "The *egwugwu* house was now a pandemonium of quavering voices: Aru oyim *de de de dei!* filled the air as the spirits of the ancestors , just emerged from the earth, greeted themselves in their esoteric language."[100] He further adds, "Each of the nine *egwugwu* represented a village of the clan. Their leader was called Evil Forest."[101] Admitting his inability to solve the dispute, the husband admits, "I have brought the matter to the fathers of the clan,"[102] thus further showing the law and order that governed the village. Further highlighting the status of the *egwugwu*, one of them asks the husband, "Uzowulu's body, do you know me?" and the latter replies, "How can I know you, father? You are beyond our knowledge."[103] In this regard, Chinwe Okechukwu contends,

> Achebe delineates the importance of the *egwugwu* as the upholder of the laws of the land, the awe it inspires, and the respect that it gets from the people as the spirit of the people's ancestors…Even the highest man in Umuofia defers to the *egwugwu*…By thus lining up these different facets of the people's lives, Achebe brings out the virtues of the people and their culture, thereby teaching his people that there is nothing to be ashamed of in [their] past.[104]

Achebe continues to explore the importance of festivals and rituals in *Arrow of God*, further showing their effect on maintaining the social cohesion and identity of the Igbo community. In this novel, Achebe highlights two main festivals, the first of which is the feast of the Pumpkin Leaves, in which Ezeulu reenacts the first coming of Ulu, the communal god of all villages, and performs a cleansing of the village's sins. Stressing the role of such a festival in social cohesion, the narrator describes the unitary atmosphere by showing how "A stranger to this year's festival might go away thinking that Umuaro had never been more united in all its history." He further adds that in the holiness of this gathering, " the great hostility between Umunnenora and Umuachala seemed, momentarily, to lack significance."[105] At the end of this festival, Chief Priest Ezeulu runs back to "his shrine, triumphant over the sins of Umuaro, which he was now burying deep into the earth with the six bunches of leaves."[106]

---

[98] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 42.
[99] Masked figures who represent the spirits of ancestors.
[100] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 88.
[101] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 89.
[102] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 91.
[103] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 90.
[104] Chinwe Christiana Okechukwuu, *Achebe the Orator: The Art of Persuasion in Chinua Achebe's Novels* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 20.
[105] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 67.
[106] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 73.

The second ritual celebrated in the novel is the New Yam feast, an annual event that the Igbo celebrate, marking the harvest season of yams while also expressing their gratitude to their god, Ulu. In terms of social cohesion, the New Yam feast was basically set to remind "the six villages of their coming together in ancient times and of their continuing debt to Ulu, who saved them from the ravages of the Abam."[107] With all six villages participating and sharing their harvest together, the feast plays an important role in connecting Igbo people to their traditions and ancestral practices as well as fostering social bonds. Drawing attention to the importance of such rituals in relation to Igbo identity, D. Ibe Nwoga argues, " These then are festivals in which human activities are given sacred dimensions and ritual reinforcement, in which the unity within the community and between the human beings and the gods is revalidated."[108] Indeed, such rituals presented in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* extend beyond mere religious practices to serve as a powerful representation of social cohesion through which Achebe celebrates the complexity and uniqueness of the cultural and religious identity of Igbo people.

As established in Chapter One, the image of Africa was painted with a negative colonial brush, for the entire continent was frequently depicted as the 'dark continent' and a place shrouded in exoticism, danger, and mystery. Colonial descriptions often emphasized the savagery of African natives, trivializing their cultures and social traditions while also fostering an image of them as barbaric and uncivilized. Moreover, as C. L. Innes argues, European perspective towards Africa was driven by a complete denigration of Africa's past, portraying the continent as a place devoid of history and that its history gained significance only upon the arrival of Europeans.[109] In this regard, Achebe's detailed description of the pre-colonial Igbo culture serves as a means to root Igbo identity out of European misrepresentations. Through his works, Achebe tends to regenerate an identity completely neglected in the colonial history of Africa, highlighting that

> Africa was not a vacuum before the coming of Europe, that culture was not unknown in Africa, that culture was not brought to Africa by the white world…[Europeans] came to Africa and said, "You have no history, you have no civilization, you have no culture, you have no religion. You are lucky we are here. Now you are hearing about these things from us for the first time." Well, you know, we didn't just drop from the sky. We too had our own history, traditions, cultures, civilizations.[110]

In a similar vein, Chris Kwame Awuyah skillfully depicts how, centuries before Achebe celebrated this Igbo spirit, Olaudah Equiano also offered a detailed description of the vibrant Igbo culture. In his book, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, Equiano represents his pre-enslavement life and paints a clear picture of his birthplace.[111] Equiano

---

[107] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 202.
[108] D. Ibe Nwoga, "The Igbo World of Achebe's 'Arrow of God.'" *Research in African Literatures* 12, no. 1 (1981): 19. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818550.
[109] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) , 8.
[110] Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 108.
[111] Chris Kwame Awuyah. "Chinua Achebe's '*Arrow of God'*: Ezeulu's Response to Change." *College Literature* 19/20, no. 3/1 (1992): 218. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25112005.

notes, "we are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets. Every great event, such as triumphant return from battle, or other cause of public rejoicing, is celebrated in public dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion."[112] Thus, Achebe's detailed portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo culture, traditions, social customs, and belief systems dismantles the fallacy propagated by Eurocentric discourse, showing a well-balanced society with a complex and rich cultural history. By so doing, Achebe not only debunks colonial myths of Africa but also clearly celebrates the depth and resilience of Igbo history and cultural identity.

3.1.1.2. Colonial Disruption: Why Did Things Fall Apart ?

As established in Chapter One,[113] the arrival of British colonialism in Nigeria and its influences were not limited to political and economic issues. Colonialism created a cultural clash that undermined the social cohesion and consistency of Nigerian society. It is through this cultural clash that traditional beliefs and practices, revered for ages, were deemed inferior and nonsensical by the colonizers. The introduction of Christianity and the colonial system of governance led to social and cultural fragmentation within the Igbo community, and the once-unified social structure began to fall apart. In his novels, Chinua Achebe depicts the devastating impact of colonialism on Igbo society and the way such an intervention places Igbo identity in a state of crisis and forces Igbo people to face the new, unsettling reality.

In both novels, the arrival of Christian missionaries and their construction of churches and colonial courts undermine both the Igbo legal system, controlled by the elders, as well as the religious authority practiced by oracles and priests in both villages. In *Things Fall Apart*, while Okonkwo is spending his seven-year exile, colonial missionaries arrive at Umuofia, where they start to preach people as representatives of God and tell the villagers that "they worshipped false gods, gods of wood and stone," as well as advise them to "leave [their] wicked ways and false gods."[114] Likewise, *Arrow of God* depicts the arrival of Mr. John Goodcountry, a native convert to Christianity, who starts preaching to the people of Umuaro about dismissing their religion and traditions and how "the early Christians of the Niger Delta who fought the bad customs of their people, destroyed shrines and killed the sacred iguana."[115] Moreover, he incites the villagers to kill their sacred symbols, including the sacred python, arguing that " You address the python as Father. It is nothing but a snake…If you are afraid to kill it do not count yourself a Christian.''[116]

Along with Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, converting to Christianity and Enoch's unmasking of an *egwugwu* in public, one illustrative example of the transformation of Igbo identity dynamics in *Things Fall Apart* is Achebe's depiction of a clear distinction between the pre-colonial role

---

[112] Olaudah Equiano. "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African."*The Classic Slave Narrative*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1987.) 14. As cited in Chris Kwame Awuyah. "Chinua Achebe's 'Arrow of God': Ezeulu's Response to Change." *College Literature* 19/20, no. 3/1 (1992): 218

[113] See, 1.3.1 "Nigeria under British Colonial Control"

[114] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 145.

[115] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 47.

[116] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 47.

of the Oracle Agbala and her diminished influence after the arrival of colonialism. Right from the outset, the narrative establishes that Umuofia "never went to war unless its case was clear and just and was accepted as such by its Oracle-the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves… If the clan had disobeyed the Oracle they would surely have been beaten."[117] Achebe also depicts how people sought guidance from the Oracle through consultations; for example, Okonkwo's father used to "consult the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest."[118] However, after the arrival of colonialism, Clayton G. MacKenzie argues, "the notion of the traditional "Oracle," so strong hitherto, disappears without a trace from the novel. It is never again mentioned or even intimated."[119]

Achebe further highlights this issue when one of the converts kills the royal python, "the emanation of the god of water,"[120] and the people of Umuofia gather to discuss how he should be punished. The social fraction can be seen in the disparity evident between Okonkwo's opinion, which advocates expelling the convert out of the village as a form of revenge, and other members of the village who contend that "It is not our custom to fight for our gods…Let us not presume to do so now. If a man kills the sacred python in the secrecy of his hut, the matter lies between him and the god."[121] Reflecting upon this disparity, MacKenzie comments, "A fascinating modification of devotion has occurred here…the very cornerstone of clan being, has suddenly become distanced from the actuality of the existence of Umuofia…the indigenous religious order has abruptly become remote and distant."[122]

Indeed, the absence of the "indigenous religious order" that MacKenzie speaks of is perhaps the very same reason why the Igbo community loses the cohesion and unity celebrated in the first chapter of the novel. As the novel nears its conclusion and after Okonkwo's release from prison alongside a group of other leaders in the village, Okonkwo's inner feelings discern a collective social retreat from established principles. When the villagers gather and discuss the possibility of a great revolution against the white man, a colonial messenger intervenes to dismiss the meeting and ends up being killed by Okonkwo. It is at this very moment that Okonkwo realizes and feels the change that has infected his own community. In this moment of recognition, Okonkwo "knew that Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had, let the other messengers escape."[123] Rather than being a spark for the fire that will face the white man, Okonkwo's action was received by the villagers with a huge tumult, from which Okonkwo "discerned fright" rather than support or a fervor for announcing the war. The villagers' response was a huge shock and disappointment for Okonkwo, who, in the night before, thought that such a gathering would be an announcement of war and "the bitterness in his heart was…mixed with a kind of childlike excitement. Before he had gone to bed he had-brought down his war dress."[124] In fact, Achebe foreshadows the dismantle of social unity

[117] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 12.
[118] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 16.
[119] Clayton G. MacKenzie, "The Metamorphosis of Piety in Chinua Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*"" *Research in African Literatures* 27, no. 2 (1996): 131. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3820166
[120] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 157.
[121] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 158.
[122] Clayton G. MacKenzie, "The Metamorphosis of Piety," 132.
[123] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 205.
[124] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 199.

through the words of Obierika, who seems to be the only character who truly apprehends the colonial project. He tells Okonkwo, "How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man…has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart."[125] However, realizing that he would fight this war alone and that "the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women,"[126] would not rise up against the white man, Okonkwo commits suicide. Reflecting upon this issue, Joko Sengova argues that such an act represents Okonkwo's last attempt to affirm his identity in a community deteriorated by colonialism and the " last resort to convey a strong message about his strength and character."[127]

However, unlike *Things Fall Apart* and Okonkwo's encounter with a sudden social crisis, Achebe's *Arrow of God* highlights an internal tension that simmered inside the village of Umuaro even before the arrival of colonialism. This tension mostly revolves around the issue of power and authority between the Chief Priest, Ezeulu, and a character named Nwaka, one of the wealthiest men in the village, who is depicted as Ezeulu's nemesis. When the village of Umuaro is about to get into a war with the village of Okperi over a peace of land, Ezeulu advises the people that they should not get involved in this war, for the land originally belonged to Okperi. However, Nwaka starts to incite people against Ezeulu, arguing that " He is a man of ambition; he wants to be king, priest, diviner, all. His father, they said, was like that too. But Umuaro showed him that Igbo people knew no kings."[128] Motivated by his friendship with Ezidemili, the priest of god Idemili, who harbors great jealousy against Ezeulu's esteemed position, Nwaka challenges god Ulu itself, telling the villagers that if Ulu rejected this war, they must never forget "how the people of Aninta dealt with their deity when he failed them. Did they not carry him to the boundary between them and their neighbours and set fire on him?"[129] Highlighting this tension and its effect on social cohesion, the narrator describes how, following that public debate between Ezeulu and Nwaka, "Umuaro was divided in two. Many people gathered round Ezeulu and said they stood with him. But there were others who went with Nwaka."[130]

Following Nwaka's call and ignoring Ezeulu's, the village launches a war against Okperi until the intervention of British colonial forces ends the war and destroys the weapons of both villages. Indeed, this colonial intervention marks the beginning of colonial penetration inside the village in its different social, political, and religious matters. Thus, the existing tension between the leaders of the village creates a fragile social structure, which, upon the arrival of colonialism, is further exploited to deepen the social crack and create a more profound crisis for the Igbo's traditional identity. In this novel, Achebe presents the character of Mr. Goodcountry as one of the basic figures affecting traditional Igbo identity. Apart from

[125] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 176.
[126] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 183.
[127] Joko Sengova, "Native Identity and Alienation in Richard Wright's "*Native Son*" and Chinua Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*": A Cross-Cultural Analysis" *The Mississippi Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1996): 341.
[128] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 27.
[129] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 27.
[130] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 26.

inciting the people to kill the sacred python, he tends to erase their entire "false" traditions by changing their names as well, an issue that he clearly states when he addresses Oduche, Ezeulu's son, saying, "When the time comes for your baptism you will be called Peter."[131] Additionally, when Moses Unachukwu, one of the Christian converts who opposes Goodcountry's radical approach to conversion, chastises Oduche for his support of killing the python and tells him, "I shall be waiting for the day when you will have the courage to kill a python in this Umuaro. A coward may cover the ground with his words but when the time comes to fight he runs away," [132] Oduche makes up his mind to kill the python. Although Oduche's attempt fails, he gets caught locking the python inside the box, and the news spreads across the village. Thus, Oduche's crime, Robert M. Wren argues, "gives Idemili's priest [Ezidemili] an opportunity to insult Ezeulu, intensifying the conflict which leads to disaster."[133] In this regard, Chinwe Okechukwu highlights the divisive role of Mr. Goodcountry and the shrewdness of his selection, arguing that for Mr. Goodcountry, "Oduche is a good choice. He is the son of the chief priest of the highest deity. He is young and immature and, therefore, full of zeal. Achebe shows how ripe Oduche is for exploitation."[134]

Social cohesion is further put to the test when the British District Officer, T. K. Winterbottom, calls Ezeulu to visit him in Okperi to discuss with him the possibility of joining the colonial administration and being their representative in the village. Upon learning the news, Nwaka intensifies his efforts to undermine Ezeulu's position, implicitly branding him a traitor to the community. Nwaka declares, " The white man is Ezeulu's friend and has sent for him. What is so strange about that? He did not send for me. He did not send for Udeozo; he did not send for the priest of Idemili…He has asked Ezeulu. Why? Because they are friends."[135] However, Ezeulu rejects the colonial offer, proudly asserting that "Ezeulu will not be anybody's chief, except Ulu."[136] Nevertheless, Ezeulu's enemies never receive such act of defiance, and they wonder " How could he refuse the very thing he had been planning and scheming for all these years."[137] However, upon Ezeulu's release from prison, he rejects calling the New Yam feast, arguing that this is the will of god Ulu, not his. Despite the elders intervention, Ezeulu maintains his refusal, and the yams in the village begin to rot, precipitating a severe famine that threatens the entire village. Achebe depicts how Ezeulu's refusal marks one of the climax moments in the novel, for "Almost overnight Ezeulu had become something of a public enemy in the eyes of all."[138] It is this very moment that Mr. Goodcountry seizes to strike the hardest blow against the Igbo identity, for he " saw in the present crisis over the New Yam Feast an opportunity for fruitful intervention," and

---

[131] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 49.
[132] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 50.
[133] Robert M. Wren, "From Ulu to Christ: The Transfer of Faith in Chinua Achebe's "Arrow of God"" *Christianity and Literature* 27, no. 1 (1978): 35. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26290099
[134] Chinwe Christiana Okechukwu , "Oratory and Social Responsibility: Chinua Achebe's 'Arrow of God.'" *Callaloo* 25, no. 2 (2002): 581. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3300587.
[135] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 144.
[136] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 174.
[137] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 176.
[138] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 211.

thus he decides that the villagers must " be told that if they made their thank-offering to God they could harvest their crops without fear of Ulu."[139]

Through such a call, Achebe highlights how Mr. Goodcountry challenges the core of the Igbo belief system and thus imposes Christian beliefs, leading to a severe loss of both the cultural and religious identities of Igbo people. Finally, when Ezeulu's son, Obika, dies during a ritual, the elders of the village infer that "their god had taken sides with them against his headstrong and ambitious priest."[140] Following this incident, Achebe's portrayal of the villagers participation in the Christian harvest ceremony can be seen as a symbolic representation of a mass conversion, for this harvest "saw more people than even Goodcountry could have dreamed…[and] [t]hereafter any yam harvested in his fields was harvested in the name of the son."[141] In such a description, Achebe highlights a significant change in religious practice, possibly leading to a complete erosion of traditional Igbo belief, identity, and cultural systems.

At this point, it is pertinent to revisit Bhabha's notion of colonial mimicry, which he defines as the colonial "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*."[142] As indicated earlier, Bhabha views this mimicry as partial and strategic, where colonial cultures compel the colonized to imitate their customs, languages, and social traditions not to create a status of equality and inclusion but rather to foster difference, exclusion, and alienation. In *Things Fall Apart*, this idea is clearly expressed in the character of Nwoye, whose conversion to Christianity leads to a rupture of his identity, starting with his repudiation of his father when he tells Obierika that Okonkwo is not his father, and culminates when he changes his name to Isaac. In other words, Nwoye's mimicry does not qualify him to be a fully equal Christian or European in the eyes of the white man, for even his name is not accepted by them. Similarly, he is no longer accepted in in his indigenous community or domestic household, an idea evident in Okonkwo's disownment when he tells his children, "you have all seen the great abomination of your brother.. Now he is no longer my son or your brother."[143]

A similar example appears in *Arrow of God*, where Ezeulu voluntarily sends his son, Oduche "to learn the new ritual…[and]to learn the white man's wisdom."[144] While Ezeulu's decision can be seen as a sort of strategic mimicry, the results are catastrophic, for Oduche undergoes a total assimilation into the white man's culture and religion. Oduche's attempt to kill the sacred python reveals the deep impact of colonial mimicry and how, like Nwoye, he becomes an alienated and fragmented subject trapped between two cultural worlds. In other words, despite their conversion, neither Nwoye nor Oduche will be accepted or treated as true, genuine Christians, for they will always be treated as the 'native converts' who perform as agents to facilitate colonial imposition on their own native communities. That is to say, this lack of belonging that both Nwoye and Oduche experience is the result of what Bhabha sees

[139] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 215.
[140] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 230.
[141] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 230.
[142] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 122.
[143] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 180.
[144] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 42.

in mimicry as the "sign of double articulation."[145] In other words, Bhabha views mimicry as a source of appropriation and repudiation for the colonized mimicking subject; both charaters become alien to their own communities while, at the same time, never truly accepted by the colonizers.

Apart from colonial success in suppressing the Igbo identity, what seems to infuriate Achebe the most, and he tries to reflect it in the novels, is the way colonialism succeeded in instigating enmity among the indigenous population and how fragile the Igbo community was to fall for such a trap. Achebe highlights how colonialism managed to create a system where achieving social recognition and progress meant betraying Igbo values. This issue can be seen through the Igbo natives employed by colonial administration in both novels, whom David Carroll describes as the ones who "have lost the traditional dignity of the clan and become bad imitations of the white man."[146] In *Things Fall Apart*, this indigenous transformation can be seen when Okonkwo and the five other leaders are imprisoned by the District Commissioner. Although the District Commissioner orders the native court messenger to treat them respectfully, for they are the leaders of Umuofia, the latter humiliates them by shaving their heads, and, joined by other native messengers, they further humiliate them by knocking their heads together in a cruel display of dominance.[147] Likewise, Achebe represents the same idea in *Arrow of God*, however, ironically enough, through the voice of the British District Officer, T. K. Winterbottom. In his criticism of one court messenger, named Obi Ikedi, Winterbottom describes the Igbo thirst for power and domination over their own people,

> Take this libertine we made Chief here. He now calls himself His Highness Obi Ikedi… The man was a complete nonentity until we crowned him, and now he carries on as though he had been nothing else all his life. It's the same with Court Clerks and even messengers. They all manage to turn themselves into little tyrants over their own people.[148]

The examples taken from both novels recall what Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks,* describes as the natives' active involvement in establishing power hierarchies and fostering the state of their Otherness. For rather than defying the status of their servitude or at least limiting their acts to their entitled roles by colonial administrators, they take active roles in oppressing and humiliating their fellow blacks through a process of pseudo-superiority. [149] Fanon further explains such behaviors by suggesting that

> Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality…The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the

[145] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 122.
[146] David Carroll, *Chinua Achebe: Novelist, Poet, Critic*(New York: St. Martin's Press, INC., 1990), 101.
[147] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 195.
[148] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 108.
[149] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 15.

> mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle.[150]

Thus, Fanon's examination of the psychological effects of colonialism on the colonized psyche, especially the loss and negation of cultural roots, values, morals, and traditions, highlights how colonial subjects can transform into agents of oppression in their own societies. In this respect, Achebe's critique echoes Fanon's perceptions in that both the court messengers in *Things Fall Apart* and Obi Ikedi in *Arrow of God* are victims and agents of colonial fracturing of colonized communities, and the way colonial powers succeed in transforming the colonized into agents of colonial domination. Through such examples, Achebe highlights the paradoxical role that indigenous African individuals played in oppressing their own identity, and thus he underscores the insidious impact of colonialism, which extends far beyond the concept of governmental imposition, reaching the core of social cohesion.

3.1.1.3 Neither Ancestral nor Colonial: Achebe's Vision for a Reformed Igbo Identity

Although many readers and critics might perceive Achebe's works as an attempt to praise his Igbo people, depicting them as a utopian community before the arrival of colonialism, he explicitly confirms his critical stance in an interview, stating, "I don't praise my people. I am their greatest critic."[151] While Achebe celebrates Igbo traditions, customs, and social structures in his novels, his vision for a reformed Igbo identity suggests a level of balance. Achebe portrayal the Igbo community lays bare both its advantages and disadvantages, its strengths and limitations. He clearly delivers this message through the actions, beliefs, and personal philosophy of his characters in both novels, showcasing the failure of rigid adherence and inflexibility. It is through his characters also that Achebe calls for a balanced approach that maintains its connection with the benign aspects of Igbo culture while simultaneously embracing the possibility for change and adaptation.

Achebe's vision of a reformed Igbo identity can be better understood using Homi Bhabha's notion of "cultural hybridity", where there is neither assimilation nor imposition between cultures, but rather a "third space" that creates hybrid forms of identities.[152] In *Things Fall Apart*, this idea can be seen in the character of Obierika, Okonkwo's best friend and one of the best and most reasonable men in Umuofia. While Achebe depicts Obierika as a character who holds a deep respect for Igbo traditions and values, he also reveals that Obierika was " a man who thought about things,"[153] for he questions the rationality of several Igbo traditions and customs. For example, when Okonkwo accidentally kills Ezeudu's son during the funeral, the village responds by burning down Okonkwo's properties and killing his live stock, an action that makes Obierika contemplate, "why should a man suffer so grievously for an offense he had committed inadvertently?"[154] It is through Obierika that Achebe criticizes

---

[150] Fanon, *Black Skin,* 9.
[151] Chinua Achebe. "Chinua Achebe, The Art of Fiction." Interview with Jerome Brooks. *The Paris Review,* no 139. 133 (1994): 31.
[152] Homi K. Bhabha. "The Third Space Interview," 211.
[153] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 125.
[154] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 125.

some of the ancient superstitions and violence in his Igbo society, especially when Obierika remembers his twins that he had to throw them away, for twins are considered a bad omen in Igbo beliefs, thinking, "what crime had they committed?"[155] Moreover, Obierika challenges the Oracle's decision, refusing to participate in the killing of Ikemefuna, and chastises Okonkwo for his complicity, telling him, " If I were you I would have stayed at home. What you have done will not please the Earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families."[156] In this regard, Clayton MacKenzie asserts Obierika's exceptionalism, arguing that Obierika is the only one who seems to be questioning the traditional authority of the Oracle in the Igbo culture. He adds,

> Achebe's narrative characterizes Obierika's inaction as being not only at variance with Okonkwo's view of things but with the received canon of traditional deific lore. Obierika claims that "the Oracle did not ask me to carry out its decision" (46), but this is a spurious absolution since, as a member of the clan, he is as responsible as the next clansperson for the execution of the Oracle's instructions.[157]

Thus, through the character of Obierika, Achebe suggests a possibility for a reformed Igbo identity, one that is rooted in Igbo culture and traditions but never succumbs to the level of uncritical conformity. Achebe's depiction of Obierika highlights a hybrid future that never advocates a complete abandonment of tradition but rather openness and a willingness to embrace new perspectives and question the rationality of ancient superstitions.

In *Arrow of God,* Achebe introduces the character of Moses Unachukwu, "the first and the most famous convert in Umuaro,"[158] to highlight the tension between converting to Christianity and the effort to maintain and preserve Igbo traditions and culture. Through Moses character, Achebe represents the complexity of conversion, suggesting that it is not always a voluntary choice or one that is based on a genuine belief. In other words, Achebe implies that Moses' conversion was a result of fear after witnessing the brutality of the British expedition sent to Abame, for what he "saw during that punitive expedition taught him that the white man was not a thing of fun."[159] Achebe uses Moses as a foil to Mr. Goodcountry, highlighting the contrasting approaches to conversion in the novel. Although Moses converts to Christianity, he maintains a deep respect for Igbo traditions and religion, attempting to integrate his new religion with his Igbo cultural heritage. On the other hand, Mr. Goodcountry represents the opposite extreme, for he prioritizes religion over Igbo traditions, culture, and customs and calls for demolishing Igbo religious heritage.

Moses challenges Goodcountry's dictations for killing the sacred python, arguing that the Bible never dictates such actions and then he openly warns Goodcountry, " If you are wise you will face the work they sent you to do here and take your hand off the python."[160] Through this dichotomy between Moses and Mr. Goodcountry, Achebe represents his vision

---

[155] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 125.
[156] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 67.
[157] Clayton G. MacKenzie, "The Metamorphosis of Piety," 129.
[158] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 47.
[159] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 47.
[160] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 48-49.

of an Igbo community and Igbo identity open for change and adaptation. Through the character of Moses, Achebe seems to advocate an identity that accepts coexistence of beliefs and respectful conversion, while, on the other hand, he tends to criticize Goodcountry as a representative of an identity that is driven by a desire for cultural annihilation and demolition of cultural foundations. Achebe's representation of Moses shares similar traits with those of Obierika from *Things Fall Apart*, and it is through such characters that Achebe delivers his message of an exemplary Igbo identity that adheres to hybridity and recognizes the interplay between cultures that promotes understanding and coexistence while resisting dominance and subjugation.

Through his novels as well, Achebe warns against blind adherence to tradition as well as complete assimilation into the colonial system, considering the two poles as forms of extremism that fail to achieve his desired vision of a reformed Igbo identity. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe clearly represents his concerns through the character of Okonkwo, who embodies the blind and rigid adherence to tradition, hypermasculinity, and fear of social shame and instability that ultimately make him a character driven by violence and an inability to accept change. From the outset of the novel, readers are well informed that Okonkwo's father, Unoka, was neither a successful man nor courageous, for he was "lazy and improvident…[he] was a failure. He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat." Moreover, "Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of blood."[161] Therefore, Achebe depicts Okonkwo as a character living in a psychological struggle to negate anything that associates him with his father, for he was "a man of action, a man of war. Unlike his father, he could stand the look of blood."[162]

As Patrick C. Nnoromele argues, in Okonkwo's culture, " a man who was unable to rule his own family was not considered a real man."[163] Thus, the narrator states that Okonkwo "ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children."[164] Okonkwo's fear of being perceived as compassionate drives him to hide all types of affection, even with his own family, for " Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger."[165] Moreover, Okonkwo commits several abominations throughout the story. For example, he heavily beats one of his wives during the sacred week, and even when his other wives remind him of the sacred week, he never stops, for he "was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess."[166] Additionally, his hypermasculinity leads him to participate in the killing of his adopted son, Ikemefuna, driven by his fear of "being thought weak."[167] It is through such examples that Achebe depicts the psychological trauma of Okonkwo, embodied in the fear of resembling his father. Okonkwo's father complex leads

[161] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 5-6.
[162] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 10.
[163] Patrick C. Nnoromele, "The Plight of A Hero in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*", in *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart-New Edition.* Edited by Harold Bloom.(New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 45.
[164] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 13.
[165] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 28.
[166] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 30.
[167] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 61.

him to act cruelly, for the narrator clearly suggests that "Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man." [168] However, the driving force behind his behavior is that

> his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness…It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness…And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion-to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness.[169]

Upon his return from exile, Okonkwo feels extremely disappointed, for his "return to his native land was not as memorable as he had wished. ..Umuofia did not appear to have taken any special notice of the warrior's return."[170] Okonkwo is unable to accept the change that occurred in the village during his exile; everything he strived to prove is no longer important, and the system of social appreciation was entirely altered by the arrival of Christian missionaries. Thus, as a last attempt to revive his sense of hyper masculinity, leadership, and Igbo heroism, Okonkwo beheads a colonial messenger that attempts to disrupt his meeting with the elders of the village, an action that the villagers receive with absolute passivity, for he hears them saying, "Why did he do it ?"[171] Facing this profound change in his community, a change that he fails to accept or coexist with, Okonkwo commits suicide. Reflecting upon this act, Nnoromele argues that Okonkwo "was so overwhelmed by the cumulative effects of his experiences on the road to heroism that he felt the only thing left to do was to commit suicide."[172]

While Okonkwo represents blind adherence to tradition and the inability to accept change, Nwoye, on the other hand, represents the opposite extreme, evident in his conversion to Christianity and his complete abandonment and rejection of Igbo traditions. Throughout the novel, readers come to realize that both Okonkwo and Nwoye are shaped by complex paternal influences, albeit from different perspectives. While Okonkwo struggles to project a fervent rejection of his father, Nwoye, on the other hand, lives in an internal struggle to meet his father's expectations of being manly. The relationship between Nwoye and Okonkwo was never based on paternal advice and education but rather on domestic violence, for whenever Okonkwo wanted to correct his son, he resorted to beating him.[173] Throughout the novel, Nwoye tries his hardest to meet his father's expectations, especially when he fakes his admiration of Okonkwo's war stories. However, although "Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent, but somehow he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell."[174] Nwoye's childhood was governed by paternal cruelty and incomprehensibility of Igbo customs, for when he hears the sound of abandoned twins crying, he never comprehends the meaning of such a practice, for "a vague chill had descended on him and his head had seemed to swell, like a solitary walker at night who passes an evil spirit on the way. Then

[168] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 13.
[169] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 13.
[170] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 182.
[171] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 205.
[172] Patrick C. Nnoromele, "The Plight of A Hero in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*,"48.
[173] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 13.
[174] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 53.

something had given way inside him."[175] In this regard, Thomas Jay Lynn asserts that Nwoye is "wounded not only by his father's brutality but also by indigenous customs."[176]

The killing of Ikemefuna represents the turning point for Nwoye, for upon realizing the death of his adoptive brother, Whittaker and Hangson Msiska argue, he "openly rebel[s] against traditional ideals of masculine behavior in the [Igbo] culture."[177] Indeed, the killing of Ikemefuna can be seen as the fracturing of the last remaining paternal tie between Nwoye and his father and eliminating his connection with the core of Igbo culture. When Christian missionaries arrive in Mbanta, the village where Okonkwo spends his exile, Nwoye gets the chance to meet and hear their words. It is at this very moment that Nwoye finds solace and answers to the questions that were occupying his mind regarding the twins and the death of Ikemefuna. Listening to the missionary's words, Nwoye, the narrator states

> had been captivated…It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul-the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul.[178]

Nwoye starts to get attached to the missionaries and their new religion, and his first act of defiance is when Obierika asks him about his father, and the latter replies, " I don't know. He is not my father."[179] Nwoye's second act of defiance occurs when Okonkwo discovers his son's visits to the church, resulting in beating him heavily until he is saved by Uchendu, Okonkwo's uncle. It is at this moment that Nwoye leaves the house and never returns. In this regard, Abiola Irele comments, " Nwoye's defection to Christianity later on has a double significance—it is at the same time an act of revolt against his father as well as a rejection of the society that he embodied."[180] In this respect, Fanon's concept of inferiority can be used to understand Nwoye's decision. That is to say, throughout the novel, Achebe depicts how Nwoye is unable to understand and reconcile the behaviors of his father's rigid masculinity as well as some of the brutal Igbo customs, such as the killing of Ikemefuna or why newborn twins should be left to die in the wilderness. In this realm of existential and religious dilemma, Fanon's concepts that "the feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European's feeling of superiority,"[181] clearly defines Nwoye's decisions. In other words, building upon what he witnessed from his own Igbo culture, Nwoye views Christianity as a source of moral, ethical, and religious superiority, as well as a deep source of emotional relief, thus unintentionally demonizing his own culture. Describing his fascination, the narrator asserts how, for Nwoye,

---

[175] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 62.
[176] Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration*, 7.
[177] David Whittaker and Mpalive- Hangson Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 11.
[178] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 147.
[179] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 144.
[180] Abiola Irele, "The Tragic Conflict in the Novels of Chinua Achebe" in *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*, eds. C. L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors (Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1978), 13.
[181] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 69.

> It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul-the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul. [182]

Thus, rather than being a spiritual and theological awakening, Fanon perceives such a conversion as a sort of psychological disintegration and alienation—a detachment wherein the colonized other seeks meaning and dignity through approaching the colonizer's cultural and religious criteria. However, the Igbo perspective on Nwoye's conversion to Christianity is clearly described in Okonkwo's words as " the very depth of abomination,"[183] for his actions defy the core Igbo beliefs, which, for him, are based on violence and rigid social order compared to Christianity, which emphasizes peace and forgiveness. Highlighting Nwoye's rejection of his father's ideals and the entire Igbo culture, Gareth Griffiths asserts,

> Nwoye…puts personal feelings above social responsibility. …[his] greater capacity for personal relationships and his deeper feelings for personal value is clearly a gain; but one which is accompanied by a loss of pride, of social unity and clarity of purpose. It involves the destruction of the tribe as the unit of value.[184]

In other words, Achebe depicts how Nwoye's action goes beyond mere conversion and reaches a level of complete renunciation. Not only does he reject his father's ideals and principles of Igbo culture, but he also rejects his own name and takes on the name Isaac, thus discarding the last thread that connects him to everything related to Igbo culture.

Achebe's *Arrow of God* further builds upon his critique of both uncritical adherence to tradition and complete assimilation into the colonial system. As explored earlier, Achebe depicts Ezeulu as a character deeply committed to preserving the Igbo customs and rituals that serve as the cornerstone of his community's religious beliefs and social order. However, in his criticism of Ezeulu's inflexibility, Achebe does not represent him as an entirely negative character in his practices and decisions. Unlike Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Abiola Irele argues, "whose exterior demonstration of strength is a compensation for an internal weakness, Ezeulu's external stature reposes upon the firm foundations of a stable, coherent mental structure."[185] Achebe tends to describe how Ezeulu's rigid adherence and commitment can be seen as tragic inflexibility, especially when faced with a threatening change.

Achebe highlights Ezeulu's inflexibility through several scenes in the novel. For example, the narrator describes the way Ezeulu treats his children "like little boys, and if they ever said no

---

[182] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 147.
[183] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 153.
[184] Gareth Griffiths, "Language and Action in the Novels of Chinua Achebe" in *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*, eds. C. L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors (Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1978), 70.
[185] Abiola Irele, "The Tragic Conflict in the Novels of Chinua Achebe," 18.

there was a big quarrel."[186] Ezeulu's obstinacy is even highlighted by his wife (Edogo's mother), who used to tell her children that " Ezeulu's only fault was that he expected every-one—his wives, his kinsmen, his children, his friends and even his enemies—to think and act like himself."[187] However, Ezeulu's rigid adherence to tradition is best seen in the final parts of the novel when he declines to call the New Yam feast, saying that it is the will of god, thus leaving his village to face the threat of an unprecedented famine. Despite the elders' intervention to make him eat the last remaining yams and call the New Yam feast, Ezeulu remains resolute in his opinion and rejects any form of intervention, even when the elders sacrifice to take the responsibility of such an 'abomination' and tell him, " if Ulu says we have committed an abomination let it be on the heads of the ten of us here."[188] In this respect, Sola Soile skillfully describes Ezeulu's acts as a "tragic paradox," for although he is "the political and spiritual leader of the community and its most able protector against contamination from internal and external sources…yet he becomes the unwitting cause of some of the society's woes."[189]

Due to his decision to reject calling the New Yam feast, the narrator describes how " Almost overnight Ezeulu had become something of a public enemy in the eyes of all."[190] Indeed, Achebe foreshadows this issue earlier in the novel, when the narrator describes Ezeulu's inflexibility, suggesting that "He forgot the saying of the elders that if a man sought for a companion who acted entirely like himself he would live in solitude."[191] Rather than actually serving his role as the political and spiritual leader and saving his village, which is on the brink of falling into a severe famine, Ezeulu prioritizes his strict adherence to tradition and appeasing the gods, pushing the village closer to a disaster. In this regard, Gareth Griffith asserts, " Ezeulu has fallen because he has failed to act within the bounds of the 'reasonable' and the 'sensible' in responding to the threat of the white man."[192] Further stressing Ezeulu's departure from the 'reasonable', Soile argues that Ezeulu's rigid adherence to tradition prompts him to " believe that he is in some kind of holy alliance with Ulu, and with this conviction he weaves a pattern of doom for Umuaro and calls it nothing but divine justice."[193] It is through the novel's denouement that Achebe delivers his opinion of Ezeulu's rigid adherence and inflexibility, especially when related to the well-being of the community. Achebe's critical message is clearly underscored by the narrator's statement: "No man however great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgment against his clan."[194]

As for Achebe's criticism of complete assimilation into the colonial system, his critique is embodied in the character of Oduche, Ezeulu's son. Initially, Ezeulu dispatches Oduche to

---

[186] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 92.
[187] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 93.
[188] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 208.
[189] Sola Soile, "Tragic Paradox in Achebe's *Arrow of God*." *Phylon* 37, no. 3 (1976): 283. https://doi.org/10.2307/274457.
[190] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 211.
[191] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 93.
[192] Gareth Griffiths, "Language and Action in the Novels of Chinua Achebe," 75.
[193] Sola Soile, "Tragic Paradox in Achebe's *Arrow of God*." 293.
[194] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 230.

join the missionaries as a form of cultural reconnaissance, for he straightforwardly tells his son that "I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share."[195] However, after spending considerable time with the Christian missionaries, Oduche undergoes a radical transformation, for he transcends his assigned role as a passive observer, embracing the Christian religion of the missionaries and adopting their world view of Igbo traditions. Oduche is heavily influenced by the dictations of his teacher, Mr. Goodcountry, who incites the new converts to destroy everything related to their Igbo religious and cultural traditions, arguing, " You must be ready to kill the python as the people of the rivers killed the iguana…If you are afraid to kill it do not count yourself a Christian.'' [196] Impelled by Goodcountry's words, Oduche decides to kill the sacred python, one of the most important religious symbols in Igbo culture. Oduche attempts to kill the python by locking it in a wooden box, an act that Chris Kwame Awuyah describes as " symbolic of the efforts of the Christian forces to subjugate the traditional religion."[197] Moreover, Abiola Irele skillfully describes the metonymical meaning of Oduche's act, arguing, " In the same way as the python is imprisoned, struggling for life, so are the gods of the land in reality circumscribed by a new order."[198] Oduche's abandonment of his native culture is further highlighted in the way he adopts a new attire and a new mood that alienates him even from his domestic environment. Awuyah adds, " Oduche, unlike any other family member, wears a singlet…While the rest of his family sit together during a storytelling session, Oduche sits apart, completely absorbed, learning the alphabet from his new book, *Azu Ndu*."[199] Oduche's acculturation in the colonial system erodes his father's purpose of such deployment, for while Ezeulu wanted him to be 'his eyes and ears' among the missionaries, Oduche never fulfills his father's intentions. This is evident in the confrontation between the two when Ezeulu chastises Oduche for not telling him about Goodcountry's announcement of a Christian harvest,

> Are your people saying to Umuaro that if anyone brings his sacrifice to your shrine he will be safe to harvest his yams? Now do you understand?"
> ''Yes. Our teacher told them so."
> ''Your teacher told them so? Did you report it to me?"
> "No."
> "Why?"
> Silence.[200]

Oduche's silence here reflects an internal conflict between his loyalty to his father and his new faith. Oduche never questions the validity of his teacher's words, thus accepting them as given truths. Therefore, his silence here transcends mere oblivion and can be better understood as withholding information. In other words, Oduche's silence further reflects his

---

[195] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 46.
[196] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 47.
[197] Chris Kwame Awuyah. "Chinua Achebe's '*Arrow of God'*: Ezeulu's Response to Change." 216.
[198] Abiola Irele, "The Tragic Conflict in the Novels of Chinua Achebe," 19.
[199] Chris Kwame Awuyah. "Chinua Achebe's '*Arrow of God'*: Ezeulu's Response to Change." 216.
[200] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 220-221.

blind acceptance and assimilation into the colonial system, thus undermining the traditional authority and position of his father and, on a larger scale, the Igbo traditional belief system.

As demonstrated through the previous examples, Achebe's vision for a reformed Igbo identity is one that accepts neither rigid adherence and inflexibility nor complete assimilation into colonial culture and denial of native roots. Achebe's exploration of identity calls for a more balanced approach—an approach that is flexible and more apt to adapt to inescapable change. Indeed, Achebe's vision of identity stems from the Igbo proverb, "Wherever Something Stands, Something Else Will Stand Beside It."[201] Reflecting upon Achebe's adoption of this proverb as a literary vision, Jay Lynn asserts,

> This proverb not only bespeaks the value placed on the qualities of balance and complementarity in the Igbo philosophical vision, qualities associated with Achebe's use of the term "duality," but also signifies an alternative to a binary duality that divides subjects into discrete, opposing pairs.[202]

Achebe thus calls for a hybrid identity, a middle ground that is "neither the origin of things nor the last things; it is aware of a future to head into and a past to fall back on."[203] Therefore, it could be discerned Achebe's criticism of characters like Okonkwo, Ezeulu, Nwoye, and Oduche for taking the position of binary dualities either in rigid adherence to tradition and inflexibility or in complete assimilation and denial. On the other hand, he advocates characters such as Obierika and Moses Unachukwu, whose characters serve as the bridge that exemplifies the hybridity Achebe advocates and create a middle ground between past and present, tradition and modernity.

3.2. The Biopolitical Body and the Reconstruction of Racial Identity in Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and *Foe*

Similar to Achebe's rejection of romanticized portrayals of his Igbo community, Coetzee also departs from such ideals of Afrikaner identity that may have been disseminated by the apartheid regime. Coetzee never ornaments the Afrikaner practices during apartheid and clearly shows the discrimination, bias, injustice, and violence that characterized that period. In this respect, John Gamgee argues that Coetzee rejects the "tribal aspect" of the Afrikaner community, an issue that the latter clearly depicts in his article "The White Tribe," in which he ultimately criticizes apartheid for being a system dedicated to tribal rather than national or collective progress and prosperity.[204] However, unlike Achebe's approach, which mainly focuses on the struggles of black identity within colonial encounters, Coetzee's dual approach tackles the issue of identity by foregrounding both the black experience under colonialism and the liberal white consciousness.

---

[201] Chinua Achebe, *The Education of a British-Protected Child* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 6.
[202] Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration,* 6.
[203] Chinua Achebe, *The Education of a British-Protected Child*, 6.
[204] J. M. Coetzee, "The White Tribe: An Acclaimed South African Novelist Explains Why the Afrikaners Will Never Give In)," *Vogue* (March 1986): 490–91 & 543–44. As cited in John Gamgee, "The White Tribe: The Afrikaner in the Novels of J. M. Coetzee," in *Towards a Transcultural Future: Literature and Society in a 'Post'-Colonial World*, ed.Geoffrey V. Davis et al (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi BV, 2005), 70.

Building on our discussion in Chapter Two about Coetzee's double sense of rejection and complicity–the state of being "inside" and "outside" the metaphoric wall of apartheid– Dominic Head argues that Coetzee's works embody " a form of intellectual challenge both to the late-colonial violence and oppression of apartheid."[205] Indeed, Coetzee engagement with apartheid is evident in the first phase of his writing, which includes *Dusklands, In the Heart of the Country, Waiting for the Barbarians,* along with *Life and Times of Michael K, Foe,* and *Age of Iron*. Highlighting the literary-political relationship that governs Coetzee's works, Head further suggests that "Coetzee's fictional preoccupations in his first six novels are profoundly determined by, and permeated with, a consciousness of life in South Africa as a constant and inevitable background presence."[206] Through these novels, Coetzee establishes his literary position and identity as a liberal white South African, bringing the world's attention to the evils of apartheid and how such a system impacts individuals and communities in a setting marked by systematic injustice. What is remarkable about Coetzee's first six novels is that they do not only criticize the dehumanizing effect of apartheid but also question the roles of liberal whites and their moral imperative to interrogate their ethical obligations within a colonially-established system of discrimination and racial segregation.

Now, in this context of complicity and liberalism, the question surrounding Coetzee's works is the extent to which such works reflect his political responsibility as an 'apartheid novelist', for his literary contributions, Head argues, "have been perceived as too oblique, with an insufficient political charge."[207] Indeed, Head's argument stems from Coetzee's departure from straightforward realism prevalent in apartheid South African fiction. In other words, Coetzee avoids the use of traditional realism in his works and rather adopts a literary approach that focuses on the use of allegories and symbolisms, thus endowing his works with a deeper level of complexity in depicting the social, political, racial, and moral constraints in South Africa under apartheid regime..

Coetzee's evasiveness, however, neither eradicates his profound sense of complicity nor does it signify an effort to reject it. Indeed, the question is not whether Coetzee is involved in the apartheid context or not, but what his position as a writer is within such complicity. In this respect, it is essential to highlight Simon During's distinction between the 'post-colonized' and the 'post-colonizers' identity. During argues that while "the post-colonized identify with the culture destroyed by imperialism and its tongue; the post-colonizers,…[while they] do not identify with imperialism,… [they] cannot jettison the culture and tongues of the imperialist nations."[208] Based on During's distinction, Head argues, Coetzee's position can be clearly considered as that of a post-colonizer who, within the realm of postcolonial literature, occupies a peripheral space where the issue of complicity is deemed the primary concern.[209] Put it simply, Stephen Watson argues, understanding Coetzee's position is closely related to

---

[205] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.
[206] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 37.
[207] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 22.
[208] Simon During, "Postmodernism or Post-colonialism Today," in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, ed. G. Griffiths, H. Tiffin and B. Ashcroft (London: Routledge, 1985), 127.
[209] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 28.

the fact that "he is not only a colonizer who is intellectual, but a colonizer who does not *want* to be a colonizer."[210]

3.2.2. Inscribed Bodies: Power, Identity, and the Black Experience of Michael K and Friday

In *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986), Coetzee represent the characters of Michael K and Friday not as monolithic but rather as multifaceted and complex individuals in their experiences with the issue of black identity and agency under the oppressive shadows of colonial systems. Through these characters, Coetzee navigates the complexity of black subjectivity, offering readers insights into the challenges and struggles faced by black individuals struggling to define their identity within the context of colonial and postcolonial societies. Despite occupying different fictional spaces and geographical contexts, both characters embody the true meaning of struggle and the search for agency and belonging within a system designed to foster black subjugation, oppression, and alienation. In other words, both characters' experiences reflect the challenges faced by colonized Others to find meaning, belonging, and ultimately their own selves in a system where they are negated and excluded. Highlighting this issue, Fanon delineates the effect of colonialism on black identity, arguing that since colonialism "is a systematized negation of the other, a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity, colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: "Who am I in reality?""[211]

In both works, Coetzee uses the body as a canvas through which he explores the role of physicality in shaping postcolonial black identities. Interestingly, Coetzee's focus on the body resonates with Michel Foucault's assertion that "the body is the inscribed surface of events."[212] In other words, both Foucault and Coetzee's views suggest that the body is not merely a biological entity, but rather a site where external forces leave their marks. It is through their bodies and the physical experiences they endure that the characters' sense of selfhood and belonging is both shaped and challenged. Along with the physical inscription that marks colonial brutality and subjugation and forces characters to question who they are in a world where their identity has been violently defined and confiscated, Coetzee's characters experience a profound sense of alienation due to the huge disparity between their physical forms and the norms set by a colonially controlled society. That is to say, Coetzee places his characters in a battleground where their sense of belonging is contested and where their identities are violently defined by others.

3.2.2.1 Beyond Words: The Body as a Text of Identity in *Life and Times of Michael K*

In *Life and Times of Michael K*, the eponymous character, Michael K, experiences a loss of identity markers through several stages in the novel. Born with a cleft lip, the narrator describes how, since childhood, Michael K has been deprived of his autonomous identity and

---

[210] Stephen Watson, "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee." *Research in African Literatures* 17, no. 3 (1986): 377. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3819221.
[211] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 182.
[212] Michel Foucault. *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews.* Edited and Translated by, Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 148.

childhood as a normal child, taken out of school, and forced to spend "the rest of his childhood in the company of other variously afflicted and unfortunate children learning the elements of reading, writing,…dishwashing, basketweaving, woodwork and digging."[213] Michael K's freedom is further challenged when he attempts to take his sick mother out of the city and transport her to her home town in Prince Albert. K's experience reflects the suffering of black South Africans who, according to the Group Areas Act of 1950 in South Africa, were not allowed to leave their designated areas and pass through 'white areas' without passes that were used as internal passports. Following his mother's death, K's experience of identity loss is further intensified, for upon meeting one of the soldiers, K is not even given a chance to declare his own identity and is immediately defined by the soldier as a thief.[214]

As the story progresses, Michael faces increasing restrictions on his freedom, for he is captured by police and driven to enforced labor in the railways. Then he is taken to Jakkalsdrif rehabilitation camp, where he is forced to work and where his identity and individuality are stripped away, transforming him from a human being to a mere symbol, "CM,"[215] signifying nothing more than his skin color. Upon his escape, K's identity is further denied when he is arrested for being assumed to be one of the rebels against the local government and is sent to another concentration camp, Kenilworth, where, in a pure colonial approach, his very name is changed from 'Michael' to 'Michaels'. In this regard, Susan Gallagher asserts, "in Michael K's times, individual identity is far less important than one's social role and place in the power structure."[216] Gallagher further highlights how K's identity exists between two split worlds, for "the protagonist's own name suggests the way he straddles the worlds of individual identity—Michael—and faceless functionary—K."[217] Indeed, it is this act of renaming that reflects the colonial imposition of the character's identity. In other words, this seemingly minor alteration signifies the broader attempt to erase Michael's agency and identity, subsuming him in a colonially pre-defined racial categorization. These dehumanizing experiences endured by Michael K leave him grappling with a fragmented sense of self and identity, deeply disconnected from his past life as a simple gardener. In this respect, Gallagher asserts,

> the particulars of Michael's life not only are prophecies as to what will become of someone like him when the fabric of South African life begins to unravel under the pressure of war but also are a tragically accurate depiction of the way that blacks in South Africa have been and are still being treated.[218]

Returning to the idea of inscribed bodies, Olfa Belgacem argues that "the "bearers of mutilation," the characters whose bodies are ailing, are, in most cases, figures of

---

[213] J. M. Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K* (New York, Penguin: 1983), 2.
[214] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*. 21.
[215] The novel offers no explicit definition of the abbreviation "CM". However, given the apartheid setting of the novel and the prevailing racial terminology of the era, "CM" most likely stands for "Colored Male".
[216] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 147.
[217] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context.* 147.
[218] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context.* 143.

otherness."[219] In this respect, Michael K experiences this state of otherness from his very first birth. Born with a cleft lip, this seemingly minor deviation sets him apart from normality and represents the first inscription on his body. Throughout the novel, Michael K's body becomes a record of his experiences, including forced labor, malnutrition, and illness, thus becoming part of his identity and a physical representation of his suffering. Upon first meeting K, the medical officer defines K in bodily terms, describing him as " a little old man" who clearly suffers "malnutrition: cracks in his skin, sores on his hands and feet, bleeding gums."[220] Therefore, Conrad Hughes argues, "Michael K "speaks" through the dislocated actions of his body rather than through any structured discourse."[221] In other words, Michael K's body can be viewed as an allegorical representation reflecting not only his individual experience but rather the broader racial and social realities of the lives of black South Africans under the apartheid regime. Addressing this matter of intersection between body, identity, and politics in relation to K's context, Shadi Neimneh argues,

> the deformed body is also a trope for the political injustices inscribed on it since a physical condition is made to represent a cultural one. By virtue of his racial status, K's inarticulate position becomes enforced on him, and his body carries the marks of oppression.[222]

Consistently, Michael K is identified as a body rather than a fully human being throughout the novel, an identification that further fosters his state of otherness. Indeed, K's state of otherness is clearly articulated when he is surprisingly referred to as "it" when the narrator describes how in Jakkalsdrif camp, the constable and the duty officer "watched the skeletal figure that sat with its back to the wall rubbing *its* exposed calves."[223] Undoubtedly, K experiences this feeling of otherness way before he arrives at the camps, for his very life and the experience he shares with his mother on their way to Prince Albert symbolize the way they are encaged like animals and how, as David Babcock argues, they are denied the possession of human identity in their own society.[224] As the novel progresses, several attempts are made to control K's body, for his encounters with state control are not just limited to enforcing rules but are actually to create a state of docility, conditioning, or domestication of his body. K undergoes beating, hunger, imprisonment, forced labor, and physical examination without any explanation, where the repetitiveness and unpredictability of such actions are all linked to K's basic needs of food and sleep. In other words, all such actions practiced by the state are to create a state of conditioning that controls K's body and identity and forces him to unconsciously submit to get his needs. In addressing this thematic concern, Olfa Belgacem argues that "the Foucauldian principle of "Panopticism" makes a

---

[219] Olfa Belgacem, *The Body, Desire and Storytelling in Novels by J. M. Coetzee* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 27.
[220] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 74.
[221] Conrad Hughes, "The Treatment of the Body in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee" (PhD Dissertation, Durham University, 2008) , 24.
[222] Shadi Neimneh, "J. M. Coetzee's 'Postmodern' Corpus: Bodies/Texts, History, And Politics in the Apartheid Novels, 1974-1990" (PhD Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 2011), 235.
[223] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 41. (emphasis added in italics)
[224] David Babcock, "Professional Subjectivity and the Attenuation of Character in J. M. Coetzee's '*Life & Times of Michael K.*'" *PMLA* 127, no. 4 (2012): 895. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23489094.

good frame for reading K's experience in the rehabilitation camp…[Michael K's] body becomes an object on which oppression…is inscribed."[225] Belgacem adeptly invokes Michel Foucault's notion of 'Panopticism'[226] and subsequently employs it within the narrative framework of the novel highlighting both its psychological and physical effect.

When in Jakkalsdrif camp, K ponders the nature of the fence surrounding the camp and says, "I walked around the back fence this afternoon,…Anyone can climb it. A child could climb it in a minute. Why do people stay here?"[227] Belgacem contends that the prisoners are mentally and physically oppressed and thus they think that they are always being watched and that they will be stopped and punished if they attempt to escape.[228] Now, in the context of apartheid South Africa, and since K is defined as a "colored male," his body automatically places him under suspicion and scrutiny by authorities, an issue evident in his successive incarcerations. In other words, Michael K's body becomes a marker of his identity, a living inscription of the racial hierarchy and a suffocating connection that defines black identity under apartheid colonial regime.

In part two of the novel, K is transferred to Kenilworth Camp, where the narrative voice shifts to a medical officer who narrates part two in the form of official reports that show an inexplicable fascination with K's body as a map of untold stories. Looking at K, the medical officer ponders how such an ailing, fragile body is still able to survive, an issue for which he reproaches the prisoners who, according to him, do not know "the difference between a thin man and a skeleton."[229] Right from the first examination, the medical officer describes how, unlike his experiences with other patients, he has "been struggling with the new patient Michaels. He [Michael] insists there is nothing wrong with him, he only wants something for his headache."[230] Whenever the medical officer tries to engage K in a conversation, all he gets is either silence or irrelevant answers, an issue that further incites the officer's curiosity and interest in K. In other words, the medical officer views K as a body that seemed to speak volumes, yet its voice and stories remained frustratingly out of reach. Describing K's mysteriousness, the medical officer adds,

> He is like a stone, a pebble that, having lain around quietly minding its own business since the dawn of time, is now suddenly picked up and tossed randomly from hand to hand. A hard little stone, barely aware of its surroundings, enveloped in itself and its interior life. He passes through these institutions and camps and hospitals and God

[225] Belgacem, *The Body, Desire and Storytelling in Novels by J. M. Coetzee*, 45.
[226] Reflecting upon Jeremy Bentham's design of the Panopticon (where prisoners are set in individual cells around an observational tower, and where prisoners cannot see who is watching them but are psychologically convinced that they are being watched), Michel Foucault reflects the dimensions of power dynamics in modern society and how surveillance acts as a powerful tool through which people would regulate their behavior and conform to the rules out of fear of being seen and punished.
[227] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K*, 45.
[228] Belgacem, *The Body, Desire and Storytelling in Novels by J. M. Coetzee*, 45.
[229] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K*, 74.
[230] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K*, 74.

> knows what else like a stone. Through the intestines of the war. An unbearing, unborn creature.[231]

The metaphor of "stone" used by the medical officer suggests how K's impenetrable body becomes a prison for trapping in emotions and a whole history of suffering. The quote further suggests how K's body becomes a battleground for his identity, for which he is "tossed randomly from hand to hand…through camps and hospitals," leaving inerasable marks on his physical form. It is through the medical officer's words that Coetzee shows how the black body under apartheid regime becomes a symbol of systematic injustice and a commodity easily and grotesquely consumed by the apartheid war machine.

Coetzee's focus on K's corporeality under apartheid regime serves as a reflection of how such a system informs K's perception of himself as a body without a soul. In other words, the ways in which K is documented and categorized through numbers and abbreviations further instill in him a feeling of objectification and make it difficult for him to see himself as a whole person of body and soul. For example, when K contemplates the issue of death, "it came home to him that he might die, he or his body, it was the same thing,"[232] he immediately links it with the death of the body, a connection that Kinga Jęczmińska skillfully detects as the "ontological monism" in K's "treatment of bodily death as the final end of human existence."[233] Jęczmińska further adds, "Michael seems to identify himself with his body,"[234] an identification that he further extends to his mother, especially when being asked about her by the medical officer, "where is your mother now?" and K replies, "She makes the plants grow."[235] Thus, through K's perspective of corporeal annihilation, what Coetzee seems to highlight here is the social conditioning of apartheid that reduces black identity to a physical existence guided by an internalized perception of an entire race as a corporeal being void of any spiritual dimension.

Another interesting aspect of K's identity is the absence of his last name, for Coetzee simply represents him as Michael K. Interestingly, this "K" is a deliberate echo of the dehumanizing reality of black South Africans, who were reduced to mere symbols under apartheid regime, a system that valued black lives only for their physical utility. Highlighting the metaphorical aspect of such an absence, Olfa Belgacem approaches this issue as "a way to silence them through their presence as a mere body." Therefore, she adds, "the other, reduced to a body, loses his/her humanity and identity."[236] Without a full name, K becomes identified by his actions and physical presence, thus reflecting an emphasis on physicality that overshadows his inner emotions, feelings, and personality, making him feel like an animal adapting to his environment. Commenting on such structural injustice, Gallagher asserts that "*Life & Times*

---

[231] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 77.
[232] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 40.
[233] Kinga Jęczmińska, "On the Battlefield of Life": J. M. Coetzee's Life & Times Of Michael K in the Light Of the Mind-Body Problem," *Brno Studies in English* 46, no. 2 (2020): 171, DOI: https://doi.org/10.5817/BSE2020-2-9
[234] Jęczmińska, "On the Battlefield of Life": J. M. Coetzee's Life & Times Of Michael K in the Light Of the Mind-Body Problem," 172.
[235] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 74.
[236] Belgacem, *The Body, Desire and Storytelling in Novels by J. M. Coetzee,* 38.

of Michael K captures the mind-numbing effects of a social and economic system that destroys every element of human dignity."[237] Indeed, an animalistic quality is first associated with K from his very first moment of birth, for the first thing that the midwife noticed about him was his "hare lip."[238] Moreover, even K himself is able to discern this animalistic quality in himself, especially when he thinks of himself as "a lizard under a stone."[239] The lizard metaphor is further used by the medical officer, who describes how K uses "his lizard-tongue" to moisten his lips.[240] Therefore, Kinga Jęczmińska asserts, K's physical appearance draws animalistic comparisons, suggesting a diminished humanity and a closer resemblance to an animal, for the medical officer views K's physicality "in a way that makes him more like a strange creature than a normal human being."[241]

The medical officer's interest in K's body grows further as the first act that K does when he gets his consciousness back in Kenilworth camp is to pull out the tube through which he is fed. K's unwavering refusal to eat becomes an intriguing puzzle for the medical officer, who feverishly addresses K, saying, "'What the hell *is* your kind of food?'…why are you treating us like this? Don't you see we are trying to help you?"'[242] In other words, the medical officer comes to the conclusion that it is not K who is refusing the food, but K's body, for he asserts that "your will remained pliant but your body was crying to be fed its own food, and only that."[243] For the medical officer, K's body goes against the ideology of " the body wants only to live"[244] which he learned through his medical studies. He argues,

> I had been taught that the body contains no ambivalence. The body, I had been taught, wants only to live. Suicide, I had understood, is an act not of the body against itself but of the will against the body. Yet here I beheld a body that was going to die rather than change its nature.[245]

Indeed, the medical officer's perception of the body and the counter-perception he realizes in K's body echo Foucault's assertion that "we believe, in any event, that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false."[246] In this regard, Jan Kosecki argues, "the medical officer reads K's body as an active, conscious, agent...Its [K's body] idiosyncrasy lies in the fact Michael's stance is not an expressible intellectual strategy: his fast has no "principle," and no "idea" behind it."[247] In other words, the medical officer's perspective of the body as having a singular desire to survive is challenged by K's unprecedented behavior, and thus it can be argued that Coetzee

---

[237] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa: J. M. Coetzee's Fiction in Context.* 148.
[238] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 1.
[239] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 67.
[240] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 79.
[241] Jęczmińska, "On the Battlefield of Life": J. M. Coetzee's Life & Times Of Michael K in the Light Of the Mind-Body Problem," 172.
[242] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 84.
[243] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 94.
[244] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 94.
[245] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K,* 94.
[246] Michel Foucault. *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. 153.
[247] Jan Kosecki, "Metaphors of the Body in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee" (PhD Dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2013), 177.

here offers a critique of Western rationality and its limitations in understanding the complex realities of postcolonial experience and identity. The focus on K's body, either by Coetzee himself or the medical officer, can be seen as reflective of the fragmented nature of postcolonial identity, where the body, according to Foucault, becomes "the locus of a dissociated Self… and a volume in perpetual disintegration." [248]

At this stage of discussion, it is necessary to revisit Bhabha's concept of hybridity as "the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects."[249] Through different stages of the novel, K is repeatedly described in derogatory terms, such as "vagrant," "idiot," "simpleton," "stupid," and "animal." However, what is remarkable about K is that despite the inhumanity and harshness of these labels, they have no effect upon stabilizing his identity. In other words, the more attempts are made to define K and fix his identity through state control, the more K's body slips into the liminal, hybrid space that Bhabha describes. As the novel reveals, K is neither dead nor fully alive, neither a victim nor a rebel, neither fully present nor entirely absent. He is neither a symbol of change nor a mark of defeat, neither fully erased nor entirely visible. Thus, K's corporeality becomes an illustrative example of Bhabha's third space that deconstructs the binaries of resistance and submission and becomes a performative space that rejects categorization.

Moreover, the social perception of K's identity under apartheid regime recalls Said's concepts of othering and stereotypical representations that reflect the conflict between Black identity and institutional othering. In other words, Said asserts that the Other is allowed to speak only "through and by virtue of the European imagination,"[250] an idea that is evident in the way K is taken out of school and denied his right of a normal childhood due to his minor physical deformity, thus forced to spend his childhood with a groupp of 'unfortunate' children. Also, the way K is always (mis)defined and mistreated by governmental bodies places him as the object of narrative, not a subject. This idea could be clearly seen in the restrictions imposed on K's freedom due to governmental and institutional misidentification. For example, he is first apprehended by police for being perceived as a vagrant and thus enforced to work in the railways. Later, he is captured by police once again for being perceived as a displaced person and sent to a labor camp. Following his escape, he is caught a third time for being misidentified as one of the rebels. That is to say, K is denied the chance and possibility to live an autonomous life and have an independent story, for his story is always interrupted, controlled, and mistold by those who occupy institutional positions of power, such as the school management, the police, soldiers, and the medical officer.

Said creates a link between Orientalism and colonization when he states that colonial domination "is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings,"[251] an idea that reflects how the process of othering thrives through

---

[248] Michel Foucault. *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. 148.
[249] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 159.
[250] Said, *Orientalism,* 56.
[251] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 7.

cultural institutions. Interestingly, Coetzee's depiction of K shares similar traits with Said's beleifs by suggesting that the racial discrimination and alienation of apartheid ideology thrives through camps, hospitals, and all radical systems that cannot accept someone who resists and rejects categorization. This idea is exemplified during the interrogation when the medical officer is desperately trying to extract some information about K's story, saying, "Come on Michaels...we haven't got all day, there is a war on!"[252] What is remarkable here is K's concise reply, " I am not in the war."[253] In other words, Michael K's refusal to eat, his silence, and his complete social and political withdrawal can be read as his rejection of objectification and the process of othering. That is to say, in a world where identities are imposed and stories are told by colonial powers, Michael K chooses to exist out of such a realm, placing himself in the unreachable and uncontrollable, a subject that resists institutional othering and maintains, or more probably defends, his own form of being.

Drawing again on Fanon's argument that the colonized others can "get rid of their 'otherness' and "be proportionately whiter…[and] come closer to being real human being[s],"[254] Coetzee highlights how K rejects and ignores this entire realm of "whiteness" and its symbolic status. Rather than aspiring for white positions of recognition, the narrative shows how K constantly shifts between zones of withdrawal, marginality, and invisibility. That is to say, his body does not get "whiter" or assimilated but rather gets more emaciated and alienated from colonial standards and expectations. In this way, Coetzee presents his view of the Black body as a means to subvert the colonial logic that links human worth to their skin color, thus highlighting K, in his physical entity, as an example of postcolonial self-assertion. Through K's refusal of state food and care, Coetzee highlights how K's body, in Fanon's terms, neither seeks to renounce its Blackness, nor does it seek elevation through imitation. It is an exemplary illustration of a postcolonial revolutionary body that ultimately maintains dignity through negation and withdrawal.

In his essay, "Toward an Ethics of Silence: Michael K," Duncan Chesney argues that "K's peculiar existence is precisely produced by the society that has no place for him."[255] Indeed, Chesney's argument is clearly evident in K's wanderings from one place, or one camp, to another without any meaningfulness that can quench his thirst for belonging. However, Coetzee highlights how K finds a powerful counterpoint to this exclusion through his connection to the land, a connection that allows him to re-establish a source of self-definition. Indeed, the act of cultivating at the Visagies' farm allows K to re-establish a sort of self definition and control over his stolen and pre-defined physicality, using his body as a tool for creation, survival, and finding a purpose in a world that denies him his physical autonomy. In the farm, Coetzee highlights how even K perceives his identity as a physical body devoid of any feelings or needs, except the fact that he needs to take care of that body, for "hunger was a sensation he did not feel and barely remembered. If he ate… it was because he had not yet

[252] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K*, 79.
[253] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K*, 79.
[254] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 8.
[255]Duncan McColl Chesney "Toward an Ethics of Silence: Michael K ." *Criticism* 49, no. 3 (2007): 310. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23130899.

shaken off the belief that bodies that do not eat die."[256] In this respect, Chesney asserts that K's experience on the farm "reduces him to sheer body, outside of human commerce and time."[257] Yet, Coetzee seems to suggest that through this connection between the land and his physicality, Michael K discerns a meaning of his existence and a possibility of transcending the realm of physicality to embrace a possible sense of spirituality. The narrator describes how, as K moves around the farm, he "felt a deep joy in his physical being. His step was so light that he barely touched the earth. It seemed possible to fly; it seemed possible to be both body and spirit."[258] In other words, it is through body-land connection that K feels for the first time that he can transcend the limits of physicality and thus have a soul. Highlighting K's unprecedented joy, the narrator describes K's inner thoughts, "Now it is completed, he said to himself. All that remains is to live here quietly for the rest of my life."[259] Thus, Coetzee highlights how the profound union with land allows K to forge a new identity beyond colonial tags, one rooted in the lived experiences of his physicality. Significantly, the connection between K's physicality and the land transcends mere survival and evolves into a source of self-definition, for K seems to recognize his body as a battleground for his identity and a way to resist assimilation.

3.2.2.2. The Eloquent Flesh: Friday's Corporeal Narrative in *Foe*

Building upon his exploration of the inscribed body as black identity in *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee revisits this concept in *Foe*, in which the body of the black, marginalized character, Friday, also becomes a site of inscribed power dynamics and colonial oppression. Unlike Defoe's Friday in *Robinson Crusoe*, who embodies John Dryden's concept of the "noble savage"[260] as well as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's figure of " natural man,"[261] and who subsequently abandons his "nobleness" by accepting Crusoe's language, mastery, religion, and ultimately his civilization, Coetzee's Friday in *Foe* remains completely outside these structures. Throughout the novel, Friday exhibits a resolute silence, never uttering a word nor showing interest in any language, religion, or civilization. Coetzee's focus on Friday's silence in the novel is not arbitrary, for through such an absence, Coetzee offers a revolutionary mode of presence that is rooted in corporeality rather than verbal expressions.

In an interview with David Attwell, Coetzee asserts that "Friday is mute, but Friday does not disappear, because Friday is body."[262] Coetzee shows that despite Friday's muteness, his

---

[256] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K*, 59.
[257] Chesney, "Toward an Ethics of Silence: Michael K ." 310.
[258] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K*, 59.
[259] Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K*, 66.
[260] John Dryden, *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards*, ed. John Loftis and David Stuart Rodes (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 30. (In this play, Dryden uses the term 'noble savage' to describe a character named Almanzor, a warrior who fights for the Moors, showing his free and uncorrupted nature before the constraints of civilization.
[261] Jean- Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men.* Edited and Translated by Helena Rosenblatt (Boston, Bedford/St. Martin's : 2011), 10. (Rousseau describes the innate state of humanity before the arrival of civilization and how humans lived in harmony and peace with nature, almost like animals. Helena Rosenblatt further highlights Rousseau's idea of the natural man as a "Self-sufficient and at peace with his environment, he was neither sociable nor unsociable, neither moral nor immoral."
[262] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, 248.

body transcends the limitations of language and becomes a narrative in itself. Moreover, connecting the body with identity, Coetzee establishes the body as a counterpoint to doubt: "That standard is the body. Whatever else, the body is not 'that which is not,' and the proof is the pain it feels. The body, with its pain, becomes a counter to the endless trials of doubt."[263] In philosophical terms, "that which is not" refers to nothingness or the lack of physical existence. However, Coetzee asserts that Friday's body offers an undeniable proof of his existence, a body that lives while, as Belgacem argues, "his interpreters/writers die; even the experienced writer Foe dies."[264] Friday's body transcends mere flesh and becomes a cornerstone of his identity. Through pain and physical presence, Friday's body transforms into a language through which his identity is constructed and understood. Hence, this perception of Friday's body as a site of meaning offers a theoretical and analytical groundwork for examining how from the outset, Friday's body is interpreted by others through a colonial gaze.

Although both Fridays in Defoe and Coetzee's narratives are depicted through the lens of other characters who represent colonial perspectives, a key distinction emerges. While Defoe's Crusoe perceives his Friday as a 'savage' human being apt for being civilized, Coetzee's Friday is first depicted through the eyes of Susan Barton as fragments of a physical body rather than a fully human being. In other words, the identity of Coetzee's Friday is defined through his fragmented body parts, for Susan initially describes Friday as "a dark shadow," "a head of fuzzy wool," small dull eyes," "broad nose," and "thick lips."[265] Indeed, Susan's depiction of Friday echoes Marlow's description of Africans in *Heart of Darkness*, where he describes the natives as "a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping. of feet stamping."[266] That is to say, Susan's approach to Friday is one of objectification rather than identification, a clear example of the colonial gaze that tends to reduce colonial subjects into objects rather than fully human beings.

Susan's approach to Friday recalls what Bhabha describes as the "epistemology of appearance and reality."[267] In his foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Bhabha asserts that "The White man's eyes break up the Black man's body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed."[268] The way Susan describes Friday reflects Bhabha's views on epistemic violence in the white eyes, a violence that highlights how Friday does not have control over his own body, which is interpreted, defined, and mediated by a white character, Susan Barton. Bhabha's critique highlights the violence of representation or the discursive violence that Fanon refers to when describing how, in white-control discourses, the Black subject turns into "an object in the midst of other objects."[269]

---

[263] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, 248.
[264] Belgacem, *The Body, Desire and Storytelling in Novels by J. M. Coetzee*, 114.
[265] J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 5-6.
[266] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Robert Hampson and Owen Knowles (London, England: Penguin Classics, 2007), 57.
[267] Homi K. Bhabha , foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, by Frantz Fanon, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), xxv.
[268] Bhabha , foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, xxv.
[269] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 82.

As soon as Susan meets Cruso and gets to know that Friday's silence is due to the fact that his tongue had been cut out by slavers, Susan develops a keen interest in Friday, as this revelation piques her curiosity about the story his body seems to hold, which, in turn, would add interesting details to her story that she tries to mother. Nevertheless, this fascination is tinged with a feeling of horror that covers Friday's past, for she clearly states that "now I began to look on him…with the horror we reserve for the mutilated. It was no comfort that his mutilation was secret, closed behind his lips."[270] Friday's silence forces him into a world defined by Cruso's narrative and Susan's interpretations, a world where his body becomes the only means of communication. Like Michael K's, Friday's body becomes a canvas of the inscribed history of slavery, violence, and the loss of identity, representing what Head describes as "the repression of the black majority in South Africa,"[271] and a constant reminder and a living testament to a brutal past and a story that he cannot tell but one that Susan desperately wants to know. In this respect, Deepa Jani argues that "for Susan, the body of Friday exists as a *terra nullius*, an empty space without self-determining sovereignty, waiting to be spoken of/written in the master discourse."[272]

In other words, the way Susan Barton, and later Daniel Foe, perceive Friday as a mere body transformed into a possible text that must be read and interpreted in colonial terms echoes Said's concepts of othering. For Said, the West views the Orient or the inferior "other" as a "textual attitude,"[273] an exotic object of representation and knowledge formation rather thatn a living being. This textual attitude, Said argues, emerges from the Western and colonial need to decipher the Orientalized other into a knowable, controllable, and understandable entity. Both Susan and Foe deal with Friday as a complex riddle to be solved rather than a reality to be respected and inspected—an idea evident in Susan's insistence to Foe that they must " make Friday's silence speak, as well as the silence surrounding Friday,"[274] ultimately revealing their mutual desire and need to create and impose meaning on what they perceive as meaningless. Said further adds that the Orient other "is depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum) , something one disciplines (as in a school or prison)."[275] What Said asserts here is the colonial tendency expressed by Susan and Foe's attempt to fabricate a (hi)story for Friday, thus placing him in the very exact position that Said highlights, turning him into a disciplinary object of control that is analyzed, interpreted, and defined in Western colonial criteria.

In *Foe*, Coetzee avoids stereotypical physical descriptions by rather focusing on the marks left on Friday's body. While the text explicitly states a physical mutilation of the tongue, Susan's subtle remark that "some other mutilations are hidden by clothing"[276] introduces the possibility of a further, unseen disfigurement related to his genitals. Coetzee shows how Friday's body becomes a site of history in which these mutilations are representative of his

[270] Coetzee, *Foe* , 24.
[271] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 64.
[272]Deepa Jani , "J. M. Coetzee: Ethics, Subalternity, and the Critique of Humanism" (PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2013), 115.
[273] Said, *Orientalism*, 95.
[274] Coetzee, *Foe*, 142.
[275] Said, *Orientalism*, 40.
[276] Coetzee, *Foe*, 24

identity and operate as a symbolic language that reflects his alienation and the deep trauma that shapes his being. In this respect, Belgacem maintains that "Friday's body is history-informed and history-informing. It bears the traces of colonial history and bears witness unto us to that history which "*de-formed*" it."[277] In a similar vain, in her analysis of Friday's body, Elleke Boehmer argues that

> This is perhaps one of the key distinguishing features of the postcolonial: the…conversion of imposed dumbness into self-expression, the self-representation by the colonial body of its scars, its history…Representing its own silence, the colonized body speaks; uttering its wounds.[278]

Coetzee suggests that, despite his muteness, Friday's body can speak his silence, for the very inaccessibility to his inner world becomes a defining aspect of his identity. Moreover, Friday's physical mutilations become a kind of counter-narrative to Susan's attempts to define or re-construct Friday's story. That is to say, they primarily function as a reminder that his true (hi)story lies not in imposed and made-up narratives but in the unspeakable and indescribable experiences his body is etched with. Therefore, Conrad Hughes argues, Friday's body becomes the "closure of history in that no meaning can be ascribed to it…[his]corporeal features, stand as barriers to thought itself…his body is a type of shell…into which he may retreat, away from understanding."[279]

Coetzee represents Friday's body as an impenetrable shield that transcends mere flesh and bone, thus operating as a living narrative of scars, gestures, and silence. Indeed, Susan Barton is desperate to penetrate this shield and have access to Friday's (hi)story, for without knowing these details, her narrative of the island feels like a hollow shell, or what she describes as "without substance."[280] In other words, Susan sees Friday's body as a text written in mutilations and silence, a text in which the missing tongue becomes an omission or a blank space that cannot be overlooked, for she asserts, "To tell my story and be silent on Friday's tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty."[281] Through her interest in Friday's body, Coetzee seems to assign colonial qualities to Susan, whose behavior is simply replicating the colonial gaze that reduces the colonized Other into an object of curiosity, ignoring the complexities that shape his identity beyond physical dimensions. In describing the state of Otherness inflicted upon colonial subjects, Homi Bhabha asserts that it is "at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity."[282] Therefore, when Susan refers to Friday as " I do not love him, but he is mine,"[283] Coetzee reflects how Susan mirrors the colonial power dynamic that Bhabha describes, which highlights how the colonized body becomes merely a marker of difference and a curiosity to be studied yet ultimately controlled.

---

[277] Belgacem, *The Body, Desire and Storytelling in Novels by J. M. Coetzee*, 156.
[278] Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 131.
[279] Hughes, "The Treatment of the Body in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee" , 75.
[280] Coetzee, *Foe*, 51.
[281] Coetzee, *Foe*, 67.
[282] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 96.
[283] Coetzee, *Foe*, 111.

In her study of the "affective politics of fear," Sara Ahmed explores the interplay between fear and racialization, focusing on how fear operates as an affective force that shapes intercorporeal relations and identity formation. [284] Ahmed draws on a passage from Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he recounts a formative experience of a white child's fear upon seeing him. Fanon writes

> "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" Frightened! Frightened! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible.[285]
>
> My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, recolored, clad in mourning on that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it's cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold that goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother's arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up.[286]

Reflecting upon Fanon's experience, Ahmed asserts that such fear is "over-determined" and influenced by historical and social factors that make the white child's fear likely to be shaped by broader societal anxieties regarding the black body.[287] She also suggests that fear transcends being a mere emotion, for it physically affects the black body as it "is drawn tighter… the black body itself becomes enclosed by the fear and comes to feel that fear as its own, such that it is felt as an impossible or inhabitable body."[288] In other words, although fear is experienced by both bodies, it nevertheless disproportionately burdens the black body. In Coetzee's *Foe,* Susan's fear of Friday transcends time and space, for even after their shared experience on the island and following their rescue to England, Friday's black body still trigger a shiver in Susan's. Describing his dance, Susan states

> I shiver when I watch Friday dancing in the kitchen, with his robes whirling about him and the wig flapping on his head, and his eyes shut and his thoughts far away, not on the island, you may be sure, not on the pleasures of digging and carrying, but on the time before, when he was a savage among the savages. Is it not only the matter of time before the new Friday whom Cruso created is sloughed off and the old Friday of the cannibal forests returns.[289]

Susan's fear is triggered by Friday's physical expression, a dance that, for her, signifies a pre-colonial identity she cannot understand. In this respect, both the white child in Fanon's text

---

[284] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 62.
[285] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 84.
[286] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 86.
[287] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 63.
[288] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 63.
[289] Coetzee, *Foe*, 94-95.

and Susan share what Ahmed describes as "hostility of the white gaze."[290] They feel a sense of fear that creates a distance between them and the black body. Just like the white child is unable to understand Fanon's shivering, Susan is unable to understand Friday's dance. Analyzing the child's fear, Ahmed stresses that such fear "opens up past histories of association."[291] That is to say, similar to the white child's fear, "Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up," where historical prejudices trigger associations with cannibalism and savagery, Susan's view of Friday's dance is tainted by the fear of his body, which evokes the phantom of "the old Friday of the cannibal forests." In this respect, Susan and the white child's perception of black bodies as inherently different and potentially savage creates a space of dissociation between black bodies and white bodies.[292] Through this fear, Coetzee highlights how the black body can be constructed as an identity permeated through historical narratives, where Friday's physical body becomes a language that Susan, just like the white child, cannot comprehend. In his discussion on the 'fact of blackness,' Fanon asserts that "the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man."[293] In this respect, Susan's approach to Friday becomes a clear reflection of Fanon's ideas, for in her conversation with Foe, she laments that "Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal."[294]

Moreover, the way Susan interprets Friday in terms of the speech, or the tongue, he lacks to define himself, and how easily his reality could be altered positions Friday within what Bhabha identifies as the fixity of the colonial discourse, that is, "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."[295] In other words, the body of Friday is thus reduced to a fixed signifier of lack, absence, and incompleteness—a narrative emptiness to be filled by Susan, Foe, and others representing colonial discourse. However, Coetzee's postcolonial reworking offers a character whose body defies this dynamic and ultimately reveals the violence of colonial representation. In other words, despite all their attempts to interpret and "give voice" to Friday, Susan Barton and Foe face an unwavering resistance of his body—a body whose refusal to give meaning is what grants Friday his power and creates an impenetrable symbol of his inassimilable identity.

In his discussion of the necropolitics theory,[296] Mbembe argues that the body of "Negroes" is no longer perceived as "a *body of extraction*, that is to say, a body integrally exposed to the will of a master and from which one seeks to extract maximum profit."[297] He adds that the definition of "negro," signifying an individual of African descent solely based on his skin

[290] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 64.
[291] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 64.
[292] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 64.
[293] Fanon, *Black Skin*, 83.
[294] Coetzee, *Foe*, 121.
[295] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 94.
[296] For Mbembe, the theory of necropolitics examines how sovereign powers take control of the lives and deaths of ruled subjects. However, Mbembe adds a twist to that sort of control in which such powers not only let people live or kill them but also create certain situations where the people are subjected to conditions that make them like the living dead.
[297] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 186.

color, is no longer universally applicable, for this condition, he asserts, is undergoing a serious deterioration where the black body is reduced to "a thing, an object, a sellable, buyable, or possessable commodity."[298] In this respect, Friday's body becomes an exemplary illustration of Mbembe's notions, especially evident in Susan's attempts to "civilize" him. For Susan, Friday's lack of language denies him the possibility of knowing "civilization," and she admonishes Cruso for not teaching Friday more words that might have brought to him "the blessings of civilization and made him a better man."[299]

After their arrival in England, Susan also attempts to turn Friday into a laundryman by teaching him to wash clothes, and in an imperative manner similar to Cruso's, she addresses Friday, "Watch me, Friday!, I say…Now do, Friday!, I say…*Watch* and *Do:* those are my two principal words for Friday."[300] She even later tries to teach him some basic words and attempts to teach him how to write, however, all to no avail. In this regard, Susan's treatment of Friday's body can be seen as a microcosm of Mbembe's ideas, for all her efforts are not based on a genuine concern for Friday's well-being but on her desire to turn him into a suitable subject for her own narrative. In other words, Susan no longer sees Friday's black body as a "*body of extraction*," for she does not view him as a source of physical labor. Instead, he has become a financial project, a "thing, an object, a sellable, buyable, or possessable commodity," from which she carves more details to add a "substance" to her story, through which she carves financial gains. Indeed, Susan's approach to Friday's body reflects Mbembe's notions of the negro as a "possessable commodity," for reducing Friday to a mere character in a story and ignoring his individuality and past commodifies him by linking his value to what he can contribute to her narrative rather than to what he stands for as an individual.

Moreover, Mbembe highlights the complexities surrounding the perception and representation of black bodies. For him, these bodies are not neutral, and they evoke a complex range of emotions in the viewer. He argues,

> Images of bodies, of Negro bodies, indeed invite a *chassé-croisé* of feelings. From whoever looks at them, they invite now a game of seduction, now a fundamental ambiguity, now repulsion. Is the person one sees exactly the same, and from every angle? One looks at him, but does one really see him? What does this black skin mean with its gleaming and slippery surface? This body placed before others eyes, viewed from everywhere, and that has placed itself in the bodies of others, at what moment does it pass from a self to the status of an object? [301]

Mbembe asserts that the way the black body is perceived creates a *chassé-croisé* (a back-and-forth movement, or simultaneous exchange) of emotions ranging between seduction, ambiguity, and repulsion. Indeed, Mbembe's notions here perfectly capture the representation of Friday in *Foe*, for Friday's body evokes a range of emotions in Susan Barton, who is at

[298] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 186.
[299] Coetzee, *Foe*, 22.
[300] Coetzee, *Foe*, 56.
[301] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 182.

first attracted to the black body of Friday and studies his "flat face, the small dull eyes, the broad nose, the thick lips, the skin."[302] The very same gaze shifts later to what Mbembe describes as " fundamental ambiguity," when Susan begins to see Friday as a "shadowy figure,"[303] and then turns to a sort of "repulsion," when Susan describes how she did not look into his mouth because "an aversion came over [her]."[304]

In this respect, Mbembe questions the nature of seeing the black body: "One looks at him, but does one really see him?" Coetzee reflects how the body of Friday is seen in the eyes of Susan but never understood, for she never sees him as a full individual with passions and feelings, but rather a mere body on which she is interested to project her own narrative and without which her narrative remains incomplete. Mbembe also highlights how the black body might "pass from a self to the status of an object." In both *Foe* and *Life and Times of Michael K*, the characters of Friday and Michael K undergo this process of objectification by Susan Barton and the medical officer. While both characters have life stories, experiences, feelings, and desires, colonial control dehumanizes and objectifies them, reducing them to bodies owned, controlled, and used. In light of this issue, Pramod K. Nayar asserts that "the black body becomes an object rather than a feeling-thinking body, soulless and open to violation in the colonial scheme of things."[305] Through both characters, Coetzee exposes the dehumanizing nature of apartheid regime that operates within the framework of necropolitics to control and exploit such people based on racial tendencies and where their black bodies become a battleground upon which all aspects of oppression, especially violence and control, are exerted.

In the final chapter of *Foe*, the seemingly predictable conclusion takes a sharp turn when an unnamed narrator emerges and narrates in a dream-like vision what they observe in relation to the characters bodies. The unnamed narrator seems to be entering Foe's room when he describes how both Foe and Susan are apparently dead and "lie side by side in bed, not touching. The skin, dry as paper, is stretched tight over their bones. Their lips have receded, uncovering their teeth."[306] However, the narrator finds Friday barely alive, and despite the warmth of his skin, the narrator attempts to make sure that he is alive and states, "I must search here and there before I find the pulse in his throat. It is faint, as if his heart beat in a far-off place."[307] The narrator opens Friday's mouth, and what he hears is " the faintest faraway roar: as she said, the roar of waves in a seashell;… From his [Friday's] mouth, without a breath, issue the sounds of the island."[308] After a break, the narrator tells the story again as he enters the very same room and observes the bodies of Foe and Susan, yet he finds something that he had not observed earlier in Friday: "a scar like a necklace, left by a rope or chain."[309] Continuing their puzzling recount, the speaker, repeating Susan's initial words at

[302] Coetzee, *Foe*, 6.
[303] Coetzee, *Foe*, 24.
[304] Coetzee, *Foe*, 85.
[305] Pramod K. Nayar. *Frantz Fanon* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 75.
[306] Coetzee, *Foe*, 153.
[307] Coetzee, *Foe*, 154.
[308] Coetzee, *Foe*, 154.
[309] Coetzee, *Foe*, 155.

the beginning of the story, states, "With a sigh, making barely a splash, I slip overboard,"[310] in a way that allows them to, as Susan Gallagher argues, "imaginatively enter Susan's story."[311]

The narrator dives deeply under the ship wreck, and it is there that they find the bodies of Susan and "her dead captain" (Cruso) floating in the cabin. However, the speaker finds Friday with a chain around his throat, and when they ask Friday, "what is this ship?" the speaker asserts that "this is not a place of words…This is a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday."[312] It is through the last chapter that Coetzee stresses the corporeal being of Friday as a marker of his identity. In other words, the last chapter does not simply describe Friday's body; rather, it treats it as a text to be read, especially with the scar and the chain around his neck standing as a mark of his past enslavement. That is to say, every detail in Friday's body becomes a signifier and a part of his unspoken story inscribed into his flesh. In this context, Dominic Head highlights how the body of the colonized Other becomes representative of their identity, for the "'home' of Friday, where a mutilated and (now) chained body, being its 'own sign', bears the marks – and bespeaks the history - of the colonial Other."[313] For Head, the chained body of Friday "evokes the history of colonial slavery and subjugation" and thus becomes "the mark of Friday's identity."[314] In this respect, Shadi Neimneh contends that " The home of Friday, it turns out, is his buried story. It is the story of his body that needs to be recovered and communicated. And just as Friday's body is the site of his story, his story is bound to be about the body's estranged relation to storytelling and narration."[315]

Taking into consideration the South African context in relation to the body, Coetzee asserts: "Let me put it baldly: in South Africa it is not possible to deny the authority of suffering and therefore of the body."[316] For Coetzee, "suffering" grants bodies a sort of authority against dominant narratives. Despite Susan and Foe's attempts to control Friday's existence and being, his physical presence and suffering cannot be erased that easily, and his body becomes a powerful counterpoint to narratives imposed by them, thus becoming a narrative itself that speaks volumes about his identity and past experiences and a powerful presence that cannot be easily ignored or manipulated. In this vein, Christopher Peterson asserts that "Coetzee's depiction of a body that signs in and for itself thus implies a pure materiality absolutely liberated from the representational domains of speech and writing."[317] What Peterson highlights is that Friday's identity is deeply rooted in and interconnected with his physical experience of the world. Friday's body, with its capacity for pain, suffering, and endurance, is

---

[310] Coetzee, *Foe*, 155.
[311] Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa,* 189.
[312] Coetzee, *Foe*, 157.
[313] Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, 126.
[314] Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, 125.
[315] Shadi Neimneh, "J. M. Coetzee's 'Postmodern' Corpus: Bodies/Texts, History, And Politics in the Apartheid Novels, 1974-1990", 316.
[316] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews,* 248.
[317] Christopher Peterson, "The home of Friday: Coetzee's *Foe*." *Textual Practice* 30, no. 5 (2016): 865. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2015.1084365

a more authentic representation of who he is than any other imposed portrayal through any given language.

Coetzee's focus on the black body, which undergoes all types of hardships, must not be perceived as merely a depiction of suffering, but rather as a central element of black identity itself. By reclaiming their agency over their own bodies, both Friday and Michael K forge a sense of selfhood that resists attempts to define and objectify them. The scarred bodies of K and Friday transcend being testaments of suffering and become a form of embodied history and a representation of the collective memory of black South Africans under colonial and apartheid regimes. It is through these portrayals that Coetzee compels his readers to see the black body beyond its physical reality, perceiving it as a powerful symbol of identity and the struggle for liberation.

Chapter 4: Decolonizing the Canon : Narratives of Defiance in the Works of Chinua Achebe and J.M. Coetzee

This chapter addresses the theme of resistance in postcolonial literature, specifically canonical resistance and the way postcolonial authors engage in literary confrontations with established literary canons. In this regard, the analysis will investigate how Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee exhibit canonical resistance through their literary works that challenge or subvert the supremacy and canonicity of an established Western literary canon. As the discussion unfolds, the chapter will address questions such as, What constitutes a literary canon? How can canonical resistance be achieved? Accordingly, the chapter delves into an examination of Achebe's innovative use of linguistic Africanization and his challenge to the written tradition as his primary tools of resisting and subverting the Western colonial canon in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. The chapter will then turn to Coetzee's transformative approach to literary genres, specifically addressing how he rewrites, re-imagines, and subverts the conventions of picaresque and adventure narratives in *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Foe*. By examining their distinct yet interconnected approaches, the chapter aims to offer insights into how both authors wage a sort of literary war against the Western canonical empire, promoting a more inclusive and diverse literary canon.

4.1. The Canon: Whose Books, Whose Rules?

In *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, the term 'canon' is defined as "those books of holy scripture which religious leaders accept as genuine are canonical, as are those works of a literary author which scholars regard as authentic."[1] Originally, the term canon derives from the Greek word *kanṓn,* which means a 'measuring rod' or 'list', and both meanings, Rob Pope asserts, "were taken over and eventually conflated by early Christianity. 'Canon law' referred to rules or decrees of the Church; 'the canon' was a list of those books of the Bible officially accepted as genuine along with, later, those works of the Church fathers approved as authoritative and orthodox."[2] In this respect, the role of authority can be clearly seen in determining the canonical status of a certain text, where religious leaders and scholars are the principal figures in deciding which texts are worthy of inclusion or exclusion.

Within the literary realm, the term 'literary canon' is used to refer to a body of works considered to be the most important, valuable, and influential in a specific culture or tradition and in a particular time period. The literary canon includes texts that are often studied in educational and academic settings and are often shaped through a process of consensus between academics, critics, and educators who determine a body of privileged collection of texts accorded a 'classic' status, and thus implicitly deemed essential for scholarly study.[3] In this respect, Zhang Longxi emphasizes the subjective nature of literary canon formation, arguing that "before a literary work can be accepted as canonical, it needs the work of critics

[1] Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 47.
[2] Rob Pope, *The English Studies Book: An Introduction to Language, Literature and Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 186.
[3] Pope, *The English Studies Book: An Introduction*, 186.

and scholars to convince people of its literary value and its significance in every other aspect."[4]

Additionally, it is important to note that the formation of a literary canon has never been a neutral process of collecting and selecting exceptional texts, but was, and still is, a cultural construction deeply intertwined with a certain ideology. In other words, the selection and formation of a literary canon often reflects certain societal values, power structures, political orientations, and cultural biases of the time in which it is established. For example, the literary canon in Classical Antiquity was dominated and shaped by the philosophical and cultural ideals of ancient Greece and Rome, where texts such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* along with the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato were treated as holy scriptures filled with tales of bravery, heroism, reason, and quest for knowledge, and became the cornerstones of their culture and education. Similarly, the process of canon formation in the Middle Ages, The Renaissance, The Enlightenment, and the 19th century was governed by the interplay of various ideological currents and power dynamics, an issue that prompted Toni Morrison to argue that "Canon building is empire building. Canon defense is national defense."[5]

Literary canons exist across diverse cultures and literary traditions, encompassing British, American, Canadian, Russian, and numerous other cultures. Although the four selected texts in our discussion engage specifically with the English literary canon, their critique extends to the broader Western canon. Thus, the focus of this subchapter will be mainly centered around the ways in which postcolonial literature resists the Western literary canon and deals with such a canon as a single multifaceted construct disregarding variations across genres or national origins. By examining what constitutes a canon in terms of genre, form, style, themes, and broader impacts within the Western literary tradition and, more precisely, the English literary realm, a more comprehensive understanding can be gained of the historical and cultural factors that shape the Western canon. Additionally, the subsequent challenges and resistance that have emerged as a critical response to such a hegemonic and authoritative canon, which has often been imbued with a sort of superiority complex and colonial tendencies towards non-European cultures, can be better understood.

As investigated in the introduction, European colonial expansion, especially towards Africa, dates back to the 15th century, and the period from the late 15th century to the 19th century was the heyday of European imperialism. However, what is important to highlight at this point is that this territorial expansion was accompanied by a significant cultural exchange, albeit a hegemonic one, where European nations imposed their literary, social, and cultural values on colonized communities. Notably, the issue of textuality was of utmost importance during the imperial period, for, as Elleke Boehmer argues in her analysis of British colonial expansion, "empire was itself, at least in part, a textual exercise…The Empire in its heyday was conceived and maintained in an array of writings."[6] Boehmer adds that texts were a

[4] Zhang Longxi, "Canon and World Literature." *Journal of World Literature*, no. 1 (2016): 121.
[5] Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable things unspoken: The Afro-American presence in American Literature." *Tanner Lectures on Human Values.*, (1988): 132.
[6] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* , 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 14.

medium through which European communities understood and internalized the concepts of imperialism and colonialism through newspapers and other forms of writing, an issue that prompts Boehmer to describe the text itself as "a vehicle of imperial authority."[7] In a similar vein, Said exposes a critical link between Western literary discourse and imperialism, suggesting that "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them."[8]

The imposition of Western ideals and cultural values on colonized communities was accompanied by the spread of European languages, especially English, French, and Spanish, which supplanted indigenous languages. Such a combination of Western ideals and languages was crystallized in the form of a Western literary canon, which was established and promoted by colonial missionaries and educators as a medium of showing colonial cultural supremacy while suppressing and marginalizing indigenous cultures and literatures. Therefore, Boehmer adds, "literature created channels for the exchange of colonial images and ideals"[9] and was the only medium through which Europeans back home understood the world 'outside' Europe, while simultaneously being the means through which colonized natives saw themselves in the European gaze. In this respect, Edward Said highlights the malicious nature of this physical and epistemological imperialism, arguing that such a "struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings."[10]

Against such an established and hegemonic Western canon, postcolonial literature offers canonical resistance by challenging dominant narratives, reasserting voices that were marginalized and silenced, revisiting and revising the version of history offered in the Western canon, and questioning the fixed norms and values propagated by Western colonial narratives. While the Western literary canon often distorts and seeks to erase the history of colonized communities by offering the Western Eurocentric version of such encounters, postcolonial literature offers thematic resistance to such distortions by attempting to reclaim and reinterpret history from the other side, that is, from the perspective of the colonized. In this respect, C. L. Innes skillfully highlights Fanon's stance on "rescuing the history from the colonizer's custody."[11] Fanon argues that against such European denials "The colonized intellectual who wants to put his struggle on a legitimate footing, who is intent on providing proof and accepts to bare himself in order to better display the history of his body, is fated to journey deep into the very bowels of his people."[12] What Fanon asserts here is the imperative for colonized intellectuals to confront and engage with the realities of colonial histories and self-examination to construct a powerful narrative that challenges colonial discourses and displays the lived realities of their peoples. In this respect, the dissertation proceeds to

[7] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 14.
[8] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xiii.
[9] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 15.
[10] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 7.
[11] C.L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) , 37.
[12] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 149.

examine the forms of canonical resistance that both Achebe and Coetzee offer in their selected works, analyzing how each author resists the Western canon by adapting and enacting alternative aesthetics within their respective sociopolitical contexts and through their different positions as colonized and colonizer.

4.2. Beyond the Colonial Archive: Achebe's Canonical Resistance

As elaborated upon in Chapter 1, Achebe's literary consciousness was profoundly shaped by indigenous African life under British colonialism. However, this formative experience of the young Achebe was mediated through the lens of English, the language of the colonizer. In other words, Achebe's formative years were characterized and heavily shaped by his exposure to the Western literary canon, including its representations or, more accurately, misrepresentations of Africa and African ethnicities. As a writer, Jay Lynn argues, Achebe's "consciousness…was shaped by his immersion in both African and Western discourses and by his moral urgency."[13] Therefore, Achebe's literary mission was to counter that Western canon with a voice from the inside, an authentic African voice that is capable of representing the African experience while challenging and subverting the authority of the Western literary canon.

Through his novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, Achebe offers a profound canonical resistance to the Western literary canon, for, as demonstrated earlier, Achebe's literary endeavor as a novelist began as a response to two influential works that depicted Africa from a Eurocentric and ethnocentric perspective: Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). However, Achebe does not respond to such texts using Igbo or other African languages but rather employs the language of the colonizer as a tool to create autoethnographic texts that dismantle the literary authority and imperialistic narrative from within. At this point, it is essential to highlight the difference between European ethnographic texts and what Mary Pratt terms "autoethnographic texts."[14] According to Pratt, the term 'autoethnography' or 'autoethnographic expression' "refers to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's terms."[15] She further adds, "If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are texts the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations."[16] In this regard, this subchapter will endeavor to examine the linguistic strategies and innovative narrative styles employed by Achebe in his autoethnographic texts to resist and subvert the Western canon, thereby highlighting the complexity and richness of African cultures and realities.

[13] Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 1.
[14] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* (New York, Routledge: 2008), 9.
[15] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 9.
[16] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 9.

4.2.1 Indigenizing the Canon: Achebe's Linguistic Africanization

Achebe's linguistic approach in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* can be seen as a significant departure from the linguistic conventions of Western (mainly English) literature. Achebe incorporates Igbo idioms, proverbs, and cultural symbols into the English language (the language of the canon), thus indigenizing or localizing the canon by Africanizing its language and creating a distinctive literary voice that challenges the canon's linguistic hegemony and offers alternative modes of communication and knowledge formation. In other words, Jay Lynn asserts, "Achebe's literary and cultural impact arises from his manner of interlacing African cultural and linguistic traditions, often those of his own Igbo people, with Western-influenced fictional discourses."[17] Moreover, what Achebe intends to achieve through this amalgamation is a sort of linguistic authenticity that challenges the biased and dehumanizing Western portrayals of African societies as linguistically and culturally primitive, lacking all sorts of communicative complexity.

Now, before examining Achebe's linguistic techniques, it is important to highlight the linguistic controversy surrounding the use of English in African literature and thus make clear Achebe's stance on the matter. Indeed, many postcolonial African intellectuals rejected the use of the imperial language as a literary language that reflects the African experience, suggesting that it reasserts the cultural and linguistic hegemony of the empire while erasing the cultural legacy of indigenous languages. One of the most important proponents of this abrogative current was the Nigerian literary scholar Obi Wali, who argues that

> the whole uncritical acceptance of English and French as the inevitable medium for educated African writing, is misdirected, and has no chance of advancing African literature and culture. In other words until these writers and their western midwives accept the fact that any true African literature must be written in African languages, they would be merely pursuing a dead end, which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity, and frustration.[18]

Wali's argument was further embraced by the Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiongo, who also criticized the use of foreign languages in African literature, suggesting that such a practice resulted in making "the renaissance of African cultures lay in the languages of Europe."[19] For Ngugi, all literature written by Africans in European languages, including his own, cannot be characterized as African literature but as Afro-European literature.[20] Therefore, Ngugi calls for pure indigenous African writing as a form of postcolonial linguistic abrogation, declaring that "African literature can only be written in African languages, that is, the languages of the African peasantry and working class."[21] Ngugi's further creates an analogy between art theft and the intellectual colonization of African communities and calls for economic, political, cultural, and, most importantly, linguistic autonomy. He argues, "in the twentieth century

---

[17] Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration*, 1.
[18] Obiajunwa Wali, "The Dead End of African Literature?" *Transition* 10 (September 1963), 14, as cited in Thomas Jay Lynn, *Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 78.
[19] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, 5.
[20] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, 26.
[21] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind*, 27.

Europe is stealing the treasures of the mind to enrich their languages and cultures. Africa needs back its economy, its politics, its culture, its languages and all its patriotic writers.[22]

On the contrary, Achebe maintains an opposing view regarding the use of English in African literature. Achebe differentiates between two types of African literature: the national and the ethnic, suggesting that national literature can address the whole nation, crossing linguistic borders and reaching a wider readership within the nation, while, on the other hand, the scope of ethnic literature he views as narrow and relevant to a specific ethnic group within the larger nation.[23] Therefore, within the Nigerian context, Achebe argues that "the national literature, as I see it, is the literature written in English; and the ethnic literatures are in Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, Efik, Edo, Ijaw, etc."[24] Regarding his use of English, Achebe ultimately asserts that "I have been given this language and I intend to use it."[25] However, the question is: how does Achebe intend to use it? The answer can be detected in Achebe's Africanization of the English language, the process through which he infuses his literary texts with Nigerian Pidgin English and Igbo, creating a vibrant mixture of linguistic expressions. Achebe views such English as "new English," the medium of writing that he regards as having the full potential to "carry the weight of [his and other writers'] African experience" and that is "still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings."[26]

By appropriating the language of the colonizer, Achebe believes that Africans, as well as all other colonized communities, can now tell their own stories in a language that crosses cultural and geographical boundaries, thus leading postcolonial narratives to achieve a wider impact that disseminates such narratives on a global stage. In other words, although Achebe acknowledges the importance and value of ethnic literature in preserving cultural heritage, he stresses the potential of national literature, written in English, to foster a sense of unity and oneness in the diverse African nation.

In his texts, Achebe reflects the "crossroads of cultures" he lived through and how although he was deeply immersed in English culture and language, he was heavily informed and fascinated by "the ritual and the life on the other arm of the crossroads.[27] In other words, Achebe's linguistic approach can be better understood within the context of indigenization, a process that Chantal Zabus defines as "the writer's attempt at textualizing linguistic differentiation and at conveying African concepts, thought-patterns, and linguistic features through the ex-colonizer's language."[28] Achebe's linguistic indigenization is evident in what Zabus defines as "cushioning," that is, "the fact of tagging a European-language explanation onto an African word."[29] For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe writes "*agadi-nwayi,* or

---

[22] Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind,* 2.
[23] Chinua Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language," in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, (New York : Anchor Books, 1976), 75.
[24] Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language, 75.
[25] Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language," 83.
[26] Achebe, "The African Writer and the English Language," 84.
[27] Chinua Achebe, "Named for Victoria, Queen of England," in *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, (New York : Anchor Books, 1976), 98-99.
[28] Chantal Zabus, *The African Palimpsest. Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 3.
[29] Zabus, *The African Palimpsest.* 7.

old,"[30] "The elders, or *ndicbie,*"[31] "hut, or *obi*,"[32] "*chi* or personal god,"[33] "*eze-agadi-nwayi,* or the teeth of an old,"[34] "the rope, or *tie-tie.*"[35] In this respect, Sofia Chilesi asserts that

> Achebe combines the message expressed in English with the graphic code usually used for Igbo word or sentences, which is for the reader a powerful and meaningful sign, that is inevitably connected with the indigenous dimension. By doing so, Achebe temporarily disrupts the boundaries between the two linguistic world in order to create a hybrid space of co-existence of the two languages and cultures.[36]

In other words, Achebe creates a new form of literary expression that reflects the realities of postcolonial African communities, where an amalgamation of cultures and languages coexists, thus challenging the 'purity' of the English canon as well as the traditional linguistic notions of literature within the English canon. Concerning this matter, Whittaker and Msiska assert that Achebe's texts show that he is "not merely reproducing Standard English but transforming it into a medium that is able to convey…[his] particular view of the world."[37]

However, while Achebe employs cushioning prominently in *Things Fall Apart*, his linguistic preference in his subsequent novel, *Arrow of God*, assumes a more knowledgeable readership, one that is familiar with the Igbo world and its terms, since it has already been introduced to non-African readers. Illustrative of this technique are sentences such as

a. He put the *ofo* back among the *ikenga* and the *okposi*, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and returned to his place.[38]
b. This is what our kinsman did—he challenged his *chi*.[39]
c. "Here is a piece of *nzu*, " he said as he rolled the chalk towards his guest.[40]
d. Ezeulu's younger wife examined her hair in a mirror held between her thighs… she was very pleased with the black patterns of *uli* and faint yellow lines of *ogalu* on her body.[41]
e. Let us go from here to Nwokafo's compound and ask him to give us a gourd from this tree. It is very costly—the gourd may be *ego-nese*—but I shall pay. If you two drink

[30] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*,11.
[31] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*,12.
[32] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*,14.
[33] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*,18.
[34] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*,34.
[35] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*,55.
[36] Sofia Chilesi, "The Subversive Function of Indigenization In Post-colonial Reconstruction of Identity: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a Case Study" (Master's Thesis, Università degli Studi di Trento, 2015/16), 134.
[37] David Whittaker and Mpalive- Hangson Msiska, *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 47.

[38] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 6. (*ofo, ikenga, and okposi*, are small artifacts or small statues found among Igbo people)
[39] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 26. (*chi* is the personal god or guardian angel)
[40] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 68.(*nzu* is small pieces of white clay used among Igbo people for nutritional purposes)
[41] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 68. (*uli* is a dye used by women for drawing patterns on the skin. *Ogalu* is a plant used as women accessories in Igbo culture)

> three hornfuls each and still go home let it be my loss. But if not you must give me *ego-neli*.[42]

In both novels, Achebe often leaves Igbo words untranslated, thus immersing readers in the Igbo cultural context and indirectly forcing them to approach the text through the cultural and linguistic context of Igbo culture. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator describes how Unoka, Okonkwo's father, enjoyed conversations about music and how "He could hear in his mind's ear the …rhythms of the *ekwe* and the *udu* and the *ogene*."[43] Here, the words "*ekwe*," "*udu*," and "*ogene*" refer to traditional Igbo musical instruments, which are not familiar words to non-Igbo-speaking readers. By choosing not to translate these words, Achebe compels readers to engage with the Igbo world, asserting that certain words, names, and concepts cannot, or should not, be translated, for they possess cultural specificity and depth.

However, it can be noticed that Achebe uses such terms in a context that allows him to acquaint his readers gradually with the Igbo word even without knowing its literal meaning, but rather through grasping a general understanding through the context offered. In other words, Achebe employs what Zabus delineates as linguistic "contextualization," that is, "the fact of providing areas of immediate context so as to make the African word intelligible without resorting to translation."[44] In this respect, Oliver Lovesey suggests that Achebe creates through his texts an "Ibo Survival Guide" that is used to "facilitate life in a carefully controlled fictional model village; it allows ready access to representative concepts and linguistic markers."[45] Nevertheless, it is essential to consider Achebe's linguistic preference which can be seen in his decentering of English and subverting the linguistic hierarchy that places English over indigenous languages. By challenging the supremacy of English, Achebe reclaims a sort of linguistic autonomy in representing the African experience using African terms that resist the linguistic homogenization of the Western (colonial) canon. Moreover, C. L. Innes highlights the importance of Achebe's "new English" linguistic approach, suggesting that

> Achebe implements a constructive dialogue between Igbo language traditions and literary English in varied ways…His work contributed to new currents of communication between his own society in Nigeria, a larger African society, and a global society, and it disclosed new interconnections between traditions of Igbo orature and Europhone literature.[46]

Along with using Igbo language in the English text, Achebe further adds to the linguistic complexity of his texts by incorporating examples of Nigerian Pidgin English. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a pidgin is "a simplified speech used for communication

---

[42] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 79. (while ego in Igbo means money, it is clear that *ego-nese* and *ego-neil* refer to a certain amount of money)
[43] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York : Anchor Books, 1994), 6.
[44] Zabus, *The African Palimpsest.* 7.
[45] Oliver Lovesey, "Making Use of the Past in *Things Fall Apart*", in *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart-New Edition.* Edited by Harold Bloom.(New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 128.
[46] Lynn, *Chinua Achebe*, 3.

between people with different languages."[47] However, what is remarkable is that, in comparison with *Arrow of God*, *Things Fall Apart* features very few examples of Pidgin English, including the use of "kotma,"[48] (court messenger) "Yes, sah," the messenger said, saluting,"[49] "Jesu Kristi" (Jesus Christ) and "the rope, or *tie-tie*."[50] Indeed, the scarcity of Pidgin examples in *Things Fall Apart* can be related to the fact that the novel is set in the late 19th century, a period that marks pre-colonial and early colonial life in Nigeria. On the other hand, *Arrow of God* is set in the earl 20th century, during a period of deeper colonial entrenchment and interaction between the colonizers and the Nigerian people. Therefore, the novel demonstrates a variety of Nigerian Pidgin expressions, such as

a. when Captain Winterbottom asks his servant John about some children he sees: " "Are all these your pickin, John?"… "No, sir," said John, putting down the chair and pointing. "My pickin na dat two wey de run yonder and dat yellow gal. Di oder two na Cook im pickin. Di oder one yonder na Gardener him brodder pickin."[51] (possible translation : My children are those two running over there with the girl dressed in yellow. The other two are the cook's children. The other one over there is the gardener's brother's child).
b. "Dat man wan axe master queshon."[52] (that man wants to ask the master a question.)
c. "Sometine na lie dem de lie. I no wan make dem put trouble for we head."[53] (Maybe they are lying, they are liars. I don't want them to make trouble for us).

Thus, by integrating Nigerian Pidgin into the English text, Achebe challenges the hegemony of canonical language, asserting the complexity of African linguistic reality as well as the legitimacy of indigenous linguistic forms in literary texts. In other words, Achebe's use of Pidgin English reflects his revival of what Simon Gikandi describes as ""the previously disdained vernacular" that "challenges the norms of the 'Queen's' English."[54] Moreover, highlighting the role of Nigerian Pidgin in *Arrow of God*, Qiang Hu argues that

> Achebe's exploitation of pidgin English as a linguistic strategy reflects his acute consciousness in using language as a barometer for social change in the Nigerian context. It also betrays his genuine craftsmanship in manipulating English, an imperialist language, to mirror African realities. His success in this adds a good footnote to the expressive function of Pidgin English.[55]

---

[47] Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "Pidgin," accessed August 11, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Pidgin.
[48] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 174.
[49] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 208.
[50] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 55.
[51] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 31.
[52] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 83.
[53] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 154.
[54] Simon Gikandi, Writing *in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature*. (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1992), 234.
[55] Qiang Hu, "The Changing Tongues of Chinua Achebe: Language as a Developing Theme in *Things Fall Apart, A Man of the People*, and *Anthills of the Savannah*" (Master's Thesis, University of Regina, 1998), 51-52.

Through his insistence on using Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin, Achebe not only offers linguistic resistance to the Western canon but also engages in a process of defying cultural assimilation imposed by colonial powers, affirming the resilience and complexity of African cultures and languages. In other words, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* can be regarded as vehicles of using language to heal the damage caused by the Western ignorance of African language and society.

4.2.2 Orality and Authenticity: Achebe's Challenge to Written Tradition

Achebe's novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* represent a groundbreaking departure from the Western canon's literary norms of the time. His narrative style is deeply rooted in the African oral storytelling tradition and serves as a powerful tool for authenticating African culture and history. In this respect, Jay Lynn argues that Achebe's " first novels clearly reveal his intention to draw on Western influences in order to narrate the lives of Africans."[56] However, the question here is that how does Achebe adapt this Western genre of the novel? To answer this question, one should carefully study the ways in which Achebe's narratives Africanize the novel genre and how his African narrative style offers a new perspective on narrative from within the already established Western canon. In other words, Achebe's narrative style, Jay Lynn argues, is meant to "to facilitate…[his] articulation of an African worldview rather than merely to enlarge the scope of Western literary discourse."[57] Highlighting this issue, Elleke Boehmer asserts that Achebe's reputation rests on his success in

> wresting Africa into non African frameworks of cognition through the medium of the novel form, yet, importantly, without ever compromising or substantially changing his novels' structures of religious and cultural reference. With *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, in particular, a coherent, "self-engendered" world sprang into the world's view, as if from nowhere.[58]

Achebe's novels are deeply rooted in and heavily influenced by the oral traditions of his Igbo people. Achebe employs storytelling strategies in his novels as a means of narration as well as cultural preservation, for in Achebe's Igbo philosophy, storytelling is a cultural practice that preserves history, disseminates knowledge, transfers wisdom, and reinforces communal Igbo, and largely African, values. Achebe incorporates elements of storytelling, including songs, folktales, and proverbs, into his narrative, and through his texts as well, he introduces the readers to the cyclical nature of Igbo culture, thus challenging both the linear plot structure as well as the narrative linear progression prevalent in Western literature.

For instance, the beginning paragraphs of both novels showcase Achebe's reliance on oral storytelling techniques and places the reader in an anecdote-like atmosphere. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe begins the narrative with a direct and descriptive introduction of Okonkwo, focusing on his reputation and achievements,

---

[56] Lynn, *Chinua Achebe*, 6.
[57] Lynn, *Chinua Achebe*, 6.
[58] Elleke Boehmer, "Chinua Achebe, a Father of Modern African Literature," *PMLA* 129, no. 2 (2014): 239, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24769450.

> Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.[59]

Similarly, *Arrow of God* begins with a description of Ezeulu while observing the new moon, a practice that reflects an important ritual and cultural aspect:

> This was the third nightfall since he began to look for signs of the new moon. He knew it would come today but he always began his watch three days early because he must not take a risk. In this season of the year his task was not too difficult; he did not have to peer and search the sky as he might do when the rains came. Then the new moon sometimes hid itself for days behind rain clouds so that when it finally came out it was already halfgrown. And while it played its game the Chief Priest sat up every evening waiting.[60]

In both novels, Achebe begins his narrative with a clear description of his protagonists, a direct approach that mirrors traditional storytelling, where the storyteller immediately engages the audience with a prominent figure. Achebe depicts Okonkwo's strength, heroic role, and the status he gains within his community. Similarly, he contextualizes Ezeulu's role within a larger framework of religious and social duties that he is responsible for in front of his community. Therefeore, it can be clearly seen that Achebe avoids any narratives that focus solely on personal growth and tends to highlight some communal aspects. In this respect, Achebe resists the Western canon's reliance on Bildungsroman as a narrative technique that captures and depicts the protagonists' moral, psychological, and personal growth. In other words, Achebe starts his novels *in medias res,* representing the established roles of Okonkwo and Ezeulu in their respective communities and the immediate challenges they encounter. Thus, Achebe's technique here subverts the conventional Western narrative form by focusing on the character's immediate circumstances rather than their developmental arcs. By doing so, Achebe creates a complex narrative that ultimately rejects Western linear narratives and oversimplified depictions of African societies and reflects the non-linear, complex, and rich nature of African societies.

Achebe's focus on the oral nature of the Igbo community in both novels not only functions as a medium for celebrating Igbo culture and traditions but also serves as an essential literary tool for resisting the Western canon's tendency to marginalize African oral traditions. In other words, Achebe's orality resists the Western canon by challenging its privilege of the written text over orally-transmitted knowledge formation. In this respect, C. L. Innes asserts that "Achebe's concern with community, together with his experience of a culture whose storytelling traditions are oral and communal, led him to radically re-form the novel in such a

[59] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart,* 3.
[60] Achebe, *Arrow of God,* 1.

way that the reader is provoked into thoughtful awareness of the problems his characters face and evaluation of the responses made to those problems."[61]

Achebe clearly brings this issue to the readers' attention in *Things Fall Apart* when the narrator describes the importance of oral traditions in the Igbo culture, stating that "Among the lbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palmoil with which words are eaten."[62] As established in Chapter Three, Achebe infuses his texts with a set of Igbo proverbs that not only reflect the richness and complexity of Igbo culture but also resist the Western denial and marginalization of African cultures. Adding the proverbial element, Achebe redefines his narrative style by embedding the oral tradition into the very fabric of the novel, thus performing as a critical narrative device that unfolds Igbo wisdom, culture, and social critique. Highlighting this issue, Jay Lynn contends that Achebe "saw in traditional Igbo proverbs a powerful mode of discourse that contributed to the narrative a distinctly African voice and manner of organizing experience."[63] By foregrounding the Igbo proverbs and forcing them into the alien context of the novel, Achebe elevates African oral traditions to the level of literary art and resists and debunks all attempts made at silencing and marginalizing African voices in Western literary discourses.

What is also remarkable in Achebe's style is the polyphonic narrative he employs in his texts, which offers a straight departure from and a challenge to the single, authoritative voice dominant in Western canonical narratives. In his novels, Achebe incorporates multiple voices within the community, which, in part, reflects the complexity of the Igbo society while also rejecting the monolithic depictions of Africa in Western literature. In Western canonical literature, the single-voiced narrative approach is a defining characteristic that clearly reflects an authoritative narrative perspective and typically features an omniscient first-person narrator guiding readers through the plot and unfolding the characters' inner psyche. For example, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), in which Crusoe recounts his personal experiences, thoughts, and reflections. Another prominent example is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), through which readers are introduced to life across the African Congo via the lens and personal recount of Marlow and his biased perspectives.

On the contrary, Achebe's novels resist the single-voiced approach and seamlessly shift between multiple perspectives in the text. In other words, although *Things Fall Apart* revolves around the chronicles of Okonkwo, Achebe provides a third-person narrative that features the viewpoints of different characters in the story, including Nwoye, Ikemefuna, Obierika, the village elders, Mr. Brown, Mr. Smith, Akunna, and others. Similarly, the polyphonic narrative of *Arrow of God* shifts between Ezeulu, Edogo, Nwafo, Nwaka, John Goodcountry, T. K. Winterbottom, and others. Through these conversations exchanged in the narratives, Achebe challenges the monolithic representations in Western narratives, particularly those of colonial discourse, thus providing a complex and more authentic representation of the Igbo community. Highlighting the revolutionary nature of Achebe's approach, Innes contends that

---

[61] C. L. Innes, *Chinua Achebe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 18.
[62] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 7.
[63] Lynn, *Chinua Achebe*, 30.

> His approach to the form and function of the novel is comparable to Brecht's approach to epic theatre, which itself was influenced by folk and oral forms and conventions. To put it another way, using the terms employed by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin, Achebe rejects the 'monologic' form … to create his own kind of 'dialogic' novel.[64]

Along with proverbs and multi-voiced narratives, Achebe skillfully infuses his novels with Igbo folktales to create a complex and rich image of Igbo culture. In other words, the folktales integrated into the stories are not meant to be decorative elements but are deeply connected to the values, traditions, culture, and ethics of the Igbo community and serve as mediums of cultural and historical preservation. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe mainly introduces two folktales; the first is the story of the tortoise and the birds, which is narrated by Okonkwo's wife, Ekwefi, to her daughter Ezinma. This folktale revolves around a greedy tortoise who manages, through his "sweet tongue," to convince the birds to take him along to a feast in the sky. He cheats the bird and succeeds in convincing them to lend him feathers and change their names, resulting in his possession of all their food at the feast. As a result, the birds decide to take their feathers back, leaving the trickster tortoise to fall from the sky and break his shell.

The crux of this story's significance resides in three fundamental aspects: first, as Jay Lynn asserts, "this story…is one of the most extensive invocations of Igbo oral tradition in his novels."[65] She further adds that the use of this folkloric trickster "play[s] a role in recovering dimensions of culture that were nearly extinguished by colonization or reshaped by colonial priorities."[66] Second, the story reflects the Igbo philosophy of prioritizing the value of community over selfish acts of individualism. Third, this story carries a symbolic interpretation that highlights the tension between the traditional Igbo community and the intrusion of British colonialism. Just like the tortoise lies and claims to know the customs of the "people of the sky," the District Commissioner exhibits similar tendencies towards the end of the novel when he decides to add Okonkwo's life story into his book, debasing and summarizing Okonkwo's entire life in a single sentences: "the story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself."[67] In this respect, Achebe argues

> To the colonialist mind it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: "I know my natives," a claim which implied two things at once: (a) that the native was really quite simple and (b) that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand— understanding being a pre-condition for control and control constituting adequate proof of understanding.[68]

Another folktale that Achebe adds to *Things Fall Apart* is the story of the Mosquito and the Ear, a folktale that Okonkwo's mother used to tell her son. In this story, a mosquito offers to

---

[64] Innes, *Chinua Achebe*, 18.
[65] Lynn, *Chinua Achebe*, 42.
[66] Lynn, *Chinua Achebe*, 41.
[67] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 208.
[68] Chinua Achebe, "Colonialist Criticism," in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 69.

marry the ear, an offer that is rejected by the latter, who says that the mosquito is too small and insignificant. However, the mosquito vows to always fly near the ear to remind her of his presence. This story carries deeper implications for the resilience and resistance of African cultures and voices in the face of colonial marginalization. Through this story, Achebe suggests that despite the continuous attempts made by colonial mindset to marginalize and downgrade African cultures and traditions, they cannot be easily silenced or ignored and will always be ready to assert their presence.

Similarly, Achebe continues his preference to incorporate folktales in *Arrow of God* to demonstrate the cosmology and cultural vastness of the Igbo community. For example, when Ezeulu is conversing with his son, Oduche, about the importance of joining the white man's new religion, he retells the folktale of the bird Eneke: "The world is changing,"…"I do not like it. But I am like the bird Eneke…When his friends asked him why he was always on the wing he replied: 'Men of today have learnt to shoot without missing and so I have learnt to fly without perching."[69] Much like *Things Fall Apart*, this story is open to symbolic readings, where one possible reading is the necessity of marginalized and oppressed cultures, like the Igbo, to develop new strategies and modes for reasserting their presence and to survive the domination of the Western powers. Another example in the novel takes place in a conversation between Moses Unachukwu, who warns Mr. Goodcountry that if he doesn't keep his sermons away from the sacred python, he will face the same fate as the lizard in the folktale who "ruined his own mother's funeral."[70] The folktale revolves around a lizard, who during his own mother's funeral due to his overwhelming sense of importance and superiority. The lizard's arrogance leads him to disregard the cultural norms and social values that are meant to sustain harmony in the community, for the chaotic actions of the lizard funeral result in shame and dishonor, thus disrupting an event that should have been solemn and reverent. Through this story, Achebe once again stresses the importance of preserving indigenous cultural and religious practices against foreign impositions and recreates a reminder of the necessity of remembering that a community's traditions are vital to its identity and survival.

The message that Achebe intends to deliver through his incorporation of folktales is that, as Chinwe Okechukwuu argues, "his people had a culture that was as good as, if not better than, the Western culture, which came to destroy it. He also argues that the Europeans misconceived the Africans, and since they lacked knowledge of the people's language, they could not have a real insight into the African worldview."[71] Moreover, Achebe's integration of folktales primarily challenges Western literary conventions, which often ignore and marginalize indigenous oral traditions. In other words, by privileging orality as a primary mode of storytelling, Achebe subverts the hegemony of Western literary forms and deconstructs colonial Western narratives that often depict African cultures as primitive, inferior, or ultimately nonexistent. Thus, Achebe disrupts the Western literary form of the

[69] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 46.
[70] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 50.
[71] Chinwe Christiana Okechukwuu, *Achebe the Orator: The Art of Persuasion in Chinua Achebe's Novels* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 13.

novel with the infusion of oral traditions, reclaiming African narrative authority and debunking Western presumptions of the novel and written tradition as the only mode of storytelling and knowledge formation.

It is through these narrative strategies and incorporations that Achebe seeks to preserve and celebrate the oral traditions of African cultures, which were often neglected and marginalized in the written texts of the Western canon. Nevertheless, a critical interrogation arises: Doesn't Achebe's utilization of the written form inadvertently perpetuate the very same tradition and textual hegemony that have historically and culturally undermined oral cultures and traditions? As noted previously, Achebe's incorporation of Igbo oral traditions, including proverbs, folktales, etc., is not meant to be an ornament for the narrative but rather a subversion of the written tradition and a decolonization or decentering of the novel. In other words, Achebe's works imply that he does not reject the written tradition completely but rather reinterprets it to show that the written and oral can coexist and supplement each other. Clarifying his philosophy of literary amalgamation, Achebe writes, "the Igbo people have a firm belief in the duality of things. Nothing is by itself, nothing is absolute. "I am the way, the Truth, and the Life" would be meaningless in Igbo theology."[72]

The written-oral dichotomy in *Things Fall Apart* can be clearly seen when comparing the first and final paragraphs of the novel. While the opening paragraph of the novel represents and recalls the tradition of traditional oral storytelling and its role in recording the story of Okonkwo's heroism as oral history, the final paragraph of the novel stands in sharp contrast to it. Indeed, the final paragraph of *Things Fall Apart* reflects the District Commissioner's written record and how he tends to re-inscribe Okonkwo's (hi)story into his work:

> In the book which he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter, but a reasonable paragraph at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*.[73]

Highlighting the colonial tendencies and polar opposition between the novel's opening and closing passages, Innes argues that the final paragraph "exposes the dismissal and displacement of Igbo culture by British power and language, as well as the displacement of oral history by written history."[74] The final paragraph clearly shows the District Commissioner's tendency to ridicule and downgrade Okonkwo's (hi)story into a mere detail, and, as Innes further adds, the entire history of this Igbo community will be imprisoned in the written record of the District Commissioner.[75] However, it is the power of Achebe's

[72] Chinua Achebe, *Collected Poems* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 82.
[73] Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 208-9.
[74] Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction,* 45.
[75] Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction,* 45

storytelling—his rich and complex incorporation of Igbo traditions, values, and struggles—that immerses the readers in the depths of the Igbo culture and allows his text to survive colonial misrepresentation. Concerning this matter, Innes asserts

> *Things Fall Apart* is after all a written and very literary commemoration of an oral culture, a novel whose story does in fact counter and outweigh the District Commissioner's fictional and unread account. As David Punter points out, it is Achebe's text which survives, and the District Commissioner's which is 'lost'; in resurrecting an oral culture and recording the destruction of a community.[76]

Moreover, the title that the District Commissioner chooses for his book can be seen as a clear reflection and representation of Said's notions of Orientalism, especially his assertion that, "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience."[77] The title stands as the very antithesis of the richness, complexity, vibrancy, and dignity of the Igbo community that Achebe depicts at the early chapters of his texts. Similarly, in Ezeulu's rejection of being "a white man's chief"[78] in *Arrow of God*, Achebe highlights how such a colonial offer is not a recognition of Ezeulu's social and religious status but rather an act of enforced cooperation aimed at integrating domestic leadership under colonial authority. Thus, the way the District Commissioner attempts to falsify Okonkwo's life story in *Things Fall Apart* and the imprisonment of Ezeulu following his rejection to cooperate with the white man in *Arrow of God* reflect the Orientalist logic that Said highlights, a logic that completely denies traditional and indigenous legal, social, and religious systems. In both texts, Achebe's representations explicate Said's views on the imposition of colonial discourse and how it attempts to construct a colonized identity through negation.

In *Arrow of God*, a similar dynamic of resistance and survival occurs when Ezeulu's story of religious and traditional loyalty to his Igbo community survives despite all attempts to undermine it. Just like the District Commissioner's attempts to falsify Okonkwo's history, Captain Winterbottom exhibits similar tendencies of falsification and degradation in *Arrow of God.* For instance, he tells his assistant that the war between Ezeulu's village and Okperi lacks legitimate grounds and is rather the result of a dispute between two drunken men from the villages:

> This war between Umuaro and Okperi began in a rather interesting way…As I was saying, this war started because a man from Umuaro went to visit a friend in Okperi one fine morning and after he'd had one or two gallons of palm wine…this man from Umuaro having drunk his friend's palm wine reached for his *ikenga* and split it in two.[79]

Moreover, Winterbottom further ridicules the natives by describing them as children and liars, for he tells his assistant: "one thing you must remember in dealing with natives is that

---

[76] Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction,* 45
[77] Said, *Orientalism*, 1-2.
[78] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 175.
[79] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 37.

like children they are great liars. They don't lie simply to get out of trouble. Sometimes they would spoil good case by a pointless lie."[80] He further refers to the natives using terms such as "savage tyrants," and "filthy animal skins."[81] In this respect, Debaleena Dutta asserts that Captain Winterbottom's discourse is emblematic of the colonial mindset, revealing a self-aggrandizing perspective wherein he casts himself as a divinely appointed messenger charged with uplifting the purportedly 'savage' indigenous populations.[82]

Similar to Clarke, Winterbottom's assistant District Officer, who is required to write full reports to Winterbottom about his observations in the village, the narrator describes how Winterbottom himself is obliged to send written reports to his superiors as well. Through these written correspondences, Achebe once again reflects on the concept of the written tradition and its supposed supremacy over the oral one. Just like the District Commissioner's book in *Things Fall Apart*, Winterbottom's reports to his superiors will be the main source for constructing a British understanding of African societies. Moreover, both the District Commissioner and Winterbottom exemplify the colonial emphasis and prioritization of written documents, an issue that reflects the colonial belief in the superiority of Western modes of knowledge formation and dissemination. By the end of the novel, although Ezeulu may seem personally defeated and Christianity appears to have notably thrived, Achebe leaves readers with the understanding that Ezeulu's legacy is not only found in the actions he took but in the collective memories and stories that will be passed down from one generation to another, ensuring that his legacy will survive beyond his immediate downfall.

By documenting these stories in the novel, Achebe ensures that oral traditions will never be lost but instead recorded in a form that can be preserved and studied. In this regard, Innes contends that "Achebe's novels repeatedly broach the 'what ifs' of history; the awareness that events and the interpretation of events are all too often matters of the chance convergence of particular people, particular technologies, particular blindnesses within an overall picture."[83] Ultimately, Achebe's creation of a hybrid text that blends together written and oral traditions challenges the supremacy and dominance of the Western literary canon, and more importantly, he challenges the Western written tradition not by rejecting it altogether but by expanding its literary dimensions to include and elevate indigenous oral traditions.

4.3. Defying Tradition: Rewriting the Canon and The Transformation of Picaresque and Adventure Narratives in Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K and Foe*

As has been shown in the previous chapter, Coetzee's complex position as a white South African in both the literary and social realms can be attributed to the fact that he could be seen as a figure who belongs to a colonial heritage, which he critiques so forcefully. While Achebe uses the English language, the language of the colonizer, to subvert the limitations and biases of canonical narratives as well as to voice and African experience in English,

[80] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 37.
[81] Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 36.
[82] Debaleena Dutta, "Bearing the Burden of Native Experience: A Stylistic Analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*," *Rupkatha Journal* ,vol.2, no. 1 (2010): 166, DOI: 10.21659/rupkatha.v2n2.07

[83] Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction,* 47.

Coetzee's English does not have the same postcolonial dynamics as Achebe's. Coetzee's distinct linguistic position reflects a more complex relationship with colonial and postcolonial narratives, for English is his first language as well as his medium of critique. However, what Coetzee and Achebe share in their usage of English is that, as Ashcroft et al. argue, they respond to the English canon "with a view to restructuring European 'realities' in post-colonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based."[84]

Considering Coetzee's advocacy for the novel's rivalry with history, such rivalry, Coetzee asserts, engenders "a novel that operates in terms of its own procedures and issues in its own conclusions, not one that operates in terms of the procedures of history and eventuates in conclusions that are checkable by history."[85] Using the 'canon's language,' Coetzee interrogates and deconstructs the literary conventions that have been implicated in canonical colonial contexts, for his works often engage in a critical dialogue with canonical texts and traditions, resulting in subversive textual reinterpretations as well as interrogations of power, authority, and history. In other words, Coetzee's works challenge readers to question the stories told, their structure within the canon, and how such stories reflect and perpetuate certain power dynamics, especially those related to colonialism, authority, and power.

In this respect, this subchapter will endeavor to shed light on Coetzee's canonical resistance and how he questions the very foundations of the Western narrative through his works *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986). The analysis will investigate how Coetzee's literary experiments in these works challenge the dominant paradigms of Western literary conventions by challenging conventional narrative structures and genres, thus defying traditional expectations and norms within the Western literary canon.

As examined in the preceding discussion of Achebe, the act of rewriting or responding to canonical genres often serves as a powerful tool for reconsidering or reexamining established narratives and their 'canonical' status, thus challenging hegemonic cultural and literary paradigms. While Achebe's canonical resistance is traceable in linguistic Africanization and the challenge of the written tradition, Coetzee's resistance lies in his subversion and reconfiguration of canonical literary genres, employing these methods to critique and dismantle underlying power structures perpetuated by such canonical forms.

In Coetzee's oeuvre in general, the practice of reimagining and rewriting established canonical genres becomes a means of critically exploring the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, including their enduring effects on contemporary society. Through *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and *Foe* (1986), Coetzee exemplifies his mastery of innovative retelling or reimagining of picaresque and adventure narratives. Now, the question arises: as a postcolonial writer, how does Coetzee engage with these canonical traditions? Does this engagement take the form of adaptation or abrogation? To answer these questions, it is crucial to analyze Coetzee's narrative strategies in both texts and highlight how his

[84] Ashcroft, et al., *The Empire Writes Back*, 32.
[85] J. M. Coetzee, 'The Novel Today', 5.

engagement with such traditions exceeds the level of adaptation and reaches a level of transformation and reconfiguration.

Coetzee's transformation challenges and subverts the foundational structures of picaresque and adventure narratives, ultimately revealing the complexities of marginalized and silenced experiences and offering alternative perspectives of power and resistance within the context of colonialism and social exclusion. In other words, Coetzee's postcolonial approach of using the frameworks of picaresque and adventure narratives endows these genres with a whole new dimension. Through his reinterpretations, Coetzee dismantles the colonial heroism, individualism, perpetuation of colonial ideologies, and European superiority associated with such genres, instead drawing attention to the experiences of those who were displaced, marginalized, and silenced by the very systems these genres seek to perpetuate.

4.3.1. Michael K as an Anti-Picaresque Figure: Intertextual Dialogues with Kafka and Kleist

The picaresque novel is a genre characterized by its episodic structure and antiheroic protagonist, and while the term 'picaresque novel' was coined in 1810, the origins of the picaresque tradition can be traced back to the 1550s in Spain, more specifically with the publication of the anonymous novel *Lazarillo de Tormes*. The term 'picaresque' originates from the Spanish word *pícaro*, meaning a rouge, or scoundrel figure, whose adventures are the central focus of the picaresque narrative. According to Thrall and Hibbard, there are seven chief qualities that distinguish the picaresque novel:

1. it chronicles a part or the whole of the life of a rogue. It is likely to be done in the first person—as autobiography
2. The chief figure is drawn from a low social level and is of "loose" character, according to conventional standards. The occupation of this central figure, should he tolerate employment at all, is menial in nature.
3. The novel presents little plot. Rather is it a series of episodes only slightly connected.
4. There is little character interest. Progress and development of character do not take place. The central figure starts as a *picaro* and ends as a *picaro*.
5. The method is realistic… it is presented with a plainness of language, a freedom in vocabulary, and a vividness of detail such as the realist only is permitted.
6. Satire is a prominent element.
7. The hero of the picaresque novel usually stops just short of being an actual criminal. The line between crime and petty rascality is a hazy one.[86]

In *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee reconfigures the picaresque novel by presenting a protagonist whose journey in a war-torn South Africa becomes a quest for survival rather than a series of adventures. In other words, while Coetzee's novel engages in a complex dialogue with the picaresque tradition, it simultaneously challenges and resists the limitations of the genre when applied to the postcolonial contexts that Coetzee explores. By analyzing

[86] William Thrall and Addison Hibbard, *A Handbook to Literature* (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1938), 352-53.

how Coetzee's novel challenges the seven main characteristics of the picaresque novel, a deeper understanding of Coetzee's postcolonial position of simultaneous engagement with and resistance to the tradition can be gained.

While the picaresque novel relies on first-person narrative as a hallmark of the genre, where the *picaro*, a marginalized figure, narrates his chronicles and draws readers into his own world and experiences with society, Coetzee's novel adheres to this structure while introducing notable deviations. Although *Life and Times of Michael K* chronicles the life of a man who exists on the fringes of society, Coetzee resists the picaresque tradition of first-person narrative by offering a third-person perspective that distances the reader from K's inner thoughts and emotions. Michael K is introduced to the readers through a shifting perspective between a third-person narrator as well as a medical officer, and as David Attwell asserts, it is "this shifting perspective [that] enable[s] Coetzee to give his reader access to the mind of a simpleton, while also keeping him elusive."[87] Thus, Coetzee's distancing of K not only subverts the confessional tone of the picaresque but also reflects K's disconnection from the world around him in postcolonial South Africa. Moreover, unlike the 'rogue' character and his interactions with society, Coetzee represents a passive, almost mute figure who is far from being cunning or manipulative and has spent his life "learning to be quiet."[88]

Although Coetzee's K is indeed of "law social level," physically disfigured, holding a "menial" job as a gardener, and occupying a marginal position like a traditional *picaro*, he is not a "loose" character altogether. Coetzee challenges this moral looseness by presenting a character who is neither morally lax nor a rogue in the conventional sense. Coetzee's K is marked by his faithfulness and fidelity, especially evident in his treatment of his mother and the way he bears all the hardships to transport her to her hometown. He is neither deceitful nor cunning, and he seeks not to manipulate society but to escape it entirely. In this respect, Dominic Head asserts that "Coetzee's novel then ironically undermines this association by portraying an anti-hero whose *raison d'eˆtre* is to resist all forms of social connection and political affiliation."[89] Hence, Coetzee challenges the very notion of roguishness, transforming K into a figure of resistance. Highlighting this issue, Coetzee argues, "If one takes Michael K seriously as a hero, a paragon, a model, it can only be as a hero of resistance against—or rather, withdrawal from or evasion of—accepted ideas of the heroic… I see no great distance between it and the resistance of the book *Michael K* itself, with its own evasions of authority."[90]

Life and Times of Michael K mirrors the traditional structure of a picaresque narrative that represents a series of 'slightly connected' episodes, following the different phases of K's life from Huis Norenius to his working as a gardener, from the city to the hospital, from freedom to imprisonment, and many others. However, while the episodic nature of picaresque novels

[87] David Attwell, "Composition and Craft: *Waiting for the Barbarians, Life & Times of Michael K*", in *The Cambridge Companion to J. M. Coetzee*. Edited by Jarad Zimbler(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 23.
[88] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, 2.
[89] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 55.
[90] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992), 206.

focuses on the protagonist's interactions with society and how each adventure reveals a different aspect of the social world, K's episodes are marked by an internal quest for solitude rather than social engagement. In other words, as Anton Leist argues, K's episodes in the novel represent a "view from outside" society…Michael K undergoes an experiment involving life outside society."[91] Thus, Coetzee's narrative of social negation and isolation directly challenges and resists the picaresque traditional emphasis on social interaction and other forms of social maneuvering.

Furthermore, in picaresque novels, the protagonist typically does not undergo any major development and is characterized as a static character who "starts as a *picaro* and ends as a *picaro*."[92] In Coetzee's novel, Michael K echoes this characteristic in that he never undergoes any external change or traditional character development, for throughout the story, he remains a passive and silent figure, trying to avoid any sort of social interaction. Nevertheless, Coetzee resists this convention by introducing a character who undergoes significant internal growth, thereby subverting the conventions of a traditional *picaro*. At the beginning of the novel, K appears to be a naïve figure whose only desire and duty is to take care of his mother and transfer her to her birthplace. However, as the narrative unfolds, K's journey shifts from an external exploration of space to an internal exploration of the self; his focus shifts from the physical space to the psychological self-determination and sense of autonomy. In other words, K's multiple escapes from concentration camps, his retreat into the wilderness, his rejection to join the guerillas, and his attempts to cultivate the land all symbolize his desire for independence and to escape all social constraints. This idea of retreat and independence is evident in K's own revelation on the Visagies' farm, where the narrator describes K's inner thoughts: "I want to live here, he thought: I want to live here forever, where my mother and my grandmother lived."[93] Psychologically and internally, what K says here represents a major change and a character who is totally different from the one presented at the beginning of the novel. In this manner, Coetzee subverts the picaresque focus on a static character and shows an inner level of character development that is absent in the traditional *picaro.*

While the picaresque novel is characterized by its realistic portrayal of the world, especially social realism, and is marked by the use of plain language and vivid detail to depict and capture the harsh realities of the *picaro*'s life, Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, however, follows a more selective and symbolic pattern of realism. In other words, Coetzee challenges picaresque realism by offering detailed descriptions that are often infused with symbolic meanings rather than being mere realistic descriptions. For example, K's attempts to cultivate the land are described as follows:

> On a shelf in the shed he had found a packet of pumpkin seeds, some of which he had already idly roasted and eaten; he still had the mealie kernels; and on the pantry floor he had even picked up a solitary bean. In the space of a week he cleared the land near

[91] Anton Leist, "Against Society, Against History, Against Reason: Coetzee's Archaic Postmodernism", in *J. M. Coetzee and Ethics*. Edited by Anton Leist and Peter Singer(New York: Columbia University Press, 2010),
[92] William Thrall and Addison Hibbard, *A Handbook to Literature*, 352.
[93] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K*, 58.

> the dam and restored the system of furrows that irrigated it. Then he planted a small patch of pumpkins and a small patch of mealies; and some distance away on the river bank, where he would have to carry water to it, he planted his bean, so that if it grew it could climb into the thorntrees… It is because I am a gardener, he thought, because that is my nature. He sharpened the blade of his spade on a stone, the better to savour the instant when it clove the earth. The impulse to plant had been reawoken in him.[94]

What Coetzee does here is that he provides a detailed description that is infused with symbolic meanings of autonomy and self-sufficiency rather than depicting mere agricultural labor. Moreover, the novel's linguistic vividness is not intended to capture the materiality of the world but rather to reflect K's alienation and disconnection from the world. When the medical officer asks K whether he has indulged in guerilla activities, K tersely replies, "I am not in the war."[95] In other words, Coetzee's linguistic simplicity is deceptive, for beneath the simple language lie deeper themes of alienation, existentialism, and a search for autonomy. That is to say, rather than using language to merely depict K's physical journey, Coetzee employs language to document K's psychological journey and inner landscape, thus resisting the picaresque language of depicting external realities and the mere recording of events. Moreover, by introducing the medical officer as a second narrator in the novel, Coetzee departs from and disrupts the conventions of the picaresque narrative, particularly the single and authoritative voice. As David Attwell contends, "to get beyond the conventional realism, Coetzee introduced a new perspective in the form of a second narrator," an act that Attwell describes as "Coetzee's determination not to lose himself in realist narration…but to find a way of bringing self-consciousness into the text."[96] Thus, Coetzee reconfigures the picaresque narrative by introducing a type of postcolonial realism that carries philosophical and existential depths, thereby creating a narrative that transcends the conventional boundaries of the genre.

As the 6th point in Thrall and Hibbard's classification indicate, satire is a prominent element in the picaresque novel. Satire in picaresque narrative arises from the protagonist's interactions with various societal figures and institutions, revealing their ethical and social degeneracy through humor and irony. On the contrary, Coetzee's novel adopts a more tragic tone, depicting apartheid South Africa amid a fictitious civil war and focusing on the plight of the individual. Rather than using overt satire to mock or ridicule social institutions, Coetzee's narrative style offers an implicit critique of society, depicting social institutions as oppressive and inhumane. The criticism that Coetzee presents is embedded in the narrative and especially evident in the suffering of the protagonist, Michael K, who endures a series of profound physical and psychological sufferings, including starvation and depravation, injuries, exhaustion, isolation, dehumanization, imprisonment and forced labor, and the death of his mother. Thus, this tonal shift in Coetzee's narrative, which marks a significant deviation from the conventions of picaresque narrative, reflects Coetzee's challenge to the

[94] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K,* 35.
[95] Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K,* 79.
[96] David Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing,* 115.

tradition and his broader concerns with the limitations of satire in addressing the complexities of postcolonial reality in South Africa.

Last but not least, the *picaro* of the picaresque narrative often occupies a liminal space between petty rascality and actual criminality. In other words, the *picaro*'s behavior and actions often blur the line between what is considered harmless mischief and illicit behavior. However, it is important to note that K's actions of escaping the camps, evading authorities, and occupying land without permission could be seen as minor transgressions that can place him on the margins of legality. Nevertheless, all of K's actions are not characterized and driven by self-interest but rather by an utmost desire to escape society altogether. In other words, it is K's nonconformity that places him in a suspicious position by the authority. This is particularly evident in K's forced imprisonment in concentration camps for his perceived occupation as a rebel. Rather than engagement in petty crimes and self-interest, K's actions are more about survival and maintaining a sense of autonomy, an issue that prompted Patrick Hayes to completely exclude K from the field of traditional, almost criminal, *picaro* and describe him as a "genuine hero," who "resists meaning'—most notably, the symbolic frameworks of apartheid race-description, but also more broadly any kind of 'binary' thinking."[97] Coetzee's challenge of the picaresque is thus evident in his distancing of the novel from the roguish and rascal spirit of the picaresque, transforming the rogue *picaro* into a potential heroic figure.

Despite different narrative contexts, the character of Michael K from Coetzee's novel shares a sort of kinship or similarity with Josef K from Kafka's *The Trial*.[98] Highlighting this connection, Dominic Head argues, "In the name Michael K there is, on the face of it, a direct reference to Josef K, the protagonist of Kafka's *The Trial*. This, together with various other allusions, suggests a shared theme of alienation."[99] Indeed, in an interview with David Attwell, Coetzee clearly declares Kafka's influence on his literary approach, arguing, "you ask about the impact of Kafka on my own fiction. I acknowledge it, and acknowledge it with what I hope is a proper humility."[100]Head further adds, "it is clear that elements of Coetzee's treatment of marginalization and alienation are informed by Kafka."[101] Interestingly, just as Michael K is forced into labor and concentration camps without any apparent reason, Kafka's Josef K undergoes arrest "without having done anything wrong."[102] Both characters find themselves entangled by bureaucratic systems and institutions that exert power and control over their lives. In such situations, both characters exhibit a sense of powerlessness against such faceless and Kafkaesque forces, for neither Michael K understands the practices imposed by his war-torn dystopian society nor Josef K can apprehend his crime or the authority he is dealing with.

---

[97] Patrick Hayes, *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel: Writing and Politics after Beckett*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2010), 76.
[98] Franz Kafka, *The Trial*. Trans. Mike Mitchell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)
[99] Dominic Head, *J. M. Coetzee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 95.
[100] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. David Attwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992), 199.
[101] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 56.
[102] Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, 5.

Additionally, both characters experience deep isolation, for most of Michael K's journey is spent in solitary, attempting to find peace in the wilderness, thus sharing similar attitudes with Josef K, whose grapple with the unknown trail isolates him from his family, friends, and ultimately the entire society. In this respect, Patricia Álvarez Sánchez contends that the protagonists in both Kafka and Coetzee's works "are in disagreement with the society they live in and tend to become isolated from it. They embody values different to those prevailing in their oppressive environments and have to suffer the consequences."[103] Moreover, both characters share an experience of absurdity and futility evident in their constant attempts to discern the meaning of their situations as well as the futility of their actions in the face of overwhelming powers. For example, both characters exhibit effortlessness in acceptance, for just as Michael K continues his journey despite the hardships and suffering he endures for no apparent reason, Josef K shows similar moments of resignation towards the absurdity of the trial he undergoes. Further highlighting this intertextuality, David Attwell asserts that "most readers believe that behind Coetzee's '*K*' lie Franz Kafka and his Josef K. The assumption is certainly correct: at one stage in his drafts, Coetzee even mused that he might call the novel 'The Childhood of Josef K.'"[104]

Through such intertextuality, Coetzee tends to acknowledge the literary influence and heritage of Franz Kafka. However, Coetzee's novelty lies in his interpretation of Kafka's themes in a whole different setting, exploring how alienation, isolation, and power dynamics are essential factors that govern the black identity in postcolonial South Africa. Coetzee grounds Kafka's themes in the very real and brutal legacy of South African apartheid, where the struggles of Michael K can be interpreted as a representation of black identity experience under a system based on marginalizing, neglecting, and suppressing such an identity.

By engaging with Kafka's *The Trial*, an emblematic work of the Western modernist tradition and a cornerstone of the Western literary canon, Coetzee subverts the canonical authority associated with this work. In other words, while Kafka's text is generally perceived as an initiative literary work in universalizing and disseminating the European experience of alienation and absurdity, Coetzee's challenge in *Life and Times of Michael K* lies in destabilizing these experiences and reframing them within the specific political and historical context of apartheid South Africa. The message that Coetzee seems to deliver through his novel is that although experiences of alienation and dehumanization are considered universal, nevertheless they are profoundly shaped by political and historical contexts, particularly those of colonialism and postcolonialism. While Joseph K's dilemma can be seen as personal, Michael K's experiences of oppression and subjugation are deeply rooted in a broader political and historical reality of his society. Moreover, while Kafka's narrative represents the inescapable nature of modern bureaucracy, Coetzee's text offers a different kind of response.

---

[103] Patricia Álvarez Sánchez, "Can We Find Kafka's Seed in Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*?," in *Building Interdisciplinary Knowledge: Approaches to English and American Studies in Spain*, ed. Esther Álvarez López, Emilia María Durán Almarza, and Alicia Menéndez Tarrazo, (Oviedo: University of Oviedo, 2014), 40.

[104] David Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face-to-Face with Time* (New York: Viking, 2015), 107.

Therefore, Coetzee's reliance on intertextuality allows him to situate his text within a recognized literary tradition, yet simultaneously subvert the very same tradition by recontextualizing its theme within a postcolonial South African framework.

In addition to Kafka's text, Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* engages in an intertextual dialogue with Heinrich von Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaas* (1810), a novel that revolves around the story of the eponymous character, Michael Kohlhaas, a horse dealer who suffers injustice and decides to become a rebel seeking revenge in response to the wrongs and injustices practiced against him. In this respect, David Attwell suggests that "in addition to the structure of ideas in Kleist's novel, Coetzee was also drawn to the swift pacing of its prose, in the picaresque style."[105] However, the question here is: how does Coetzee use this intertextuality to subvert the picaresque style of such a canonical text? In fact, it is through this intertextual dialogue that Coetzee reconfigures the picaresque narrative of resistance, transforming it from one of active rebellion to one of withdrawal and passive resistance.

In the context of the picaresque tradition, Kleist's novel can be seen as a typical picaresque narrative that follows the story of the relatively "low class" Michael Kohlhaas and how he suffers oppression and injustice at the hands of a nobleman. Kohlhaas then, as a typical picaresque hero, employs his wit to challenge the social and political structures that oppress him. Through an episodic story, each stage of his story becomes a representation of social corruption and the type of social nature he confronts, driving him to reach a level that "stops just short of being an actual criminal."[106] In this respect, David Attwell suggests that not only the theme of Kleist's novel was interesting for Coetzee, but "it was the picaresque quality of Kleist's novel that interested Coetzee, as much as its theme."[107]

However, Coetzee subverts the Kohlhaas picaresque narrative by introducing a character who ultimately rejects any type of active resistance or direct engagement but rather prefers a quiet and complete withdrawal. In other words, Coetzee subverts Kleist's narrative by drawing a contrast between Kohlhaas's active rebellion and K passive resistance. Thus, while Kohlhaas takes arms and offers a violent form of resistance against the oppression and injustice he faces, K, as Rowshan Chowdhury argues, can be seen described as a Gandhian hero.[108] That is to say, while Kohlhaas exhibits an active resistance in the form of legal battles, public petitions, and ultimately armed rebellion against the Junker, Chowdhury asserts that Coetzee's K embody a diametrically opposed paradigm, for "the resistance which Michael shows against the situation around him makes him appear as a Gandhian, a non-violent passive subject in resistance."[109]

In his analysis of Kleist's text as the genesis of Coetzee's work, Anthony Uhlmann argues that "almost against the logical relation he has intended to set up between Kleist's story and

---

[105] David Attwell, "Composition and Craft: *Waiting for the Barbarians, Life & Times of Michael K*, 22.
[106] William Thrall and Addison Hibbard, *A Handbook to Literature*, 352.
[107] David Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 107.
[108] Rowshan J. Chowdhury, "Can Coetzee's Michael K be Called a Gandhian Hero?." *Stamford Journal of English* (2013): 90. DOI:10.3329/sje.v6i0.13905
[109] Chowdhury, "Can Coetzee's Michael K be Called a Gandhian Hero?, 96.

his own, Coetzee finds himself moving towards a different model."[110] In other words, rather than choosing a character who embarks on adventure and exploits, Coetzee presents a character who seeks solitude and simplicity, one that ultimately rejects the perception of social engagement as the way for finding meaning and justice. In this connection, Coetzee's K can be seen as an inversion of Kleist's Kohlhaas, and the passivity that Coetzee's K exhibits can be interpreted as a critique of the Western canon, especially when dealing with narratives of resistance that valorize violent resistance and individual heroism, similar to the one featured in Kohlhaas's character. In this respect, David Attwell argues that Coetzee achievement lies in his ability to translate Kleist's narrative into contemporary South Africa by turning Kohlhaas into a Michael K, an outlaw, "who is so far beyond the reach of the law that even the very idea of the law, its conceptions of the citizen and civic responsibilities, are unable to contain him."[111] Unlike the active and resourceful Kohlhaas, Coetzee creates a quiet and introspective hero whom, Attwell adds, "Coetzee had to make of him a hyper-outlaw whose resistance confounds all attempts to understand him."[112]

Coetzee's intertextual engagement not only dialogues with but also resists and destabilizes the canonicity of Kafka's and Kleist's texts. Rather than being a journey of confrontation and articulation, Michael K's journey is one of withdrawal, silence, and endurance, one that fails to conform to the Western literary conventions and expectations. Through his narrative, Coetzee resists Western exclusion and calls for an inclusion of postcolonial experiences and narratives that can really reflect alternative narratives and perspectives that stem from postcolonial contexts.

4.3.2. Subverting Crusoe's Island: Coetzee's *Foe* and the Reimagining of Adventure Narratives

Just as Coetzee challenges the picaresque tradition in *Life and Times of Michael K*, he continues this critical engagement in his subsequent novel, *Foe*, by confronting the Robinsonade and adventure narratives, genres that have long been the cornerstones of the Western literary canon. The Robinsonade refers to a genre of literature that originates and takes its name from Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and generally features a protagonist who is lost or stranded in a remote location and has to rely on his cleverness and resourcefulness to overcome all adversaries and obstacles that might come across. Similarly, adventure narratives can be seen as a broader genre that encompass stories of protagonists facing wild, unexpected, and exciting adventures that often involve challenges, danger, action, excitement, heroism and bravery. In his *Encyclopedia of Adventure Fiction*, Don D'Ammassa attempts to delineate the genre as follows:

> almost all fiction involves some sort of adventure, exposure to new experiences or knowledge, changes in the shapes of the characters' lives. Although there is no easily definable line of demarcation, we will assume that an adventure is an event or series of events that happen outside the ordinary course of the protagonist's life, usually

[110] Anthony Uhlmann, *J. M. Coetzee: Truth, Meaning, Fiction* (New York, Bloomsbury Academic: 2020), 110.
[111] David Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 111.
[112] David Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 111.

> accompanied by danger, often by physical action. Adventure stories almost always move quickly, and the pace of the plot is at least as important as characterization, setting, and other elements of a created work.[113]

Therefore, Robinsonade narratives can be seen as a subset of adventure narratives, for both genres share the same elements of action, challenges, and heroic individualism. In its retelling or reimagining of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Coetzee's *Foe* offers a complex engagement with the canonical genres of Robinsonade and adventure narratives. By reimagining Defoe's narrative and foregrounding marginalized characters, Coetzee challenges and subverts the very structures that have historically defined and preserved these narratives. Challenging Defoe's text, Coetzee not only attempts to subvert this novel per se but intends to defy the broader tradition of Western literary culture and civilization that Defoe's work represents, for, as Ian Watt contends, "we do not usually think of *Robinson Crusoe* as a novel. Defoe's first full-length work of fiction seems to fall more naturally into place with *Faust,* Don *Juan,* and *Don Quixote,* the great myths of our civilization."[114]

Unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, or adventure narratives in general, Coetzee's *Foe* challenges and subverts the sense of extraordinary "events that happen outside the ordinary course of the protagonist's life."[115] Instead, Coetzee reimagines events that would be considered adventurous in *Robinson Crusoe* and strips them of their related excitement or grandeur. For example, Unlike Robinson Crusoe's extraordinary island adventures, Susan Barton's are far from being extraordinary or remarkable and are rather portrayed with overwhelming feelings of dullness and alienation. Indeed, Susan's experiences are limited to her encounter with Friday and Cruso and having some conversations with the latter, for she herself describes how apart from conversing with Cruso, she spent her days on the island "walking on the cliffs or along the shore, or else sleeping."[116] By so doing, Coetzee challenges the notion that Robinsonades and adventure narratives are inherently tied to principles of the extraordinary or phenomenal adventures, suggesting that the extraordinary itself in such novels is nothing but a fantasy that ignores the mundane realities of human experience.

Diverging from Defoe's narrative, *Foe* subverts the expectation that adventure narratives must involve experiences accompanied by danger and physical action. While Defoe's Crusoe faces several dangers, including threats from wild animals and attacks by cannibals, Barton's life is largely devoid of any danger found in Defoe's text, for both Cruso and Friday take the responsibility of providing her food and shelter; therefore she declares that "we lived at peace one with another."[117] Moreover, while Defoe's Crusoe engages in various physical actions, including building a shelter, domesticating animals, crating tools and weapons, and building rafts, Barton's physical actions are notably limited and are largely passive and mundane without any narrative focus on survival.

---

[113] Don D'Ammassa, *Encyclopaedia of Adventure Fiction* (New York, Infobase Publishing, 2009), vii.
[114] Ian Watt, "*Robinson Crusoe* as a Myth", in *Robinson Crusoe: An Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. Edited by Michael Shinagel. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994), 228.
[115] D'Ammassa, *Encyclopaedia of Adventure Fiction*, vii.
[116] Coetzee, *Foe*, 35.
[117] Coetzee, *Foe*, 37.

Thus, in a manner akin to his narrative shift from the physical to the psychological in *Life & Times of Michael K*, Coetzee transitions the focus in *Foe* from Crusoe's external actions to Susan's internal and psychological struggles. By doing so, Coetzee critiques the colonial and patriarchal assumptions underlying adventure novels, which often equate physical power with moral and cultural superiority. Moreover, Coetzee subverts the very essence of Robinsonades and adventure narratives by suggesting that not all narratives need to conform to the patriarchal and conventional demands of physical power and danger and that internal and psychological conflicts can be just as significant. In this regard, it can be inferred that Coetzee creates a subversion of the protagonist's role in adventure narratives. In other words, while Defoe's Crusoe is a typical adventure hero—active, resourceful, decisive, and autonomous—Barton, on the other hand, is way far from Crusoe and the traditional adventure hero in general. Unquestionably, Coetzee's protagonist is a character who struggles not to survive, overcome obstacles, and conquer but rather attempts to find her authorial voice and have her story told and recognized in its own right.

Coetzee's *Foe* challenges the canonicity associated with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, using a postcolonial and feminist perspective that questions the authenticity of Defoe's work in its (mis)representation of colonial subjects and gender roles. The critical dialogue that Coetzee employs to engage with the canonicity of Defoe's work stems from a postcolonial approach through which Coetzee reevaluates the representation of the "other" and power dynamics inherent in canonical colonial texts. In other words, Kehinde argues, Coetzee's approach in *Foe* "critiques the ubiquity of stereotypes while creating a voice for the most powerless and poorest members of the global community."[118]

Indeed, the introduction of Susan Barton as a narrator into the narrative realm of *Robinson Crusoe* and the way Coetzee shifts the narrative perspective from the male, colonial voice of Robinson Crusoe to the female voice of Barton represent one of the most important modes of subverting Defoe's narrative that Coetzee employs in the text. Barton's struggle to have her story recorded and published against the silence of Friday and the will of the writer Daniel Foe is a critical element through which Coetzee addresses the issue of narrative authority and authorship. In this respect, Dominic Head argues that "readers are invited to ponder the place of this novel in literary history, and it is Coetzee's choice of *Robinson Crusoe* as his basis that is important here."[119] In other words, the shift in narrative voice questions the originality and narrative authority of the original *Robinson Crusoe*, raising questions on who has the power to tell stories and whose stories are deemed worth telling.

The relationship between Susan Barton and the famous author, Daniel (De)Foe, is complex and multilayered. On the one hand, Susan seeks the help of Foe to have her story recorded and published, for she ultimately declares that "some people are born storytellers; I, it would seem, am not."[120] On the other hand, Susan seeks to have her story recognized in a way that remains faithful to her experiences and without any alterations. Susan strives to have control over her narrative, a desire that represents a broader quest for recognizing voice and agency

[118] Ayobami Kehinde, "Post-colonial African Literature as Counter-discourse," 95.
[119] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 62.
[120] Coetzee, *Foe*, 81.

in the literary world that often ignores and marginalizes female figures. Indeed, Foe seems not to be interested in Susan's story of the island, which he attempts to ridicule suggesting that "the island is not a story in itself,' said…We can bring it to life only by setting it within a larger story."[121] What Foe suggests is that he adds more excitement and action to the story by adding fake details that alter the story and make it more dramatic, an issue that Susan strongly rejects. In her response to Foe, Susan asserts, "Once you proposed to supply a middle by inventing cannibals and pirates. These I would not accept because they were not the truth. Now you propose to reduce the island to an episode in the history of a woman in search of a lost daughter. This too I reject."[122]

Through this rejection of altering her story, Coetzee presents Susan Barton as a figure of female resistance in postcolonial novel. In other words, Susan's assertion of the originality of her story can be read as a narrative resistance against both patriarchal and imperial frameworks. Over the course of the narrative, the phrase "my story" is repeated 14 times, a repetition that highlights her true desire and struggle for narrative authorship in the male-dominated realm of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, where women are either neglected or marginalized and spoken for on their behalf. In her essay " When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," Adrienne Rich offers a criticism of literary history, suggesting that it is mostly written by men and directed for male audiences, an issue that historically marginalized and misrepresented women's experiences. In this context, Rich calls for an act of "Re-Vision" against the male-dominated society. Rich contends

> Re-vision-the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an text from a new critical direction-is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society.[123]

In this respect, Susan's effort to claim her story aligns with Rich's assertion that "re-vision" is an act of survival. Rich asserts the act of rewriting and reinterpreting the texts that have shaped women in literary discourse is not only intellectual but ultimately existential. By rejecting Foe's alterations, Susan rejects the position of an object in the narrative of a male author, Foe, and instead fights for her right of self-representation as well as her position as a subject who can tell her own story. Thus, by emphasizing the phrase "my story" throughout the narrative, Susan attempts to achieve a sort of narrative agency which ultimately challenges and rejects the "self-destructiveness of male-dominated society." The feminist resistance that Susan represents here challenges the male-centered narrative authority that Foe attempts to impose, thus figuratively deconstructing the patriarchal and imperial systems of knowledge production.

---

[121] Coetzee, *Foe*, 117.
[122] Coetzee, *Foe*, 121.
[123] Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," *College English* 34, no. 1 (1972): 18, https://doi.org/10.2307/375215.

Indeed, Coetzee's reimagining of Defoe's text through the perspective of a female character is itself a fundamental act of postcolonial resistance. In this respect, Kehinde argues, "*Foe* deliberately rejects *Robinson Crusoe*'s canonical formulation of the colonial encounter and addresses the silences and prejudices in its precursor, while actually invading and deconstructing the economic utopia of Crusoe's island."[124] Coetzee disrupts the canonical setting of *Robinson Crusoe*, which rests upon a colonizer-colonized interaction, by inserting a character who is neither a colonizer nor the colonized. That is to say, Susan Barton can be read as Coetzee's literary intervention intended to highlight the female exclusion and marginalization in canonical texts. This idea is reflected in Susan's refelection and assertion of her own narrative existence as a narrator, particularly in her letters to Foe, where she reasserts her narrative identity and ownership of a story that is neither Cruso's nor Foe's: "On Cruso's island I was washed ashore; from that all else has flowed. I am the woman washed ashore."[125]

Through Foe's insistence on the embellishment and fictionalization of Susan's story, Coetzee problematizes the very concept of authorship. In other words, Foe attempts to modify the story in a way that makes it fit the Robinsonade genre, thus highlighting how canonical narratives are shaped and constructed. Interestingly, what is noteworthy in this debate between Susan and Foe is that the latter is writing a story of an adventure he never witnessed, for Susan, addressing Friday, tells him that

> You do not know the gentleman, but at this very moment he is engaged in writing another story, which is your story, and your master's, and mine. Mr Foe has not met you, but he knows of you, from what I have told him, using words. That is part of the magic of words. Through the medium of words I have given Mr Foe the particulars of you and Mr Cruso and of my year on the island and the years you and Mr Cruso spent there alone, as far as I can supply them.[126]

Foe is writing a story he never witnessed, an idea that recalls the process of writing colonial histories by writers who neither understood native languages nor had ever been to these places. In other words, Foe's endeavor to write Susan's story is similar to the work of the British politician and historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, who arrogantly proclaimed that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia,"[127] even though he knows neither language, and also similar to Hegel's tendencies for Africa even though he has never been there. In Foe's insistence on altering Susan's story to fit the Robinsonade genre, Coetzee seems to critique the way canonical narratives are constructed, often at the expense of alternative voices and perspectives.

Highlighting the essence of Coetzee's canonical challenge, Head argues that Coetzee is figuratively challenging the reader to reconsider the originality of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and the source of its inspiration, suggesting that

---

[124] Ayobami Kehinde, "Post-colonial African Literature as Counter-discourse: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Reworking of the Canon," 109.
[125] Coetzee, *Foe*, 99.
[126] Coetzee, *Foe*, 58.
[127] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Minute on Education" (1835), 122.

> the pointed differences between her [Susan's] story and the published *Crusoe* reveal the imaginative premise: Coetzee invites us to speculate on the inspiration for *Crusoe* and on the omissions and reconstructions evident in the finished novel … We are invited to assume that Susan Barton's island story is the inspiration for Crusoe, but that the woman is written out and put in another of Defoe's novels instead." [128]

As Head further points out, Defoe's approach was well-known for the way it tend to hide the craftsmanship behind his literary works while, on the other hand, infusing them with a sense of realism.[129] On the contrary, Coetzee is deeply engaged with literary artifice, and by "by reversing particular details from Crusoe he draws our attention to the implausibility of the original."[130] Thus, Coetzee here impliess a sort of narrative manipulation in Defoe's text, suggesting that this and other stories of the adventure genre are nothing but products of literary conventions, rather than objective reality. Ultimately, Head asserts that through examining the authorial relationship between Foe and Susan Barton, Coetzee seems to challenge and subvert the very origin and inspiration for Defoe's text, for "we are invited to assume that Susan Barton's island story is the inspiration for *Crusoe*, but that the woman is written out and put in another of Defoe's novels instead."[131]

Moreover, a comparison between Defoe's Crusoe and Coetzee's Cruso reveals the latter as a postcolonial figure. Analyzing Coetzee's Cruso, Head argues that "unlike his literary model, he makes no table or chair, no lamp or candle…he does occupy himself with building barren terraces ready for planting."[132] These barren terraces reflect the postcolonial tendency of Cruso's character who endows terraces and walls with a whole new meaning. Unlike Defoe's Crusoe, who is represented as the king of the island, Coetzee's Cruso has no interest in kingdoms or ownership. Frustratingly, he declares to Barton that in "a year, in ten years, there will be nothing left standing but a circle of sticks to mark the place where the hut stood, and of the terraces only the walls".[133] When Barton questions the meaning of building such barren terraces, Cruso replies:

> The planting is not for us…We have nothing to plant—that is our misfortune…The planting is reserved for those who come after us and have the foresight to bring seed. I only clear the ground for them. Clearing ground and piling stones is little enough, but it is better than sitting in idleness…I ask you to remember, not every man who bears the mark of the castaway is a castaway at heart.[134]

Cruso's words here reveal the changing perception of walls from being markers of power and civilization to being mere landmarks of existence. For Cruso, the walls "will be enough. They will be more than enough."[135] Therefore, rather than being a metaphor for success and power,

---

[128] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 63.
[129] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 63.
[130] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 63.
[131] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 63.
[132] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 63.
[133] Coetzee, *Foe*, 54.
[134] Coetzee, *Foe*, 33.
[135] Coetzee, *Foe*, 55.

these terraces and walls delineate Cruso's frustration and failure as a postcolonial figure who, ironically, created walls that became, as Barton believes, "more like tombs" for his tedious existence.[136]

Another major element of Coetzee's critique and subversion of Defoe's text is the portrayal of Friday. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, Defoe's Friday is an exemplary figure of the 'noble savage' who is granted speech by his colonial master, Crusoe, and is eventually incorporated into the colonial narrative, serving as a symbol of the European 'civilizing' mission. On the contrary, Coetzee's Friday is almost entirely silent throughout the novel, a silence that should never be read as lack or inability to speak but rather as a deliberate blankness and hollowness that rejects being filled by colonial languages and narratives. By doing so, Coetzee endeavors to undermine the colonial narrative in general, for, as Alexandra Effe contends, Coetzee responds to the canon "by turning to Defoe, that is, to the very beginnings of the novel, to the silences at the heart of the canon and to the responsibilities they entail for writer and reader. *Foe* responds to the discourse of the novel rather than to the discourse of history."[137] The silence that Coetzee endows Friday with challenges the perceived reality of Defoe's text, that is, the colonial subject's true voice and experiences are inaccessible and can never be represented by the colonizer.

Through Friday's silence, Coetzee also questions the authority of the canon, highlighting the exclusionary practices that govern and shape the formation of literary canons. As a foundational text of the English literary tradition and the Western literary tradition in general, *Robinson Crusoe* is often read as the infamous text that has historically marginalized and neglected non-European perspectives. In this respect, Derek Attridge contends

> *Foe*'s most telling challenge to the literary canon, therefore, is not its insistence upon cultural construction and validation…it is its representation, through this most powerful of nonrepresentations, of the silence which is constitutive of canonicity itself. All canons rest on exclusion; the voice they give to some can be heard only by virtue of the silence they impose on others. But it is not just a silencing by exclusion, it is a silencing by *inclusion* as well.[138]

What Attridge skillfully refers to is the way the canon operates its methods of silence through both the absence of marginalized voices, where such voices are completely erased from the dominant discourse, and through their presence in the dominant narrative, as in the case of Friday in Defoe's text. However, through the silence of Friday, Coetzee resists the authority of the canonical text by suggesting that whether through inclusion or exclusion, stories controlled by a hegemonic Eurocentric discourse remain incomplete and fail to represent a universal human experience.

---

[136] Coetzee, *Foe*, 63.
[137] Alexandra Effe, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Narrative Transgression*, 28.
[138] Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 98.

Stemming from his belief that a novel must never be a supplementary account of history; rather, a novel must always be in "rivalry with historical discourse,"[139] Coetzee employs silence as a method to highlight the limits of historical representation. It is through Friday's silence that Coetzee tends to criticize the gaps and absences in both literary and historical accounts of the Western canon, thus creating an open, unfinished narrative. By refusing to give Friday a voice, Coetzee resists the Western canon's tendencies of filling the gaps of history with fictionalized accounts that would do nothing but supplement the dominant narrative. Rather, Coetzee leaves such gaps empty, thus making *Foe*, as Attridge argues, "engage with the historical present time of its publication, but it does so in rivalry rather than in subordination to the discourse of history."[140]

In other words, by making Friday mute, Coetzee ensures that *Foe* remains an unfinished narrative that engages in a historical rivalry with the depictions and conclusions of Defoe's canonical text. While Defoe's text ends in a straightforward manner, where Crusoe is rescued after spending twenty-eight years on the island and returns to England with Friday, the ending of Coetzee's *Foe*, on the other hand, is far more complex and ambiguous and leaves many questions unanswered, such as, What is Friday's story? Who mutilated his tongue? What is the truth of Susan's story? What happens to her after their return to England? Who is the real narrator of the novel? What happened to Susan's alleged daughter? By leaving such questions unanswered, Coetzee critiques the canon's tendency to create meaning where there may be none and challenges readers to question the authority and reliability of the Western canonical narrative of Defoe. He also destabilizes traditional literary forms, implying that such texts are not objective representations of reality but rather extremely shaped by colonial Eurocentric approaches that disregard and distort historical complexities.

In conclusion, Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* and *Foe* serve as a powerful critique and a challenge to the Western canon by both engaging with and subverting its literary conventions and texts. Coetzee challenges the authority of established literary conventions by presenting characters who defy social and literary expectations, such as Michael K, Friday, and Susan Barton, interrogating power structures embedded in the Western canon and inviting readers to reevaluate and reconsider the limitations and exclusions in canonical texts as well as to examine new horizons and interpretations in postcolonial contexts.

[139] Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J. M. Coetzee*, 28.
[140] Effe, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics Narrative Transgression*, 28.

Conclusion

This dissertation was an attempt to explore the postcolonial discourse in selected works of Chinua Achebe and J. M. Coetzee, examining how both authors offer unique yet complementary postcolonial frameworks that directly engage with the regeneration of African identity as well as the resistance to colonial and Western canonical narratives. Using the postcolonial notions of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, and other postcolonial scholars, the discussion aimed at highlighting the formation of the 'Other' identity in the Western colonial canon, and how the distinct yet interconnected postcolonial approaches of Achebe and Coetzee sought to dismantle and re-form colonial identities established and disseminated by the Western canon. While both authors seek reconstruct the postcolonial identity, their approaches are fundamentally different, a difference that reflects the distinct colonial experiences of Nigeria and South Africa.

The dissertation reveals that Achebe focuses on cultural reclamation of identity through a blend of ancestral values and colonial influences. Through his celebration and subtle criticism of Igbo cultural traditions in the face of colonial hegemony, Achebe finds a potential for cultural regeneration and adaptation. In other words, Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God depict the epistemic violence of colonialism—or what Said describes as the cultural imperialism over the Orient—in imposing and forcing an alien identity upon the colonized. However, Achebe resists and challenges this colonial imposition by reconstructing a revolutionary form of identity that aligns with what Bhabha terms as a cultural hybridity or third space, one that is rooted in the Igbo culture and traditions, yet rejects and resists uncritical adherence to indigenous culture as well as the complete assimilation into colonial cultural norms. This ideation is evident in Achebe's depiction of characters such as Obierika in Things Fall Apart and Moses Unachukwu in Arrow of God as figures bridging past and present, tradition and modernity. By setting Obierika and Moses against the traditionalism of Okonkwo and Ezeulu as well as the complete assimilation into colonial culture of Nwoye, Oduche, and John Goodcountry, the dissertation argues that Achebe's portrayal of his "hybrid" characters offers a vision for a reformed Igbo identity and intimates a brighter and more pragmatic vision of postcolonial identity.

Coetzee's revolutionary approach, on the other hand, grounds the African identity in the brutal realities experienced by the human body, thus stressing the physical rather than cultural reclamation of identity. The dissertation contends that Coetzee's physical interest suggests a more pessimistic view of Black South African identity, where identity is interconnected with suffering and survival in the South African context. The link that Coetzee creates between the body and identity under apartheid regime seems to assert a fragmented and often alienated postcolonial identity in South Africa—one that lacks the capacity of self-representation and marked by social exclusion, yet resist discursive control by stressing corporeality as the core of identity. The discussion reveals how, in their fragmentation and alienation, Michael K and Friday offer a subtle and profound form of resistance that challenge dominant colonial perceptions of identity, and surprisingly serve as models of postcolonial autonomy and freedom. In *Life and Times of Michael K*, Coetzee does not depict K as a character who

attempts to reclaim his identity through cultural rootedness, but rather as a corporeal being who resists apartheid's discourse of classification and identification, thus choosing suffering and alienation over discursive control and identity appropriation by the medical officer and others. Likewise, the dissertation establishes how, in *Foe*, Friday's body defies all attempts of interpretation and identification. The scars and mutilations on his body evolve into a site of power and resistance, transforming his body into a text that cannot be appropriated, translated, or manipulated by Susan Barton, Foe, and even Coetzee himself. In this respect, the dissertation concludes that in terms of identity reconstruction, Achebe's approach is regenerative and reconstructive of postcolonial African identity, whereas Coetzee's is deconstructive, seeking to dismantle the colonial mechanisms and strategies that attempt to capture or define it. Yet, despite their distinct approaches, bot Achebe and Coetzee challenge colonial perceptions and impositions of Black identity and offer revolutionary modes that resist colonial totalization.

In the chapter related to canonical resistance, the dissertation endeavors to show how both authors resist dominant literary traditions, yet, as in their attempts of reconstructing postcolonial identities, they engage with canonical resistance through different but interconnected strategies that are informed by their racial and historical positions within the colonial structure. In other words, Achebe, as a black colonized writer, centers his literary vision on reaffirming African cultural autonomy in the face of colonial erasure by indigenizing the Western canon through linguistic Africanization and orality, thus challenging the Western tradition in a form that is deeply rooted in his perspective of cultural restoration. Coetzee's critique, on the other hand, stems from his position as a white South African writer interrogating canonical colonial structures he is historically connected to. The discussion highlights that, unlike Achebe, Coetzee adopts a more subversive and intertextual approach to resistance, transforming and deconstructing forms like the picaresque and adventure narratives, thus destabilizing the Western literary canon from within. That is to say, while Achebe does not merely reject the Western canon but seeks to indigenize and localize it within African frameworks, Coetzee seeks to reconfigure the canon in a way that he undermines and deconstructs its ideological foundations. Whether through Achebe's reclamation or Coetzee's deconstruction, the discussion aims to reveal that postcolonial resistance is not monolithic but rather a complex and diverse process shaped by the interconnectedness between race, power, and history. Despite their distinct methods, Achebe and Coetzee contribute to the postcolonial effort of decolonizing the canon, offering complementary modes of postcolonial resistance.

In discussing their literary revolution, the dissertation concludes that the challenge Achebe and Coetzee's works pose within the postcolonial discourse is of profound importance and magnitude, for their revolutionary oeuvre not only addresses issues within their own cultural and historical backgrounds but creatively transcends all possible contexts and settings. While the core of this study was primarily oriented toward investigating the literary, cultural, and political dimensions of Achebe's and Coetzee's postcolonial interventions, it is pertinent to make a final observation concerning the ethical orientations of both writers. That is to say, the selected novels of Achebe and Coetzee can be seen as exemplifying what Michel

Foucault calls *parrhesia*, or the courage of truth. In his *The Courage of the Truth :The Government of Self and Others II*, which is a collection of lectures delivered at the College de France in 1984, Michel Foucault explores the power-knowledge relationship as well as the dynamics of discourse, engaging with the theme of *parrhesia*, which means truth-telling or candid speech. Although Foucault suggests in earlier lectures that *parrhesia* entails a certain degree of risk for the parrhesiast, he shifts his focus to the issue of courage that the parrhesiasts acquire through their speech. He argues that *parrhesia* "involves some form of courage, the minimal form of which consists in the parrhesiast taking the risk of breaking and ending the relationship to the other person which was precisely what made his discourse possible."[1] What Foucault stresses here is the courage that the parrhesiast manifests with regard to the audience to which the speech is directed, even at the cost of risking their bond with such an audience.

In this regard, the courage of truth exemplified by Achebe is evident in his portrayal of the Igbo community in a way that simultaneously critiques colonial powers as well as expanding the scope to reach his own Igbo community. In other words, through his criticism of colonial effects and indigenous practices, Achebe risks the repercussions of colonial violence as well as the possibility of alienating himself from his own native community. Similarly, Coetzee's parrhesiastic courage is evident in challenging and highlighting the injustices of apartheid regime in his novels. Being a liberal white South African who criticizes a regime to which he belongs, Coetzee engages in questioning the privileges and moral complexities associated with the white race in South Africa, thus facing the same risk of exclusion and alienation experienced by Achebe. Yet, in Coetzee's ambivalent position, being "inside" and "outside" the walls of apartheid, his risk goes beyond the estrangement from his own ethnic community to reach the possible retribution that he might face by the white-ruling authority.

Foucault affirms that *parrhesia* is an interactive discourse between the speaker and the listener; it is not only "the courage of truth in the person who speaks and who… takes the risk of telling the whole truth that he thinks, but it is also the interlocutor's courage in agreeing to accept the hurtful truth that he hears."[2] In this regard, highlighting the repercussions of colonialism as well as the flaws of their own ethnic communities, Achebe and Coetzee's works demand a kind of courage from those who are the subject of criticism, including colonial powers, white South Africans, and Igbo people, urging them to accept such "hurtful truths" about themselves. This complex exchange of *parrhesia* that Achebe and Coetzee engage their readers with extends beyond mere acknowledgement and recognition of historical facts; it calls for a stage of self-examination and reviewing the ethical and moral implications in Nigeria and South Africa alike.

[1] Michel Foucault, *The Courage of the Truth: The Government of Self and Others II*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 11.
[2] Michel Foucault, *The Courage of the Truth*, 13.

Bibliography

Achebe, Chinua. “An Image of Africa: Racism in *Heart of Darkness*.” In *Postcolonial Criticism*, edited by Brat Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley. New York: Routledge, 2013.

—. *Arrow of God.* New York: Anchor Books, 1969.

—. “Chinua Achebe, The Art of Fiction” Interview. By Jerome Brooks No.139. Edited by George Plimpton. New York: The Paris Review Foundation, (Winter 1994): 15-31.

—. *Collected Poems.* New York: Anchor Books, 2004.

—. “Colonialist Criticism.” In *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays*, 66-86. New York: Anchor Books, 1990.

—. *Home and Exile.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

—.. “Named for Victoria, Queen of England.” In *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*. New York: Anchor Books, 1976.

—. *The Education of a British-Protected Child.* New York: Anchor Books, 2009.

—.. “The Role of the Writer in a New Nation.” In *African Writers on African Writing*, edited by G. D. Killam, 7-13. London: Heinemann, 1973.

—. *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra.* New York: Penguin Books, 2012.

—. *Things Fall Apart.* New York: Anchor Books, 1994.

Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

Aidoo, Ama Ata. *Our Sister Killjoy.* Harlow: Longman , 1977.

Alemika, E.E. O. “Colonialism, state and policing in Nigeria.” *Crime Law Soc Change* 20 (1993): 187-219.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.* London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

—. *Postcolonial Studies : The Key Concepts.* 3rd. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.

—. *The Empire Writes Back.* 2nd. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Attwell, David. “Composition and Craft: *Waiting for the Barbarians, Life & Times of Micheal K*.” In *The Cambridge Companion to J. M. Coetzee*, edited by Jarad Zimbler, 15-28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

—. *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face-to-Face with Time.* New York: Viking, 2015.

Awuyah, Chris Kwame. “Chinua Achebe’s ‘*Arrow of God’*: Ezeulu’s Response to Change.” *College Literature* 19/20, no. 3/1 (1992): 214-19 http://www.jstor.org/stable/25112005.

Babcock, David. “Professional Subjectivity and the Attenuation of Character in J. M. Coetzee’s *Life & Times of Michael K*”.”*PMLA*, 2012: 890-904.

Belgacem, Olfa. *The Body, Desire and Storytelling in Novels by J. M. Coetzee.* New York: Routledge, 2018.

Bhabha, Homi K., interview by Gary A. Olson and Lynn Worsham. *Staging the Politics of Difference: Homi Bhabha’s Critical Literacy.* JAC 18, no.3, (1998): 361-91 http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866193.

—. *The Location of Culture.* London: Routledge, 1994.

—. interview by Jonathan Rutherford. “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha.” *Identity: Community, Culture, Diference*, edited by Jonathan Rutheford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, (1990): 207-221.

Boehmer, Elleke. “Chinua Achebe, a Father of Modern African Literature.” *PMLA* 129, no. 2 (2014): 237-40 http://www.jstor.org/stable/24769450.

—. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature.* 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

—. *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

Bouchard, Donald F., ed. *Michel Foucault: Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews.* Translated by Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Brantlinger, Patrick. “Heart of Darkness”: "Anti-Imperialism, Racism, or Impressionism?”.” *Criticism* 27, no. 4 (1985): 363-85 https://www.jstor.org/stable/23110450.

Brantlinger, Patrick. “Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent.” *Critical Inquiry* (The University of Chicago Press) 12, no. 1 (1985): 166-203.

Brooke-Smith, Robin. *The Scramble for Africa.* London: Macmillan Education LTD, 1987.

Carroll, David. *Chinua Achebe : Novelist, Poet, Critic.* New York: St. Martin's Press, INC., 1990.

Césaire, Aimé. *A Tempest.* Translated by Richard Miller. New York: Ubu Repertory Theater Publications, 1992.

—. *Discourse on Colonialism.* Translated by Joan Pinkham. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972.

Chamberlain, M. E. *The Scramble for Africa.* 3rd. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Charles, Asselin. "Colonial Discourse Since Christopher Columbus." *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 2 (1995): 132-52.

Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse.* London: Zed Books, 1986.

Chesney, Duncan McColl. "Toward an Ethics of Silence: Michael K." *Criticism* 49, no. 3 (2007): 307-25 http://www.jstor.org/stable/23130899.

Chilesi, Sofia. "The Subversive Function of Indigenization in Post-colonial Reconstruction of Identity: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as a Case Study." Master's Thesis, Università degli Studi di Trento, 2015/2016.

Chowdhury, Rowshan Jahan . "Can Coetzee's Michael K be called a Gandhian hero?" *Stamford Journal of English 6*, 2013: 90-102 DOI:10.3329/sje.v6i0.13905.

Churchill, Winston S. *My African Journey.* Toronto: William Brigs, 1909.

Clark, Nancy L., and William H. Worger. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid.* 2nd ed. New Yotk: Routledge, 2013.

Coetzee, J. M. *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews,.* Edited by David Attwell. Cambridge, MA:: Harvard University Press,, 1992.

—. "The Novel Today." *Upstream*, no. 6.1 (1988): 2-5.

—. *Waiting for the Barbarians.* London: Vintage Books, 1980.

—. *Foe.* London: Penguin Books, 1986.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness.* Edited by Robert Hampson and Owen Knowles. London: Penguin Classics, 2007.

Czerwińska, Paulina Kłos-. *Discourse: An Introduction to van Dijk, Foucault and Bourdieu.* Washington, D.C.: Wrocław : Washington, D.C : Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Filologicznej we Wrocławiu, 2015.

D'Ammassa, Don. *Encyclopedia of Adventure Fiction.* New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009.

Dijk, Teun Van. "Ideology and discourse analysis." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 2 (June 2006): 115-140.

Dijk, Teun van. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach.* London: Sage Publications, 1998.

Dike, K. O. "Her Brittanic Majesty's Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra 1849—1854." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 1, no. 1 (1956): 5-14.

Dryden, John. *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards.* Edited by John Loftis and David Stuart Rodes. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk.* Edited by Brent Hayes Edwards. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

During, Simon. "Postmodernism or Post-colonialism Today." In *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, edited by Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin Bill Ashcroft, 125-29. London: Routledge, 1995.

Dutta, Debaleena. "Bearing the Burden of Native Experience: A Stylistic Analysis of Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God." *Rupkatha Journal : On Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2010): 162-172 DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v2n2.07.

Effe, Alexandra. *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Narrative Transgression : A Reconsideration of Metalepsis.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Ejesu, Onyemuche Anele. "*Achebe's Arrow of God*, the Anti-Promethean Figure and Lukács's Sociological Approach to Tragedy." *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing*, no. 52 (2014): 257-271.

Ekechi, F. K. "Colonialism and Christianity in West Africa: The Igbo Case, 1900-1915." *The Journal of African History* 12, no. 1 (1971): 103-15.

Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi, ed. *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader.* Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd,, 1997.

Falola, Toyin. *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Falola, Toyin, and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 2008.

—. *The Wretched of the Earth.* Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2004.

Ferreira, Eduardo de Sousa. *Portuguese colonialism in Africa: the end of an era.* Paris: The Unesco Press, 1974.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977.* Edited by Colin Gordon. Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

—. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language.* Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

—. *The Courage of the Truth: The Government of Self and Others II.* Edited by Arnold I. Davidson. Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Gallagher, Susan VanZanten. *A Story of South Africa: J.M.Coetzee's Fiction in Context.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Gamgee, John. "The White Tribe: The Afrikaner in the Novels of J.M. Coetzee." In *Towrds a Transcultural Future: Literature and Soceity in a 'post'-Colonial World*, by Towrds a Transcultural Future: Literature and Soceity in a 'post'-Colonial World, edited by Geoffrey V. Davis and et al. Amesterdam-New York: Editions Rodopi BV, 2005.

Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction.* 2nd. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Gibson, Rex. *Cambridge Student Guide to The Tempest.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Gikandi, Simon. *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature.* Ithaca: Cornell Universit Press, 1992.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* Edited by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971.

Griffiths, Gareth. "Language and Action in the Novels of Chinua Achebe." In *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe*, edited by C. L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors, 70. Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1978.

Guha, Ranajit. "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India." In *Subaltern Studies 1: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, edited by Ranajit Guha, 1-8. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Hayes, Patrick. *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel: Writing and Politics After Beckett.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Head, Dominic. *J. M. Coetzee.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

—. *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Hegel, G. W.F. *The Philosophy of History.* Translated by J. Sibree. Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001.

Hu, Qiang. "The Changing Tongues of Chinua Achebe: Language as a Developing Theme in *Things Fall Apart*, *A Man of the People*, and *Anthills of the Savannah*." Master's Thesis, University of Regina, 1998.

Hughes, Conrad. "The Treatment of the Body in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee." PhD Dissertation, Durham University, 2008.

Hui, Karen. ""Call Me X": Post-Colonialism and Resistance in Aime Cesaire's A Tempest." *Wordpress.* March 8, 2016. https://karenhui.wordpress.com/2016/03/08/call-me-x-post-colonialism-and-resistance-in-aime-cesaires-a-tempest/ (accessed 11 17, 2023).

Hume, David. "Of National Characters." In *Hume: Political Essays,* edited by Knud Haakonssen, 78-92. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Innes, C. L. *Chinua Achebe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

—. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

—. "The Politics of Rewriting." In *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature*, edited by Shirley Chew and David Richards, 56-77. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Irele, Abiola. "Chinua Achebe: The Tragic Conflict in his Novels." In *Introduction to African Literature*, edited by Ulli Beier, 167. London: Longman, 1967.

—. "The Tragic Conflict in the Novels of Chinua Achebe." In *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe,* edited by C. L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors, 13. Washington, D. C.: Three Continents Press, 1978.

Jaher, Diana. "The Paradoxes of Slavery in Thomas Southerne's Oroonoko." *Comparative Drama* 42, no. 1 (2008): 51-71.

Jani, Deepa. "J. M. Coetzee: Ethics, Subalternity, and the Critique of Humanism." *2013.* PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, n.d.

JanMohamed, Abdul R. "Sophisticated Primitivism: The Syncretism of Oral and Literate Modes in Achebe's "Things Fall Apart"." *Ariel-a Review of International English Literature*, 1984: 31.

Jazeel, Tariq. *Postcolonialism.* New York: Routledge, 2019.

Jęczmińska, Kinga. "On the Battlefield of Life" : J.M. Coetzee's Life & Times of Michael K in the Light of the Mind-Body Problem." *Brno Studies in English* 46, no. 2 (2020): 159-179.

Kafka, Franz. *The Trial.* Translated by Mike Mitchell. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Kant, Immanuel. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings.* Edited by Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Kehinde, Ayobami. "Ability in disability: J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and the empowerment of the disabled." *English Academy Review: Southern African Journal of English Studies* 27, no. 1 (2010): 60-72 DOI: 10.1080/10131751003755948.

Kehinde, Ayobami. “Post-Colonial African Literature as Counter Discourse: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Reworking of the Canon." *Ufahamu* 32 (2006): 92-122.

Kipling, Rudyard. “The White Man’s Burden.” *The Kipling Society.* n.d. https://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_burden.htm (accessed May 01, 2023).

Knight, Franklin W. *The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism.* 2nd. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Kosecki, Jan. “Metaphors of the Body in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee.” PhD Dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2013.

Kuykendall, Ronald. “Hegel and Africa: An Evaluation of the Treatment of Africa in The Philosophy of History.” *Journal of Black Studies* 23, no. 4 (1993): 571-81.

Leist, Anton. “Against Society, Against History, Against Reason: Coetzee's Archaic Postmodernism.” In *J. M. Coetzee and Ethics : Philosophical Perspectives on Literature*, edited by Anton Leist and Peter Singer, 265-301. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Lindfors, Bernth, Ian Munro, Richard Priebe, and Reinhard Sander. *Palaver; interviews with five African writers in Texas: Chinua Achebe, John Pepper Clark, Dennis Brutus, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Kofi Awoonor.* Austin: African and Afro-American Research Institute, University of Texas at Austin, 1972.

Lindsay, Vachel. “Congo and other poems.” *American Verse Project.* n.d. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAH8721.0001.001/1:8?rgn=div1;view=fulltext (accessed May 1, 2023).

Longxi, Zhang. “Canon and World Literature.” *Journal of World Literature*, no. 1 (2016): 119-127.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism.* 2nd. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Louai, El Habib. “Retracing the concept of the subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical developments and new applications.” *African Journal of History and Culture (AJHC)*, 2012: 4-8.

Lovesey, Oliver. “Making Use of the Past in *Things Fall Apart*.” In *Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart— New Edition*, edited by Harold Bloom, 115-140. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. “Minute on Education (1835).” In *Complete Works of Thomas Babington Macaulay*, 122. Hastings: Delphi Classics, 2016.

Macheso, Wesley. “The African Novel as a Strategy for Decolonization in Ama Ata Aidoo’s ‘*Our Sister Killjoy’*.” *African Writer Magazine.* November 9, 2015.

https://www.africanwriter.com/the-african-novel-as-a-strategy-for-decolonization-in-ama-ata-aidoos-our-sister-killjoy/ (accessed November 20, 2023).

Mackenzie, Clayton G. "The Metamorphosis of Piety in Chinua Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*"." *Research in African Literatures* 27, no. 2 (1996): 128-138 https://www.jstor.org/stable/3820166.

Mackenzie, J. M. *The Partition of Africa 1880–1900 and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century.* London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1983.

Mambrol, Nasrullah. "Postcolonialism." *Literary Theory and Criticism* . April 06, 2016. https://literariness.org/2016/04/06/postcolonialism/?_ga=2.216917782.1868114732.1697399614-793623725.1697399602 (accessed 10 16, 2023).

Mayowa, Abayomi Alli. "Pre-Colonial Nigeria and the European's Fallacy." *Review of History and Political Science* 2, no. 2 (June 2014): 17-27.

Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics.* Translated by Steven Corcoran. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

Meredith, Martin. *The Fate of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence.* New York: Public Affairs, 2005.

Metcalf, Thomas R. *Ideologies of the Raj.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Morrison, Toni. "Unspeakable things unspoken: The Afro-American presence in American Literature." *Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 1988: 123-163 https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_resources/documents/a-to-z/m/morrison90.pdf.

Mouffe, Chantal, ed. *Gramsci and Marxist Theory.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1979.

Nayar, Pramod K. *Frantz Fanon.* London and New York: Routledge, 2013.

—. *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary.* West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015.

Neimneh, Shadi. "J. M. Coetzee's 'Postmodern' Corpus: Bodies/Texts, History, and Politics in the Apartheid Novels, 1974-1990." Phd Dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 2011.

Niemi, Minna. ""A Dynamic of Blaming and Counterblaming": J.M. Coetzee's Analysis of Self-deception in South African Resistance Literature." 2011. https://pivot.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/pivot/article/download/32162/29381 (accessed 11 9, 2022).

Nkrumah, Kwame. *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism.* New York: International Publishers, 1965.

Nnoromele, Patrick C. “The Plight of A Hero in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*.” In *Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart— New Edition*, edited by Harold Bloom, 45. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010.

Nwoga, D. Ibe. “The Igbo World of Achebe’s ‘*Arrow of God*’.” *Research in African Literatures* 12, no. 1 (1981): 14-42 http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818550.

Ohaeto, Ezenwa. *Chinua Achebe: A Biography.* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997.

Okechukwu, Chinwe Christiana. *Achebe the Orator: The Art of Persuasion in Chinua Achebe's Novels.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001.

Okechukwu, Chinwe Christiana. “Oratory and Social Responsibility: Chinua Achebe’s ‘*Arrow of God.*’.” *Callaloo* 25, no. 2 (2002): 567-83.

Okunoye, Oyeniyi. “Dramatizing Postcoloniality: Nationalism and the Rewriting of History in Ngugi and Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*.” *History in Africa* 28 (January 2001): 225-237.

Paolini, Albert J. *Navigating Modernity: Postcolonialism, Identity and International Relations.* Edited by Anthony Elliott and Anthony Moran. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1999.

Peterson, Christopher. “The home of Friday: Coetzee's *Foe*.” *Textual Practice* 30, no. 5 (2016): 857-877.

Pinggong, Zhang. “Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient—on Edwad W. Said's Orientalism.” *Comparative Literature: East &. West* 4 (2002): 176-183.

Pope, Rob. *The English Studies Book: An Introduction to Language, Literature and Culture.* London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes.* New York: Routledge, 2008.

Rieder, John. “An Image of Africa From the Sky: Jules Verne’s “*Five Weeks in a Balloon*”.” *Los Angeles Review of Books.* April 1, 2017. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/an-image-of-africa-from-the-sky-jules-vernes-five-weeks-in-a-balloon/ (accessed May 11, 2023).

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men.* Edited by Helena Rosenblatt. Translated by Helena Rosenblatt. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

—. *Orientalism.* New Yotk: Vintage Books, 1979.

Sánchez , Patricia Álvarez . “Can We Find Kafka's Seed in Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*?” In *Building Interdisciplinary Knowledge: Approaches to English and*

American Studies in Spain, edited by Esther Álvarez López, Emilia María Durán Almarza and Alicia Menéndez Tarrazo,, 39-47. Oviedo: University of Oviedo, 2014.

Sardar, Ziauddin. Foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, by Frantz Fanon, translated by Charles Lam Markmann, vi-xx. London: Pluto Press, 2008.

Schipper, Minneke. *Imagining Insiders: Africa and the Question of Belonging.* London: Cassell, 1999.

Sengova, Joko. "Native Identity and Alienation in Richard Wright's "*Native Son*" and Chinua Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*": A Cross-Cultural Analysis." *The Mississippi Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1997): 327-351 https://www.jstor.org/stable/26476280.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest.* Edited by Peter Holland. New York: Penguin Books, 2016.

Singh, Frances B. "The Colonialistic Bias of '*Heart of Darkness*'." *Conradiana* 10, no. 1 (1978): 41-54.

Soile, Sola. "Tragic Paradox in Achebe's *Arrow of God*." *Phylon* 37, no. 3 (1960): 283-95 https://doi.org/10.2307/274457.

Southerne, Thomas. *Oroonoko.* Edited by Maximillian E. Novak and David Stuart Rodes. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976.

Spengler, Oswald. *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life.* Translated by Charles Francis Atkinson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, and Leon De Kock. "Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 23, no. 3 (1992): 29-47.

Spurr, David. *The Rhetoric of Empire.* Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993.

—. *Travel Writing and Imperial Administration.* Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1993.

Thiongo, Ngugi wa. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.* Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Publishing House (Pvt.) Ltd., 1987.

Thrall, William Flint, and Addison Hibbard. *A Handbook to Literature.* New York: The Odyssey Press, 1936.

Tiffin, Helen. "Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse." In *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, 95-98. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Tiffin, Helen. "Post-Colonialism , Post-Modernism and the Rehabilitation of Post-Colonial History." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, no. 23 (1988): 169-181.

Uhlmann, Anthony. *J. M. Coetzee: Truth, Meaning, Fiction.* New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.

Unesco. *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: South Africa and Namibia.* Paris: The Unesco Press, 1974.

Uzoigwe, G. N. *European Partition and Conquest of Africa: an Overview.* Vol. III, chap. 2 in *GENERAL HISTORY OF AFRICA- VII; Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935,* edited by A. Adu Boahen. California: University of California Press, 1985.

Uzoigwe, G. N. "Reflections on the Berlin West Africa Conference, 1884-1885." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 12, no. 3/4 (1984): 9-22.

Verne, Jules. *Five Weeks in a Balloon: A journey of Discovery by Three Englishmen in Africa.* Edited by Arthur B. Evans. Translated by Frederick Paul Walter. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2015.

Watson, Stephen. "Colonialism and the Novels of J. M. Coetzee." *Research in African Literatures* 17, no. 3 (1986): 370-92 http://www.jstor.org/stable/3819221.

Watt, Ian. "Robinson Crusoe as a Myth." In *Robinson Crusoe: an Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism,* edited by Michael Shinagel. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994.

Whittaker, David, and Mpalive Hangson-Msiska. *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

Wren, Robert M. "From Ulu to Christ: The Transfer of Faith in Chinua Achebe's "Arrow of God"." *Christianity and Literature* 27, no. 1 (1978): 28-40.

Young, Robert C. J. *Postcolonialism- A Very Short Introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Zabus, Chantal. *The African Palimpsest. Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.