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**CROSS-CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL
PERCEPTIONS OF THE OTHER IN W.B.
YEATS, JAMES JOYCE, JOSEPH CONRAD,
CHINUA ACHEBE AND ASSIA DJEBAR**

a thesis

**submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of**

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DEDICATION

To my beloved father who allowed me to escape the harem.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and due reference or acknowledgment is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

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A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis investigates ‘Otherness’ through works which have thoroughly examined and questioned the creation of a “stable self” by putting it in dialogue with its others and to society as a whole, namely William Butler Yeats’s selected poems, James Joyce’s *Dubliners*, (1914) Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, (1899) Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), and Assia Djebar’s *L’Amour, La Fantasia* (1985).

By representing the results of English, Belgian and French oppression in tangible material terms as well as its spiritual bankruptcies, these writers mark their works as clearly critical of the colonial regime and opposed to colonial exploitation, positioning themselves as postcolonial through their representations. In this sense, their texts raise issues debated in current postcolonial discussions. Speaking in the voice of the oppressed, in the language of the oppressor as a weapon to make cultural difference visible, these writers indeed analyse the problem of identity crisis, displacement, disintegration and the effects of colonialism on the culture and psyche of the colonised subject. These authors moreover offer possibilities of dismantling polarized constructions of alterity in a way similar to postcolonial critics such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, among others, whose theories are central to the analysis of the above-cited narratives.

This study also draws on Bakhtin’s theory on the dialogues of voices in texts, heteroglossia and polyphony among others and theories of intertextuality such as Julia Kristeva’s and Roland Barthes’s, who by using metaphors of “mosaic” and “social text,” encourage us to view a text as part of, and being overrun by a larger “social context,” hence the importance of a socio-critical reading of these writers’ texts to show that their artistic creations are social practices and ideological productions.

Each theoretical approach mentioned above will be used where appropriate to bear on some aspects of our analysis in the various chapters of this thesis, which has been organised into two parts respectively comprising four chapters and seven chapters.

One important way to understand the effects of colonisation and decolonisation on Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria is to gauge the institutional legacies of history. Part one therefore addresses the colonial legacy in Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria. The examination of the British, Belgian and French models of colonisation will reveal common features. Our concern however lies elsewhere, with those forms of domination that revolve around the construction of the Other. It is particularly important to see to what extent the otherness of the Nigerians, Congolese, Algerians and Irish, their supposed 'inferiority' and 'savagery' justified the colonisers' intrusion on their respective territories.

In Part two, we have therefore first examined the role played by ethnocentric prejudices in shaping the relations of England, Belgium and France towards their respective colonies. We have also focused on the repercussions this thinking had on the minds of the British, Belgian and French colonisers. Working against the background of the West's history of the colonial enterprise and its exploitation of other societies and cultures, postcolonial theory has thus been used as a vital tool to re-read the texts of Western imperialism and offers a powerful framework for analysing identity formation. We have then analysed Yeats's, Joyce's, Conrad's, Achebe's and Djébar's aforementioned texts in the light of postcolonial theory such as Edward Said's, Frantz Fanon's, Homi K. Bhabha's and Gayatri Spivak's among others.

The gist of our argument in the various chapters of this doctoral thesis is therefore twofold: colonialism and postcolonialism as essentially a critique of colonialism in Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria.

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Glossary

ABBREVIATIONS

AG: Action Party

AML: Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté

CSF : Congo Free State

CMS: Church Missionary Society

FLN: Front de Libération Nationale

F.P: Force Publique

GPRA: Provisional Revolutionary Government of Algeria

IRA: Irish Republican Army

MTLD : Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques

NCNC: National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons

NPC: Northern People's Congress

OAS: Organisation Armée Secrète

O.S: Organisation Spéciale

PPA: Party of the Algerian People

SPIL: Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language

UDMA : Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien

A: *L'Amour, la Fantasia*

AS : *Anthills of the Savannah*

D: *Dubliners*

HD: *Heart of Darkness*

TFA: *Things Fall Apart*

The SA : *The Secret Agent*

Part One



COLONIALISM AND ITS

LEGACIES OF DARKNESS

Part Two

*AT THE CROSSROADS
OF CULTURES*

INTRODUCTION

From the earliest times, the stranger from another tribe, the ‘barbarian’ who speaks an incomprehensible language, and follows ‘outlandish’ customs, but also the woman, whose biological difference stimulates fantasies of castration and devoration, or in our own times [...] that alien being, Jew or Communist, behind whose apparent human features a malignant or preternatural intelligence is thought to lurk: these are some of the archetypal figures of the Other about whom the essential point to be made is not so much that he is feared because he is evil; rather he is evil because he is Other [...]

Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), 115.

“Beginnings,” wrote Edward Said “have to be made for each project in such a way as to enable what follows from them.”¹ Our beginning lies with the reality of cross-cultural encounters and with the phenomenon of the Other, an ineluctable problem of human society. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud explains our iniquitous and constant use of the Other, writing that “it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are people left over to receive the manifestation of their aggressiveness.”² Similarly in *Barbarians Within and Without*, Leonard Woolf remarks that “in time of storm and stress within any society, [the barbarian’s] appeal is very strong. He offers immediate satisfaction of the simple instincts, love, hatred and anger. He helps us forget our own unhappiness by making other people still more unhappy.”³ And Frederic Jameson, in the above quote, adds that this alien being, the barbarian, “is feared [not] because he is evil; rather he is evil because he is Other.” Over the course of generations, the ‘barbarians’ have indeed always been the Others, and boundaries have been drawn between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ We need therefore to ask: Why such anathema? Why are there problems

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 16.

² Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (S.I.: Hogarth Press, 1946), 61.

³ Leonard Woolf, *Barbarians Within and Without* (New York: Harcourt, 1939), 65-6.

when people come into contact with different cultures? Why cannot people from different backgrounds simply get along with each other? A preliminary consideration of these questions allows the introduction of a definition of some key concepts such as ‘perception,’ ‘alterity,’ ‘identity,’ ‘culture,’ ‘civilisation,’ ‘ideology,’ ‘orientalism,’ ‘colonial discourse,’ and some indications of their importance in determining behaviour towards people from another culture.

The Latin etymology of ‘perception’ with its prefix ‘per’ intensifies the violence of the root ‘capere’ meaning to seize. Perception is commonly defined as the process of creating patterns from the unprocessed sensory data, which involves the selection, organisation, and interpretation of that sensory stimulation. A fundamental question thus immediately arises: How do we decide what another person is like ? There is much evidence that we tend to attribute our own behaviour to the situation and others to their dispositions. Our judgements of other people are weighed averages of the information we have or do not have about them. In other words, we tend to take for granted everything we ‘know’ about other people. The likelihood effect is that we like to focus on certain characteristics, positive but most often the negative ones, an effect known as the halo effect.⁴ The halo effect seems to be particularly powerful when we know relatively little about the person. In other words, perception is an active process of collecting data, formulating hypotheses about those data, and making adjustments at one’s own will. Interpreting the data in the light of what we already ‘know’ is clearly a lot more efficient than starting from scratch.

But what we commonly call ‘knowledge’ should perhaps be more accurately called ‘belief.’ The problem is that it comes pretty close to stereotyping. Stereotypes are indeed established beliefs about groups, peoples, nations and whole civilisations. They are over-generalised, incorrect, and impervious to new information. Although perception has its roots

⁴ The halo effect is involved in Harold Kelley’s implicit personality theory, (IPA) whereby the first traits that we recognise in other people tend to colour all our later perceptions, if only because of our initial cognitive bias.

in the human brain and nerve structures, there is also a large component of the human perspective which is determined by cultural and social learning. How individuals perceive others is often established by cultural backgrounds, socio-political, ideological and religious frameworks. The perception one has of the other often comes to be laden with misleading content and images of individuals. Often they result in misunderstandings of ethnic, racial, religious and national groupings, causing social resentments. Such misunderstandings can generate misconceptions or prejudices. In this sense the stereotyped becomes the one who is strange and different, or the Other.

One way of inquiring into alterity⁵ is thus through a questioning of forms of representation or stereotyping, a universal strategy for 'seizing' the Other to come back to the root of the word perception. Alterity from the German 'alter,' or 'other,' does not simply describe individual differences but the systematised construction of classes of people. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines alterity or otherness as "a thing other than the thing mentioned or the thinking subject," indicating that alterity comprises not only radical external difference, but everything that is in some way distinct from the subject. Alterity can therefore be understood as the represented Other, or projected identity. Be it racial, gendered or ethnic Other, the term 'Other' is used to name the way a hegemonic culture or gender group views different and subaltern ones as inferiors or just plain aliens and therefore as something that has to be erased or assimilated by any way. Moreover, as each generation reinforces its stereotypes, the problem is exacerbated. By extension, the negative otherness is attributed to entire cultures. The notion of the Other thus gains an encyclopaedic sense by designing a symbolic universe. In this sense, otherness is not alien to the articulation of gender. Based on the patriarchal order of society, otherness is a theory of objectification of women in a world

⁵ Cf. 'Stereotypes of Alterity: Race, Sexuality and Gender' in Kirsti Bohata, *Post-Colonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: Univ. Of Wales Press, 2004), 29-58.

where men constitute the centre and the standard. Woman becomes man's inferior Other. As such she is viewed as subservient, even to the point of lacking independent will.

The construction of alterity inevitably leads to sexism, racism and classism. It is an early step in the process by which a semblance of social order is created. First some groups are constructed as Other, thus less than fully human. Then we assign qualities to variable human individuals on the basis of their inclusion in this constructed alterity. Once we take this step in our construction of alterity, then, at last, we have created prejudice and stereotyping. The final step in the construction of alterity is to institutionalise these prejudices in laws and customs. When laws, group culture, educational values, and social custom operate as if prejudices were truths, then they result in racism, sexism, classism, and so forth. In all these cases however "tout autre est tout autre,"⁶ as Jacques Derrida would put it. Since the Other is constructed as an object, he/she ultimately develops an overarching search for self-identity.

Otherness is indeed an inherent aspect of identity construction and assertion. It is integral to the understanding of identities, as people construct roles for themselves in relation to an Other. How does identity come to be defined? What are its constituting criteria? The perception of one's distinctiveness as well as the perceptions of others are prerequisites for an individual to define his/her identity. As a blend of self-identification and the perceptions of others, identity can only be viewed in terms of difference and demarcation.⁷ Furthermore, one of the most important factors affecting a person's identity is linked to the encounters he/she has made throughout his/her life. From this perspective, personal identity develops during a set of interactions with the social environment. And culture plays an important role in shaping this environment.

The concept of culture forms indeed the core for definitions of Self and Other. Culture helps stabilise a person's identity with its deep-rooted principles. We would thus define

⁶ "Every Other is wholly Other," Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1993), 22.

⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 52.

cultural identity as the result of a process whereby individuals or groups attempt to establish a sense of self-esteem and self-confidence which enables them to accept their own place in life and society. It involves an acceptance of difference from others whilst forming a new belonging. Before turning to the specific notions of cultural differences a brief definition of the term 'culture' is necessary. As Robert Young has it: "The word 'culture,' which comes from the latin *cultura* and *colere*, has a wide range of meanings: inhabit, cultivate, attend, protect, honour with worship. These meanings then separated out. More significantly, the meaning 'inhabit' has become the latin *colonus*, or farmer, from which we derive the word 'colony.' Therefore, 'culture' is always a form of colonisation, [a way of 'seizing' the Other,] even in relation to its conventional meaning as the tilling of the soil. The culture of land has always been the primary form of colonisation."⁸

While these definitions cover a wide range of meanings, they do not exhaust the many uses of the term 'culture.' For instance, in considering the notion of centre/periphery, most people hear 'culture' and think 'high culture.' Although it has a longer history in Continental Europe, the concept of 'high culture' had been introduced into English largely with the publication of Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*⁹ in 1869. Arnold saw high culture as a force for moral and political good, and in various forms this view remains widespread, though far from uncontested. The phrase had been contrasted with 'Popular culture' or 'Mass culture' and also with 'Traditional cultures,' but by no means implied hostility to these. However the idea of 'culture' that developed in Europe during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflected inequalities within European societies, and between European powers and their

⁸ Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London:Routledge, 199), 30-1.

⁹ Arnold Matthew, *Culture and Anarchy* (New Haven; London : Yale University Press, c1994). Arnold defined culture as "the disinterested endeavour after man's perfection" (Preface) and most famously wrote that having culture meant to "know the best that has been said and thought in the world" - a specifically literary definition, also embracing Philosophy, which is now rather less likely to be considered an essential component of High Culture, at least in the English-speaking cultures (43).

colonies around the world. High culture thus became the culture of the ruling social group. It identifies 'culture' with 'civilisation'. In this case a Westerner's background thinking articulates the belief that there is no real culture outside the Western centre. Due to a false perception of the Other, boundaries are drawn between high and the so-called low cultures. A sub-culture therefore exists only when it exhibits a fixed pattern of specific differences from the larger system.

One important strategic feature inherent in the notion of culture is indeed its normative potential of differentiating between Self and Other. When differences surface in families, organisations, or communities, culture is always present, shaping perceptions, attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes. It is used by the different members of society, politicians, theologians, academics, and families to impose and ensure order, the basics of which change over time as need dictates. As F.S.L Lyons has it, "against this sombre diagnosis, it may be then argued that where Matthew Arnold saw culture as a unifying force in a fragmented society and as a barrier against anarchy, the diversity of cultures had been a force which worked against the evolution of a homogeneous society and in so doing has been an agent of anarchy rather than unity."¹⁰ Questions of the Self and the Other are at the root of many crucial issues in European thought. If Aristotle viewed the Other as a reflection of the soul, necessary to complete individual flourishing within a pattern of civic friendship in the polis, Jean Paul Sartre however portrayed Hell as other people, and for Hobbes, the Other carried the threat of domination and annihilation.¹¹ What is important is that, as the need is increasingly felt for a justification of domination, the justification often takes an ideological form.

Ideology is indeed a word much used and abused. The term was first coined by the French philosopher, Count Destutt de Tracy, who used it at the time of the French Revolution (the

¹⁰ F.S.L Lyons Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979, 2.

¹¹ Cited by Chris Tiffin, and Alan Lawson, *De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality* (London: Routledge, 1994), 64.

1790s) to define the ‘science of ideas,’ a science supposedly at the service of men and which aimed at rescuing them by purging their minds of prejudice and preparing them for the supremacy of reason. But soon the term took on a new meaning. Nowadays, it is no longer ‘the study of ideas,’ but rather a set of ideas, beliefs and values about the way the social order should work. Ideology, in this sense, is a set of beliefs with which people deceive themselves; it is a theory that expresses what they are led to think, as opposed to that which is true.¹² In other words, it is false consciousness. In cultural studies, the term ‘ideology’ has acquired the Marxist negative overtones: Ideology serves the interests of those with power in society. It therefore attends to maintaining relations of domination.¹³ Karl Marx argues that the property-owning classes have been able to rule by ideas which legitimised or made widely acceptable certain forms of social inequality. In so doing, ideologies have been able to disguise the real structure of domination and exploitation which exists in society. The investigation of domination has been extended to include relations of domination between the sexes, ethnic groups, dominated and subjected nations. In the context of the dominant and the dominated, which characterises the charade of colonialism, the dominant group (European) set the pattern for what is ‘normal’ in their societies and in societies directly or indirectly controlled by them. It has then become ‘normal’ to ill-treat others and debase them. The whole character of ideology, its extremism and violence are indeed nowhere more visible than in colonialism.

Colonialism is a rather elusive concept and does not lend itself to a clear definition. It is sometimes used interchangeably with imperialism, but the terms mean rather different things. As Peter Childs and Patrick Williams argue, imperialism is an ideological concept which maintains the legitimacy of the economic and military control of one nation by another and

¹² The Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser, defines ideology as the representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. Cited by Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1996), 41.

¹³ It is important to note that not all notions of ideology necessarily construe ideologies as negative. Ideology, in Lenin’s view, had a positive connotation. Proletarian ideology was an important tool in the proletariat’s struggle against the Bourgeoisie.

does not demand settlement. Colonialism however as one form of practice which results from the ideology of imperialism specifically concerns the settlement of one group of people in a new location.¹⁴ In his book on *Modern Colonialism: Institutions and Policies*, (1955) Thomas R. Adam defines colonialism as “the political control of underdeveloped peoples whose social and economic life is directed by the dominant power,”¹⁵ while Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana describes it as “the policy by which a foreign power binds territories to her own economic advantage.”¹⁶ Aimé Césaire however, views colonialism as a “pseudo-humanism [that] diminishes the rights of man.”¹⁷ And Edward Said defines it in relation to the Other. Which definition is the fittest for this research work? While it is true that colonialism is both political and economic control of a foreign country and is accompanied by settlement, the definitions proposed by Childs, Williams, Adam and Nkrumah touch upon only some aspects of colonialism. The most important features, which are to be at the heart of the colonial experience, have been supplied by Césaire but most explicitly by Said. There is indeed more to imperialism and colonialism than the accumulation of wealth and acquisition of land. The will to claim and control what is different is the main tenet of colonialism.

Colonialism can indeed only exist under conditions of inequality. It is organised around an unwavering view of the Other, and suggests certain ways of seeing, specific modes of understanding the world and a person’s place in it that assist in justifying the subservience of colonised peoples to the so-called superior order of the colonisers. It is therefore within the ideology of what Said terms ‘Orientalism’ that colonialism will first be considered.

Said defines orientalism as

a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western Experience. The

¹⁴ Peter Childs & Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-colonial Theory* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997), 227.

¹⁵ Thomas R. Adam, *Modern Colonialism: Institutions and Policies* (New York: Random House, 1955), 17.

¹⁶ Kwame Nkrumah, *Autobiography* (London: Nelson, 1957), Vii.

¹⁷ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955), 174.

Orient 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

'Orientalism' has therefore been identified as the particular form that Western stereotypical understandings of other cultures has taken. It is a total misconception of the Other through a veil of interpretations of reality resulting in a denial of common humanity with people of Western descent. Some Western people think that others belong, as they do, to humanity but on an inferior level. The diamond in the crown of European culture is indeed the distinction made between itself and others through the criterion of civilisation. Certain people in Europe sought to re-interpret and re-define their entry to the world of civilisation through the invention of racial stereotypes and hierarchical cultural classifications. Convinced of being the best expression of humanity and that they had to project their principles and values on others, these Europeans went on 'producing' others in the name of the civilising mission which they were supposed to accomplish, taking example from the Roman empire - *Pax Romana* – a so-called model of peace and world order, a myth of universal happiness. As Europe mounted its civilisation, the use of violence to maintain oppressed peoples in the position of 'uncivilised' increased. The idea of the civilising mission was the bulwark in the justification of imperialism. Civilising other races regarded as 'inferior' became an ideological adjunct to the economic and military interests. It is this very attitude that Britain, Belgium, and France adopted to reject the cultures of Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria.

During the colonial period in Ireland from 1169, Algeria from 1830, Nigeria from about 1850, and the Congo from 1879, the British, the French, and the Belgians, like any other

¹⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 1-3.

colonial power asserted their dominance through a variety of media. The colonial policies pursued by the various European powers differed markedly. For instance, the British policy aimed at self-government or political independence while the French and Belgian policies rested mainly on assimilation ie. making French or Belgian citizens respectively out of Algerians and Congolese. Despite these differences in colonial systems however, the colonial experiences of Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria went through similar phases: the capture of the colony and the taming of the colonial Other.

Although Fanon contends that “the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man,”¹⁹ historical records show that under colonial rule, any colonised man tended to be seen as Other. The Western ego has indeed been formed through the negation of white and non-white peoples. To the British, Belgians and French, Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria were homes of ‘savage’ peoples. To the African, the colonialist says, “You have no culture; you are an animal.” To the Irish, however, he says, “You have no culture; you are *almost* an animal - but at least you are not an *African*.”²⁰ The Irish, Nigerians, Congolese and Algerians had indeed been presented as almost different species at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder and were pejoratively referred to as ‘savages’ and ‘barbarians,’ hence lacking in all the attributes of civilisation. The nineteenth century was a particularly fertile era in the production of knowledge that sought to categorise, define and delimit the different peoples of the world. The British, Belgian and French powers presented themselves to the native peoples as the bearers of science, rationality and progress, and the enemies of religion, superstition and backwardness, hence as the agents of civilisation.

The colonisers sought to civilise these natives but instead they created for them a state of perpetual Otherness. It was indeed not evangelisation alone that the British, Belgian and French missionaries attempted but a cleansing of the Irish, Nigerian, Congolese and Algerian

¹⁹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove P, 1961), 26.

²⁰ Cited by Henry Louis Gates, ed., *Race, Writing and Difference* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986), 62. Italics mine.

minds. These colonisers not only imposed their values on the natives, but also caused some to merge with the larger culture by denying their origins, destroying without any qualms the natives' cultural systems and ultimately promoting the negation of these native societies. The Gaels, the Ibos, the Congolese and the Algerians had all been compelled to bury their cultures, to worship another religion, though in Algeria it was not compulsory. Crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised was also the domination of these peoples' languages. Drastic measures were taken by the colonisers against the use of the mother-tongue. Therefore, English or French became the language of every day life, alienating the native language. In such a context every Irish, every African was expected to acquiesce to the forces of colonialism that would preserve the coloniser's influence over the colonised Other. By subjugating the natives, who were viewed as too degraded and inhuman, the British, Belgian and French settlers made them deeply dependent and in the process erased their very identity.

The advanced/backward dichotomy has also been used to define male/female power relations. Patriarchy like imperialism is a supremacist ideology which subjugates and dominates its subjects. The oppressed woman is in this sense akin to the colonised subject. Colonialism is indeed organised around male control and a single-minded view of woman as the Other. But women have been doubly colonised. Male authority has been explained in the "male conception of the world where women [become] the creatures of a male power-fantasy."²¹ Men stand for "the progressive agent[s]" while women incarnate the "inert, backward-looking and natural"²² in line with the dichotomies of civilised/uncivilised brought about by colonialism.

But colonialism operates not only as a military/economical/political/social/cultural force but also as a discourse of domination. Colonial discourses have been the ideal tool for the

²¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 145.

²² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 359.

profound Othering of colonised peoples, men and women, as different and backward. The phrase ‘colonial discourse’²³ refers not only to how one perceives the Other, but also indicates peculiar attitudes shaped by imperial expansion of the West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The material provided by missionaries and historians about Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria together with literature played a decisive role in constructing and perpetuating a sense of difference between the British, Belgian and French colonisers and the peoples from their colonies. Historical and literary works about the Other sustained the Western superiority complex, rationalized inequality as they systematically debased the Other and his culture. And scientific theories of race further complicated the racist divide which informed colonial contact by reinforcing the belief that colonisation was the barometer for establishing standards and bolstering the ‘barbarian’ image of the colonised. Fundamental to the project of ethnology were the supposedly empirical sciences of anthropology such as physiology, phrenology and craniology which produced a powerful hierarchy of stereotypes. Anthropologists started to categorise human races in accordance to how far they were supposed to have gone in the evolutionary ladder. This myth of race superiority provided the British, Belgian and French colonisers among others, with an ideological justification for exploitation in all the meanings of the word. The cultural transformation the Irish, Nigerian, Congolese and Algerian societies underwent during the colonial period ultimately brought about a sense of displacement and left the colonised men struggling for a sense of themselves. With this colonial heritage, it is not hard to understand why cultural identity has now come to the forefront of cultural and postcolonial debates.

Postcolonial discourse has indeed been largely built around the concept of Otherness, which includes both identity and difference as well as around the concept of resistance. Since the colonial position has been defined as that of the West’s marginalised and silenced Other,

²³ I am indebted here to Gina Wisker’s book, *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2007).

then postcoloniality has empowered the margins and given voice to the subalterns. One cannot embark on a discussion about so nebulous a term as ‘postcoloniality’ without offering some kind of definition. The term ‘postcolonial’ is commonly applied to previously colonised countries, which throughout the 1940s and 1950s and following intensive anticolonial campaigns, underwent a radical decolonisation. De-colonisation implies not only the rejection of the deleterious ideas from the West, but also the freedom of the oppressed from the shackles of the oppressor as well as the creation of “new men,”²⁴ as Fanon has it. Although it is generally believed that postcoloniality is more concerned with the post-independence era, we would argue that the cultural influence of the centre does certainly not vanish with political freedom. Independence is a political event that takes place at a certain time, but in the cultural field, there is a continuity of preoccupations from the moment of colonisation to the present day and this may even extend to the future. Postcolonialism therefore studies the world during and after colonisation. It focuses on the ways in which colonial ‘knowledge’ of the native peoples has been generated and used to serve the coloniser’s interests, and with cultural identity in colonised societies: the dilemmas of developing a national identity after colonial rule; the ways in which writers articulate and celebrate that identity. Thus literature while arguably the means for imperial (and patriarchal) powers to propagate their version of culture also encompasses narratives which challenge dominant hegemonies and through which colonised people can assert their own identity and history. A contrapuntal reading thus addresses both the perspective of the coloniser and that of the colonised; in other words that of imperialism and that of resistance to it (Said).

One of the main forms of opposition to cultural imperialism has been the quest of the self for its moorings and the restoration of cultural identity. But the recovery of the real self, as Trinh, T. Min-Ha explained, “requires the elimination of all that is considered foreign or not

²⁴ *The Wretched of the Earth*, 36-7.

true to the self, that is to say, not I, the Other.”²⁵ There has therefore been an imperative to assert an ethnic distinctiveness, and to re-fashion alternative National/Cultural identities. Nationalism offers colonial subjects a positive emphasis on their native culture, but it requires a literature of and from the formerly colonised peoples.

Postcolonial counter-discursive writing exposes the underlying assumptions of European discourses from the native’s cross-cultural standpoint. In recent times the figure of the Other, women, natives, minorities, deviants, subalterns, hitherto silent and effaced, has made claims to speak back, disrupting the realm of politics in radical ways. Having shaken off the cultural cringe, postcolonial writers are “writing back” (Bill Ashcroft et al.) to the centre, debunking clichés produced by the masters, hence paving the way for a deep questioning about the making of Otherness. They have become increasingly interested in the formation of national identity. At this juncture, it is worth noting that postcolonial literatures developed through different phases. As Bill Ashcroft et al. remark:

During the imperial period writing in the language of the imperial centre [was] produced by a literate elite whose primary identification [was] with the colonising power [...] The second phase of production within the evolving discourse of the post-colonial [was] the literature produced under imperial licence by ‘natives’ or ‘outcasts,’ for instance the large body of poetry and prose produced in the nineteenth century by the English educated Indian upper class, or African missionary literature [...]”²⁶

But these early postcolonial texts were prevented from fully exploring their anti-imperial potential because literature in the colony was under the control of the ruling class. Such restrictions certainly account for the emergence of modern postcolonial literatures.

A major aspect of postcolonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. Where is one’s place? This question is fundamental to the cultural impact of colonisation and affects every aspect of colonised societies. It is here therefore that the crisis of identity

²⁵ Trinh T. Min-Ha, ‘Not you/Like you: Postcolonial women and the interlocking Question of identity and Difference,’ in *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Indiana University Press, 1989), 58.

²⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 5.

surfaces. Postcolonial writers have been concerned with the reconstruction of 'place,' and postcolonial women writers have participated in these counter-narratives. As women share with colonised races and cultures an intimate experience of oppression and repression, it is no surprise therefore that the history and concerns of feminist theory have paralleled developments in postcolonial theory. Postcolonialism and feminism indeed overlap: the former springs from the literature of empire and speaks its language; feminism uses patriarchy as a platform from which to speak against patriarchy. Women's world in the margin, be it in the domestic or public sphere, constitutes a subversive space for campaign against marginalisation. The space has provided a veritable weapon as demonstrated by feminist literature and gender action. Postcolonial women writers expose both the dominant imperial and patriarchal ideologies. Thus in both postcolonial male and female writing the question of representation necessarily bifurcates under a dual agenda: first a resistance to colonialism through a deconstructive reading of its rhetoric; second a re-valorizing of the colonised peoples' culture. We have followed this dual agenda in this doctoral thesis.

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to investigate the notion of alterity in cross-cultural encounters between Britain and Ireland and Nigeria, Belgium and the Congo, France and Algeria. Many works have been published concerning cross-cultural behaviour and this thesis would make, we hope, a modest contribution to postcolonial studies.

This doctoral thesis investigates 'Otherness' through works which have thoroughly examined and questioned the creation of a 'stable self' by putting it in dialogue with its others and to society as a whole, namely W.B. Yeats's selected poems, James Joyce's *Dubliners*, (1914) Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, (1899) Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, La Fantasia* (1985). The rationale behind our selection of these texts is that they are typical instances of postcolonial representations of Otherness, tales of cultural clash. These texts both enunciate the cultural collision and allow the Other a

voice of resistance. They are therefore concerned with both the issue of colonialism and that of subject formation and identity reconstruction. By representing the results of English, Belgian and French oppression in tangible material terms as well as its spiritual bankruptcies, Yeats, Joyce, Conrad, Achebe and Djébar mark their works as clearly critical of the colonial regime and opposed to colonial exploitation, positioning themselves as postcolonial through their representations. In this sense, their texts raise issues debated in current postcolonial discussions.

The second incentive behind our choice of these texts is that most critical overviews of the issue of 'writing back' are mainly focused on the Anglophone world overlooking cultural and historical specificities. Not all countries have the same experience of colonialism and it has affected the colonial subjects quite differently. We believe that there are many texts, both in French (and in Arabic) that have a lot to contribute to the debates on postcolonial identity, hence my choice of a francophone writer. Our choice of a woman writer is dictated by our belief that men and women do not experience colonialism in the same way, and they do not live postcolonialism in the same way either. Therefore, women writers of colonial texts are bound to be different both thematically and discursively.

Bringing together writers from such distinct cultural backgrounds, quite different geo-political and socio-historical conditions may seem odd at first glance, yet their connection has several strands. What first and foremost binds these writers is their awareness of the upheavals that colonial rule caused. Moreover as they all grew up in the shadow of imperialism and colonialism, they stand on the edge of two cultures, belonging fully to neither and their acts of self-positioning offer an opportunity to interrogate the operation and ramifications of cultural constructions of Otherness in an Irish /African colonial context.

What these writers have in common is also their underlying concern with changing the world. Each oppressed group represented by the writers cited above had to use the platform of

imperialist literature in order to revise the history of the Irish and the Africans as written in literatures in English and French, and had been compelled to use the language and ideology of the dominant culture to create a cultural space from which to speak. Their narratives rechart the position of the individual, and present a rejection of stereotyping, and a merging of character and culture.

These authors moreover reveal the paradoxes of the colonial position and Europe's equivocal attitude to its Others, one of the main characteristics of the colonial representations to which postcolonial authors are writing back. As champions of the oppressed, they have given voice, in their works, to those silenced by dominant cultures. More than a hundred years ago, W.B. Yeats and James Joyce, were deeply marginalised by the English colonisers though in very different ways. Yeats looked into the past and prophesied the future and with Joyce, and other Irish writers, strove to create a unified Irish society that could resist English oppression. James Joyce showed the paralysis that afflicted both the society and politics of Ireland. Joseph Conrad, a contemporary of Yeats and Joyce, a Polish writer similarly oppressed by the Russians, exposed the brutality of imperialism and spoke for the African Other. Chinua Achebe is a twentieth century Nigerian writer of Ibo culture, another culture oppressed by British imperialism; and Assia Djébar, a Francophone woman writer from North African culture suffered from a double colonisation: that of patriarchy and that of French colonialism. Like Yeats and Joyce, Achebe and Djébar set out to rewrite the history of their respective peoples. But the Algerian woman writer manufactured a speaking platform from the midst of colonialism and patriarchy as well. She showed that it is possible for women of the new millennium to find an alternative space of their own making, where they may regain agency. To refer to Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas of speech genres, it is easy to compare each ideology, imperialist and patriarchal, to an utterance in a chain of communication. In Bakhtin's view:

Every utterance must be regarded as primarily a *response* to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word 'response' here in the broadest sense). Each utterance refutes, affirms, [...]Therefore, each kind of utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication.²⁷

In this sense, each writer cited above responded to the colonising masters by using his language to create a sense of cultural specificity and difference. Paradoxical as it is, the coloniser's language had indeed been a major element in the definitions of Self and Other in these writers' narratives.

The theories that will be used in the analysis of these texts are wide-ranging: Intertextuality, sociocriticism and postcolonial theories. Theorists of intertextuality such as Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes argue that a literary text does not come out of a vacuum. In Kristeva's words: "every text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations. Every text is absorption and transformation of another text [...]"²⁸ A text is indeed a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture, "entering in mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that is the reader [...]"²⁹ explains Roland Barthes. If a text absorbs and transforms (all loaded terms in a post-colonial context), then it is the reader's job to make sense of the process. By using metaphors of "mosaic," and "social text" as Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes do, they encourage us to view a text as part of, and being overrun by a larger social context, hence the importance of a socio-critical reading of the texts under study. One of the functions of literature down through the ages has been to comment on society and socio-political problems. The aim of socio-criticism is thus to show that Yeats's, Joyce's, Conrad's, Achebe's and Djébar's artistic

²⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas P., 1986), 91.

²⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Sémiotiké : Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (Paris: Seuil, 1969). Trans. as *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature* by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez, 146.

²⁹ Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 21.

creations are social practices and ideological productions. To read these writers' texts in their historical, social and cultural contexts is thus to attend to the ways they dynamically deal with the issues they raise.

Mikhail Bakhtin's writings also offer a useful framework for the study of the aforementioned texts and their potentials for performance while at the same time acknowledging the social, cultural, and political nature of these texts, and the importance of context to textual meaning. Bakhtin's theory on the dialogues of voices in texts, heteroglossia and polyphony among others, based on a perception of the inherent relationship between ideology and utterance, addresses the sociopolitical fact of literary performance and provides analytical tools relevant to the act of performing literature. In the case of postcolonial re-writings of canonical texts for instance, dialogue refers to the use of language which allows voices of the Other to emerge in dialogue with the voice of the 'individual.'

Our theoretical framework also includes a wide range of postcolonial theories. As the term implies, one of the main aspects of postcolonial theory is an exploration of the impact and continuing legacy of European conquest, in our context the creation by European powers such as Britain, Belgium and France of dominated foreign empires. Central to this critical examination is an analysis of the ideas of European superiority over colonised people. Postcolonial theories therefore investigate the dichotomous frame of 'us' and 'them,' and explore ways in which identity, language, class, racial and gender differences have been deployed in colonial discourse. Theories of colonial discourses have been hugely influential in the development of postcolonialism. They explore the ways that representations and modes of perception of the Other are used as tools of colonial power to keep the colonised peoples subservient to colonial rule. The first overview was probably *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (1989) inspired by Salman Rushdie's argument on the need to decolonise English language. The model of colonial discourse which

relies on the binary opposition between Self and Other as developed by Edward Said is also apt for this study. Said offers invaluable insight into European racism. In his view, capitalism inevitably culminates in imperialism which dominates, classifies and commodifies all space under the aegis of a metropolitan centre.³⁰ In his seminal *Orientalism*, and later in *Culture and Imperialism*, Said examines the role that European discourse has played in creating and maintaining non-European peoples as subaltern groups. Western fantasies of the exotic, the oriental Other, involve a colonisation by transcendence that subsumes the alterity of the Other under a category of knowledge.

Our analysis also draws on Frantz Fanon's theory of Self/Other elaborated in his anti-colonialist treatise, *Black Skins, White Masks*, (1952) and his discourse on nationalism in *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* (1965). As the chronicler of colonialism, Fanon provided a psychopathology of colonial domination. He questioned the basic assumptions of colonialism, and exposed the methods of control the white world used to hold down their colonies. Fanon defined the colonial relationship as one of non-recognition of the colonised's humanity, his subjecthood. Thus in his view colonialism de-structured then re-structured the colonised man and in the process depersonalised him. It imposed an existentially false and degrading existence upon its black victims to the extent that it demanded their conformity to its distorted values. Fanon thus called for a radical break with colonial culture, and exalted violence as a necessary pre-condition for this rupture. The broad outlines of his theory of Otherness have been taken up by Homi K. Bhabha.

The Other has indeed been a major preoccupation of this Indian-American theorist who argues that stereotyping is pathological because it is fetishistic behaviour. Cultural diversity and cultural difference are the two important concepts Bhabha discusses in his work. The politics of difference played out in his work highlights the notions of hybridity, liminality,

³⁰ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 225.

intersticity and mimicry. For him, both coloniser and colonised undergo a splitting of their identities. This suggests that a new identity is formed. For Bhabha moreover, no cultural meaning is separable from its originally multi-cultural production. He thus sees writing as a productive way of conceptualising the differences between cultures. Though supporting nationalism, Bhabha like Fanon warns against the pitfalls of national consciousness. Quite paradoxically, nationalism in the hands of a native bourgeoisie may replicate the chauvinism of colonial hegemony and thus betray the peoples' revolutionary endeavours.³¹ Bhabha's and Fanon's arguments are forceful not least because they represent the nation in its most illiberal facets, but also because they reveal the paradoxes and contradictions of cultural identity in narratives of liberation. This claim in turn bears some resemblance to Gayatri Spivak's theory that the subaltern's 'truth' is "always already"³² distorted by the Westerner, who enacts "epistemic violence by interpreting the culture of the Other."³³ Spivak's exploration of the possibilities of recovering the voices of women therefore complies with this research. Her definition of the subaltern, disempowered after the advent of independence becomes quite significant when applied to the gendered subaltern.

With regard to the critical approach adopted in this work, we have avoided using a proper psychoanalytic criticism in a way that may appear surprising in a study so bound up with the concept of selfhood and literary creativity. We have followed the line of thought expounded by Edward Said who pointed out that while Sigmund Freud was certainly deeply interested in what we call now the Other, his view of culture was Eurocentric. Although some seminal texts written by Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi and others, analyse the effects of colonialism on the psyche of both coloniser and colonised, our own engagement is informed by issues of cultural difference and also by the political nature of the above-cited writers' texts.

³¹ Cf. Fanon's, 'On National Culture,' and 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness,' essays in *The Wretched of the Earth*, as well as Bhabha's 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation,' in *The Location of Culture*.

³² Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?,' in Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 25.

³³ Ibidem.

Each theoretical approach mentioned above will be used where appropriate to bear on some aspects of our analysis in the various chapters of this thesis, which consists of two main parts: part one and part two comprising respectively four and seven chapters.³⁴

PART I: Colonialism and its Legacies of Darkness

As no art can be divorced from the social and historical reality in which it appeared, a socio-historical background is necessary to interpret any piece of literary work. The purpose of this part is therefore to set stage and provide the context for what follows in the thesis. One important way to understand the effects of colonisation and decolonisation on the Irish and African countries under study is to gauge the institutional legacies of history. To understand present-day Algeria, Nigeria, the Congo and Ireland and their problems, it is essential to keep alive the memory of what had gone before and to delve further into a past that has remained obscured for so long. We will lay particular stress on how Belgium, Britain and France achieved dominance and maintained rule over indigenous peoples whose experiences of empire varied tremendously. During the colonial era, countries such as Britain, Belgium and France established a host of political and administrative institutions to rule beyond their boundaries. These had enduring effects on the native people's lives. This part therefore addresses the colonial legacy in the aforecited countries.

Chapter one: The Irish colonial experience. The Normans' invasion of Ireland in the twelfth century gave way to a cycle of British colonisation which was consolidated in the sixteenth century under the Tudors when the English gained control of the entire isle. English expansion was accompanied by the expropriation of the defeated Irish aristocracy in favour of English landlords, the ousting of the indigenous peasantry and grants of land to loyal English and Scottish colonial settlers. But the Irish question is not exclusively about the land but one

³⁴ This study is the product of a considerable amount of research based on official archives, (Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France) the writers' biographies, autobiographies, letters, as well as articles, essays, interviews, (personal and others) critical and theoretical studies of colonialism and postcolonialism.

that also revolves over religion. This chapter therefore brings into light the religious tensions between Protestants and Catholics. As year 1649 was a turning point in the history of both England and Ireland, I have devoted a section to the savage campaign launched by the English Parliamentary leader, Oliver Cromwell, and the harsh system he imposed on Ireland, which was further exacerbated by the Penal Laws of 1695. The deep injustice generated by these laws was later reinforced by the Act of Union. When the Act of Union was passed in 1800, Catholics believed that the united Parliament would allow them to hold seats in Parliament, but this right was allowed to them only twenty-nine years later with the enactment of the Catholic Relief Act. Under Parnell's leadership, Catholics demanded a separate Irish parliament within the British union. The British won over the Catholics by promising them emancipation. But the Catholics' triumph was short-lived as the country was racked by famine in 1845. Special attention will therefore be paid to the Act of Union, the Catholic emancipation and the human and economic tragedies occasioned by the Great Famine. When Ireland was finally granted home rule, after World War I, it was a completely ruined country. Paradoxically, Britain emerged at that time not only as the largest overseas empire, thanks to her long-standing in India, but also as the European country that earned the lion's share in the scramble for Africa. Britain took twice as much as France, for example of Africa's population under her yoke. Nigeria alone contributed millions of subjects.

Chapter two: Nigeria's Falling Apart thus looks at Nigeria's colonial relationship with Great Britain which began through the activities of the 'The Royal Niger Company' chartered under the leadership of Sir George Taubman Goldie from 1886. It will focus on the 'indirect rule' strategy used by the British, which rested upon the idea that the British could best govern through indigenous authorities. In effect this indirect rule policy proved a great experiment in coercive cultural relativism. It exacerbated the problems between the two protectorates of the North and the South. This chapter will therefore focus on the complex

relationship between Northern and Southern regions, and the conflicts over tradition the indirect rule policy created when British colonial officials began to anglicise traditional African political institutions by gradually modifying their practices, an action similar to the 'Frenchisation' operated by the French on the Algerians.

Chapter three: Algeria's Long Road to Peace concentrates on the French colonisation of Algeria, which started in 1830. Unlike the British, the French opted for a system of 'direct' rule. In order to understand the nature of the French colonial regime in Algeria as well as the theories of assimilation it promoted, it is important to analyse the Senatus-Consulte Laws of 1863 and 1865, and their underlying ideological function. Like the British in Ireland and Nigeria, the French interfered in the Algerian way of life. This was strongly opposed by the Algerians and led to a bloody war during which the French military used brutal force and inflicted both physical and moral torture on the Algerians as will be discussed in the final sections of this chapter.

Colonialism was also a plague that devastated the Congo. This region fell into the hands of the Belgian King about the same time Nigeria was under British colonial rule. **Chapter four: Leopold II's Congo: A Negation to Humanity** relates the atrocities committed in the Congo during King Leopold II's regime. The King ruled the Congo State not as a trustee of the Powers, but as an absolute sovereign, trampling the Berlin-made Congo charter under foot. He held the Congolese people as his private property, and made all the riches of the land his: rubber and ivory were gathered for him by men, women and little children under compulsion of lash and bullet, fire, starvation, and mutilation.

Part II: At the Crossroads of Cultures

The examination of the British, Belgian and French models of colonisation will reveal common features. Our concern however lies elsewhere with those forms of domination that revolve around the construction of the Other. It is particularly important to see to what extent

the otherness of the Nigerians, Congolese, Algerians and Irish, their supposed ‘inferiority’ and ‘savagery’ justified the colonisers’ intrusion on their respective territories. The racialism of the nineteenth century, to which Darwinian concepts and ethnopsychiatrists appeared to give a new scientific validity, lent theoretical and moral justification to the prevailing state of fact. The main strand in **Chapter five: ‘Barbaric’ Others: Why are They not so Blest?** is therefore to examine the role played by ethnocentric prejudices in shaping the relations of England, Belgium and France towards their respective colonies. It will also focus on the repercussions this thinking had on the British, Belgian and French colonisers’ minds.

Working against the background of the West’s history of the colonial enterprise and its exploitation of other societies and cultures, postcolonial theory has therefore been used as a vital tool to re-read the texts of Western imperialism to offer a powerful framework for analysing identity formation. **Chapter Six: Postcolonial Theory** spotlights the new set of conceptual tools postcoloniality has provided not simply to revise colonialism, but also to reframe it in terms of the relation between colonial power and colonial knowledge. Postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, among others, provided a foundation for the emergence of a distinct form of cultural theory: the analysis of colonial discourse. All of them grappled with the centre/periphery opposition, though each critic developed his own perspective towards colonialism. By revealing the many conflicting articulations of colonial discourse, these theorists sought to demonstrate the limits of its discursive power and by focusing on the wide range of stereotypes and subject position allocated to the colonised in colonialist texts. We shall then analyse Yeats’s, Joyce’s, Conrad’s, Achebe’s and Djébar’s selected works in the light of the above-cited postcolonial theories in the chapters that follow.

Chapter Seven: Apocalypse Then considers Yeats’s ‘The Second Coming,’(1921) Joyce’s *Dubliners*, (1914) Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,(1899) Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*

(1958) and Djébar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985) from a historical viewpoint. These writers deploy the plagues of colonialism, analyse the predicament of the colonised subject, and formulate a critique both of the assimilationist theory and colonial laws which turned the colonised society into a vagrant society. The constant use of historical themes in these works bears witness to the need to come to terms with the remnants of colonialism.

The next chapters will be devoted to a discussion of the concept of the Other by examining several narratives centred upon the protagonist's search for identity. Our point is to elucidate the encounters between England/Ireland and Nigeria, Belgium and the Congo, Algeria and France long deformed and obscured by colonial historiography, and shed new light on questions of identity and culture.

Chapter Eight: Re-Inventing Ireland: W.B.Yeats's Poetry and James Joyce's *Dubliners* draws on some Yeatsian poems and Joycean short stories to outline that centuries of conflict between Ireland and Britain have produced some of the most complex cultural identities possible. Although Yeats was a national poet, and wrote more than a hundred years ago, his voice resonates across cultures to the contemporary world. His voice was the beginning of postcolonialism in literature written in English. At the time of Yeats's birth, the Irish had been living for almost seven hundred years under English oppression, since at least 1171 when Pope Adrian IV gave Henry II authority to rule Ireland. Yeats himself was doubly marginalised. In terms of power these forms of otherness were antithetical: to be Irish in England was to be inferior; in Catholic Ireland, he was Protestant, which was to be superior. Yeats's experiences of dual Otherness influenced much of his life's work. In order to demonstrate that the Irish were more than substandard Englishmen and provide a basis for his assertion of a difference from the imperial centre, one of the projects of postcolonial literatures, Yeats looked into ancient history, the ancient myths and legends of the Celts, which offered an alternative way of seeing and representing the world. Although Joyce could

not commit himself to subordinate his art to politics, he however agreed with Yeats that Ireland's ills were attributed to English oppression. However his conception of Irishness differed from Yeats's. Joyce showed his people how the Church oppressed them by taking a strong hand in their politics, by keeping them bound to a strict moral code, and contributing to their poverty thus making their subservience to the English more accute. The destruction of Parnell, in 1890, and with him the hopes of Irish Catholics for a fuller participation in society coloured Joyce's thinking for the rest of his life. The fragmentation of identity entailed by colonisation is also a topic tackled by Conrad and Achebe.

Chapter Nine: Mapping the Subaltern: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* focuses on Conrad's and Achebe's views of the colonial Other. As an outspoken critic of imperialism, Conrad identifies with the victims of imperialist oppression and shares a perspective with postcolonial writers. Yeats's line "Things fall apart" in his poem, 'The Second Coming,' can be directly linked to Joseph Conrad who wrote about hollow centres in *Heart of Darkness*, twenty years before Yeats's poem, and to Chinua Achebe, who titled his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, after Yeats's poem forty years later. Like Joyce, Conrad was an exile and a multilingual. Like the poet, Conrad anticipated the future. Conrad not only manufactured a position for himself to speak from but he also spoke about the predicament of the colonised African man. Drawing inspiration from Yeats's 'The Second Coming,' Achebe set forth a tantalising story which deals with the clash of cultures and the violent transitions in life and values brought about by the onset of British colonisation in Nigeria at the turn of the nineteenth century. Under British rule "things" began to "fall apart." The encounter with the British led to a deepening sense of a distinct Ibo ethnic identity. In refuting the colonial versions of history, the Nigerian writer elaborated a counter-

history in which the Ibo past with all its imperfections, was not “a long night of savagery,”³⁵ as Assia Djébar did in *L'Amour, la Fantasia*.

Algerian writers like the Irish and the Nigerian ones overtly criticised colonial rule reclaiming their identity, yet, the problem of Algerian cultural identity remains figured in the masculine terms of cultural Nationalism. Djébar's *L'Amour* is particularly apt for a discussion of the theme of Otherness: it contains two aspects: a dialogue with the West and a dialogue with man. **Chapter Ten: Making Sense of a Double Colonisation: Assia Djébar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*** thus offers a powerful statement of women's struggles to denounce, resist and reshape the discourses of dominance. It raises important postcolonial and feminist issues for Algerian women, notably their relationship to language and writing and the relationship between their language and their identity. It attends to the question of women in another dimension of 'identity,' namely their gender, explores the interaction of race and gender in the experience of Algerian women, and discusses the possibility of a woman's space that transcends the problems of imperialism and patriarchy. Picking up on the area of inquiry that Yeats, Joyce, Conrad and Achebe started, Djébar captures moments of the history of Algeria. Portraying Algerian women as victims of a dual oppression, Djébar claims subjectivity for herself and her Algerian and African sisters by reappropriating language, history, space and the gaze. On the one hand, the novelist explores French colonial archives in order to rewrite the history of France's conquest of Algeria by reinserting women into the pages of history. On the other hand, she challenges the Muslim patriarch's dominating gaze so as to empower Algerian women and restore their subjectivity. As women's voices have been unheard thus the images of woman in pre-colonial as well as in colonial periods had been mostly presented by male writers. Concurrently, the latter have not been spared the criticism of being androcentric based on their amplified presentation of male gender. This point brings

³⁵ Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday/Anchor Press, 1975), 72.

us to consider woman's place in Yeats's, Joyce's, Conrad's and Achebe's works in **Chapter Eleven: Woman's Place in: Achebe, Conrad; Yeats, and Joyce**. Drawing on the work of some feminists, this chapter revisits the gender question in the works of the aforementioned writers. The central question taken on board is: If Djébar shares a history of colonialism with Yeats, Joyce, Conrad and Achebe, do these male writers share her views on the marginalisation of women? We will explore this gender issue in relation to some Yeatsian poems and Joycean short stories, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, (1899) in comparison with his later prose and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and some of his later novels.

The gist of our argument in the various chapters of this doctoral thesis is therefore twofold: colonialism as solidification of Eurocentrism and postcolonialism as essentially a critique of Eurocentrism in Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria. The purpose of this thesis is to present a discussion of important issues deemed necessary for an understanding of the processes of colonialism and imperialism and to discuss these types of power manipulation in terms of various cultural responses by indigenous populations.

Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they had all gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of spark from the sacred fire [...] They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force [...] They grabbed what they could for the sake of what has to be got. it was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind [...] The horror! The horror!

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Boston & N.York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, [1899], 1996), 19, 21, 86.

The bubonic epidemic of 1347-1353, which depopulated Europe and appalled historians and all those who read about the ensuing innumerable deaths, seems nothing before another more terrifying, more deadly plague carried by ideology not by fleas from rats: Colonialism. Colonialism was one of the greatest crimes against humanity in history. Out of the colonial era there came many great discoveries, but there also occurred some of the greatest tragedies the world has ever seen. Coercion and even "hideous butcheries"¹ indeed secured the colonialist project in Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo, and Algeria. It was these countries' misfortune to be confronted respectively to Britain, Belgium and France.

These European countries played key roles in the world mainly because of their empires. One might think that the sun never sets on the British Empire because the sun sets in the West and the British Empire is in the East, but the real motive is that the Empire's span across the globe ensured that the sun was always shining on its numerous colonies. The British Empire began first with its neighbouring Ireland and Newfoundland, with parts of the African continent coming later in the nineteenth century. During the Victorian age when colonialism was at its height France and Belgium, like Britain, also expanded their possessions overseas. They held colonies on most of the continents of the world in which they asserted their sovereignty such as Africa.

¹ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955), 176.

Slavery and subsequently colonialism were twin plagues that devastated Africa. Before 1870, most of the African continent was uncharted and free from alien penetration. However in the early 1800s, explorers began to cut their way through the African jungle. The great inflow of Europeans into the continent in 1881 completed the long process of invasion of Africa by alien races. The special attraction of Africa was that it offered many of the raw materials needed by the blossoming factories of Europe. The products of the tropics were especially welcome to Europe which looked for more open markets overseas. The ports of Africa were also invaluable as naval bases and ports of call, no less than as inroads for trade and investment. For this purpose, Africa (and Asia) offered the most inviting opportunities. It was in these economic circumstances that the race for colonies intensified in the 1880s gaining rapidly momentum until 1914.

But the scramble for the acquisitions of colonies caused disputes among the powers. To avoid a European war that might arise from the conflicting claims, German chancellor Otto von Bismark held the West African Conference in Berlin from November 1884 through February 1885 to decide on the partitioning of Africa. Of the seven European countries that would eventually control most of Africa, Great Britain, France, and Belgium together controlled most of Africa's territory.

This part will focus on the colonial experiences and histories of Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo, and Algeria respectively under British, Belgian and French rule. It will review the historical record to judge which types of legacy are most important in accounting for Belgian, French and British colonial policies.

Chapter I

The Irish Colonial Experience.

Colonialism has indisputably shaped Irish history, destroyed Ireland's civilisation, and ushered in the Dark Ages. The Anglo-Irish problem has long been reckoned as Britain's (or England's) Irish question. Cultural critic, Terry Eagleton, has written that Ireland signifies "roots, belonging, and traditions,"² but we could posit that Ireland also spells subordination, exile, dislocation, acculturation and trauma. Centuries of British hegemony, tensions between the Catholics and the Protestants, and Irish resistance offer a dramatic account of the pitfalls that accompanied the conquest of Ireland.

Despite some distinct differences of temperament, philosophical outlook, culture and tradition, the English and the Irish have the same skin colour, and share the same ideals of life. So why had their countries been at death-grips with each other for many centuries? This chapter is an attempt to provide some insight into Ireland's long and complex history. We will not only analyse the roots and development of tensions, but also their culmination to see what forces helped intensify English hostility vis à vis their close neighbour and what impact the clash had on the Irish community.

Historian Lawrence McCaffrey asserted that England had no special views on Ireland until an Irishman named Dermot MacMurrough went to Wales asking for help after having been ousted from his kingship in Leinster. MacMurrough enlisted the assistance of Richard de Clare, the second Earl of Pembroke, nicknamed Strongbow, whom he persuaded to bring Norman soldiers to the Island in return of which he promised him his daughter's hand and the Leinster throne. That day in 1169 marked the beginning of more than eight hundred years of

² Terry Eagleton, 'The Ideology of Irish Studies,' (1997) *Bullán: An Irish Studies Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 5-14.

direct English involvement in Ireland. Although the Normans occupied only the eastern part of Ireland, after having defeated the Irish in Ulster, they gradually extended their control over the whole country. Soon after their incursion, the Normans began some reforms, many of which dealt with the granting of land, and violated the traditional political and social structure.

However, the decisive transformation of Ireland should be placed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the whole island was subjected to numerous military offensives in the period 1534–1691, and colonised by English and Scottish Protestant settlers alike. With the establishment on the Irish land of a considerable Anglo-Scottish population distinguished from the indigenous majority in religion, language and culture, factional conflicts began to emerge.

1.1. Religious Tensions

The question of religious discrimination dominated Irish life and was a constant source of division. This rivalry over religion was evident early and served as a particularly explosive issue. Most significantly, while Protestantism was the predominant religion in Great Britain, most native Irish people were Roman Catholics. But the English Reformation (1500-1640) under the Tudor king, Henry VIII, brought a new religious division to the relationship between Ireland and England. When Europe became divided by religion in the first half of the sixteenth century, Henry VIII complicated foreign affairs. Failing to get a papal annulment for his first marriage, the King broke away from the Church of Rome and was invited by the Parliament of Ireland to rule the country. Fearing that Ireland could become a base for his enemies in England and Europe, he strove to get back his influence over the office of the Lord Deputy (chosen from the Old English Lords to rule in the name of the previous King) and regain stricter control over Ireland. When Henry VIII became king in 1509, he tried to separate the Irish Church from the Papacy, much as he did in England. The King's main

objective was to extend the ecclesiastical reforms under way in England, in other words, to bring the English Church into Ireland. Most importantly, he wanted to civilise Ireland by the spread of English laws and the English language. With their church under attack, the native-born Irish came to see the Protestants as a real threat to their cultural and political hegemony. Therefore they refused to accept English imposed ecclesiastical change. As a result, the King dispossessed them of their lands and banned Catholicism.³ And to further his scheme, Henry VIII adopted a policy dubbed ‘Surrender and Re-grant.’ The Gaelic chiefs were persuaded to surrender their lands to the King but get them back if they pledged loyalty to him. Being ‘loyal’ to the King however meant abandoning Irish customs and traditions, adopting the English way of life, and speaking the English language. In other words, the King wanted the Irish to ‘surrender’ their own identity. Those who complied were re-granted their lands. Though the King gained greater control over some of the Gaelic Lords, his strategies to introduce the Protestant Reformation were hopeless as he failed to capture the allegiance of the bulk of Irish people. Indeed many Gaelic people remained Catholic. It should be noted that there was actually no ardent Protestantism in Ireland until the threat posed by Spain and excommunication of Queen Elizabeth, King Henry VIII’s daughter. When Elizabeth I ascended to the English throne, (1558-1603) to oppose invasions from Catholic France, she ravaged the island, burnt crops, slaughtered herds and settled the province with Englishmen. The Queen’s instructions displayed the utmost cruelty and inhumanity against those who dared oppose the colonisation effort. She underlined the necessity of bringing “[...] that rude and barbarous nation to civility [while] acknowledging their duty to God and us by wisdom[...].”⁴ From this, it appears then that the Queen and her disciples were convinced that the Irish were an unreasonable peoples that had to be exterminated. But the brutal methods used by crown authority to quell Irish rebellion only helped intensify native resentment at

³ By 1700, the portion of land held by Catholics had fallen to fourteen per cent and by the 1770s, it had shrunk to five per cent.

⁴ R. Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors, with a Succinct Account of the Early History* (London, 1885-1890), II, 288-289.

English rule. The failure of this policy prompted the English to come up with more long-term solutions to pacify and Anglicise Ireland.

By conciliation and repression, the conquest of Ireland continued for sixty years, until 1603, when the entire country came under the nominal control of the first Stuart Catholic, James I, who became King of England and exercised power through his council at Dublin. The conquest was furthered by the banishment of the Catholics from all public office after the gunpowder plot was discovered in 1605,⁵ the imposition of English law, language and culture, as well as by the extension of the English Protestant Reformation, destroying the polity of Gaelic Ireland. This left the way clear for extensive settlement in the country by English, Scottish, and Welsh colonists, which culminated in the Plantation of Ulster. James I declared Ireland's Northern province, Ulster, Crown property making it a complete Protestant colony which he divided into six British counties. Land titles were conferred to English Protestant nobles. Hence, the alternative left to the Catholic Irish was lease or leave. Naturally, the prospect of land confiscation alienated the Irish further. As a matter of fact, the Irish starved as their lands were allocated to prominent Englishmen who set up a form of feudalism by which the Irish lived as tenants on land they formerly owned. This repression intensified during the English Parliamentary re-conquest of Ireland led by Oliver Cromwell from 1649 to 1653.

1.2. The Cromwellian Re-Conquest of Ireland

The next bloodiest phase in Ireland's history was the Cromwellian army's campaign in Ireland immediately after the English Civil War in 1642. The conflict that involved the King and Parliament led to the outbreak of a civil war between the King's disciples known as the 'Royalists' and supporters of Parliament under the leadership of the Puritan commander,

⁵ The Gunpowder Conspiracy of 1605, or the Powder Treason or Gunpowder Plot refers to the failed murder attempt by a group of provincial English Catholics against King James I of England and VI of Scotland. The plot was meant to kill the king, his kin and most of the Protestant aristocracy all at once by blowing up the Houses of Parliament during the State Openings on 5 November 1605.

Oliver Cromwell. The year 1649 was a turning point in the history of both England and Ireland. After defeating the Royalists, Cromwell landed in Ireland with his New Model Army on behalf of the English Parliament in 1649, and swept the board. His slogan was chilling, “To hell or to Connacht.” Anyone considered disloyal to the English Parliament was to be deported to the poorer lands of Connacht or else put to the sword. Cromwell started his bloody crusade in the town of Drogheda where his soldiers spent three days slaughtering men, women and children so that the streets ran red.⁶ Cromwell was convinced that he was carrying out God’s Holy Will and read from the bible while slaughtering his victims. His conquest ended up bonding Protestant interests together by opposing Irish and Old English. In order to pay his troops at the end of the war, Cromwell confiscated eighty percent of the Irish land and distributed it to Protestant landowners taking his revenge on the Catholics for the massacres of 1641, triggered off by resentment from those who lost their holdings in the Ulster plantation and had to pay high rents for their lands. It should be pointed out that the 1641 revolt revealed that the Irish were ‘irredeemable’ and posed a serious threat to England and its people. By the close of this brutal war, up to a third of Ireland’s pre-war population was dead or forced to emigrate due to the threat of starvation.

Cromwell’s main task then in Ireland was to deal with a large homeless and starving population. His panacea was to round up the poor and the starving and sell them as slaves to work on the sugar plantations in the West Indies. His next step was to subdue the Catholic Church in Ireland by banishing the Priests and banning Catholic services like the mass. Some Protestant church missions took advantage of the situation. They offered food to the starving Catholics in exchange for their conversion to Protestantism.

The years to follow were more than a “chronicle of barbarism”⁷ (Barnard, T.C) during which the foundation of the later Protestant Ascendancy over Irish land and politics was laid.

⁶ Today two of Drogheda’s streets are named Bloody Street and Scarlet Street.

⁷ Cited by Gilbert Declan, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of The Modern Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995), 62.

The main change was the transference of land from Catholic to Protestant ownership together with the decline of Catholic political power. Enhanced English power stimulated resentment and opposition in Ireland. The Irish resisted the assimilation of the two communities and refused to co-operate in any power-sharing putting thus an end to any chance for conciliatory politics in Ireland. In England it began with the execution of Charles I and the establishment of a Republic, the Commonwealth. In Ireland it ended with the slaughter of Cromwell's troops at Drogheda and Wexford and the launching of the final phase of the colonisation of the Island. The Protestant conquest was complete by 1660, when the English monarchy was restored under Charles II. In 1685, James II, another Catholic, succeeded him on the English throne. After the birth of a Catholic heir, James II was dethroned by William of Orange, and retreated to Ireland, where he planned a conquest of England with the encouragement of the French King, Louis XIV. However James's plans failed when his forces were vanquished on July 12, 1690, on the banks of the Boyne River. With the victory of William of Orange and the final surrender of the Catholics and Jacobites at Limerick in 1691, political power fell into the hands of the Protestants. From 1691 and the end of the Williamite war, Ireland became largely controlled by a Protestant Ascendancy constituting members of the established Church loyal to the British Crown which governed the majority Irish Catholic population by a form of institutionalised sectarianism codified in the 1695 Penal Laws.

1.3. The Penal Laws

As English attempts to govern Ireland had long been marked by the passing of various laws to secure its rule, a synopsis of those acts is thus necessary to understand the impact of the Penal Laws: in 1367, the Statutes of Kilkenny sought to prevent the Old English from any further adoption of Gaelic culture. The Poynings Law of 1494 made the Irish parliament subservient to the English one. New laws were legislated from the late 1500s that coincided with a determined effort to bring all of Ireland under English government and culture. But the

laws of 1695 were even more restrictive and had a pronounced effect on Ireland over two centuries.

The phrase ‘Penal Laws’ refers to a series of laws imposed under British rule which sought to discriminate against all faiths other than the established Anglican Church of England. The main victims of those draconian laws were the Catholics, who were regarded as disloyal and potential allies of France and Spain, and later Presbyterians. Those laws were not only intended to make Catholics in Ireland powerless by placing landed and political power in the hands of an English Anglican settler class, being based on ownership of land, but they were also meant to convert the Irish en masse to the Protestant faith. The tithing system had the biggest impact on the Catholics as they had to pay a percentage of their crops’ value to the local Protestant clergyman, as well as the cost of supporting their local priest. The law on inheritance was even harsher: Catholic inheritance of land was to be equally divided between all an owner’s sons with an exception: if the eldest son and heir converted to Protestantism, he would then become the one and only tenant of estate.⁸ There were also bans on converting from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism on pain of Praemunire: forfeiting all property estates and legacy to the monarch of the time and remaining in prison at monarchs’ pleasure. In education moreover, the only legal form of education taught children to be good Protestants. An Irish Catholic could not gain a position as a teacher, or as a lawyer or become a government official, and was of course denied the franchise. All in all, the Penal Laws completed the division of Ireland into two distinct societies: the conqueror and the conquered, the Protestant community and the Catholic one. As the decades drew on, the Catholics suffered tremendously from poverty. Subsequent Irish antagonism towards England was exacerbated by the economic situation of Ireland in the eighteenth century. In the 1740s, the economic crisis along with two very cold winters led directly to the first Great Famine, (1740-

⁸ To be noted that this ‘Gavelkind’ system had previously been abolished by 1600.

41) which killed about four hundred thousand people. In addition Irish Trade was tremendously affected by the Navigation Acts which imposed heavy taxation on Irish products entering England, while English goods were exempted from tariffs on entering Ireland.

Meanwhile, the American colonies also became restless under British rule. The Revolution of 1776 had many disciples in Ireland who sided with Benjamin Franklin's against a common foe: England. When French and Spanish fleets also sympathetic to American rebellion began to cross the English Channel, the anxious British asked loyal Irishmen to organise against an incursion. The latter refused to cooperate because they resented the British mercantile system which gave England a monopoly on trade: Northern Ireland would produce raw materials and goods, many of which were to be shipped only to England, and industries that threatened English interests were outlawed. The supposedly loyal Ulstermen paraded, brandishing placards that read, "Free Trade or This." Fearing a rebellion, the British Parliament loosened trade restrictions. But revolution could not be appeased. The promise of reform inspired a small group of Protestant liberals in Belfast to found the Society of United Irishmen in 1791. The organisation crossed the religious divide and joined members from all creeds: Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, other Protestant dissenter groups, and even some from the Protestant Ascendancy. The Society asked for further democratic reforms, which the Irish Parliament had little intention of granting and the British government was just as unwilling to enforce until pressured to do so in 1793. The outbreak of war with France earlier in 1793 following the execution of Louis XVI forced the Society underground and toward armed insurrection with French aid. The avowed intent of the United Irishmen was the complete rupture with England. The organisation spread throughout Ireland and linked up with Catholic agrarian resistance groups, known as the Defenders, who started raiding houses for arms in early 1793. The British retaliated with the gruesome massacre of hundreds of captured and

wounded rebels. They burnt rebels alive in New Ross and Enniscorthy. Those insurgents taken alive in the aftermath of the battle were not treated as prisoners of war but were hanged because they were regarded as traitors to the Crown. In addition, countless civilians were murdered by the rampaging military, who also practised gang rape, particularly in Wexford County. The difficulty to govern an Ireland that sparked social unrest culminated in the 1798 rebellion, probably the most concentrated outbreak of violence in Irish history. Atrocities were committed on both sides, the great majority being committed by government forces but rebel killings of Protestants in Wexford were given much greater emphasis by the victors in the following years, as the loyalist version of events reduced the rebellion to a sectarian Catholic plot to massacre Protestants, a repeat of the Irish Rebellion of 1641. To ward off 1798 French invasions and solve the Irish problem, the British sought to bring Ireland into the United Kingdom. The British government was convinced that only a union of the countries could bring their mutual safety against both internal and external foes.

1.4. The Act of Union

Under the 1801 Act of Union, the centuries-old foes came under a single Parliament in London. The Union, which was to last one hundred and twenty years, affected Ireland in a myriad of ways. Some Irish worked for the repeal of the Act. With parliamentary reform at home blocked, others resorted to physical force. A third effect of the Union was the flood of emigration from Ireland, especially to North America. A fourth and most important effect of the unification act was to divide Protestants more deeply from Catholics. The Protestants were reassured by the argument that Catholics could never be more than an impotent minority in the British Parliament in Westminster; the Catholics were won over with the promise of enfranchisement.

1.5. Catholic Emancipation

Ireland found a voice in a Catholic barrister, Daniel O’Connell, who became the most outspoken opponent of Union and campaigned for better civil rights and social conditions for Irish people, but he refuted violence as a means to reach any consensus. In 1823, he co-founded the most popular Catholic organisation which led the struggle for Catholic emancipation, and became an unofficial native parliament whose aim was to raise the level of Irish grievances. To soothe the Protestants’ fears, the English Parliament passed Anti-Catholic Acts, suppressed the Catholic Association and as the franchise became based on property ownership, it reduced the Catholic electorate to a minority. Locked into factional contexts, the Catholics began to think in terms of revolution to pull down British laws. As a defensive strategy, Catholic groups began to envisage their prospects against the establishment. Awareness was dawning and was articulated in the development of agrarian societies, which included Whiteboys, Steelboys, Oakboys, Ribbonmen and Defenders to address the needs of disfranchised poor Irish tenants, especially as a reaction to the imposition of tithes and rents to absentee British landlords.⁹ To save the Union, the British preferred to grant Catholic emancipation instead of granting repeal, which would destroy the Union. Fearing a civil war, the Duke of Wellington, British Prime Minister, compelled George IV to sign the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, which came into force to overturn the Penal Laws. Catholics could be elected to the British Parliament, but the Protestant Ascendancy which owned most of the land had a complete monopoly of power. The Irish had to work for these landlords in return for the patch of land they needed in order to grow enough food for their own subsistence. This was the system which forced Ireland and its peasantry into monoculture, as only the potato could be grown in sufficient quantity. The rights to a plot of land in Ireland could mean the

⁹ These landlords were called ‘absentee landlords’ because they lived in England. They used agents to administer their property for them, with the revenue generated being sent to England. A number of these absentee landlords never set foot in Ireland. They took their rents from their ‘impoverished tenants’ or paid them minimal wages to raise crops and livestock for export.

difference between life and death in mid-nineteenth century. The standard of living was so low that a large part of the population subsisted almost entirely on potatoes. Therefore when the blight which ravaged potato crops throughout Europe during the 1840s reached Ireland it produced a famine.

1.6. The Great Famine

The Famine of 1845, which lasted for nearly half a decade remains the symbol of the impact of English rule on Irish life. That tragedy was a watershed in the history of Ireland, and its effects permanently changed the island's demographic, political and cultural landscape. In 1845, the Great Hunger resulting from the potato blight which severely damaged that crop shook Ireland to its core. The potato formed the basis of Irish meals because it was cheap, nutritious and easy to cultivate. This man-made famine caused ravages as the population of Ireland fell from nine million to three million through starvation, typhus and cholera. The loss of life was heaviest in Galway, an area in the West of the country. Unable to live with more restrictive conditions, many Irish people left Ireland.¹⁰ About two million Irish, a quarter of the population, emigrated en masse to England, Scotland, Australia, Canada, but mostly to America. The great famine of mid-nineteenth century and subsequent mass migrations transformed Ireland from an Atlantic country to an American one.¹¹ The underlying factors which combined to cause the famine were aggravated by an inadequate government response. Instead of taking measures to alleviate the peoples' suffering, the government found in that catastrophe an opportunity to facilitate various long-desired changes

¹⁰ It should be noted that while the famine was responsible for a significant increase in emigration from Ireland, it was not the sole cause. Nor was it even the era when mass emigration from Ireland started. That can be traced to the 1814-1815 post-Napoleon world when cereal crops and linen, Ireland's two primary exports, which had commanded high prices during the war years, collapsed with the advent of peace in Europe.

¹¹ In his preface to his book, *Americana: The Americas in the World around 1850*, James Dunkerley pointed out that "Ireland is really an American country on the wrong continent" (Verso, 2000, xxii). Recent Irish social and political reactions to the terrorist threat of 11 September in the USA seem to confirm the view that the great bulk of the Irish population would like to see their country as an island extension of the United States.

within Ireland. These included population control and the consolidation of property through various means.

As a matter of fact, the famine hardened the hearts of the Irish and increased their hatred for England whose mercantilist policies they blamed for starvation.¹² And the land issue again stirred Ireland. Although Ireland produced crops in great abundance during the famine, Irish tenants had to pay huge rents while their own families starved. Many tenants refused to pay the new tariffs, claiming that the English had no right to charge any rent. Michael Davitt founded the Land League under the slogan “the land of Ireland for the people of Ireland,”¹³ which soon became a mass movement aimed at breaking landlordism by refusing to pay rent and through militant acts, the most famous of which targeted Captain Charles C. Boycott, an estate agent who ordered evictions. In protest, all farmhands and servants refused to work on the Boycott estate. He was put into quarantine by the whole population. In despair, Boycott resigned and retired to England. Thus, a new word was added to the English language: ‘boycott.’ Parnell, who later became president of the Land League, explained the meaning of that word: When a man takes a farm from which another has been evicted, he must be isolated like the leper. He must be hated for the crime he committed. Above all, the Famine is regarded as a terrible heritage to subsequent generations, a legacy of political resentments that would affect forever the attitude of the Irish towards British occupation.

Post-famine Ireland was a ruined country barely kept alive by subsistence agriculture and available when required by the expanding industries of Britain and North America. The adoption of Free Trade by the British government exacerbated the situation: the export of wheat soon ceased to be important and Russia and the USA replaced Ireland as the main provider of wheat to Britain. Further unrest in Ireland followed the Great Famine. Spurred by

¹² The British Corn Laws (1815-1846) added to the Irish misery. These duties on non-English grain guaranteed English farmers a minimum price for their crops. The English grain was beyond the Irish purse, consequently he could not substitute imported grain for potatoes. As a remedy to the famine, Sir Robert Peel, British Prime Minister, advised the removal of all obstacles to the import of all sorts of human food. The Tories cried out in opposition. The Corn Laws were repealed but instead a tougher Coercion Bill was introduced in 1846 to repress a hunger-provoked crime wave in Ireland.

¹³ Cited in ME. Collins, *History in the Making: Ireland 1868-1966*, (Dublin: Education Company of Ireland, 1993), 68.

the Fenians, one of the most important revolutionary movements to challenge the British Empire in the nineteenth century, William Ewart Gladstone, who then became British Prime Minister, decided that the cycle of violence had to be broken. He declared that his mission was to pacify Ireland, and announced his conversion to Home Rule for Ireland.

1.7. Home Rule, Rome Rule

One of Gladstone's first acts during his first ministry, from 1868 to 1874, was to disestablish the Church of Ireland, a serious blow to the Ascendancy class because Catholic farmers no longer had to pay tithes to the Church. Gladstone's Land Acts of 1870 and 1881 gave Government the power to intervene in the tenant/landlord relationship in significant ways and limited the property rights of landlords. Those acts further undermined the position of many Anglo-Irish landlords. During his third ministry from 1886, Gladstone officially announced his support for Home Rule for Ireland. Not only did the Tories adamantly reject it but Gladstone failed to get Queen Victoria's support. The struggle for home rule continued, and Gladstone introduced a second bill in 1893, only to see it defeated in the House of Lords. The Home Rule bill was not brought into effect because the Protestant majority in Ulster (Northern Ireland) vetoed it, they refused to become a minority in a Catholic nation: "Home Rule is Rome Rule," was their slogan at the time. Thus they threatened with civil war if Ireland was given home rule. Meanwhile, there was a lull in the home-rule movement due to a sex scandal which brought into disrepute its leader, the Protestant politician, Charles Stuart Parnell.¹⁴ In 1912 British Parliament passed a Home Rule Bill, which gave Ireland a certain measure of independence in national affairs.

¹⁴ Charles Parnell, a wealthy Protestant land-owner from County Wicklow, might have seemed an unlikely advocate of home rule. However, his American mother had always been hostile to England, and he himself was horrified by the execution of the Manchester martyrs. So after entering Parliament, he quickly forced the government to attend to Irish grievances.

But the home-rule movement aroused mixed sentiments: while the South approved of it, the North stood against Home Rule. Growing tension and resentment at English rule in Ireland and the question of separation from the United Kingdom set in motion a chain of events that came to be known as the Irish Revolution. The clash between the Nationalists who wanted a completely independent Irish republic, and the Unionists who wished to remain under British control, led to the establishment of armed paramilitary groups in both areas of the island. However the crisis resulting from the threat of a civil war between the factions over the question of Irish independence was temporarily warded off by the outbreak of World War I. Representatives of both groups supported the British war effort against Germany.

John Redmond, the mouthpiece for Southern Ireland declared that the South would join Ulster to defend a common homeland: Britain. The House of Commons applauded and placed home rule on the statute books. But not all Irishmen in the South agreed on the issue of war. Arthur Griffith, the leader of the Sinn Fein, or 'Ourselves Alone' group, saw the war as an opportunity to further their schemes. He refused to recognize British authority and called Irish representatives to withdraw from British Parliament and form a separate Council. Griffith also pointed out that England was at war with Germany not Ireland, and as Irish nationalists their sole duty was to stand for Ireland's interests. He added that if Irishmen were to defend Ireland, they must defend it for Ireland, under Ireland's flag. Otherwise they will only help to perpetuate the enslavement of their country. But Fenianism was the most direct anti-English movement. The military wing of the Fenians formed the Irish Republican Brotherhood later known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Concurrently those members of the nationalist faction who refused to join the war effort, launched the Easter uprising of 1916 to challenge the whole force of British empire. At the height of the Great War, a few hundred armed men marched out. They invaded the city of Dublin, calling out for the independence of Ireland. The riot was short-lived. It resulted in

many of the leaders of the Easter Rising being shot by a firing squad. The revolt and its aftermath brought into disrepute the parliamentary nationalists. In the election of 1918, seventy three of the one hundred and six Irish seats went to Sinn Fein who refused to go to Westminster and set up a provisional government in Ireland. There followed three years of bitter guerrilla warfare in which the rebel Irish Republican Army played a prominent role. Committed to direct violence, the IRA began a campaign of terror, to which Northern Protestants responded by attacking Catholics. In August 1920, no part of Ireland escaped the violence of what was called the Anglo-Irish War, or the Irish War of Independence. The Restoration of Order in Ireland Act was passed, giving British forces in Ireland full rights: they tortured prisoners, sabotaged industries, killed family members of rebels, and shot civilians including children. There were massacres on both sides before a peace treaty was finally signed in 1921. Most of Ireland secured political independence from the United Kingdom, which led to the 'final' solution of the Irish Problem with partition as a compromise between the British government and the majority of the Sinn Fein leadership: the Irish Free State in the South and the continuation of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. Ulster accepted, but the South rejected the proposal. This partition was viewed by the Irish nationalists as a reinforcement of British colonial policy, and believed that it would maintain their inferior status. The terms of the truce were seen as a betrayal by Eamon de Valera and his followers, particularly the requirement that Irish members of parliament still swear an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. Bitter fighting ensued. This division formed the basis of the declaration of war by the Irish Republican Army on Great Britain. The English began to depart from their oldest colony, which they had occupied for almost eight hundred years. But the sun never sets on the British empire as pointed earlier. Britain was already a dominant commercial power in West Africa.

Chapter II

Nigeria's Falling Apart

The British ban on slave trade in 1807 indeed began increasing governmental involvement in African countries as the British attempted to stamp out persistent slave traders in Nigeria. In the early eighteenth century, Britain and France destroyed the Dutch hold on West African trade, and by the end of the French Revolution (1799) and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars, (1803-1815) Britain became very powerful in West Africa. When the slave trade¹ ended, this area soon became famous as a major supplier of palm oil, palm kernels and other commodities, the so-called legitimate commerce, to the international market. And to safeguard its expanding trade interests in the Nigerian hinterland but also to head off formal claims by other colonial powers, such as France and Germany, Britain had to establish political control over Nigeria.²

Colonisation in Nigeria began with the inauguration of commercial relations between several European trading expeditions and the main coastal states in the Bights of Biafra and Benin. These states commonly referred to as 'city states' and 'trading states' acquired influential positions, as they connected Europe to the peoples of the hinterland. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, different city-states in the Niger Delta, which became ethnic communities, fought against and enslaved one another. These internecine clashes facilitated British invasion. Tension between the city-states actually became the ostensible

¹ Denmark, (1803) Great Britain, (1807) and the United States (1807) were the first to ban the importation of slaves. The Swedish and Dutch followed. Because of economic interests, Great Britain put pressure on France, Spain, Portugal, and Brazil to end their involvement. Portugal and Spain agreed after an arrangement for a cash payment from Britain was reached. Brazil agreed only after military action was taken against its coastal areas, and France did not consent to ban trading until 1815. But black market slave trading still existed until 1848.

² This name suggested in 1898 by Flora Shaw, who later became Lady Lugard, to term the British Protectorate on the River Niger. Hence it is during the colonial period that the territorial state of Nigeria came into existence.

rationale for colonisation as the colonisers sought to re-establish a new political order that re-defined relations in the Niger Delta.

This region became during the scramble for Africa one of the areas which urged Britain to claim the future Nigeria as its zone of influence. British trading interests were concentrated in Lagos and the Niger River delta. Fears that the French would assume control of Lagos, and the collapse of trade by the Yoruba civil wars, made of Lagos a crown colony. The conquest of Benin in 1897 completed the British occupation of south western Nigeria. The incident that sparked the expedition was the murder of a British consul and his team, who were on their way to investigate reports of ritual human sacrifice in the city of Benin. In retaliation a marine force promptly beset the city and destroyed Oba's palace. The reigning Oba was sent into exile, and Benin was controlled indirectly under a protectorate through a council of chiefs.

2.1. Indirect Rule

In Nigeria, the British method of governance was based on the 'indirect rule' system, the brainchild of the British colonial administrator, Frederick Lugard. Under this system, external, military, and tax control were operated by the British, while every other aspect of life was left to local aristocracies who had sided with the British during their conquest. The British used African traditional rulers to work on their behalf and help subjugate their fellow Africans. Concurrently, many villagers came to be governed by members from other villages with whom they had traditionally or historically been at odds. Although these Africans were nominally 'ruling,' the actual decisions rested with the British colonial officers.

Lugard first experimented with indirect rule in northern Nigeria where the Fulani established the Sokoto Caliphate³ and emirship. The ruling aristocracy of the Sokoto

³ It is worth noting that though present in Nigeria for centuries, Islam really began to dominate Northern Nigeria only in the early nineteenth century. In 1804, an ethnic group called the Fulani, led by an Islamic scholar, Usman dan Fodio, declared a *jihād* or holy war on the ethnic Hausa states west of Bornu. The Fulani triumphed over the Hausa. The groups intermarried and became one large varied ethnic group. Together they founded an empire.

Caliphate co-operated with the British in return the Caliphates were allowed a certain degree of autonomy. Two major areas of this semi-autonomy were religion and education. This sovereignty meant that northern Nigeria witnessed much less political, cultural, and economic change during the colonial period compared to southern Nigeria. To maintain his good relationship with the Sokoto Sultan, Governor Lord Frederick Lugard established in 1903 a policy of religious non-interference toward the Muslims. As a result, Christian missions were prohibited in Muslim areas, but conversely, they were encouraged in non-Muslim districts including Southern Nigeria.

Moreover, Lugard formed an alliance with the Muslim states and gradually, the British gained control of the more recalcitrant non-Muslim groups by a system of punitive patrols, massive destruction of human life, farms, villages and property as well as high taxation. The Hausa-Fulani were considered leading communities, and their superiority over the non-Muslims, or 'primitives' was well established. This discrimination soon became a notion of racial hierarchy, with the non-Muslim groups at the bottom of the social pyramid and the Hausa-Fulani near the top, just below the British. Although the principles of English common law were introduced, native law and customs were allowed to continue to regulate the lives of the colonised people.

This 'indirect rule' policy sought to benefit both the coloniser and the colonised. It allowed the British to reduce the colony's administrative cost, as fewer British administrative officers were required. In reality, indirect rule in the North secured British interests but did not benefit indigenous populations. If a ruler was loyal to the British and paid up, then the British did not care how corrupt or brutal he was to his own people. The method of 'paying up' involved the imposition of a standard currency in which all taxes were to be paid. To get this currency, every family had to work for wages or produce cash crops. Nigerian people bitterly resented this burden of taxes, half of which being used for the payment of white officials.

As the system of indirect rule seemed to have worked for the British in northern Nigeria, Lugard attempted to apply it to southern Nigeria, formally a British protectorate from 1906. It is worth noting that the south-eastern part of Nigeria was economically very important to the British because of its natural resources. Thus most of England's commercial exploitation of Nigeria was concentrated in this area. But the British practice of indirect rule in the south caused much turmoil, especially among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria, and it failed woefully in the Ibo areas of south-eastern Nigeria. When the British 'direct officers' tried to make cultural changes in the Yoruba community, the public refused to obey those pseudo-leaders. The Yorubas resented this system of rule by their ancestral foes and reacted violently towards their 'indirect' and colonial leaders, but their grievances fell on deaf ears.

The south-eastern part of Nigeria, apart from suffering the daily oil spillages caused by British oil drillers, frequently suffered heavy taxations imposed on products and services. When the British imposed tariffs on the people of Aba, in 1929, massive protests erupted, especially by the women⁴ who stood against the oppressive rule of the colonial government. They resented this over-taxation because it pauperized them and caused economic hardship to the entire community. As part of their protest, some twenty-five thousand Ibo women covered about six thousand square miles in their march, burning and looting British trading posts and services on their way. They eventually forced the resignation of those warrant chiefs and compelled the British to a compromise to accommodate conflicting demands and lower taxes, but native resistance was met with more repression.

To further expand across Nigerian territories, the British established local, decentralised police forces. The main purpose of the police during that time was quasi-military assistance to the British colonisation of Nigeria, and boost of the economic and political agenda of the colonisers. The make-up of these police forces varied from one area to another. For instance,

⁴ Women in traditional Ibo society played a prominent role in the economy of the community. This explains their violent reaction to the British heavy taxations.

in the Lagos colony, officers from the linguistically and culturally distinct Hausa ethnic group were used. This practice alienated the police from the local community they were to control. By contrast in the northern Nigerian protectorate, the system of indirect rule empowered the existing police.

The relationship between citizens and the police was very often characterized by brutality, confrontation and exploitation. Police killings and excessive use of force have been corroborated by local and international human rights organisations. In colonial times, the Nigerian Police Force was deliberately designed to appear tough and intimidating before civilians. Local organisations and the media reported circumstances in which police in Nigeria were often unable to meet the safety and security needs of local communities, and instead preyed on them for economic gain. Indeed, corruption within the force was rampant as the lower cadres tried to supplement their exiguous incomes. Hence for the Nigerian encounters with the police meant terror.

Moreover, rising poverty, soaring unemployment and the breakdown of traditional social structures led to an upsurge of violent crime, which the Nigerian police was ill-equipped to address. Concurrently, public confidence in the effectiveness of the police force was brittle and marked by distrust and hostility. In these circumstances, many Nigerian communities resorted to other means for their own protection. They embraced vigilante groups in spite of their murderous methods. For instance, they turned to the Bakassi Boys in the south-eastern states and other vigilante groups in large measure because the Nigerian state and its governmental agencies were absent from their daily lives.

Respondents to a survey carried out in fourteen states also revealed high figures of police abuse: beating, slapping and burning with hot objects were reported to be common practices during British colonial rule of Nigeria. One instance among the many scandals in British colonies threatening as it were the image of colonialism as a ‘civilising mission,’ was that of

the flogging of women in the open market while stripped completely naked. Women were punished in a way antithetical to a respect for feminine daintiness. *The African Telegraph* reported that women in Nigeria were flogged in areas in which native custom remained unchanged. The press of Lagos, muck-raking missionaries, and organisations like the Anti-Slavery Society regularly accused Northern Nigeria's colonial government of supporting a brutal and degrading practice. Inherently, it was a form of punishment repugnant to the best ideas of justice.

Despite humanitarian criticism, British officials however believed that corporal punishment was a necessary adjunct to colonial governance. Thus though brutal, flogging was viewed as a necessary tool in a longer term civilising project to demonstrate that they were carefully controlled. To make his point Governor Lord Lugard drafted regulations specifying the type of cane and the different lash techniques that could be used for each occasion. Accordingly, there were great differences between the way in which Muslims, pagans and women were flogged. For a time therefore, regulations declared that Muslims would be whipped with the *bulala*, a hippo-hide whip and pagans with a cane, but pagans soon complained that their floggings were substantially more severe than the Muslims.' These different methods created an opportunity for the British officials to act as buffer.

The latter therefore attempted to deal with these scandals, assuming that corporal techniques would mitigate political problems. And when the Native Courts accused them of enforcing bestial and savage law codes, the officials replied that such savagery was the only penalty likely to have a deterrent effect. They also added that it was a feature of traditional law and asserted that the 'civilising mission' could be accomplished only by using methods the 'uncivilised' could understand, savage though these might be. The history of flogging in Northern Nigeria provides an insight into the culture of colonialism and the ways in which the colonised peoples were integrated theoretically as subjects or citizens of the colonial state.

But the most troublesome form of punishment was not corporal punishment but the barbarity of the European forms of imprisonment. Nigerians were supposed to be unable to adapt to isolation from their families and tribes. If they could survive flogging carefully regulated and monitored by British officials and the worst excesses, convicts were less likely to survive a term of imprisonment due to the barbarous conditions within the prisons, which probably accounts more for the mortality rate than an inability to adapt to isolation from the tribal community. But Britain maintained its hegemony over the colonies not only through military power, and the collaboration of indigenous rulers, through missionaries, but also through its strategy of dividing the people in order to better dominate them.

2.2. Divide and Rule

The British repressed the Nigerians by imposing their cultural, religious, and economic lives by “Bible, Business, and Bullet,”⁵ as Fafunwa, a former Minister of Education in Nigeria, put it. Britain undermined the pre-colonial socio-political structure with new beliefs and values considered to be superior to the local ones. More importantly, it amalgamated and divided the people for its own purposes. The British presence indeed reinforced existing cleavages between the North and the South, and made the British approach each region in a distinct manner by simultaneously attempting to preserve the indigenous cultures of each area and to introduce modern technology and Western political and social ideas. A number of discriminatory practices were put into place to create or enhance disparities among Nigerian ethnic groups. One such process of differentiation was education.

Commenting on the pernicious effects of the British policy in Nigeria, Professor Awa observed that: “It was the educational policy of the country more than anything else which helped to create a cleavage between the North and the South in intellectual and psychological

⁵ A. Babs Fafunwa & J.U. Aisiku, *Education in Africa: A Comparative Survey* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 74.

orientation.”⁶ The colonisers used education as a tool to inculcate a peculiar mode of thinking, in the form of Christianity, to further dominate and oppress Nigerians. The Southerners, especially the Yorubas were provided with Western education while the Northerners spurned it because of its association with the Christian missionaries. Concurrently the north was shut off from much of the Westernising influences to which the south was exposed. This custody gave southern people a head start, especially in Western education. Like in Ireland, the missionaries reinforced the colonial policy and were used by the colonial power as an avant-garde to expand into new regions.

The Churchmen used the schools as a means of converting indigenous people to Christianity. The work of prominent Victorian Englishmen known as the Clapham Sect formed one of the first Protestant missionary societies to venture into Nigeria. To reach a wider audience, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Methodist Missionary Society, the first British Christian organisations to set up schools in Nigeria, translated the Bible into the local languages such as Yoruba, Ibo, Efik and Nupe. It was also believed that if a ‘raw’ African was to be made a ‘civilised,’ and a Christian black European, he had to be isolated from the evil influences of his pagan past and present, hence most of the schools set up by those missions were boarding schools to better control, supervise, and direct children along proper British Christian lines. However as most of the missionaries were Canadians, the British leader in Nigeria, Lugard, though upholding their industrial aims, staunchly refuted their religious preaching because they advocated the equality of Europeans and natives, which though “true from a doctrinal point of view,”⁷ could be misused by people “in a low stage of development, and interpreted as abolition of class [and race] distinction,”⁸ explained Fafunwa. Therefore, the British selected specific aspects of Christianity which ought to be represented

⁶ Cited by Taiwo Akinola in ‘Historical Perspectives on the Balance of Power Crisis in Nigeria: An Argument For Restructuring Nigeria,’ *Isokan Yoruba Magazine* (Fall 1996/Winter 1997), Vol. III, n° 1, 32, 8.

⁷ A. Babs Fafunwa & J.U. Aisiku, *Education in Africa: A Comparative Survey* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 102-3.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

in their educational system in order to further subject the Nigerians to their command. Thus from the start of British colonisation of Nigeria in 1850 to its independence in 1960, the activities, discipline and style of teaching that existed in those schools reflected the attributes that the British instructors believed a good Nigerian citizen ought to have: “A ‘good’ citizen in Nigeria [...] meant one who was African by blood, Christian by religion and British or French in culture and intellect,”⁹ noted Fafunwa.

However this Westernisation proved to be more a liability than an asset to British interest in Nigeria as the Yoruba elites wanted to oust the British from Nigeria and liberate the North. The Yorubas thus constituted a serious threat and were viewed by Lord Lugard as masters of intrigue plotting against British government.¹⁰ To quell Yoruba risings, Lugard changed his strategy in Northern Nigeria. He launched a military campaign, in 1903, known as ‘pacification of the North’ to bring the Northern emirates by force of arms under the hegemony of the British government and the Christian movement. The British military expansion into Northern Nigeria introduced Christianity to a region which had been Muslim for over five hundred years. These colonial religious policies created religion-based skirmishes between the two communities. Ergo, these two societies could not develop under the principles of solidarity, human cooperation, respect, racial equality and justice. Rather, they nurtured religious and cultural intolerance, racial and ethnic inequality. This resulted in the formation of a number of Muslim radical movements such as the Mahdists, whose goal was to cleanse the land of the British. The conflict between the Muslims and the Christians in

⁹ Ibid., 71.

¹⁰ However for the Governor, the Northerners were born rulers. He even underlined “their wonderful intelligence, [...] incomparably above the Negroid races in ability” (Cited by Akinola Taiwo in ‘Historical Perspectives on the Balance of Power Crisis in Nigeria: An Argument For Restructuring Nigeria,’ *Isokan Yoruba Magazine* (Fall 1996/Winter 1997), Vol. III, n° 1, 32,7. The British authority also admired the Ibos’ republican qualities, their sense of commerce and good education, though they could neither be trusted with political or military powers because as John Holt, one of the British officials, noted “[t]he Ibos quite unknowingly appeared to take the position of the Irish.” Thus the British admiration for the Ibos and their consideration of the Hausa/Fulani as very intelligent were just a cloak of an assessment based on the natives’ usefulness to the empire as made clear by Holt’s stereotypical portrayal of the Ibos.

Nigeria, much as the clash between the Catholics and the Protestants in Ireland, reached far beyond the country's independence, constituting a hindrance to political unity.

All in all the British 'Divide and Rule' strategy sustained north-south separation, pitted one group against another to maintain power and obviated any rising up of the native population against their occupation. This system fostered rivalries not only between regions but also between the dominant groups: the Hausa/Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the west, and the Ibo people, one of the three largest of Nigeria's approximately two hundred fifty ethnic groups in Southern Nigeria and minority groups. These divisions in the country created upheavals as the oppressed minorities agitated for separate states in the regions. But to soothe the two regions Britain adopted the same strategy as in Ireland, their amalgamation.

2. 3. The Unification of Nigeria

A turning point in the history of the Nigerian state was the fusion, in 1906, of the colony of Lagos with the Southern Protectorate. Power to make laws for the entire entity was conferred to the Lagos Legislative Council. But it was actually in 1914, on the eve of World War I that the unification process was completed. Both the colony and the protectorates merged into what became 'The Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria,' with Lagos as the capital and Lugard as Governor General, creating the political entity that is today the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In 1916 Lugard formed the Nigerian Council, a consultative body that brought together six traditional leaders, including the sultan of Sokoto, the emir of Kano, and the king of Oyo, to represent all parts of the colony. The establishment of the council was supposedly meant to allow for the expression of opinions that could instruct the governor, but in practice Lugard used the annual meetings to inform the local leaders about British policy, leaving them with no functions at the council's sessions except to listen and to assent. British staff in each region continued to operate according to procedures developed before unification. Thus as in Ireland, this amalgamation process permitted Britain a better control of

its colony. But that arbitrary alloy of disparage ethno-cultural groups without any consideration for their differences was no doubt the main cause for the tensions within the Nigerian state. As in Ireland again, World War I awakened national consciousness and provided the ideal opportunity for some Nigerians to rebel against British rule.

When Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914 thus starting World War I, all of the British Commonwealth and its colonial possessions also went to war. The Nigerians were constrained to support Britain in the name of a better post-war world, a world that would supposedly include democracy and self-determination. But political independence required economic independence. At that time, Nigeria was opening up to foreign investment as never before. Native resentment at foreign firms within Nigeria was building up. The government only strengthened these firms. Against this backdrop, Nnamdi Azikiwe, an American-educated Nigerian, returned home to establish a chain of newspapers. In denouncing colonial authority, he became a nationalist hero. In 1918, the first Pan-African Congress declared that the African natives had the right to participate in their government.

The struggle for independence and self-determination increased in tempo during the Second World War. Throughout Asia and Africa, the colonised peoples took their first staggering steps toward independence. Major uprisings occurred and though they were short-lived, the propaganda of the war had a revolutionary effect. The Nigerian politicians exploited every opportunity offered by these disturbances for effective propaganda against the colonial regime, attacking the colonial record on economic and social welfare.

The advent of India's and Pakistan's independence in 1947 together with the prospect of independence in Burma and Ceylon opened another crack in Nigeria. Sir Arthur Richards, Nigeria's governor, tried to soothe the situation by drafting a document that became known as the Richards Constitution. The same session of the British Parliament that approved the Richards Constitution also passed four so-called Obnoxious Ordinances. Three of them, the

Minerals Ordinance, the Public Lands Acquisition Ordinance, and the Crown Lands Ordinance, were steps toward nationalising natural resources. The Minerals Ordinance stipulated in part that the entire property and control of all minerals should be vested in the Crown. This embittered the natives who accused the British of grabbing Nigeria's minerals and land.

The Richards constitution, which aimed at promoting unity by bringing the North and the South together, in reality fostered regionalism as regional councils tended to divide more than unite Nigeria. This controversial document also proved unworkable because while giving the traditional authorities a greater voice in national affairs, it excluded the Western-educated elite. As a result, the document which was meant to be in effect for nine years was revised by the new governor, Sir John Macpherson. The latter announced his intentions to recruit Nigerians into the senior ranks of the civil service. A new constitution providing for elected representation on a regional basis was instituted in 1951. The Macpherson Constitution sought to pacify Nigeria, but it was too late for concessions. It rather stimulated the rise of three major militant party politics, each with a strong regional base: In the East the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) or Zikist Movement, founded in 1944, after disappointment with the Richards Constitution which excluded Nnamdi Azikiwe, its leader, from the National Legislature meeting in Lagos. It was the first all-Nigerian political party largely based among the Ibos, championing nationalism. In the West, the Action Party (AG) formed in 1950 with a mostly Yoruba membership was led by Obafemi Awolowo; and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in 1951 based in the north was led by Ahmadu Bello. Disparities over the pace of decolonisation between the AG and NPC culminated in the Kano troubles of May 1953, and the subsequent demand for the dissolution of the Federation by the North. The Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 finally laid down the basic pattern for a self-governing Nigeria. The elections that followed the introduction of the 1954 constitution paved

the way for an NPC-NCNC coalition agreement. This was a significant development because it made national unity possible as both parties were willing to make compromises. The Federal elections of 1959 returned the NPC and its allies with a large enough majority to form a government. But again disagreements between the NPC and NCNC led to the formation of a coalition government, leaving the AG in opposition. Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa became Prime Minister and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (leader of the NCNC) opted for the position of President of the newly formed Senate. The thorny question of self-government was finally resolved on October 1, 1960 when the country achieved its independence and became a republic in 1963 when Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the first President of the country.

But Nigeria's colonial experiences and phases are also typical of the history of other African colonies. The British taking over unknown territories created vested interest among the French who too began to enter the scene eager to have their share of that cake that was Africa.

Chapter III

Algeria's Long Road to Peace

Joint circumstances turned the eyes of France towards Africa rather than any other parts of the globe: a series of colonial conflicts¹ between France and Britain in the middle of the eighteenth century together with the little expansion that the French Empire saw under the reigns of Louis XVIII (1814-1824) and Charles X (1824-1830) as well as the demoralising defeat France suffered at the hands of the Germans in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871, which resulted in the loss of the prized territories of Alsace-Lorraine, ultimately destroyed the first French colonial empire. After these many defeats, the humbled Frenchmen saw colonisation in Africa as a chance to regain some of their lost dignity and prestige in their traditional competition against the British. France therefore established a new empire in Africa (and South East Asia). The main areas of French influence in Africa were West Africa, Equatorial Africa and the present day country of Gabon. The French holdings in Africa also included the Maghreb. Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia and made up the French colonies in North Africa. But the real beginnings of the second French colonial empire were laid in 1830 with the French invasion of Algeria.

The conquest of Algeria² was initiated in the last days of the Bourbon Restoration³ by King Charles X. It is important to note that until the late eighteenth century, Franco-Algerian

¹ These wars were the War of the Austrian Succession (1744–1748), the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), the War of the American Revolution (1778–1783), the French Revolution (1793–1802) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815).

² Algeria sits at the crossroads of the Atlantic, European, Arab, and African worlds, and was known as the Regency, the land of the Berbers. In the late eighteenth century, this land became part of the 'Barbary Coast.' For about three centuries, it had harboured the cruiser ships of the corsairs who raided the mainland of southern Europe, exacting money, attacking vessels sailing in the Mediterranean including those of the independent United States and taking a great part of the population off into slavery. The United States paid huge sums of money in return for a promise that the pirates would not accost U.S. shipping but even this could not stop the pirates. By 1815, Congress launched naval action against the so-called Barbary States, the then independent states of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Lybia. The bombardment of Algiers under the commander Stephen Decatur ended up in a Treaty between the U.S. and the Regency.

³ Following the deposition of Napoleon I of France in 1814, the Allies restored the Bourbon Dynasty to the French throne. The ensuing period is known as the Restoration.

relations were quite satisfactory. They began to deteriorate during the French Revolution about money matters: the Jewish houses of Bacri and Busnach in Algeria allowed credits to Napoleon Bonaparte's armies in Italy and Spain. Bacri and Busnach did not ask for immediate refund of the loan until after the Napoleonic Wars when they owed money to the Dey of Algiers, Hussein Khodja. As the French could not pay back their debt, Bacri and Busnach informed the Dey that they were dependent on French repayment to settle their own debts. This added to another and more serious issue infuriated the Dey: France had the commercial concession of a stockhouse in La Calle, and through its representative, Deval, engaged itself not to fortify it. Paris however did not respect its promise. The Dey first asked for explanations by sending a letter to the French government. As the latter did not respond to his mail, upon meeting the French consul, the Dey asked for the reasons behind the non-payment of the financial debt owed and the breach of the contract concerning the Calle fortifications, but Deval remained deaf to his inquiries. The Dey responded to French disdain by striking the French Consul's shoulder with his fan on 29 April 1827. This led to the breach of the diplomatic relations between France and the Dey. The Dey's inadvertent gesture provided King Charles X with the ideal opportunity to reverse his domestic unpopularity. The dazzling effect of a new conquest would cover up the coming assault on civil liberties. The French thus invaded Algeria and what was meant to be a simple punitive expedition against the Dey of Algiers turned out to be a war of conquest, a quasi-permanent establishment.

But the King's plots rebounded on him. No sooner had the news of the capture of Algiers reached Paris than the French monarch was deposed by a new liberal regime which brought in the constitutional monarchy of Louis Philippe I, Charles X's cousin. The new monarch was not particularly interested in Algeria but the imperial project having gained momentum, it became difficult to dampen the national enthusiasm for the colonial enterprise, so the

monarch decided that the occupation had to continue in order not to sully national prestige. Algeria thus became a French colony.

France's first colonial scheme in Algeria was to create, in 1841, the so-called *bureaux arabes* run by the Arabs and working in tight collaboration with the Army. Occasionally, they acted as buffer between Muslims and colons. The creation of the *bureaux Arabes* not only helped the expropriation of lands, pushed the indigenous tribes into segregated areas, but they also allowed for the division of Algeria into three distinct zones: civil, mixed and military. The 1845 Royal ordinance indeed set up three types of administration in Algeria: The civil zone comprised the self-governing full exercise communes (*communes de plein exercice*) mainly inhabited by Europeans settlers. The 'mixed communes' (*communes mixtes*) were predominantly constituted of a Muslim majority and government was in the hands of appointed officials including representatives of the great chieftains (*grands Chefs*) and a French administrator. In the military zone, the indigenous communes (*communes indigènes*) remained under the *régime du sabre*, (government of the sword) the colonial administration placed under Governor General, Bertrand Clauzel. Under that regime the colons had limited self-government in areas where European settlement was intense, and there were constant clashes between them and the army. The colons agitated against military rule, complaining that the *bureaux arabes* constituted an impediment to the progress of colonisation. By 1848, nearly all of northern Algeria fell under French yoke. After Louis Philippe's constitutional monarchy was brought down in the 1848 Revolution, the new government of the second French republic ended Algeria's status as a colony and claimed the occupied lands as an integral part of France. The cities of Algiers, Oran and Constantine became French Departments while the territories outside the zones occupied by the colons remained under the *régime du sabre*. The local Muslim administration remained under the control of French military commanders.

With the advent of the second Empire in 1852, the new Emperor, Louis Bonaparte, or Napoleon III came back to a military control to Algeria. To Napoleon, a man deeply impregnated with Saint Simonian philosophy,⁴ the colonies were vital for France and not only provided the metropole with the necessary resources, but also gave the colonies a chance for self-improvement. However he was shocked by the self-serving attitude of the colon leaders in Algeria and called it a day. Napoleon III, whose ambitions were to be seen in the Imperial Decree of 1857, declared that Algeria was not “strictly speaking a colony, but an Arab kingdom. The natives and the colonists [had] an equal right to [his] protection and [he was] no less the Emperor of the Arabs than the Emperor of the French.”⁵ He thus set up an Arab Kingdom (*royaume Arabe*) and declared himself King of the Arabs. To further his plans for the Arab Kingdom, Napoleon III issued two decrees known as the ‘Senatus-Consulte’ in 1863 and 1865. The former law, which aimed at defending the rights of the natives, expropriated the native inhabitants, Arabs and Berbers, while the latter allowed Algerians to apply for French nationality, but only if they accepted the full jurisdiction of the French legal code, and subjected themselves to French courts in such matters as marriage and inheritance. The Muslims had also to renounce some of the mores of their religion in order to become French citizens. The French indeed viewed their conquest as a crusade against Islam because they believed that it constituted a hindrance to their policy of acculturation, or as they termed it, assimilation of the Algerians. The various naturalisation laws passed in the 1880s and early 1920s made a renunciation of the *Sharia* (Islamic Law) a *sine qua non* condition for becoming a French citizen. Thus instead of promoting equality with the French settlers as propounded by Napoleon III, the Senatus-Consulte laws worked against the Algerians: they affected tribal

⁴ Claude-Henri Saint-Simon was an influential economic and social thinker of the French Revolution and post-revolutionary period who took the view that the French Revolution had proceeded at such a hectic pace on the political front that the economy had been left behind. Moreover, Saint-Simon’s vision of the economic future of France was one where investment should be concentrated in manufacturing and industry, and it would follow the example set by England which he considered to be the route to future French prosperity. As a result, he saw the most pressing task of the post-1789 Revolution to be to construct an economic framework that would be capable of sustaining the political one it had already created.

⁵ Cited by Magali Morsy, *North Africa 1800-1900: A Survey from the Nile Valley to the Atlantic* (New York: Longman, 1984), 160.

structure, land tenure, and reinforced the differences in cultural background between the French and the Muslims.⁶ The whole colonial enterprise was however framed in much more grandiose civilisational language.

The platform of the French settlers in the northern part of Africa was indeed based upon the three 'C's,' Commerce, Christianity and the Civilising mission. The idea of raising up others to the French standard and way of life was such an engaging one to the French that this 'mission civilisatrice' soon became the rallying cry for French expansionism right up to decolonisation. Henceforth France attempted to fully subjugate the native populations in French colonies of settlement,⁷ performing a vast *razzia* against the Algerian natives. It was within these colonies that France began to implement her policy of assimilation which aimed at making the citizens of these colonies an integral part of the mother country. To achieve their aims the French like the British introduced drastic measures to modernize Algeria, imposed European-style culture, and eradicated the natives' religious beliefs and customs, which they believed to be barbarous.

The French colonisers' aim was to deprive the Algerian of his cultural heritage in order to produce a man easy to manipulate. But fearing to incite the natives into revolution if they forced them to become French, the idea of assimilation was soon replaced by another more subtle idea, that of association. The latter consisted in infusing French pride and love of the mother country in the Algerians without forcing them to throw away their native ideas and culture. However despite the attempts of assimilation and association, few natives thought of themselves as part of the French empire. Algeria proved not a simple place to be reshaped, but

⁶ For more details, see Mohamed Teguia, *L'Algérie en guerre* (Alger: OPU, 1982), 19-20.

⁷ In his 1858 essay on the importance of the colonies, Napoleon divided the colonies into three groups: the 'Colonies of Settlement' which he described as 'lands, long-lost Canada, where the native races are rapidly diminishing in numbers, leaving their lands for more advanced races.' These colonies were Algeria, Nouvelle Calédonie and Nouveau- Dauphiné. The 'Colonies of Exploitation' were the second type of colonies. These colonies were rich in resources and material usable by modern industry, but as they were peopled by so-called barbaric races, sturdy in temperament, they were unsuited for the presence of the European. These colonies moreover had to be organised in such a way as to provide the most possible benefit to the Metropole, and also to the native. The third type of colonies in Napoleon's categorisation were 'the Colonies of Modernisation' such as Guiana. These lands 'capable of modern civilisation, but required the aid of France to reach their full potential.'

a mature Muslim society. French efforts to transform Algeria were thwarted by strong native resistance.

3.1. Opposition to Occupation

The most successful opposition immediately after the fall of Algiers led by Ahmed Ibn Mohammed, the Bey of Constantine, destroyed the Ottoman administration in his beylik by replacing Turkish officials with local leaders, and starting reforms in finances according to the precepts of Islam. Cheikh Mahieddine, head of a religious group who spent several years in Ottoman jails for opposing the Bey's rule, launched attacks against the French in Oran and his son Abdelkader quickly gained the support of tribes throughout Algeria. The charismatic Emir thus assumed the mantle of leader and undertook to give the Algerians "a sense of nationality, a further step toward national consciousness and national unity"⁸ as the Algerian historian, Mohamed Teguia, has it. He made several proclamations to the Algerians. One of the most famous was the following:

You [Algerians] are now commanded by roumi, (the foreigner)
judged by roumi and administered by roumi [...] He took your
best lands and gave them to his people. He purchased the virtue
of your women [...] Rise all at the sound of my voice! Oh, Muslims!
[...] We will go forth and fertilise the plains of our country with the
blood of the infidel.⁹

The Emir set up a Muslim government which barred European expansion and later created an independent theocratic state unsullied by any contact with European Christianity. By his numerous military successes, the leader of the believers, (Amir-el-Muminin) as he was commonly referred to, forced France to recognise his sovereignty. Although Abdelkader's troops were defeated under General Thomas Bugeaud in 1836, a Peace Treaty was signed in 1837, which salvaged the Emir's prestige. But France transgressed the Treaty by occupying Constantine provoking a new conflict. Bugeaud reinforced his army. His policy was to

⁸ Mohamed Teguia, *L'Algérie en guerre* (Alger : OPU), 16.

⁹ Al- Khabar, March 19, 1846, 3. Trans.mine.

destroy the Emir's bases then starve the population by destroying its means of subsistence, crops and herds. On several occasions, French troops burnt and asphyxiated non-combatants hiding in the caves. Algerian historian, Amar Belkhodja, provides horrifying pictures of those fumigations in his book, *Barbarie coloniale en Afrique* (2002).¹⁰ Despite all his efforts at striking the French down, the Emir's strongholds fell to the French. He had to flee in exile to Morocco. But the Moroccan Sultan was forced to expel him soon after Bugeaud attacked the Moroccan borders in 1844 (the Battle of Wad Isly) to prevent the Emir from getting Morocco's support. This situation seemed almost hopeless to the Emir, but the revolts which started as early as 1843 in the Kabyle region under Bou Baghla, Oran under Darkawa, and Dahra under Bou Maaza, gave the Emir a ray of hope. Taking advantage of the situation, the Emir contacted the leaders and attacked at Sidi Brahimi, capturing a whole French detachment led by Montagnac in September 1845. But the Emir's victory was short-lived as the French succeeded in isolating Bou Baghla, compelled Bou Maaza to surrender and concentrated their efforts to force the Emir to surrender. The latter retreated to Morocco again, but without success. Faced with fire from Morocco, bayonets from France, the Emir surrendered to General de Lamoricière in December 1847 on condition that he and his disciples would choose their place of exile. But France did not keep its promise. Instead of Alexandria or Syria where he had chosen to go, the Emir was imprisoned in the Chateau d'Ambroise in France. In a letter he wrote to Napoleon III, the Emir described his sufferings and reminded him of France's promise. When Napoleon visited the Emir in his prison in 1852 and gave him back his freedom, the Emir pledged not to fight against France again. In 1852, under Napoleon III, Emir Abdelkader received a decoration as *The Grand Cordon of The Legion Honour* in appreciation for saving the lives of many Christians, including the French Consul and staff during a massacre instigated by local Ottoman officials. Additional honours followed from the

¹⁰ Cf. Amar Belkhodja, *Barbarie coloniale en Afrique* (Alger : Editions ANEP, 2002). As Assia Djebar also portrays those exterminations in *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, (Paris: Julliard, 1985) details of those crimes will be given in chapter X to avoid repetition.

part of many European governments. The Emir became the first hero of Algerian Independence.¹¹

However the most alarming native uprising since the time of Emir Abdelkader broke out in 1871 in the Kabyle regions and spread throughout the eastern part of Algeria.¹² The insurrection led by Hadj Mohamed Mokrani¹³ and Aziz ben Cheikh El Haddad was prompted by Adolphe Crémieux's¹⁴ extension of colon authority to formerly self-governing tribal reserves and the abrogation of commitments made by the military government, but it is likely that such rebellion had its basis in more long-standing grievances. In the aftermath of the 1871 upheavals, the French imposed more drastic measures to punish and control the whole Muslim population. They expropriated tribal lands and placed the Kabylie under a coercive regime dubbed 'régime d'exception' (exceptional regime). A special native code, 'code de l'indigénat,' was instituted and the Governor General was given a free hand to jail suspects for up to five years without trial, hence tightening his control of the Muslims. Attempts to implement even the most modest reform were thwarted or put off by the local administration in Algeria, monopolised by the colonists and colon representatives in the National Assembly alike. The representative of the colonists, Auguste Warnier, succeeded during the 1870s and the 1880s in amending or introducing laws which promoted the private transfer of land to settlers and continued the appropriation of land from the local population to the settlers, recalling Cromwell's expropriation of Irish lands. Henceforth, the wealth of Algeria passed into the hands of the colonists.

However France's attempts to control the natives, like Britain's, were more visible in the field of education. The denial of Algerian cultural identity through control of language,

¹¹ Not without cause, his green and white standard was taken up by the Algerian Liberation Movement during the War of Independence and became the national flag of independent Algeria.

¹² Mohamed Teguia relates other similar uprisings that occurred in 1872, in the south of Constantine, Biskra, Touggourt and Ouargla; in 1876 in the Ziban; in 1879 in the Aurès; in 1881 in the southern part of Oran under the leadership of Bouamama; in 1882 in the M'Zab region. Cf. *L'Algérie en guerre* (Alger: OPU, 1982), 18.

¹⁴ Crémieux was a French-Jewish lawyer and statesman, and a staunch defender of the human rights of the Jews of France.

educational programmes and methods of instruction revealed the colonisers' policy in its most destructive aspect. The colonial regime proved extremely pernicious to education for Algerians, who had previously relied on Koranic schools to learn reading and writing. Severe restrictions were placed upon education opportunities for Algerian children. Not only did the state confiscate the *habus* lands, the religious foundations and the main source of income for religious institutions including schools, but the colonial officials also refused to allocate sufficient funds to finance schools and mosques while more than five times as much was spent for the education of Europeans. As a result less than five percent of Algerian children attended any school in 1870. Illiteracy moreover sought to prevent the awakening of a national consciousness among the natives. Attempts at educating a small portion of the Algerian population along with the Europeans truly started in the 1890s in the French school system as part of France's so-called civilising mission in Algeria. This French acculturation seriously backfired. Within a generation or so a new class of well-educated Algerians emerged, the *évolués*. It was in this privileged group of Algerians deeply impregnated by French culture that a new Algerian self-consciousness evolved.

The first organisation to call for independence was the North African Star, (*Etoile Nord Africaine*) a group formed in Paris in 1926. Its role was to coordinate political activity among North African workers in France and defend the interests of North African Muslims. The leaders included members of the French Communist Party and its labour confederation. Ahmed Messali Hadj, the North African Star's General Secretary, promulgated the group's demands in 1927. In addition to independence from France, the North African Star called for the freedom of press and association, a parliament chosen through universal suffrage as well as the institution of Arabic schools. However, these demands could not be met as the African Star was banned in 1929, but it continued to operate secretly until 1934. Messali Hadj turned to a more nationalist standpoint for which the French Communist Party attacked the North

African Star. He returned home and founded the Party of the Algerian People (PPA) to rally the Algerian working class in Algeria and in France through political action.

As the Islamic reformers were becoming more influential, the colonial authorities took swift action and prohibited preaching in official mosques in 1933. Resentment of this decision was felt by native people. The French government responded with more restrictive laws. Meanwhile the outlawed PPA created secret organisations throughout the country. Membership to PPA increased and its supporters joined 'Les Amis du Manifeste et de la Liberté' (AML)¹⁵ in great numbers and attempted to espouse Messali Hadj's independence concept. As a result, violence erupted in 1944-1945 in many regions, including Algiers and Oran mainly fuelled by the existing tensions between Muslim and colonial communities and the social unrest caused by a poor wheat harvest. Shortage of goods and soaring unemployment added to the misery of the Algerian population. The conflict reached its apex when nationalist leaders determined to mark the advent of the liberation of Europe, the end of World War II, with a demonstration calling for their own liberation. The latter was organised by the AML and was authorized by the French authorities. But the French Police warned the AML marchers not to exhibit the national flag or any placards. The Algerian nationalists ignored their admonition. On May, 8, 1945 occurred one of the greatest catastrophes in one of the eastern regions of Algeria, Sétif.

The Sétif Massacres

Trouble started when police tried to stop a procession of Algerian demonstrators carrying their national flag, and confiscate it together with banners calling for Algerian independence and for the release of Messali Hadj, the leader of the PPA. As it happened, 8 May was market day in Sétif, so the tribesmen swelled the floats of the demonstrators, brooding over the

¹⁵ The Friends of the Manifesto and Liberty (AML) was a militant anti-French party created in 1944 by Ferhat Abbas, a member of the Algerian Muslim Students Association along with Messali Hadj, a more radical Islamic leader. It united Islamic and Communist factions.

confiscation of their lands in 1853. In their reaction to the Algerian's aspiration to freedom and equality, the French colonisers rejected the very essence of humanism. Their reprisals were dreadful. In the middle of the town, a French policeman drew a revolver and shot dead a young man carrying the Algerian flag. The French troops then launched a terrestrial offensive against several eastern cities. Thousands of Muslims were shot on sight, villages were bombarded during the nationalist demonstration. A 'comb out' of the area was ordered. The European civilians and the police responded with mass executions and reprisals against whole communities, and to erase any trace of their crimes and prevent investigations, they opened mass graves and burnt the bodies. Repression lasted for several days. European historians reported between fifteen and twenty thousand dead people whereas Algerian historians recorded about forty-five thousand deaths.¹⁶ This cruel episode however went largely unreported in France. The French Communist Party's newspaper, l' *Humanité*, cloaked the event, laying the blame on fascist *provocateurs* who supposedly opened fire on Muslims, then retaliated, leaving one hundred dead. To cap it all, the French government closed the commission of inquiry directed by General Tubert, and the murderers were never tried. That episode remains one of the darkest chapters in the history of Franco-Algerian relations, and still lives in the minds of many Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) leaders. To this day relations between Algeria and France are strained over the Sétif massacres.¹⁷ France's role in Algeria's genocide stands as the Fifth Republic's bloodiest foreign campaign.

“La chasse à l'Arabe”¹⁸

If this episode in the Algerian tragedy is one of the greatest turning points in colonial history, historian and former Algerian journalist, Amar Belkhodja, in his *Barbarie coloniale*

¹⁶ Cf. Boucif Mekhaled, *Chronique d'un massacre Sétif-Kherrata-Guelma : Le 8 mai 1945* (Paris : Syros, 1995), 106.

¹⁷ After Sétif, worse was to follow in Madagascar in 1947. When Madagascans demanded greater independence, the assertion of their rights to freedom was fiercely repressed. French-led Senegalese troops were sent in to crush the uprising. This resulted in a massacre similar to that of Sétif. Thousands of people perished.

¹⁸ « Hunting the Arab. » Trans. mine. Cf. Amar Belkhodja, *Barbarie coloniale en Afrique* (Alger : Editions ANEP, 2002), 102.

en Afrique (2002) reveals some other scenes of horror lived by Algerian people such as the mutiny in the douar of Deschmya, not far from Sour-El- Ghozlane in April 1948. He also recounts the night of terror lived by the Muslim population on April, 30, 1949, in Baba Ali, an Arab district in Mascara, as well as the tragedy that occurred in Sid Ali Bounab douar in October 1949 and the butcheries that occurred in El-Asnam on May, 14, 1952. Those bloody events hardened the resolve of the nationalists who became even more radical. The nationalist movement therefore gained momentum.

The battle lines were drawn. Ferhat Abbas and Messali Hadj reconstituted their respective political organisations, the *Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien* (UDMA) and the *Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques* (MTLD). Some of the more radical members of Messali's group continued to operate clandestinely, always striving for an independent, Arab and Islamic Algeria. A secret organisation called 'l'organisation spéciale' (OS) was created by Mohamed Belouizdad within the MTLD in 1947, to lead the operations after legal channels had been suppressed by the colonial authorities, but it was short-lived. The OS was dismantled in 1950, providing some sort of relief to the French who feared another uprising. However the Algerians were perseverant. The OS was soon replaced by a new underground action committee. The Revolutionary Committee of Unity and Action (Comité Revolutionnaire d'Unité et d' Action) had its headquarters in Cairo where Ahmed Ben Bella, its founder, fled in 1952. The group had nine historic Chiefs (*Chefs historiques*) : Ait Ahmed, Rabah Bitat, Ahmed Benbella, Krim Belkacem, Larbi Ben M'hidi, Mohamed Boudiaf, Didouche Mourad, Mustapha Ben Boulaid and Mohamed Khider.

In the aftermath of the Setif repression guerrilla groups were formed in the mountains but it was in 1954 that full-scale conflict erupted. A group of one hundred fifty men met in Batna, an eastern region in Algeria. They assaulted a French garrison. Paris spurned the rebellion as

an act of bandits. And it was not until farmhouses of European settlers were set on fire that the French realised that the Algerian War for Independence had truly started.

The Algerian War of Independence

For the first time since Daia – the Prophetess that rallied the Berbers of Algeria against an Arab invasion and gathered the tribes into a nation more than one thousand years ago – Algeria stood on the brink of nationhood and once again blood flowed. The Algerian victims of France's violence turned this very same violence against the French to free the nation. Ahmed Ben Bella, one of the exiled insurgents, formed a committee in March 1954, which was to become the pivot of the Front National de Libération (FLN). The struggle started by the FLN on November, 1, 1954 only two years before France gave up its control over Tunisia and Morocco. It was the first dauntless armed combat against European hegemony in Africa, and it was to become a legendary milestone in the history of the decolonisation of Third World countries.

The revolution spread throughout the nation. The Algerians set up civil government, judiciary and social systems of their own. The whole country was paralysed. Government and police headquarters were assaulted, military installations and communication amenities were destroyed. The French attempted to crush the uprising but it was to no avail. The French then killed civilians who refused to support them, but the Algerians did not feel dejected. The fighters were determined not to give up. In order to draw public attention (international and domestic French) to their struggle, the FLN decided to bring the conflict to the cities and called a nationwide general strike. The most conspicuous instance of that new urban campaign was the Battle of Algiers,¹⁹ which started on September 30, 1956. Three women carried bombs under their veils and placed them at three strategic places, including Air

¹⁹ The Battle of Algiers has been screened by Gillo Pontecorvo from a script by himself and Franco Solinas. The award-winning black and white film is a seminal work and a powerful film about French occupation of Algeria and native resistance to colonial rule. It reveals the *modus operandi* of contemporary colonial oppression as well as what gives rise and fuels a national insurrectionary movement. The context along with groundbreaking cinematic techniques gives the film an extraordinary authenticity and dramatic intensity.

France. Their courage, their ruthlessness dragged the French into bloody reprisals against the population. The French commanders, Generals Jacques Massu and Raoul Salan, were then given a free hand to crush the rebellion, using whatever methods to restore order in the city. General Salan, who came to Algeria in 1957, built a heavily patrolled system of barriers. The best known was the Morice Line named for the French Defence Minister, André Morice. It consisted of an electrified fence, barbed wire and mines over three hundred kilometres of the Tunisian-Algerian frontier zone. France thus turned Algeria into a huge concentration camp with miles of barbed wire cutting the borders Algeria had with Morocco and Tunisia to limit infiltration from these countries. General Massu's troops razed entire villages in retaliation for the death of one soldier and castigated those remaining inhabitants suspected of harbouring insurgents, supplying or co-operating with the guerrillas, using tactics similar to those used by the Nazis against French Resistance during the Second World War.

The majority of Algerians were indeed subjected to inhuman treatment. The 'enemy,' the Algerian, being characterized as 'barbarous' and 'savage,' so the use of various means of violence was crucial in establishing differences between the coloniser and the colonised. The French kidnapped and abused women, executed civilians suspected of abetting the FLN and practised mass torture on innocent men, women and children. The most common acts of torture used on the natives were hanging by the feet or hands, water torture, sexual abuse but electric shock was the most prevalent form of torture. Suspects were given electric shocks in the most sensitive parts of their bodies and were often beaten to death. The quest for information was the ostensible target for torturing people, but the willingness to exert power was the main goal for such acts of violence, which were almost always carried out under the supervision of a commander.

Despite certain publications on the topic of torture, especially Henry Alleg's book, *La Question*, (1958) which related his own torture at the hands of the French, and Pierre Vidal

Naquet's book, *Torture dans la République*, (1983) which condemned this practice as a breach of France's liberal traditions, the topic of torture remained a social taboo after the 1962 amnesty.²⁰ Despite many assassinations and such draconian repression, Algeria however could withstand the onslaught. France found itself torn between carrying on its colonial project based on exploitation and dehumanisation and preserving its prestige in the world community as a bearer of democracy. This dilemma proved difficult to solve as the French colonials were intransigent. The failure to find a panacea to the Algerian crisis, the French government still refusing to admit the state of war, put an end to the unstable French Fourth Republic. A coup d'état was staged in 1958 under the leadership of Jacques Soustelle, a fervent Gaullist.

It was at this juncture that French colonials and army officers called back General De Gaulle as a leader and hoped to preserve French Algeria, and re-establish France's great power status. De Gaulle's return to power was also viewed as the breakthrough needed to end the hostilities. The General offered some economic, social and political reforms to improve the lot of the Muslims. However, within a couple of years he realised the futility of his task. He became very pessimistic about the outcome of the Algerian situation. He therefore sought to find a solution among the population of Algeria unstained by the FLN. His new strategy was that in order to reach a propitious post-colonial settlement which would allow France a continued influence in the area, the latter had to withdraw from the colony. This negotiated political settlement would preserve France's military honour. A new constitution for France's Fifth Republic was thus drafted under which Algeria would be associated without forming an integral part of the mother country. De Gaulle announced a referendum allowing Algerians to choose between being independent or remaining attached to France. Men and women alike

²⁰ Unlike the United States who went through its Vietnam catharsis with a number of books, anti-war songs and such movies as 'Apocalypse Now,' silence surrounded the issue of torture at that time. This was a paradoxical situation as the atrocities of World War II were still on everybody's mind. When the FLN brought the case into United Nations' debates, the French attempted to present the issue as an internal affair and kept it out of international discourse.

were allowed to register on electoral rolls to take part in the referendum. De Gaulle thus laid down the first steps for Algerian self-determination.

The General's initiative however aroused much anger and was viewed as a betrayal by the colonials. The extreme right wing, which supported him to get to power, accused him of selling out France to agitators with whom he vowed not to negotiate while the leftists held him responsible for much of the violence of the 'Organisation Armée Secrète'(OAS) both in France and in Algeria. This militant terrorist organisation was formed with the aim of overthrowing the General. It sought to increase French supremacy in Algeria through terrorist activities including the elimination of Charles De Gaulle. However the President survived many assassination attempts. His personal prestige and the strong position accorded to him by the new constitution permitted him to weather the storm. The OAS then launched a merciless campaign against the FLN, but it was also doomed to failure. The tide for independence could not be halted. But in the story of the Algerian War of Independence one massacre hid another.

The Massacres of October 1961

In the summer of 1961 when the negotiations between the French government and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Algeria (GPRA) over the independence of Algeria hit a roadblock, the situation for the Algerians in France changed as well. Between August and October 1961, the police waged a campaign against the Algerian community, which resulted in untold numbers of Algerians killed, reported missing, or found floating in the Seine. The FLN riposted but police organisations then called for drastic measures from the government, and the Police Prefect, Maurice Papon, declared openly in a speech given at a policeman's funeral that they would retaliate. For each blow received, they would respond with ten, he said. On October 5th 1961, Papon put in place a curfew covering all French Muslims from Algeria. But the FLN took swift action. On October 10, instructions for a boycott of the curfew, a general strike as well as for demonstrations were given. The peaceful

nature of the demonstrations was stressed as was caution in face of the forces of repression. The Algerian community in France was then well prepared. But when demonstrations occurred in various areas in Paris, the infuriated police went after the Algerians with a vengeance. It began firing on the unarmed and peaceful demonstrators. On that date, somewhere between four hundred and forty Algerian demonstrators were killed, others tossed into the Seine, some of whose bodies were later fished out of the Seine, and more than ten thousand Algerians were arrested and imprisoned in several locations in Paris and its outskirts, where the massacres continued. In order to justify the mutiny, Maurice Papon asserted that it was the Algerians who fired on the police.²¹

Meanwhile, amidst the massacres the negotiations with the FLN kept going until a ceasefire was agreed on, on March, 19, 1962. The Algerians unanimously voted for their liberation from French yoke. After the referendum the French left Algeria en masse. And by the terms of the Evian Agreements France agreed to recognize the FLN as the absolute power in Algeria. In return the latter accepted to lease special bases to France such as the naval port of Mers-El-Kebir, in the west of Algeria, the Reggan nuclear test site in the Sahara, and accept as Algerian citizens those Europeans who wished it. And so Algeria gained her independence on July, 5th, 1962 after about eight years of hard struggle against French colonial rule, at the cost of nearly one million and a half lives. But the barbarity and savagery of colonialism found its peak of expression in the Congo under Belgian rule.

²¹ Maurice Papon was eventually sentenced for his crimes, not against the Algerians, but for his role in the deportation and death of more than a thousand Jews from the Bordeaux region during World War II.

Chapter IV

Leopold II's Congo: A Negation of Humanity

In this chapter we do not propose to narrate the European history of the Congo Free State. There are plenty of historical documents on that subject, but rather endeavour to describe the nature and changing form of the burden inflicted by the white men upon the blacks to explain the differing causes and motives which inspired white activities in the Congo and illustrate with specific and notable examples their resultant effects upon the Congolese people.

Until mid-nineteenth century the Europeans seldom ventured into the interior of the Congo because the rainforest, swamps, and tropical diseases made it a difficult environment for exploration and exploitation. However in 1876, the Belgian King, Leopold II, organised a meeting in Brussels to discuss a scheme of “open[ing] to civilisation the only part of [the] globe where Christianity [had] not yet penetrated and to pierce the darkness which envelop[ed] the entire population.”¹ The King thus set up a private holding company dubbed the International African Association, a so-called scientific and philanthropic association. Soon after Christian missionaries, mostly Roman Catholics, began to flow into the Congo and became chief agents for raising the educational level of the Africans and for improving medical services. But Leopold’s civilising scheme was only a cloak.

The King, a man of greed who believed that overseas colonies were the key to a country’s greatness, resolved to acquire colonial territory for Belgium. So when he read Henry Morton Stanley, the famous explorer’s African adventures, and his accounts of the region’s potential wealth, the Belgian King saw Central Africa as an area for colonial expansion, and an opportunity to make his dreams come true. Much of the interest in that country was inspired

¹ Ross C. Murfin, ed., *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness* (Boston & New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 5.

by the immensity of the territory,² its considerable wealth but also by its strategic geographical position at the heart of Africa. In 1878, the King hired Stanley and endowed him with a great mission: to negotiate with native chieftains to give Belgium and himself power over their regions. Through dubious treaties with native chiefs, Stanley managed to acquire rights to a great area along the Congo. Military posts were then established. The promises of so-called benefits to the Congo made by the explorer were so enticing that in some cases the chiefs were not only willing to hand over their lands, but also promised to help provide workers for forced labour. But all the treaties were in favour of Leopold and the other European powers were not ready to stand idle and see lands snapped up by their rivals. That situation soon became a serious matter for European powers in the event of disputes over the territories.

Therefore in 1879, the International Association of the Congo, an extension of the former Comité d'Etudes du Haut Congo, sought to merge the numerous small territories acquired into one sovereign state and asked for recognition from European Powers. On April 22, 1884, the United States government, having decided that the land grantings by the native chiefs were rightful, acknowledged the International Association of the Congo as a sovereign independent state under the name of the Congo Free State, and the US example was soon followed by other European countries.³ At the Great West African Conference held in Berlin in 1884, Leopold's Association was recognised as a friendly Government by the European Powers. After so many unsuccessful efforts in the most diverse and remote parts of the world, in East and South Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East and many parts of North and Black Africa, as well as skillful machinations at the Berlin Conference, the King finally succeeded in realising one of his overambitious projects. When Africa was partitioned in 1885, the Congress of Berlin gave Leopold II administrative powers over the Congo. The International African

² It is ten times that of Great Britain, five times that of France, three times that of Nigeria and eight times that of Belgium.

³ These were Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, and Sweden.

Association blossomed out into the Congo Free State. The term 'free' signified the free trade that the Berlin Act compelled Leopold to establish for the benefit of all nations who wished to trade there, however the King managed to flout that condition by awarding territorial concessions for rubber extraction to a number of private companies, some of which were mere disguise for Leopold's own aggrandisement. The International Association's lasting service was in reality to provide a humanitarian cover for naked plunder.

4.1. The Humanitarian Disaster

Soon after he acquired his much coveted colony, the King administered the country as a private undertaking and acted as a constitutional monarch and absolute ruler from early 1885 until its annexation by Belgium in 1908. One of the first changes the King introduced in that vast realm was the concept of *vacant* land (*terre vacante*). He declared that any land considered vacant land belonged to the State and servants of the state ie. to the white men in his service. Henceforth large parts of the Congolese territory remained directly or indirectly under the control of the King as crown-lands.

The King's next step was to set up state-owned schools called *colonies scolaires* (Ecoles Officielles congregationnistes) managed by Catholic missionaries; schools owned by commercial companies; secular vocational schools also staffed by government; independent and non-independent schools. Unlike the former, the latter were not covered by legislation. French was a required subject in the government colonies scolaires and vocational schools. However unlike Algeria where the French language was spread throughout the country, Leopold's language policy in the Congo was doomed to failure. Although government precluded the teaching of any other language in the CFS, French could not be propagated because the Belgian Catholic missionaries staunchly opposed the use of French or any other European language by Africans. They believed that instruction had to be carried out in Kikongo or Latin. The latter could serve as a religious link as it did in medieval Europe.

The King's final step was to divide up the Free State into two economic areas: the Free Trade Zone open to entrepreneurs of any European nation who were allowed to buy ten to fifteen-year monopoly leases on anything of value: ivory from a particular district, or the rubber concession, for example. The other zone, almost two-thirds of the Congo, became the personal fiefdom of the King on May 29, 1885. Thereafter the Belgian King set in motion a brutal colonial regime to maximise profitability, and kept the people of the Congo basin in a condition of virtual slavery. He began to drain the country of any resource of value, completely disregarding the Congolese lives. The brutality of Leopold's regime saw no bounds as it included forceful conscription of men, women and children into the ivory and rubber tapping businesses.

Rubber Boom, Congo Doom

In the early 1890s a larger source of wealth suddenly loomed. The invention of the inflatable bicycle tyre soon followed by that of the automobile tyre, triggered an enormous boom in rubber. The discovery of 'the wood that weeps,' as the rubber tree was euphemistically called, intensified human suffering in the Congo. The natives were required to provide State officials with rubber (and ivory), food to the local post, and worked as full-time forced labourers no less than slaves. To harvest enough rubber, the Congolese were given quotas to fulfil and to enforce the rubber quotas, the *Force Publique*, (FP) was called in.

The FP's officer corps consisted of white Belgian soldiers as well as mercenaries from other countries drawn by the prospect of wealth. The role of the Force Publique was to defend Free State territory and fight Arab slavers, but most importantly to enforce rubber quotas, and other forms of forced labour. Serving under these European officers were an ethnically-mixed African soldiery, many of whom kidnapped during raids on villages in their childhood, were brought to Catholic missions where they received a military training in conditions close to slavery. Army officers and colonial officials earned bonuses based on the amount of rubber

collected in areas under their control. These were an incentive for ruthless, devastating plunder. The *Force Publique* thus became the token of brutality *par excellence*. The Congolese natives were subjected to a terror regime. Atrocities such as mass killings and mutilations were used to subordinate the indigenous tribes of the Congo region and provide slave labour. Failure to meet the quota meant the *chicotte*, a whip made of sun-dried hippopotamus hide with razor-sharp edges, was applied. But limb amputation was the best source of joy for the Belgian soldiers. It became the symbol of the civilising mission in the Congo. Many Congolese had their arms, noses, ears and/or legs lopped off. The Force Publique soldiers brought the baskets of severed hands to the stations in place of rubber. It also burnt insubordinate villages, and above all, took human hands as trophies on the orders of white officers to show that bullets had effectively been used. To punish a rebellious village, the native males were beheaded, their heads and sexual members were hanged on the village palisades. Women and children were also hung on the fences in the form of a cross. Some Belgian officers' homes were even lined with the skulls of the Congolese people for decoration.

The genocide which took place in the Belgian Congo, which became a *cause célèbre* in turn of nineteenth- century Europe, reached its peak when thousands of women were brought into forced labour, or 'Corvée' leading to "a death toll of Holocaust dimensions,"⁴ as Adam Hochschild put it. And the colonial officials' most effective system for harvesting wild rubber was to keep women as hostages. Leopold's agents used brutal force to get men into the forests to gather rubber. When these men fled into the jungle, women were held hostage until the men returned to face conscription and probable death. Hochschild describes the horrifying treatment of Congolese women as follows:

⁴ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost : A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 4.

The rubber having been brought, the women were sold back to their owners for a couple of goats a piece, and so he continued from village to village until the requisite amount of rubber had been collected [...] If you were a male villager, resisting the order to gather rubber could mean death for your wife. She might die anyway, for in the stockades food was scarce and conditions were harsh.⁵

Thus to secure their wives' release, the men had to disperse into the rain forest to collect the sap of wild rubber vines. As the vines near a village were often drained dry, the men sometimes had to walk for many days to find areas where they could gather their quota of rubber. Many died from exhaustion and starvation resulting from the inhumane working and living conditions present in the Congo. So for a twenty-year period Leopold II acted with impunity, causing the murder of about ten million people, the abuse of women and children, and their hunting like animals.

King Leopold's rule over the Congo met fierce resistance both from the natives and from within his own circumscribed army. In the far south for instance, a chief named Mulume Niama led warriors of the Sanga people in a rebellion during which one of the King's officials died. The State retaliated by imprisoning them in large caves. When troops finally entered the caves three months later, they found about two hundred corpses. Another chief near the great Congo river rapids called Nzansu also led rebels who killed a hated colonial officer and pillaged State posts. Nzansu's men continued their fight for more five years but they were defeated.

Within the King's army, the soldiers sometimes found a common cause with the rebel groups they were supposed to pursue. The largest mutiny involved three thousand troops and an equal number of auxiliaries and porters, and continued for three years. The Congo Free State issued several orders to stop the abuses in the Congo, but this was just a strategy to disguise the King's woeful actions. The world was not entirely aware of what was going on in the Congo because Leopold and his officials took great care to erase incriminating evidence

⁵ Ibid.,161-2.

from historical records. He even ordered a statewide burying of historical records because he believed that people should “have no right to know what [he] did there,” (Hochschild 294) but the truth inevitably leaked out.

4. 2. The Outcry

Leopold’s terror gave rise to vigorous protests in Britain, America and Continental Europe, particularly between the years 1900-1908. George Washington Williams, a journalist and historian, was the first outspoken critic of Leopold’s regime, and the first to attempt to bring attention to the Congo carnage in the 1890s, but little credence was given to his accusations because he was Afro-American. Change came only when several hundreds of Protestant missionaries, whom the King allowed into the Congo to secure diplomatic favour, outraged at the brutal forced labour system, described the atrocities occurring in the Congo in articles in church magazines and in speeches throughout the United States and Europe. Other reports on the unspeakable exploitation and ill-treatment of the native population led to an international protest movement in the early 1900s calling attention to human rights abuses and genocide.

The scenario of colonial savagery in the Congo precipitated bitter criticism against Leopold, mainly by the British⁶ who campaigned vigorously against the so-called civilisation in the Congo. It was H.R. Fox Bourne, the Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, who marshalled the evidence of missionaries to prove the ill-treatment of the indigenous people. In Fox’s view, the Congo State transgressed the Berlin Act of 1885 especially as regards free trade and the welfare of the native Congolese. The British Foreign Office took then a decisive stand against the Congo State. Following the House of Commons debate in May 1903, the Foreign Office delegated a British consul, an Irishman named Roger Casement, later famous as an Irish patriot. The latter took the assignment seriously. He

⁶ While those so-called opponents were denouncing Leopold’s barbarity, they were committing much the same atrocities against Africans elsewhere on the continent. Britain in particular came in for no international criticism for its killings of Aborigines in Australia, Irish and Nigerian peoples. And of course, in neither Europe nor the United States was there major protest against the decimation of the American Indians.

traveled to the interior of the 'Dark Continent' to carry his crusade against the abuses of colonialism in the Congo, and gather authentic material about the alleged maladministration. Casement's disclosures⁷ were a terrible indictment, a scathing denunciation of the Congo horrors. Copies of his report were dispatched by the British government to the Belgian government as well as to the signatories to the Berlin Act in 1885. But Casement's report aroused much discontent in the House of Commons and led to elaborate discussions of the Foreign Office officials who weighed the pros and cons of its publication. Finally it was decided that both the names of the tyrants and victims should be removed to avoid acts of vengeance. This increased Casement's bitterness against the Foreign Office. Constantine Phipps, the British Minister in Brussels took an entirely different view from Casement. He refuted his accusations of Belgians' acts of cruelty vis à vis the indigenous people. He rather sympathised with the Belgians and admired their efforts at civilising Tropical Africa. But sworn eyewitness testimony from missionaries⁸ and photographs of men, women and children with their hands lopped off for not collecting enough rubber or for some other arbitrary reason added to the veracity of reports of atrocities in the Congo. They represented irrefutable evidence of misrule there and served to arouse international indignation and increase support for the Congo Reform Association's cause, an organisation founded in Britain jointly by Roger Casement and Edmund Dene Morel in 1904 to further aid the Congolese people by

⁷ This is Casement's letter: "I found that fully half the population now consisted of refugees [...] when asked why they had fled their district,[they replied] that they had endured such ill-treatment at the hands of the government soldiers in their own district, that life had become intolerable; that nothing had remained for them at home but to be killed for failure to bring in a certain amount of rubber or to die from starvation or exposure in their attempts to satisfy the demands made upon them [...] I subsequently found other members of the tribe who confirmed the truth of the statements made to me [...] During the course of these operations there had been much loss of life, accompanied, I fear, by a somewhat general mutilation of the dead, as proof that the soldiers had done their duty [...]Two cases of mutilation came to my actual notice while I was in the lake district. One, a young man, both of whose hands had been beaten off with the butt ends of rifles against a tree; the other a young lad of 11 or 12 years of age, whose right hand was cut off at the wrist [...] Of six natives (one a girl, three little boys, one youth, and one old woman) who had been mutilated in this way during the rubber regime, all except one were dead at the date of my visit. Cf. *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1904, LXII, Cd. [1933]

⁸ E. V. Sjöblom of Sweden was one of the first and most outspoken missionaries in the Congo. Alice Harris, a British Baptist, took photographs of the atrocities she witnessed. William Morrison, a white man, and William Sheppard, the first black missionary in the Congo, were Presbyterians from Virginia whose acts of witness so infuriated Congo colonial authorities that they put the men on trial for libel.

drawing attention to their predicament.⁹ The association gained strong support from leading political and cultural figures in many countries.

Scores of prominent writers of the time took part in an international condemnation of Leopold II's abuses in the Congo. Deeply shocked by what he came across in Casement's report, the English writer, Arthur Conan Doyle, could not contain his indignation and wrote *The Crime of the Congo*,¹⁰ a book he completed in only eight days. Horrifying images of mutilated people and descriptions of atrocities committed in the Congo at that time are well illustrated in Conan Doyle's book. The barbarism of Leopold's regime also prompted Mark Twain to become a staunch opponent of Belgian rule. His 1905 political satire, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, is a harsh denunciation of Leopold's actions and calls attention to great wrongs. Twain used the criminal monarch himself to reveal the organised system of plunder and outrage which he had been perpetrating in the Congo.

Casement's report thus produced much consternation and alarmed the Congo State authorities who took swift action to restore order. The King felt so disquieted that he sent Sir Alfred Jones, the Consul of the Congo State in Liverpool and Director of the *Compagnie Maritime du Congo*, to warn the British to put an end to their attacks or else he would have to hand over the matter to Germany. The Belgian government admitted that individual abuses were taking place in the Congo, but refuted the accusations broadcast by the Press and claimed that Leopold II or the Congo authorities neither ordered the severing of hands, affirming that this practice existed in local customs, nor dictated the extermination of the Congolese population needed for the cultivation of rubber. To salvage his reputation, Leopold himself decided in 1904, after many comments about his regime in the British Press, to set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the atrocities detailed in Casement's report. The

⁹ Casement traveled throughout Britain speaking to large audiences and was adept at recruiting bishops, well-known writers, and other luminaries to join him on the lecture platform. More than one thousand mass meetings to protest slave labour in the Congo were held, mostly in Britain and the United States but also in Europe and as far away as Australia and New Zealand.

¹⁰ Arthur C. Doyle, *The Crime of the Congo* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1909).

commissioners, a Belgian, an Italian and a Swiss magistrate, were too horrified by what they found out to lie to Leopold. Following the commission's report,¹¹ some reforms had been ordered by the Commission of Inquiry, but it was too late. The scandal of the hacked off hands stained Leopold's reputation and shook the colonial edifice to its very foundations. Leopold's image as a philanthropist, a humanitarian crusader thus proved to be the greatest disaster of the period. International pressure finally forced the Belgian Parliament to wrest control of the colony from Leopold's hands in 1908. But the King's manoeuvres did not stop there. When he was forced to capitulate and pass on his private African preserve to the Belgian State, he demanded in exchange a government loan of one hundred and fifty million Francs.

4. 3. Post-Leopoldian Era

The Belgian authorities tried to eradicate the worst Leopoldian abuses, but forced labour continued till the very last years of colonial rule. In 1955, when demands for independence started to mount throughout Africa, Antoine van Bilsen, a Belgian Professor, published a thirty-year-plan for granting the Congo increased self-government. The plan was accepted enthusiastically by most Belgians, who assumed that Belgian rule in the Congo would continue for a longer period, but the course of events proved contrary to their expectations.

The Congolese nationalists, notably Joseph Kasavubu, the leader of the Abako party based among the Kongo people, and Patrice Lumumba, who led the leftist *Mouvement National Congolais*, became increasingly influential. They were greatly impressed by the visit in late 1958 of French President Charles de Gaulle to the Middle Congo, where he offered the opportunity to vote in a referendum for continued association with France or self-rule as he did in Algeria. De Gaulle's visit awakened Congolese consciousness. In January 1959, there were serious nationalist riots in Kinshasa, and thereafter the Belgians steadily lost control of

¹¹ It was published in the *Bulletin Officiel de l'EIC*, n° 9-10, Sept.-Oct. 1905.

the situation in the Congo. At a roundtable conference held in Brussels from January through February 1960, which included Congolese nationalists as well, the United Nations granted independence to the Congo because of pressure from the worldwide anti-colonial movement that touched Africa in the 1950s. On June 30, 1960, the Congo was granted independence, but the emergence of an independent Congo marked the beginning of a new era of colonialism by Western powers.

In the aftermath of Leopold, though power was in the hands of the Belgian parliament, the trading corporations and companies of Belgium and other European countries were given more control and influence over the Congolese economy. Independence did not constitute a hinderance to the European corporations which decided to continue the occupation and economic exploitation of the land. The argument that the European self-proclaimed superiority over those who are darker provided the impetus for their continued actions in the Congo. They regarded the Congolese as inferior people lacking civilisation, thus believed that the occupation was justified. The Belgians' superiority complex was further strengthened because they believed that they possessed personal ownership of the land in the Congo. Thus immediately after the proclamation of the Congo's independence, Belgium sent troops to the country in order to protect Katanga, the Congolese province that possessed a wealth of resources and was the primary export site for these corporations.¹² This military presence remained in the Congo for years allowing these corporate bodies to continue their production in the province and enrich themselves at the expense of the natives.

These are the tales of horror and tragedy in the Congo, starting with King Leopold's promises to build schools, homes, and liberate the Congolese people from Arab slave traders,

¹² The United Mines of Upper Katanga, (UMHK) founded shortly after Leopold's reign ended, alone controlled about seventy percent of the economy for the next fifty years. It controlled the exploitation of cobalt, copper, tin uranium and zinc in mines which were among the richest in the world. During that time period, the Congo was one the world's largest copper-producing countries and the "cobalt extraction in Katanga represented seventy five percent of the entire world production" (Hochschild, 31).

but under his rule very little was done to improve the citizens' well-being. Instead a regime was instituted that operated solely through force of might. The King reduced the natives' lives to a dull routine of endless toil for incomprehensible ends, dislocated social ties, disrupted social institutions, and crushed mental development.

But repression, murder, forced labour, racism and exploitation were also characteristic of the British and French colonial enterprises as demonstrated throughout this first part of the thesis. Colonialism in Ireland, Nigeria, Algeria and the Congo entailed exploitation on a great scale and a drastic cultural change. The British, Belgian and French extensions of control over these territories involved Christianisation and Civilisation, but the real motive was capitalistic greed for cheap raw materials, cheap labour, advantageous markets, good investments, and national prestige. The legacy of colonialism is evident not only in the ongoing structures of political authority, but also in the cultural fabric of Irish and African societies. The culture of modern Ireland, and the African countries studied above continue to be profoundly influenced by the colonial legacy. Years of colonial misrule have made of Ireland and Nigeria the most deeply divided nations in the world. Much of the subsequent history of the divided countries revolves around attempts to unite North and South, resistance to that union, religious intolerance, and an enduring hostility towards Britain. The memory of empire in those who had been oppressed in Algeria and the Congo is also nothing but that of a grim tragedy.

If the definition of the Self needs the confrontation with the Other to mark its own borders, it is undoubtedly [colonialism] as the most intensive conflict between cultures, which effects the strongest motivation for the shaping of the cultural self-image.

Gabriela Hima, 'War as conflict and Contact,' in *Postcolonialism and Fiction in English*, ed., Anu shukla (Sarup & Sons: New Delhi, 2004), 120.

The relationship between the English and the Irish or Nigerians, the Belgians and the Congolese, the French and the Algerians had long been one of domination accompanied by degrading representations of these people as barbarians and degenerate races as pointed out earlier. In this second part of the thesis, we will therefore first examine a set of phenomena that have become inscribed in the cultures of the colonised with a view to identifying alternative cultural origins and dispositions recovered in the postcolonial era. Ireland, Nigeria, The Congo and Algeria and their peoples will provide a backdrop against which the nature and impact of colonialism on the colonised will be explored.

Postcolonialism as essentially a critique of colonialism is characterised by a process of disengagement from the colonial epoch and has taken many forms. This part also identifies history as a major site for identity formation in the postcolonial world. It will attempt to set the stage for postcolonial theorising in the light of alternative representations of 'whiteness,' issues of gender, race and language within the discourse of equality. Postcolonial theories will provide the background context for this exploration. In the light of these theories, we will then analyse some classic instances of colonial representations of Europe's Others in literature namely Yeats's (selected) poems, Jame Joyce's *Dubliners*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. These works are important in the study of the psychological and sociological effects of imperialism/colonialism. They not only exemplify, but also provide a justification for our approach to postcoloniality. They are counter-discourses about the Self and about cultural identity and the Other.

Chapter V

‘Barbaric’ Others: Why are They not so Blest?

O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other, in kindness, not that you may despise each other [...]

The Koran, Surat Al-Hujurat, 49:13.

When you examine at close quarters the colonial situation, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species.

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40.

The above verse highlights the point that in Islam, (and all other religions) there is no place for intolerance, prejudice, or discrimination based upon colour, race, nationality or any other consideration, and quite paradoxically implicit in Frantz Fanon’s words is the question of racism, a particularly thorny issue today. Racism has played havoc with societies for generations and accounts for the animosity and tension inherent in the political situation of today’s world. If there is a common origin to humanity, as preached by all religions, how can we explain the fact that society remains divided into ‘human beings’ and ‘native inferiors’, or ‘savages’?

In this chapter, we shall use colonialism as a leitmotif throughout our discussion of racism to try and find out an explanation for the negative attitudes and beliefs which characterized the thinking of the English, Belgian and French men respectively towards the native Irish, Nigerians, Congolese and Algerians. Special attention will be given to the malignant effects of pseudo-sciences on individuals and societies. We shall also attempt to deconstruct colonial discourse in order to reveal its misrepresentations and occlusions. One important aspect of

colonial discourse is that it highlights those appalling stereotypes of savagery and cannibalism and inscribes them as modes of differentiation and categorisation.

5.1. Stereotyping/Othering as a Culture Disease

While antagonisms of race and class have intensified with European invasions of alien territories, slander of the Other is as old as human civilisation. Misrepresentations of the Other can be traced back to ancient times. Thereafter, cultural differences have served as a dividing line between civilisation and barbarism widening the gap between cultures. For instance, the Greeks rejected the Romans on the ground of their cultural differences; the Christians have cast away the non-Christians, more particularly the Muslims; the Jews have denied the humanity of the Palestinians; the English and the French respectively that of the Irish and Africans because they felt superior to them.

This animosity is the outcome of a malicious construction of the Other. These negative impressions result in resentment and antagonism which inhibit peaceful co-existence and constantly threaten to burst out into open conflict. The aim of this section is to trace the steps by which the Irish and Africans have become targets of prejudice, discrimination, persecution and violence from the part of the British, the Belgians and the French in the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

Forms of perceptions of other people indeed constitute the fundamental conditions enabling misconceptions. The idea one forms of individuals on the other side of the cultural fence is influenced by one's personal background, a blend of cultural, socio-political, ideological and religious factors. People tend to confine themselves within their own race, culture and devise false images of others whom they consider as barbarians. These fabricated clichés that members of one group form of other groups are meant to justify all sorts of acts of discrimination and oppression and give the members of the ingroup, the supposedly strongest

and civilised one, a sense of superiority and self-control over a situation.¹ The ‘civilised’ man, the European, assumed then that compared with him, others were at a much lower level of development and used this cliché to relegate their ‘others’ to the backstage. For instance, if a group was stereotyped as inherently lazy, stupid, childish or aggressive, these ascriptions were enough to set the group on the margins and tear apart whole cultures. The question of stereotyping in imperialist discourse provides an example of such application.

It was indeed under the banner of progress that the concept of the Other came into existence. As Bernard MC Grane has it:

The concept of progress was what made possible the experience of the Other-as-primitive, of the Other-as-fossil [...] We would have never, in encountering and confronting difference, experienced ‘primitiveness,’ experienced our advance over their backwardness [...] The resource of ‘progress’ authorises the transformation of the ‘different’ into the ‘primitive.’²

The process of empire-building has drastically modified the mode of thinking about cultural differences. The encounter with the Other has led to the predominant assumption that the Europeans were superior to the natives. Hence against all odds Western culture, taking its paradigm from science, was to be *the* universal culture, a standard by which all other cultures had to be measured.

5.2. Scientific Approach to Otherness

The stereotyped portrait of the colonised hardened with the growth of science, defying rationality, as it were. Scientific interest in ‘primitive’ societies had been urged by the archeological discoveries of the age, by Darwin’s theory of evolution and the growth of empires in the 1880s. From 1770s onwards, the origin and abilities of the various types of

¹ “[The] stereotype of the Other is used to control the ambivalent and to create boundaries. Stereotypes are a way of dealing with the instabilities arising from the division between self and non-self by preserving an illusion of control and order.” Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and The Aesthetic* (Manchester University Press, 1992), 182. Cited in Michael Pickering, *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation* (N. York: Palgrave, 2001), 14.

² Bernard MCGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1989). Cited in *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation* (N.York: Palgrave, 2001), 14.

homo sapiens became the focus of hot cultural debates and in the early nineteenth century, there was much controversy between the monogenists, those who believed in a single creation for all races, and the polygenists, those who believed that God created each race of men separately. When phrenology³ came into popularity, the inferiority of those so-called lower races started to be proved by phrenological arguments. With the decline of the latter,⁴ which occurred as early as 1824, the racists turned to evolutionary thought to justify their racist attitude towards other peoples. Social scientists went on proving race and gender inequalities to promote their political goals. The purpose in this section is to reveal how science, an area of study, supposedly committed to truth, has been abused by racist scientists who used it in the name of ideology.

One crucial example of what has been done in the name of science is research about the innate genetic, mental and moral superiority/inferiority of human beings born into the adequate/inadequate social class, culture or race. Scientific racism perverted scientific and historical facts and created two broad groups of humankind. The first of these ‘races’ is the white man, wealthy and therefore superior while the second ‘race’ consists of poor coloured people, of lower intelligence by virtue of hereditarily lower brains and therefore inferior.

Carolus Linnaeus, (1707-78) a pioneer in defining the concept of ‘race’ as applied to humans, for instance, classified humanity according to various races. Within *Homo Sapiens*, he proposed four taxa of a lower rank.⁵ These categories are: *Americanus*, *Asiaticus*, *Africanus*, and *Europeanus* and were at first based on location then later on skin colour. In Linnaeus’s view, each race has certain idiosyncracies peculiar to individuals belonging to it. Native Americans for instance, are reddish, obdurate, and bad-tempered. The Asians on the

³ A pseudo-science of the 18th and 19th century based on the belief that a person’s character and personality could be determined by looking at the shape of the head.

⁴ The first opposition occurred at the University of Louisville (U.S.A) when the scientist, John P. Garrison, observed that current anatomy was unable to outline the borders of the various cerebral organs. In such case, the detailed measurements of the brain in correlation with psychological defects or abilities were also not possible.

⁵ A Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist known for his modern taxonomy which he developed in his book, *Systema Naturae*, (1767). Cited in *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*, 28.

other hand, are yellow, miserly, and anxiety-ridden. The Africans for their part, are black, lazy, impulsive, rough-and-tumble and notable for their animal sexuality. The first two forms of *Homo Sapiens* are, in all respects, far superior to the blacks. The Europeans on the other hand, are white, refined, smart people who in Linnaeus's view are head and shoulders above the other races in the world. Since Linnaeus's taxonomy, scientists have divided human culture into three broad stages: Savagery, Barbarism and Civilisation with the barbarian as a lower being in the scale of existence than the civilised man and the savage still lower. This classification, often characterized with all the prejudices of ignorance, justified the Western man's hatred of the Other. Illustrations of this fact have been found on every hand: scientists began to publish books in which they portrayed the Europeans as being at the top of the racial hierarchy. Those ideas associated with racial superiority/inferiority were immortalised in such books as Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1857).⁶

Darwin's theories laid the ground for an investigation into man's origins. Central to his thesis, species develop according to the rules of natural selection which preserves the strongest and exterminates the weaker. His theory of "the survival of the fittest"⁷ provided the basis for the development of the dominant species. Accordingly, a nation which is technologically advanced has to prevail over less developed nations. Those scientific arguments supporting racial prejudice then moved into another direction, to the theory of types, to the question of intellectual differences, hence to the theory of racial supremacy, disrupting as it were, the native nations' chances for 'civilisation.' Darwin's explosive book and others have been used throughout the centuries to justify such ignoble acts as the conquest and colonisation of Ireland and Africa, among others, and the extermination of their peoples. Theories of racial and cultural supremacy played indeed a crucial role in validating British, Belgian and French imperial rule.

⁶ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, c1995).

⁷ Coined by Herbert Spencer, not Darwin.

5. 3. The Ideology of English, Belgian and French Colonisations

Racial theories promoted belief in the inferiority and even bestiality of the Irish and Africans and served to preserve the French, Belgians' and Anglo-Saxons' *status quo* at home and further the cause of their empires abroad. Throughout the period of colonialism and empire-building, the British, Belgian and French approaches betrayed a strategic failure of understanding. They believed that the Irish and Africans were the antithesis of all desirable qualities. The view of the Irish and African societies as barbaric, and of their peoples as little better than cannibals⁸ became entrenched in the French, Belgians' and English minds. In the segment that follows, we shall attempt to demonstrate that "skin is [not] the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype,"⁹ as Homi K. Bhabha asserted. Though belonging to the white race, the native Irish had also been viewed as an alien whose culture was inferior to the Anglo-Saxons.'

"The White Negroes" ¹⁰

The Irish Celts were savages,[and] have been savages
since the world began, and will be forever savages;
mere, radical savages, not yet advanced even to the
state of barbarism.

John Pinkerton, *The History of Scotland* (London, 1797), 243.

An inquiry into the events which affected Anglo-Irish relations reveals that the stereotyping of the Irish Celt¹¹ as barbaric is nothing new. Those derogatory pictures were based on medieval barbarian histories and pseudo-historical Irish origin legends. Why had then the Irish been

⁸ Cannibalism actually helps to draw clear-cut boundaries between groups and is used by the imperialists to highlight the natives' difference, to strengthen their position and by the same token weaken that of the Other.

⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of culture: Discussing Post-Colonial Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 78.

¹⁰ This phrase had been used by Gustave de Molinari, a Belgian political economist who published a series of articles on the condition of Ireland in the *French Opinion on the Irish Crisis* (Translation of letters from Gustave de Molinari published in *Journal des Débats*, 1881. The phrase "White negroes" is an indicator of the prejudices which pervaded Great Britain vis à vis not only Irishmen but also the Negroes.

¹¹ The term 'Celt' (Keltoi) was first used by the Greek historian Herodotus to describe Western Europeans such as the Irish, Scots, and Gauls, and so forth. After his time other historians, such as Caesar and Strabo continued to use this term to refer to any foreign tribe that Rome considered barbaric and antagonistic. Suggestively, however, Caesar, Tacitus, Hecataeus, Strabo, and Herodotus never employed the term to describe the peoples of Britain.

viewed as ‘savages’? In his evaluation of Irish society and its morals, Gerard of Wales, a twelfth-century Anglo-Welsh writer, who was acquainted from an early age with English and Celtic cultures, found some historical and cultural circumstances for Irish backwardness. The Irish for him, bear a striking resemblance with the barbarians of the Græco-Latin sources. He also believed that their isolation from the benevolence of more advanced countries and marginal way of life condemned the Irish to poverty and account for their barbarous condition. The Anglo-Saxons¹² used the so-called barbaric nature of the Irish as evidence to legitimise their taking possession of the Irish territory in the twelfth century and as a justification for open racism against Irish people.

Concurrently, the wars of conquest undertaken in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in Ireland, turned into a clash between ‘civilisation’ and ‘barbarism,’ an equivalent to the trite and pernicious dichotomy of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ This binary opposition could not even be eroded by Christianity whose main tenet is spiritual and moral unity. Quite paradoxically, Protestantism became identified with ‘Civilisation’ and Catholicism with ‘Barbarism.’ This stereotype was strongly resented by the Irish who reacted violently. But the 1641 Irish Rebellion only helped perpetuate the myth of the Irish as men of violence, and reinforced English assumption of superiority and their view of themselves as *Conquistadores* taming the ‘barbaric’ and ‘pagan’ Irish in the same way their Spanish counterparts gained ascendancy over the Indians in Mexico in the mid and late sixteenth century. It seems that their knowledge of Spanish harshness vis à vis the Indians comforted the English in their belief that they were justified in their own severe treatment of the native Irish. Ever since, the view of

¹² The term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ refers to the members of the Germanic peoples (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes) that invaded England in the fifth and sixth centuries, and were there at the time of the Norman Conquest. In its broadest sense, it refers to a person of English descent.

the Gaelic¹³ Irish as ‘pagan’ and different from them became an accepted tenet of all Englishmen.

This view of the Irish as ‘barbarous’ found its most demeaning expression in Edmund Spenser’s *A View of The Present State of Ireland* (1670). Well before Darwin, Spenser applied the principle of evolution to natural species. He stressed Ireland’s eastern link with Scythia¹⁴ and proposed the eradication of native Irish culture. The Scythian connection was, for him, a way to single out the otherness of the Irish. Not only did he believe that there were marked differences between the Irish and the English, but between the Irish and all other Europeans as well. Spenser also believed that the English were the new Romans who came to civilise the Irish,¹⁵ whom they believed to be still at an earlier stage of development in the same way the Romans civilised the Britons. Spenser went even further in his analysis of the Irish and asserted that the latter used to drink human blood. The inhabitants of Munster, he said, became cannibals when the English armies prevented them from herding their cattle and tilling the ground. Spenser’s allegations were no doubt dictated by race prejudice. Gradually, the concept of the Irish as socially inferior to the English had been replaced by the idea that they were culturally far behind the English on the ladder of development. It was then quite natural for the English to subdue them. One way to effect control over the Irish was to prohibit the practice of Gaelic law¹⁶ so that the Irish could be brought “from their delight of licentious barbarism unto the love of goodness and civility,”¹⁷ explained Spenser. It is worth noting that civility was an important criterion in the latter’s categorisation. For him, the Irish

¹³ The Gaels, or Goidels, were another branch of the Celtic groups from Europe who allegedly crossed to Ireland around the fourth, fifth, or sixth centuries BC (depending on which officially posited theory one believes). These Goidels were known by Irish mythographers as the “Milesians” or “Children of Mil.” They were descendants of the Scythian “Celts” who had visited Egypt and returned to their Western homelands after the reign of Pharaoh Akhenaton.

¹⁴ Those Caucasian barbarians were the founding stock for most of Northern Europe. They were the arch-barbarians of Greek and Roman tradition before becoming the ancestors of the modern ‘oriental.’

¹⁵ It is likely that this approach comes from his reading of Italian Renaissance writers such as Machiavelli who contrasted medieval barbarism with old Roman civilisation to justify the elimination of the last remnants of that barbarism.

¹⁶ The English scheme of expropriation rested first and foremost on the view that Irish laws were primitive. The Irish pastoral economy was another reason for considering the Irish as uncivilised people. Thus by decreeing that the Irish were pagans, the English established that their heathenism was due not to lack of opportunity but rather to an antithetical system of government. This justified their subjection.

¹⁷ Edmund Spenser, *A View of The Present State of Ireland*, ed., W.L., Renwick (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 10-11.

profess to be Catholics when they actually have no real knowledge of God, or any civility, whereas the English “[...] you see are now brought to that civility that no nation in the world excellth them on all goodly conversation.”¹⁸ We should also stress that supreme authority was claimed for Western civilisation because it combined the assets of Christianity with those of civility. Thus though the Irish belong to the Western world, to recognize them as Christians would amount to acknowledging them as civilised people.

And the philosophical poet, Sir John Davies, though he agreed on more than one point with Spenser, believed that the Irish owed their negative idiosyncrasies not to ancestry but to their social environment. Davies hoped that “the next generation will in tongue and heart and every way else, become English so as there will be no difference or distinction but the Irish Sea betwixt us.”¹⁹ To put the matter in another way, the one community that the Irish and English were to form was, in Davies’s view, *English*. Such racial prejudices based upon differences thrived so long in the English (and Scottish) minds that it became easier for the Victorians as well to conclude that the Irish were a primitive peoples unfit to manage their own affairs, therefore one that had to be tamed by the English rulers.

Victorian Ethnology

The Victorians were deeply convinced that irreconcilable differences not only in religion but also in culture separated Englishmen from Irishmen.²⁰ Accordingly, the representative Irishman was by the 1860s an anthropoid ape. The dichotomy between the Celts and the Anglo-Saxons also rested on the belief that the blood of the latter was ‘better’ than the former’s and that a blending of the two was inconceivable although history proves that this mixing did indeed occur. We are referring here to the marriages between the Irish and earlier Anglo-Norman settlers in Ireland, the Old English. This view spread rapidly amongst

¹⁸ Ibidem . How can one associate the word ‘civility’ or even ‘honour’ with those who performed abominable acts in Ireland.

¹⁹ Sir John Davies, *A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued*, Ed., James P. Myers, Jr (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, c 1988), 144.

²⁰ For the Victorians, the Irish, commonly called ‘Paddy,’ connoted everything that was negative. The word ‘Irish’ took on several pejorative meanings: for instance to ‘get up one’s Irish’ meant to show one’s *ire*, or anger.

European intellectuals, especially in France and England, increased racial inequality and informed many writings.

To Charles Kingsley, a minister of religion whose Celtophobia was intense, the wretched he saw along the roads in July 1860 during his brief stay in Ireland, belonged to a lower scale. He wrote to his wife:

I am haunted by [these] human chimpanzees[...in] that [...] horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe they [...] are happier [...] under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful, if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours.²¹

Kingsley also believed that if a society collapses, it is because of its weak morality and has thus to be exterminated. By the same criterion, a society which has progressed, like his, is obviously stronger and has to dominate the lesser bred.²²

Like his contemporaries, the English historian, James Anthony Froude stressed the anarchist character of the Irish, their laxity, instability, lack of discipline and moral principles. The Irish he encountered from Bandon to Killarney, in 1845, were in his view, “more like tribes of squalid apes than human beings.”²³ Thus those Irish people had to be firmly governed lest they should become cut-throats.

But it was John Beddoe's theory of the 'Index of Nigrescence' which put the final touch on the Victorian image of the Irish. The founding member of the Ethnological Society in the U.K. assumed that colour of hair and eyes were significant clues for explaining ethnic or racial origins.²⁴ Beddoe went even further in his speculations. The darkest Celts he

²¹ Charles Kingsley, *His Letters and Memoirs of His Life* (London: Macmillan & Co, Limited, 1904, ii), 107.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Cited in Francis Steward Leland Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 12.

²⁴ John Beddoe, *The Races of Britain: A Contribution to the Anthropology of Western Europe* (S.I. : J.W Arrowsmith, 1885), 101.

encountered throughout his trips led him to meditate on their African origins.²⁵ He coined them, “Africanoid.”²⁶ Milesian Spain is certainly the crucial link in the genealogy that derives the Irish from African Negroes. This theoretical tracing of Irish and African connection encouraged Victorian ethnologists who went on providing a scientific explanation for Irish violence, poverty and drunkenness.

It is worth noting that the widespread belief that the Irish was separated from the English by clear-cut ethnic, racial and cultural boundaries was also underscored by political events. The animosity vis à vis the Irish became a tool in the social and political arena. Anglo-Saxons’ success in political and economic affairs provided tangible proof of their superiority. This feeling of superiority intensified in the nineteenth century with the rise of the conflict over Catholic emancipation in 1823. O’Connell’s repeal dissension posed a real threat to the defenders of the *status quo*. The nationalist movements which grew during the Parnellite era made the prejudices of Englishmen against the Irish even more acute. The new Parnellite members of Parliament were doubly rejected, first for sitting in Parliament and then for not being landlords.²⁷ This discrimination gave birth to another form of exclusion of the Irish, that of the Catholics. In the Victorian era, the terms ‘Irish’ and ‘Catholics’ became synonymous for the English Protestants. And the Irish rebellious attitude against such bias together with the revolts and social unrest in Ireland fed the Victorian stereotype of the violent man. During Home Rule riots for instance, the Irish were attributed even more violent characteristics paralleling the negro ‘brute’. Some Victorians went further claiming that the Irish were born criminals to justify their categorisation and denigration, and used such allegations to explain any rising or war in the next decades. Such absurdly negative spin, imperial in outlook, pervaded English imagination and fostered Irish identification with cultures in Africa.

²⁵ I believe that it requires an ethnocentric imagination to find traces of an African genesis in the Celts.

²⁶ Cited in Perry L. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish prejudice in Victorian England* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 71 -72.

²⁷ It is worth pointing that to become a member of Parliament one had to possess land.

Indeed if the Victorians formed such unfavourable impressions of the Irish Celtic character, their images of the Negroes and other non-white peoples were even less flattering. Given the prejudice in England and Scotland against the Irish, it is not surprising that the Negroes and other non-Caucasians had been relegated to the lowest form of the human race.

The African Mind

Africa proper, as far as History goes back [...] exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state[...]There is *nothing harmonious with humanity* to be found in that type of character [...] Tyranny is regarded as no wrong, and cannibalism is looked upon quite customary and proper. Among us instinct deters from it,[...] but [in] the Negro this is not the case; and the devouring of human flesh is altogether consonant with the general principles of the African race.²⁸

Hegel G.W. Friedrich. *Philosophy of History* (N.Y: Dover Pub.,[1837]1956).

Although Hegel never visited Africa proper, he laid down a stunning criticism of the continent and its people upon which all future Western readings eventually followed. Accordingly for William Bosman, the Africans “seem to be *born and bred Villains*: All sorts of Baseness having got such such footing in them, that ‘tis impossible to lye concealed.”²⁹ Coming at this issue from a different perspective, Robert Knox, a Scottish anatomist, even wondered if the Negroes “walk[ed] like [the Europeans], [thought] like [them], act[ed] like [them]?”³⁰ “Not in the least,”(14) he concluded. Belgian officials took a somewhat similar tack. In their view, the native Congolese were “a sector of humanity [which] inherited no civilization, no energy, no ideas, no interests to defend [...They were] people without writing, without history, without philosophy, without any consistency.”³¹ The Congo missionaries also

²⁸ Cited in C.L. Innes, *The Devil's Own Mirror: The Irishman and the African in Modern Literature* (Three Continents Press, 1990), 10. Italics mine.

²⁹ Cited in Ulrich Pallua, *Eurocentrism, Racism, Colonialism in the Victorian and Edwardian Age: Changing Images of Africa(ns) in Scientific and Literary Texts* (Univeritatsverlag WINTER Heidelberg, 2005), 14.

³⁰ Ibid., 14.

³¹ Cited by Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 32.

adopted negative attitudes and deplored the low state of African civilisation. Most of them found little in the African to commend and saw them as savage brutes in need of redemption. For instance, the leader of the American Presbyterian Congo mission described his work as with “the very bottom of humanity”³² and the Africans as having “an unbroken history of perhaps thousands of years of ignorance, superstition and spiritual darkness.”³³ The more optimistic missionaries distinguished between adult and children characters. While the latter were inattentive, fidgety and mischievous, like any children elsewhere, they regarded African children as being the most corrupt. They depicted them as talented liars compared with white children, but not unwilling to obey. The adults on the other hand, were described as lazy, deceitful, thievish, morally degraded and yet endowed with some ‘positive’ traits: they were submissive, therefore easy to manipulate. These Eurocentric characterisations of Africa and the Africans summarize the nineteenth century views of the ‘Dark Continent’ and its people, and served to reinforce the hegemony of the colonial enterprise. Our argument in this section is twofold: first to show that there are striking similarities between the dehumanizing pictures of the Irish and those of the Africans; second to reveal the ways in which colonial politics used the establishment of medical institutions to maintain the illusion of Western munificent action in Africa. We will therefore focus on the role played by colonial psychiatry in reinforcing contemporary social hypotheses concerning the psychology of the coloniser/colonised relationship.

Colonial psychiatry provides a significant insight into the functions of race and calls attention to inconsistencies between the realities of colonialism and medical practices. In colonial Africa, it was not simply a form of scientific inquiry and medical practice, but an application of colonial ideology. It allied itself closely to civilising missions as it gathered

³² Cited by Barbara B. Yates, ‘White Views of Blacks Minds: Schooling in King Leopold’s Congo,’ in *History of Education Quarterly* (The Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, 1980), 28.

³³ *Ibidem*.

‘knowledge’ about indigenous psychologies to facilitate colonial rule.³⁴ Western psychiatry produced a sub-discipline cross-breeding anthropology and psychiatry. Ethnopsychiatric studies stemmed from the acknowledgment of cultural differences, and aimed at finding out whether white people had the same type of mind as other ethnic groups.

Colonial Africa was also an outpost of nineteenth century pseudo-sciences, drawing on Eugenics, crude measurements of the cortex and other distortions of evolutionary theory aiming at showing the inadequacy of Africans. The works of some imminent researchers, Dr. John Colin Carothers, a British ethnopsychiatrist, Jonathan Sadowsky, a professor in medical history, and French-Algerian psychiatrists such as Dr. Frantz Fanon clarify the evolution of thought concerning the so-called ‘African mind,’ and further illustrate how such theories were applied in psychiatric hospitals in Algeria, Nigeria, and other African countries. While Carothers’s, Antoine Arrii’s and Don Come Porot’s research works had been used as scientific justification for certain stereotypes of Africans, Sadowsky’s and Fanon’s ‘socio-genic’ philosophies however constitute the most celebrated polemics of the 1960s against colonialism available in medical literature.

Psychiatrists Arrii and Porot³⁵ for instance stressed the wide gap between the North Africans’ mental systems and the Europeans,’ hence underscored their judgment of the Algerian as psychologically other.³⁶ Not only did they view the Algerians as ordinarily pathological, but also as born criminals, like the Irish. According to them, the Algerians’ tendencies toward violence required that the French mission in Algeria be harsher than elsewhere to protect itself from indigenous criminality. Punitive measures were therefore, “necessary [...] in the general work of civilization, [and] it [was] above all through [...]

³⁵ Arrii and Porot are authors of the book, *L’impulsivité criminelle chez l’indigène Algérien: ses facteurs* or *Criminal Impulsivity in the Indigenous Algerian: Its Factors*, *Annales Medico-psychologiques II* (1932). Trans. Mine.

³⁶ At Blida in the 1950s, Fanon agreed that the Algerians were fundamentally different from the Europeans, but contested Arrii’s, and Porot’s conclusions.

sanctions that [they could] teach [those] thwarted and overly instinctive beings [the Algerians],”³⁷ pointed out Arrii and Porot.

British ethnopsychiatrist, John Carothers, had an even more biased view. He strove to demonstrate that different physical traits such as skin colour, entail differences in cognitive capability.³⁸ Carothers used African patients as test subjects for his investigation of African psychology. He compared the general shape of the African’s brain with the European’s and asserted that the Africans display a “cortical sluggishness”³⁹ due to under-use of the frontal lobes. He concluded then that the Africans were cognitively or mentally inferior.⁴⁰ Carothers further explained that the African’s “mental development is defined by the time he reaches adolescence, and little new remains to be said.”⁴¹ This supposed child-like state had been used as evidence of the Africans’ so-called immaturity and inability to reach a civilised state.

Those pseudo-scientific allegations did not stop at physical or intellectual disparities but were followed by theories of behavioural difference. The loss of cultural guidelines for behaviour, or anomy, together with cultural identity confusion and relative deprivation were said to be the main pathogenic factors operating in the development of the psycho-social syndrome described as ‘anomic depression’ in the indigenous peoples experiencing acculturation and marginalisation under imposed Westernisation. Even worse, people suffering from that acculturative stress were declared insane. Those stereotypes of African moral and intellectual retardation, their so-called violent nature and anomalous behaviour contributed indeed to the confinement in brutal institutions, managed as prison annexes, of

³⁷ Cited in Richard Keller, ‘Madness and Colonization : Psychiatry in the British and French Empires, 1800 1962,’ *Journal of Social History* (Winter, 2001), Vol. 35, n° 2, 298.

³⁸ Cited in Keller’s ‘Madness and Colonization: Psychiatry in the British and French Empires, 1800 1962,’ 308.

³⁹ John Colin Carothers, *The African Mind in Health and Disease: A Study in Ethnopsychiatry* (Geneva: World Health Organisation, 1953). 3.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ *The African Mind in Health and Disease*, 3. It seems to me that Carothers’s conclusions on the African mind had been greatly influenced by the Kenyan pathologist F.W.Vint who carried out a study of the brain of the Kenyan native and published his findings in a book that bears the same title. Vint contended that in terms of cortical development, the brain of the adult African was equivalent to that of a European child of seven or eight.

those supposedly mentally deranged Africans, and triggered off a host of ethnopsychiatric theories to explain ‘the African mind.’

As European doctors monopolized the medical profession, therapeutic tendencies manifested racism in more insidious ways. In those psychiatric institutions, racial difference was central to day-to-day practices of confinement and treatment and affected the delivery of mental health care to Africans. Punitive policies like internment indicated clearly that psychiatric practice in Africa served as a measure of social control. From Lagos to Algiers, from Mombasa to Cape Town, psychiatrists, colonial administrators, and settlers focused their concerns about madness on indigenous rather than European populations. Studies from the Zomba Lunatic Asylum,⁴² in Nyasaland (now Malawi), Blida hospital in Algeria, (which bears now Fanon’s name) the Yaba and Aro asylums in Nigeria illustrate the prevailing attitudes towards African ‘madness,’ and the politico-economic circumstances in which psychiatric care was given. Sadowsky’s and Fanon’s concerns with the topic of colonial madness, respectively in colonial Nigeria and colonial Algeria, mark another new direction for the historiography of colonial psychiatry.

In his attempt to understand how British colonials defined madness among Nigerians, Sadowsky noted that the British confined patients not because their behaviour was anomalous but instead because they constituted a threat to structures of power.⁴³ Indeed by late nineteenth century, the British colonial Press started to raise the problem of mad Nigerians roaming the streets of Lagos, and demanded that public order be preserved. And as public madness became more visible in the early twentieth century with an increasing British presence in the colony, the British administrators saw it as a real social danger. And believing

⁴² The Zomba Asylum was opened as part of Nyasaland’s Central Prison in 1910, and harboured native ‘insanes.’ The Asylum was supervised by untrained guards. When a patient was noisy, violent or troublesome in any way, he was locked in a cell or put in irons. Those so-called lunatics often suffered from physical illnesses such as syphilis, epilepsy and brain injury.

⁴³ Sadowsky relies largely on British and African archival documents. As such he gained valuable access to patient case files.

that racial and cultural difference made it impossible for them to cure those patients, they urged their confinement. A lunacy ordinance was then enacted in 1906, which stipulated the construction of specialised institutions for confining the insane.⁴⁴ Paradoxical as it is, those psychiatric hospitals in Nigeria, and elsewhere, symbolised the civilising mission.

Sadowsky explored the functioning of two of those institutions in Nigeria, the Yaba and Aro asylums. In the Yaba asylum in Lagos for instance, psychiatric patients lived in conditions worse than those of convicts. Sadowsky attributed those poor conditions to a paradox of Britain's system of 'Indirect Rule' in Nigeria, which promised the exploitation of economic resources by the British, and the civilising of the Nigerians with minimal intervention into their lives. Many Yaba patients suffered from what psychiatrists call persecutory hallucinations, a diagnosis which Sadowsky found "over-determined by the persecutory nature of colonialism itself."⁴⁵ In Nigeria, practitioners viewed Nigerians not as patients but rather as representatives of a different race. Concurrently, they described Africans' "innate character, without examining British policies that provoked trauma by transforming the social landscape,"⁴⁶ explained Sadowsky. In his view however, colonialism was not the sole cause for madness. Precarious social conditions also played their share, a point of view that Fanon does not fully agree with.

Colonial pathology, a central notion in Fanon's works, adds an important "sociogenic"⁴⁷ dimension to ethnopsychiatry. Reports from the Zomba Asylum show an apparent increase in mental illness in Africans in the decades surrounding the Second World War. This lent

⁴⁴ Until the 1950s, Nigeria's colonial prisons and asylums were practically equivalent.

⁴⁵ Cited in Richard Keller, 'Madness and Colonization : Psychiatry in the British and French Empires, 1800 1962,' *Journal of Social History* (Winter, 2001). Vol. 35, n° 250. To support his point, Sadowsky cites a number of cases. The most conspicuous was that of Isaac O., a nineteen-year-old missionary student at the time of his first confinement in 1932. Isaac claimed "that he would kill all the Europeans in Nigeria." His violent attitude toward the Europeans revealed his resentment at the hollow promises of colonial education. In his concluding chapter to his book, *Imperial Bedlam: Institutions of Madness in Colonial Southwest Nigeria* (Berkeley, London: Univ. Of California Press), c1999, Sadowsky argued that knowledge produced in the colonial context could not escape the prejudices of that milieu.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁴⁷ "Beside phylogeny [Carothers's theory] and ontogeny [Darwin's theory] stands sociogeny," says Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, (7) ie. The black man's alienation is not an individual concern but that of society. Fanon develops the earlier insights of such Black American thinkers as W.E. Dubois with respect to the notion of "double consciousness" (*The Souls of Black Folk*, 364-5) of the Negro in Western civilisation.

credence to Fanon's correlation between the colonial condition and mental illness. Fanon offered thus a culturally-sensitive theory of mental illness. He asserted that colonialism caused those psychic impairments annihilating the colonised subject. He also argued that the colonisers' practice of internment and brainwashing of the Algerian elite was a strategy aimed to "attack from the inside those elements which constitute national consciousness."⁴⁸ This particular form of psychological torture was a way to force the intellectual to collaborate. For Fanon moreover colonialism alienated the African native, and it was that estrangement that caused somatic and mental illnesses. In *Toward the African Revolution*, he described a range of psycho-somatic illnesses which he believed were caused by the trauma of colonial rule in Algeria. Such symptoms were known as the North African Syndrome.⁴⁹ Fanon further explained that "if psychiatry is a medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab (Algerian), permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization."⁵⁰ The colonial environment indeed provoked significant psychological trauma.

Hence stereotyping as a strategy of exclusion not only created barriers to social interaction and relations but also produced some peculiar kinds of neurosis or anxiety. For the Africans as well as for the Irish, the experience of colonialism had been devastating in all domains. Ostensibly, the determining factors that set these peoples on the margins were their 'irrationality,' their 'deficiency' in reasoning and their 'excessive' emotional behaviour. A false perception of their societies and ways of life helped perpetuate their image as primitive peoples. Scientific theories of race helped further ideologies of racial difference. Instead of responding to the severe stress under which the native lived with sympathy and assistance,

⁴⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove P, 1961), 286.

⁴⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 3. The validity of this syndrome is debatable. It is likely that this medical framework was informed by the earlier "phylogenetic" work of ethno-psychiatrists like Carothers.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

some ethnopsychiatrists consolidated and sustained those stereotypes which gave moral justification to the myth of colonialism as a civilising mission.

If imperial relations have been built on a false perception of the Other, not just as the alien or the different, but as a basically and ontologically inferior being to be brought under the tutelage of the West, they were however largely maintained by textuality. The vehicle for the dissemination of this perception is commonly referred to as colonial discourse. The colonial text rationalised colonial conquests and invested the conqueror with absolute rights over the colonies, and helped propagate racial inequality. The enormous body of literature bequeathed by the English, Belgians and French to posterity is fraught with references to Irish and African deficiency in intellectual power, which of course makes them unfit for self-rule. It is from this nightmarish situation that the postcolonial man is trying to awake. This colonial 'knowledge' has been harshly criticised by postcolonial writers and critics as expressive of a biased Eurocentric understanding of indigenous peoples.

Chapter VI

Postcolonial Theory

Caliban's capacity to create a future for himself
by transforming the colonial language depends
very much on his ability to confront the imperial
discourse that inscribes him.

Bill Ashcroft, *On Post-Colonial Futures* (London: Continuum, 2001), 103.

In the postcolonial, as Linda Hunccheon argues, "on the one hand, 'post' is taken to mean 'after,' 'because of' and even unavoidably 'inclusive of' the colonial; on the other hand, it signifies more explicit resistance and opposition, the anticolonial."¹ And Leela Ghandi adds that "postcoloniality [...] is just another name for the globalization of cultures and histories."² Building upon Ghandi's and Hunccheon's definitions, postcolonialism then deals with the legacy of colonialism. The postcolonial task is not simply to contest those historical accounts which have relegated some individuals to a footnote, but also to create a multicultural society.

Accordingly, postcolonialism brought paradigmatic changes in the relations between the centre and the margin. If the colonies had been viewed as the 'White Man's Burden,' postcoloniality has shed the burden. It valorises difference and multiculturalism, attempting as it were to integrate the people on the periphery into the centre. This has resulted in radical transformations in the structure of literary texts written in European languages, and more specifically in English and French. The postcolonial text expresses cultural hybridity and lays emphasis on the survival of the distinctive features of the culture of the oppressed.

In this chapter, we shall concentrate on some contemporary postcolonial theories inspired by the work of such thinkers as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak,

¹ Cited in Richard Webner & Terence Ranger, eds., *Postcolonial Identities in Africa* (London: Zed Books LTD, 1996), 4.

² Leela Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory* (New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 126.

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin who rank among postcolonialism's leading figures and helped usher in what is known today as postcolonial studies. Our purpose is to construct a working knowledge of some key concepts such as ambivalence, mimicry, hybridity and liminality in the operations of colonial discourse. This postcolonial terminology will provide a theoretical introduction to the forthcoming analyses of the works selected in the corpus. We have devoted the second part of this chapter to the revolution effected by postcolonial literature in challenging the colonial system of representations.

6. 1. Postcolonial Theorists and the Subaltern

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define postcolonial theory as a debate on

migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe [...] and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being.³

Postcolonial theory thus revolves around the concept of Otherness, which includes both identity and difference. Originating from Commonwealth studies, it has tended to focus on works from the former British empire as well as on works written in English which tackle the theme of colonisation. Postcolonial theorists offer ways to crush colonialism's signifying system, expose its agency in the muting and repression of the colonial subject, and attempt to liberate the colonised man from that debasing inscription as Europe's hampered Other. Prominent among these is Frantz Fanon, a Martiniquan political theorist, psychiatrist and activist.

³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 2.

The Distinctive Force of Fanon's Vision

Although Fanon's profession was not writing, he produced a significant body of work. *Black Skin, White Masks*, (1952) originally titled 'An Essay for the Disalienation of Blacks,' and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) made him a prominent contributor to postcolonial studies. Fanon held an exceptional position in observing and criticising the racist ill-treatment of native people in colonial Martinique and Algeria. His close encounter with the war of independence in Algeria and the unspeakable sufferings inflicted to the Algerians by the French Army led him to resign from his post as a psychiatrist to uphold the Algerian cause for he believed that the colonial enterprise was incompatible with ethical psychiatric practice. He remarked that "the colonial settlers brought history to Africa, but it is not the history of the native country that they made but that of the mother country."⁴ His work therefore is a provocative challenge to the assumptions and discourses of colonial cultures. Fanon presents the colonial situation from the perspective of the Black man and writes about the pathologies of oppression, providing painful evidence of the blighting effects of colonialism upon the so-called untutored races. *The Wretched of the Earth* provides arresting insights into the life of colonial society, and offers a profound analysis of racism and the psychological wreckage suffered by colonised peoples who internalised those colonial discourses.

Fanon's analysis, largely based on the Lacanian conceptualization of mimicry as camouflage,⁵ focuses on colonial ambivalence. The European man decided how those Others were supposed to exist, and imposed such a degrading existence on his victims that it demanded their conformity to its distorted values. Members of non-white and even white cultures, we are referring here to the Irish, had to repress their inherited culture to adopt the 'universal' one. The colonised man, Fanon says, is "elevated above his jungle status in

⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove P, 1961), 40.

⁵ In Lacanian terms, this "camouflage," is like mimicry. "Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled - exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare." Jacques Lacan, "The line and light', Of the Gaze." Cited in Homi K. Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry of man,' *The Location of Culture: Discussing Post-Colonial Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 121.

proportion to his adoption of the mother's cultural standards.”⁶ Ultimately, the Algerians, (and other) intellectuals depended upon their ability to imitate the ideology, speech and manners of the Europeans. Thus, in Fanon's view, the crucial moment for every struggle for liberation lies in the fundamental question of how to avoid this double-bind of Manichaeism: either the colonised attempts to escape the violence of the colonial system and enters the white side of the dividing line by mingling with the coloniser and assimilating to the manners and mores of Europe, hence rejecting his own identity; or he fights to affirm his own identity by positing himself against the white man.

In his anxiety to obtain recognition from the coloniser, and escape the association of blackness with evil, the colonised subject however has been compelled to put on a 'white mask'. This colonial mimesis has not only moved him away from his cultural traditions, but has also had a debilitating effect on his soul. It has further alienated him and in the process depersonalised him. This negation of a primordial identity has created disjuncture between the black man's consciousness and his body. From such ambivalent identification, black skin, white mask, Fanon has tried to redeem the pathos of cultural confusion. He insists that 'white' depends for its stability on 'black,' so one cannot exist without the other, and both come into being at the moment of imperial conquest. Thus, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon analyses the ways in which the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised could be ameliorated if boundaries were banished. But his philanthropic ideas could not withstand the wave of racism both in France and in the colonised world. Hence, he called for a radical break with colonial culture. This could be achieved, according to him, by deconstructing the enemy within, by re-defining tradition and drawing inspiration from it to fight its abuse. The relations between the oppressed and the oppressor also provided the real material context that greatly influenced the Palestinian critic, Edward Said.

⁶ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove P, 1967), 17-8.

Edward Said, the Orient and the Oriental

Like Fanon, Said has investigated the scope to which colonisation created a new perception of the world and indoctrinated the colonised subject with a sense of inferiority. In his writings, Said encourages the reader to re-examine Western perceptions and misconceptions of the Oriental world. As he probes the nature of colonial resistance, Said introduces the concept of contrapuntal reading, a form of “reading back”⁷ from the point of view of the colonised, which brings to light the hidden colonial history that permeated nineteenth-century European literary texts. Said has indeed developed a body of counter-discursive writing to try and change the ways non-Western peoples and their cultures are viewed.

However, Said has looked at the alienating relationship between the coloniser and his subject from a different perspective than Fanon. Fundamental to Said’s view is the binary division between the Orient and the Occident. Each is assumed to exist in opposition to the Other. He argues that throughout Western history, Europe has portrayed the Oriental as the Other. Thus in his seminal book, *Orientalism*, (1978) Said particularly cites the Europeans’ attitudes towards the Arabs in which any suggestion of individual identity is obliterated. The Arab, in history and literature, has been projected as the Other, as a threat and a challenge to Eurocentric morality. Those clichés, he claims, not only facilitated the colonisation of many areas of the world, but also continue to govern relations with the Eastern world. He has also stressed that although the Oriental is conceived as the Westerner’s alter ego, the two have never been treated on equal terms. For him indeed, European culture has gained in strength and identity “by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even *underground* self.”⁸ This radical Otherness has been taken as an evidence of his inferiority.

⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 71.

⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 3. Italics mine.

The Palestinian critic therefore reads orientalism as the strategy which sets up identities and enforces lines of demarcation.

Said carries his argument a step further and explains that Western nations like Britain and France have spent much time producing flawed knowledge about the nations they subjugated. The Foucaultian insight that the production of knowledge and the exercise of power are interrelated indeed informs his ground-breaking *Orientalism* in which he draws attention to the written text as a central tool in the process of the Europeans' control of the world they invaded. Said explains that colonial power buttressed by the production of knowledge, or rather an *ad hoc* fabricated knowledge of non-European cultures, has helped Europe expand its possessions overseas, and maintain its hegemony by silencing the indigenous culture. In Said's view, then, the representation of the Orient in European literary texts has contributed to the creation of the dichotomy 'us' and 'them,' widening as it were, the gulf between Europe and its Others (*Orientalism*, 94). European knowledge of the Oriental, Said says, is not objective, but simply

a political vision of reality whose structure promote[s]
the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West,
"us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them") [thus]
the Orient becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more
Western – and limits the human encounter between cultures,
traditions and societies,⁹

as it is blurred by cultural biases. This binary opposition between the "familiar" and the "strange" has been essential to Europe's self-conception. This line of argument suggests not only that the identity of the Oriental is entirely an historical construction, but also that the Orient is a constructed territory. Said therefore seems to deny the Oriental any "location of culture" to borrow Bhabha's words. This is one of the pitfalls of *Orientalism*. It seems that herein lies the main ambiguity in Said's thesis. It is precisely that equivocacy that disoriented many critics and led them to respond negatively to him.

⁹ Ibid., 45- 46.

Aijaz Ahmed, one of Said's fiercest critics for instance, accuses him of focusing on Western literary texts and ignoring resistance by the colonised, and in so doing promoting a fixed replica of colonial relations. This is a matter of debate. While it is true that Said's *Orientalism* concentrates on canonical Western narratives, Aijaz Ahmed's indictment of Said seems quite unfair. If Said does so, it is simply because these texts present a distorted view of colonial rule thus blur the reality of colonial history. In *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature: Yeats and Decolonization*, for instance, Said does discuss anti-imperialist theories such as Fanon's in order to think about resistance. Moreover, his discussion of postcolonial intellectuals highlights the power of colonial discourse in the constitution of the postcolonial perspective. The challenge for the colonised man is to deal with his sense of marginalisation. Said therefore argues that if non-Western peoples are to be written about with justice, it must be in a narrative in which they are themselves the agents, (*Orientalism*, 240) a point of view Fanon shares. The Others should no longer remain silent but "challenge and resist settled [...] histories, forms and modes of thoughts,"¹⁰ Said adds.

Stephen Slemon sees another flaw in *Orientalism*. He points to the fact that although describing specific Eurocentric formations, the concept of Orientalism as Said terms it, risks to become a prison-house for non-Western readers attempting to better understand themselves and their culture. And Megan Vaughan (1994) flays Said. She believes that his analysis distances and thingifies the Other. According to her, *Orientalism* is responsible for this bias and "runs counter to Said's professed political aim of effecting the dissolution of 'orientalism'[and sees it] as an ironic validation of his own theory, since he seems trapped within the frame of Orientalism, unable to move outside it."¹¹ To respond to this harsh criticism, we would argue that what Said actually stresses is that the Oriental does exist in his own right, but his existence has been reduced to nothingness by prejudicial knowledge in

¹⁰ Edward Said, 'Representing the Colonized': Anthropology's Interlocutors; *Critical Inquiry* (15.2 1989 205- 25), 22.

¹¹ Edward Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature: Yeats and Decolonization* (Derry: Field Day, 1988).

colonial discourses. This construction of knowledge is in itself oppressive. Oriental peoples as examples of invidious racial stereotypes also constitute the central threads in the works of Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak whose main focus is the uncertain place occupied by the colonised subject.

Bhabha's notions of ambivalence, mimicry, hybridity, liminality

Hybridity, liminality, mimicry and ambivalence are key concepts that focus on the issue of identification. The Indian-American theorist shares Said's view that colonial discourse has produced imagined constructions and that this ambivalent mode of representation based on cultural difference has been deliberately exploited by the coloniser to annihilate the colonised and further his plans of expansion overseas. Weaving through the chapters of *The Location of Culture* (1996) is a reflection on *différance*, on temporal and spatial disjunction that learns much from Jacques Derrida's conclusions. Unlike Derrida however, Bhabha's orientation is emphatically cultural. Like Said and Fanon, Bhabha believes that "colonial power and discourse are possessed entirely by the coloniser."¹² The main objective of colonial discourse, he explains, is "to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest [...]"¹³ This discourse is fraught with "[...] terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy,"¹⁴ he adds. In his examination of the ambivalence of colonial rule Bhabha moreover draws attention to "its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness,"¹⁵ and "fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/ racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation,"¹⁶ he explains. The colonised subject finds himself in an ambivalent position always sliding between two polarities: similarity and difference. The colonial discourse

¹² Homi K. Bhabha, 'Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of Some Forms,' in Frank Gloversmith, ed., *The Theory of Reading* (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1984), 200.

¹³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture: Discussing Post-Colonial Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 70.

¹⁴ Ibid., 72.

¹⁵ Op.Cit., 18.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

produces the colonised “as a social reality which is at once an Other and yet entirely knowable and visible.”¹⁷ On the one hand, the colonised subject is a strange creature thus othered by the Westerner and kept at a distance; yet, on the other hand, the latter attempts to domesticate him and abolish this otherness by bringing him into ‘civilisation,’ making him “knowable and visible,”¹⁸ thus reducing the distance between him and the colonised subject. This ambivalent position of the colonised subject never secures him into place. Bhabha therefore seeks to find the “location of culture” in the marginal space between dominant social formations. Building on these ideas of the similar and the different, Bhabha investigates the ambivalence of the colonised subject which threatens the master’s hegemony through the effects of mimicry. His theory of colonial mimicry owes much to Fanon’s work.

Mimicry

In the contemporary debates on postcolonial theory, the notion of mimicry plays an important role in defining the relationship between coloniser and colonised. In his noted book, *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha defines mimicry as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite, which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence.”¹⁹ This representation of a difference is itself “a process of disavowal,”²⁰ he adds. In Bhabha’s theory of mimicry, as in Fanon’s, the colonial subject is constrained to impersonate the image of the coloniser, and emulate certain parts of the dominating culture in order to survive in that space within which he/she exists, which in any case reinforces power relations. By using the coloniser’s methods and mimicking the attitudes and ideologies of colonial discourse, the colonised subject would also attempt to beat the master at his own game and dismantle him. Bhabha also remarks that mimicry or partial assimilation of the colonised into the coloniser exerts a powerful effect on

¹⁷ Op. Cit., 70-71.

¹⁸ *The Location of Culture*, 70-71.

¹⁹ Ibid., 86.

²⁰ Ibidem.

the identity of the former. Bhabha's major contribution to postcolonial theory is also the concept of intercultural space where hybrid identity is formed in an in-between space. Racism has indeed created pathological cultural hybrids.

Cultural Hybridity/Liminality

The term 'hybridity' has become one of the buzz words of late twentieth century critical theory cited and celebrated on the one hand, as a space of resistance and protest, and on the other hand, as one of tolerance. As the traditional usage of this concept is embedded in the narratives of evolution, the hybrid is commonly thought to be a fusion of two different species (botanical or animal), but owing to colonialist ideologies of race emphasising the alleged virtues of the white colonisers, the term acquired a negative connotation. Western thought therefore used the word in the framework of racial thinking, and promoted nineteenth-century ideas of race. In contemporary cultural theories, the term is used in a counter-discursive way as an alternative to the once dominant narratives praising white supremacy.

In Bhabha's colonial scenario, the establishment of a hybrid and liminal identity recalls his notion of mimicry: "almost the same, but not quite."²¹ Rethinking questions of identity, Bhabha provides a theory of cultural hybridity and analyses the liminality of hybridity as a paradigm of colonial anxiety. Tackling the history of nations and colonies from the perspective of liminal spaces between dominator and dominated, Bhabha insists that all cultural identity is essentially and originally hybrid. The gist of his argument is that cultures and nations do not construct themselves out of their own essence, but they do so through interactions with other cultures. Thus cultural identity is always and already a composite of differences. According to him, the oppressed culture, though rendered mute, participates in the formation of an identity that is neither purely that of the coloniser nor that of the colonised. From this intermixing of races emerges a new identity. Also because of his ambivalent relationship to the dominant culture, the subaltern finds himself in an in-between

²¹ Of Mimicry of Man,' 86.

space, which Bhabha calls the “third space of enunciation,” or “liminal space.”²² By liminal space, Bhabha means the site of conflict, interaction, and mutual assimilation that the cross-cultural contact involves. This third/liminal/interstitial space is an ambivalent, hybrid space.²³

Significantly, Bhabha describes this third space as the unhomely, in Freudian terms, and suggests that what is involved in the construction of hybrid identity is “an estrangement sense of relocation of the home and the world - the unhomeliness - that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations.”²⁴ To be at ‘home’ is not only to have a shelter, but it also entails stability, security and acts as a means of orientation by assigning us a sense of place, a sense of belonging. In the light of Bhabha’s remarks, then, we might argue that the colonised occupies a displaced position. As the ‘unhomely’ is defined as the archetypal condition of colonial and postcolonial situations, it is not surprising that Bhabha approaches the history of English colonialism from precisely this liminal position.

A crucial trope in Bhabha’s analysis of the coloniser/colonised relations is also their interdependence. In Bhabha’s view, the oppressor and the oppressed cannot be viewed as entities that define themselves separately. His introduction to *The Location of Culture* sheds light upon the liminal negotiation of cultural identity across differences of race, class, gender, and cultural traditions. He suggests that this negotiation of cultural identity by involving a constant interface produces a reciprocal and mutable recognition/representation of cultural difference, an argument Fanon shares. Bhabha concludes that “colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity, but a problematic of colonial representation.”²⁵ He thus encourages a thorough rethinking of nationalism, representation, and resistance that above all emphasizes the hybridity that characterises the site of colonial encounter, a liminal space in

²² Ibid., 37.

²³ The term, ‘ambivalence,’ has been first used in psychoanalysis. It refers to the presence of contradictory feelings such as love and hate and has become a major symptom in case histories of schizophrenia. This ambivalence of hybridity is determined by the power relationships within the colonial scenario.

²⁴ *The Location of Culture*, 9.

²⁵ Ibid., 114.

which cultural differences articulate. Bhabha, thus re-appropriates Derrida's notion of *différance* to suggest cultural difference and its representation and negotiation in the form of writing.²⁶ He refuses to accept the well-known narrative of colonialist authority silencing and repressing native tradition. Bhabha thus gives more credit to the colonised subject's agency to gain a voice than Gayatri Spivak who underlines the impossibility for the subaltern to speak.

Culture Under Female Eyes

Since Simone de Beauvoir's ground-breaking work, *The Second Sex*, (1953) in which she voiced the now famous phrase "One is not born, but rather one becomes a woman,"²⁷ gender, like many areas of imperial history has come to the forefront of hot cultural debates. Feminist history is releasing women from their obscurity of being exclusively 'the angel of the house.' Feminist discourse shares many similarities with postcolonial theory, for this reason the two fields are regarded as complementary. Both discourses concern themselves with the struggle against oppression and injustice, yet one blind spot of postcolonial theory is its lack of focus on gender issues, which is particularly evident in the work of most male critics who relegate gender to a footnote. While postcolonial writers have created narratives to subvert monologic imperialism, there has indeed been a tendency among male writers to ignore the imprisonment of women within indigenous patriarchy. Significantly, in Said's *Orientalism*, Orientalist representations are mainly male-made. This explains why the Orient is often represented in feminine terms. The East is feminised, passive, submissive ultimately domesticated by the West which is masculinised therefore active and dominating. Said also asserts that in Orientalist writing "women are usually the creatures of a male-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing."²⁸ This has been the main bone of contention of the feminists. The latter stress the fact that colonial oppression has affected men and women in different ways as females have often been subjected to a "double

²⁶ *The Location of Culture*, 105.

²⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1953) trans. H. M. Parshley (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 301.

²⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 207.

colonisation.”²⁹ This trope makes way for a specific attitude of men towards women against which postcolonial women authors are writing.

The question of representation within the postcolonial context has been investigated by the critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who argues that gender reflects the legacy of hegemonic colonial relations. As a marginal figure herself, a Third-World woman and a Bengali exile living in the West, Spivak brings this personal eclecticism into her work. The question she asks is: How do we gain any knowledge of the colonial Other when his history depends upon colonial texts? Spivak’s theory takes its cue from Edward Said’s. Drawing on French intellectuals such as Jacques Derrida,³⁰ Michel Foucault and Said, she debunks Western discourse by analysing the issue of representation of the Third World subject. She names the oppressed and marginalised the ‘subaltern.’

This feminist theorist opened up the doors to Subaltern Studies³¹ some years ago with her essay, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in which she discusses the asymmetrical relationships in which gender and ethnicity have positioned woman as Other. In her analysis of the domestication of women, she remarks that caught

between patriarchy and imperial subject constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling that is the displaced figuration of the Third World woman caught between tradition and modernity, culturalism and development.³²

Shunned by her society because she is the female, and ostracized by the colonisers who labelled her ‘heathen,’ the woman thus engages in a continual struggle to maintain individuality against all odds.

²⁹ Cf. Kirsten Holst Petersen & Anna Rutherford, ‘A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women’s Writing’ (Sydney, Australia: Dangaroo P, 1986).

³⁰ As the English translator of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (1967) trans., (1974) it is not surprising that Derrida is a significant influence on Spivak’s work.

³¹ The task of the postcolonial, according to the ‘subaltern’ school of Indian historiography, is to brush the history of the nation against the grain, and recover the fragments of tradition and of the people’s history.

³² Cited in *Postcolonial Criticism*, 304.

Spivak also takes her position along the same lines as Bhabha. Her texts exemplify Bhabha's notion of hybridity. An important point she makes, in her above-cited article, is the fact that the native society is split up into social groups forming elites and spaces in-between ie. hybrid groups. Thus, she concerned herself with the people and subaltern classes group. However unlike Bhabha who asserted that a native voice could be recovered, the gist of Spivak's argument in her article is that imperialism's epistemic belligerence decimated the traditional culture and left "no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak."³³ Spivak also argues that to retrieve the lost voice of the subaltern subject is to risk complicity in an essentialist, and Western model of subjectivity that ultimately keeps the subaltern woman muted because her speech is always improperly interpreted. Her question is whether this group can speak for itself, or is simply rendered as the subject of representation through the voices of others as Fanon advocated.

Spivak's argument however departs markedly from Fanon's. The task of the intellectual, for her, is not to speak for the subaltern but to lay bare the processes by which she/he has been silenced, she thus calls for social consciousness, this entails of course, female consciousness. To illustrate her point, Spivak argues that First World feminists are often mistaken in considering that their gender authorises them to speak for Third World women. In Spivak's words, First World feminists must "learn to stop feeling privileged as women."³⁴ They must learn to speak *to*, not *for* women. She provides a good example in her evaluation of Julia Kristeva's work on Chinese women. Spivak criticises the French feminist for appropriating Third World women to serve the interests of First World feminists. This is a compelling instance of what Spivak calls "the inbuilt colonialism of First World feminism toward the Third."³⁵ In this sense, Western feminism cannot escape implication in the political

³³ Can the Subaltern Speak?, 27.

³⁴ Gayatri Spivak, 'French Feminism in an International Frame,' in *Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (Routledge, 1987), 136.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 153.

framework and as such replicates unequal power relations between First and Third World women, a point clearly made by Chandra Mohanty in her essay ‘Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses.’³⁶ We would therefore argue that Third world women are cast as the victims of a triple colonisation, patriarchal, imperialist, and First World feminist.

The systematic negation of the other person by the coloniser and patriarchy and his/her denial of all attributes of humanity has inevitably given rise to cultural nationalism. The events that took place in the colonised countries, at the end of the nineteenth century, bear the hallmarks of a colonised peoples’ anti-colonial struggle through the revival of a culture that attempts to assert difference from the coloniser. This involves the reversal of stereotypes by which the coloniser has marked the colonised’s cultural difference as inferior. Cultural Nationalism can thus be seen as the apotheosis of independence.

In his essay, ‘On National Culture,’ Fanon observes that a distinct and separate national culture entails a distinct and separate nation. He thus demands a nation as the site of the quest for autonomy and self-determination for as he explains “in the colonial situation, a culture, which is doubly deprived of the support of the nation and the state, falls away and dies.”³⁷ For those whose traditional communities are crumbling, the nation offers a new community on a grand scale in which they could find again a social identity and in whose service they could regain dignity and purpose as they fight to liberate themselves from alien overlords. But is it possible to clearly define a nation? What characteristics are to be found in common among the denizens of a nation?

In the many definitions of the nation four elements stand out as essential. A nation is associated with a particular territory to which it lays claim as the traditional national homeland, one shaped to a common mold by generations of shared historical experience.

³⁶ Cited in Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman, ed., *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory* (N.York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 196 -220.

³⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove P, 1961), 197.

Nation is also a community of people who feel that they belong together. Above all, it is a space where they share a sense of common identity which lies at its roots, a common language, the sense of the existence of a 'we' which is distinguished from all the others who make up an alien 'they.' The nation thus exemplifies social cohesion. But given the fragmentation of the colonised countries' identities, how can then a nation restore its identity?

In the words of Homi Bhabha, "Nation and narration are not easily separated for the one implies the other."³⁸ He therefore sees writing as a symptom of the native's cultural dis(location), and re-location from what he calls the in-between space, a space of liminality as discussed earlier. Said validates this statement by arguing that narrative is an important strategy for countering the "official view of the colonised as ahistorical and hence fixed in time and space."³⁹ The disappearance of empire therefore turned into the most cogent force driving the demand for narratives of identity in the peripheral space. The demeaning and in caricature representations of the colonised countries' histories and cultures led the postcolonial writer to claim a break from European culture and define his people anew. Hence, a notable efflorescence of literary creation in postcolonial countries followed the drive towards the assertion of political independence.

6.2. Postcolonial Literature

Helen Tiffin and Diana Brydon define postcolonial literatures as a move

from the monocentric into the polyphonic, from the dominance of a single culture into convergent cultures, from pure ancestry into hybridisation [...] Postcolonial fictions help decolonise our imaginations, by enacting various modes of escape from the mental straitjackets in which imperial habits of mind had locked them.⁴⁰

³⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 3.

³⁹ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 49.

⁴⁰ Cited in David Punter, *Post-colonial Literature* (Edinburgh, Scot.: Edinburgh UP, 1997), 33.

The writers of *The Empire Writes Back* for their part, describe it as literature which “focuses on that relationship which has provided the most creative and psychological impetus in the writing, [and expresses] the rationale of the grouping in a common past.”⁴¹ Viewed from this angle then, postcolonial literature is based on the typology of writing back to that othering discourse described by postcolonial theorists. In an effort to restore a positive sense of culture, the postcolonial writers set out a re-reading of canonical French, Belgian and English texts to challenge the image of the colonised, and correct the fabricated versions of truth, based on prejudice and ignorance, as provided by the Western canon, rescuing as it were, native culture from colonialist misrepresentations. This revisionary strategy, which Said calls “reinscription,”⁴² undermines the idea that there is an ‘us’ and ‘them.’ It becomes a means of demarcation between postcolonial literature and colonial literature since this polyphony creates new voices that reverse the monocentric discourse.

The challenge for the postcolonial writer has been to articulate a world history that includes the story of the Other as told from the Other’s own perspective. Writing functions as a form of compensation for a historical experience that has been written out of existence in colonialist discourse. Writing the native’s history⁴³ thus becomes decolonisation itself. But the very notion of culture on which cultural nationalism is based is the written word; yet, both Irish and African traditions, as most traditions, are oral in nature. The writer’s audience being steeped in Western tradition, the oral tradition then appears as alien and constitutes another barrier between the coloniser and the colonised. Irish and African writers were deemed, by Westerners, unable to produce original works, consequently they could only be mimics. As such, their works have been identified as isolated off-shoots of Western literature, and

⁴¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin, eds, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 24.

⁴² Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 25.

⁴³ I would like also to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that although Conrad did not write about his homeland in *Heart Darkness*, the novella is impregnated with the writer’s first-hand experience of Russian colonialism and the concept of cultural identity is an intrinsic and crucial component in this novella.

relegated to marginal and subordinate positions. Our contention is that a book is not an *ex-nihilo* production. Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, Europeans borrowed from non-Western texts, especially Arabic texts, so that Western literature is not original literature as it is believed but has been produced in the crucible of a history of interactions going back to ancient times. In a postcolonial context, such appropriations establish a kind of dialogue, even if it is an oppositional dialogue between literary traditions where first there was monologue.⁴⁴ This dialogism should therefore be celebrated rather than rejected as unoriginal. It also helps break the barriers between cultures and offers a sense of collective identity. This perspective on literary influence subscribes to the Bloomian and Kristevan views,⁴⁵ which see the construction of identity in difference through the text's creation of its own voice via distortion and transformation of the earlier text. As African and Irish literary productions were deemed to be the product of Western influence, cultural decolonisation appeared as a challenge to this idea of dependence by disrupting the assumptions embedded in that canon. Nationalist politics and racial affirmation were major issues in the early examples of African and Irish literatures. Europe's silenced Others started to speak in their own voices through a dialogic process, thereby creating a hybrid postcolonial literary identity. Producing a national literature, in Fanon's view, helps to reconstitute the identity of the colonised. He defines this restoration of identity as a people's revolution.⁴⁶ It is against this background that Fanon calls for national consciousness as a vital step for anti-colonial resistance, and for a direct involvement of the native intellectuals, thinkers and writers alike. The native writer's task is to aid in the process of cultural and personal re-identification by acting as a conveyor of the national struggle to the people, but also in eroding the biases often ascribed to native cultures. This however seems quite a difficult task since those liberatory people are

⁴⁴ Michail M. Bakhtin describes the novelistic text as a heteroglossia of social voices. Cf. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas P, 1981), 301.

⁴⁵ Cf. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975) and Julia Kristeva, *Sémiotiké: Recherches pour une Sémanalyse* (Paris:Seuil, 1969).

⁴⁶ Although Fanon's argument focuses on Algeria, his reasoning is applicable to many if not all states.

themselves “bearers of a hybrid identity,”⁴⁷ as Bhabha noted in his article on ‘Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences.’ The nation becomes split by what Bhabha calls the “conceptual ambivalence.”⁴⁸ Bhabha’s and Fanon’s arguments are forceful because they reveal the paradoxes and contradictions of cultural identity in narratives of liberation. Since the act of restoring the native Self to history is itself dependent on a Western language, the questions that arise are then: does the act of restoration really lead to the formation of a new culture or just repeat, under the guise of nationalism, colonialist discourse? Is it possible for a national literature to develop when it is not carried by the national language?

Linguistic Fracture

The role of language is essential in the debated fields of representation, and power relations in patriarchal, colonial, and class structures. Fanon notes that to speak one’s language “means to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization [...] a man who has language [...] possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. Mastery of language allows remarkable power.”⁴⁹ Thus a language is not merely a medium of communication, but also the repository of a cultural tradition, a way of living and of expression which helps to convey a sense of identity upon its native-speakers. And in her insightful book, Claire Kramsch argues that foreign language learning itself contains within it the means to facilitate cross-cultural communication, and adds that it is mainly through dialogue that conflict can become a catalyst for change, because it involves, “fundamental realignments of value and perceptions among the participants.”⁵⁰ This implies that cross-cultural communication can become part of a systematic effort to change perceptions of the other. However, during the colonial period, the imposition of a foreign language not only displaced native speech, but also became the very means of ideological domination (Bhabha,

⁴⁷ Cf. Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), 208.

⁴⁸ *The Location of Culture*, 146.

⁴⁹ *Black Skin, White Masks*, 17-8.

⁵⁰ Claire Kramsch, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 232.

The Location of Culture, 152). Fanon explains that it is through language that the Other is created.⁵¹ Indeed he who has power over language has power over others. The coloniser's language was a major element in ideological definitions of Self and Other. By forcing colonised people to abandon their own language and adopt that of the imperialist, the coloniser stripped the native country of its very soul.

During the colonial period, language policy put in place by the British, Belgian and French colonisers tended to promote their languages to the detriment of the indigenous languages because the latter were viewed as key obstacles to successful assimilation. By adhering to the French language, or the English language, respectively the Algerians, Congolese, Nigerians and Irish had been more deeply confirmed in their original feelings and prejudices, and more thoroughly kept under the influence and direction of the coloniser.

Reclaiming the mother tongue is thus an allegory of national rebirth. The question of language is central to the postcolonial experience. The campaign to revive the native language has become an instrument of the nation's pride and self-respect. Examining postcolonial processes of linguistic displacement, Trinh T. Minh-ha affirms that "to write clearly one must incessantly prune, eliminate, forbid, purge; in other words, practise what may be called an ablution of language."⁵² But how to effect this purgation when as a legacy of colonial acculturation, a great number of postcolonial writers, whose aim is to restore their own culture, continue to write in the language of their erstwhile masters to express their identity?

It is worth noting that some critics view the adoption of the coloniser's language as the *lingua franca* in their writings, as a threat to the identity of a national literature. They argue that in so doing, the colonised writer sacrifices his cultural soul and his identity and that all efforts to express his innermost feelings in a language other than the mother tongue could end

⁵¹ *The Wretched of the Earth*, 18.

⁵² T. Minh-ha Trinh, *Woman, Native and Other: Writing Postcoloniality & Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989), 16-7.

only in approximations. In *Decolonising the Mind*,⁵³ Ngugi for instance, argues that the imposition of European languages over Majority World cultures amounts to their annihilation. The use of the foreign language itself becomes a subversive practice, thereby decentering, deterritorialising. Jewish Tunisian writer, Albert Memmi, for his part, though acknowledging the work of Maghreban writers as bridge-building between cultures, underlines the corrosive aspect of French on the mother tongue. He views the use of the French language by Maghreban writers as “un drame linguistique.”⁵⁴ For him moreover, “possession of the two languages is [...] participation in two psychic and cultural realms. Here the two worlds are [always] in conflict: they are those of the colonizer and the colonized.”⁵⁵ The cultural conflict suggested by this bi-cultural heritage is indeed the ultimate paradox facing Maghreban writers in their attempt to construct identity. They found themselves caught between the impositions of the coloniser on the one hand, and the desire for recognition and affirmation of identity on the other. The sense of loss of language and culture generated by French education is for Maghreban writers in general, a second severing of the umbilical cord.⁵⁶ Using the French language thus does not signify betrayal of one’s culture, or one’s identity; on the contrary, it has helped them reclaim their lost heritage and secured them their own identity. It has also become a language of communion with the rest of the world as Mouloud Mammeri has it, who adds that one could perfectly be an Algerian nationalist and still write in French,⁵⁷ a point of view some Irish and African writers share. Actually what matters is not the linguistic medium to which a writer resorts but rather the uses to which that language is put.

⁵³ Wa Thiongo Ngugi, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language* (London: James Currey, 1989).

⁵⁴ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (New York: Orion Books, 1965), 106-7.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ Yacine Kateb, *Le Polygone Etoilé* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 181.

⁵⁷ Mouloud Mammeri discussed these views with Abdellah Mazouni in an interview in November 1965. Cf. Jean Déjeux, *La Littérature Algérienne Contemporaine* (Paris : Presse Universitaire de France, 1975), 207.

The question of “how to curse in the master’s tongue”⁵⁸ has become the quintessential embodiment of the process of linguistic homelessness. The adoption of the coloniser’s language is the very weapon used by the postcolonial writer to fight off the enemy, to denounce the colonisers’ projects. It is a way to challenge the representations which have attempted to fix and define the colonised. French in the Mahgreban novel or English in Irish or black African writings function as languages through which the writers seek to create a sense of cultural specificity and difference, hence to construct a new identity out of the debris of colonialist discourse.

So far we have seen that postcolonial theories examine the ways in which representation and modes of perception have been used by colonial power as essential tools to maintain colonised peoples subjected to colonial rule. This racist imperialist discourse has inevitably given rise to many anti-colonialist writings among them, William Butler Yeats’s, James Joyce’s, Joseph Conrad’s, Chinua Achebe’s, and Assia Djebar’s. Their works betray an ambivalence one can detect in the works of postcolonial theorists, but their narratives certainly speak more eloquently than theory.

⁵⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* in Stanley Wells. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. 2nd Revised edition. Reproached by Miranda for his ingratitude towards her pedagogic gift of language, Caliban replies: “You taught me language, and my profit on’t/ Is, I know how to curse ” (Act I, ii).

Chapter VII

Apocalypse Then

They talk to me about progress, about ‘achievements,’ diseases cured improved standards of living,” but I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out [...] I am talking about thousands of men sacrificed [...] I am talking about millions of men torn from their gods, their land, their habits, their life- from life, from the dance, from wisdom.

Césaire Aimé, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955), 16.

The prosperity and progress of Europe have indeed been built up upon the ashes of the so-called inferior peoples. An analysis of William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Chinua Achebe, Assia Djebar inevitably raises issues related to empire’s crippling economic, political, cultural and psychological legacies. These writers act as historians, demystifying notions of progress and the European encounter with the Other. Their conceptions of Europe, and their anti-colonial attitude had been determined respectively by their Irish, Polish or African heritage, especially by their views upon the partitions of Ireland, Poland, Africa, and their feelings that their countries had been victimized by European empires. In this chapter we shall attempt to show that despite the long span of time that separates these writers and their different backgrounds, the same crushing experience is found in their works. Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, (1899) Yeats’s ‘The Second Coming,’ (1921) Joyce’s *Dubliners*, (1914) Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Djebar’s *L’Amour, la Fantasia* (1985) reveal to us the truth about colonialism and imperialism.

Set respectively in a Congolese, Irish, Nigerian and Algerian tragic setting, Conrad’s, Yeats’s, Joyce’s, Achebe’s and Djebar’s texts offer examples of colonial practices and set forth a panorama of Western civilisation which they saw as engulfed in a pitch-black ‘heart of

darkness.’ Their narratives function as receptacles of human experience, and their emotional charge allows the reader to see many otherwise invisible facets of the colonial experience.

7. 1. The Inglorious Enterprise in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*

In his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, (1897) Conrad stressed the visual element in writing: “My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel; it is before all, to make you see” (vii). Conrad tried to make the reader see the destructive chaos prevailing in the world because of man’s disruption of the world order. Such a wound as that left by Russian oppression in Poland, his exile to Russia under conditions which killed his mother and hastened his father’s death, helped Conrad understand the trauma of conquest and sharpened his insight. *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad told William Blackwood, his publisher in 1899, was about “the criminality of inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa.”¹ So it is specifically the appalling abuses involved in the colonial exploitation and the civilising approach of the Belgians in the ‘Dark Continent’ that Conrad exposed in his 1899 novella.

Heart of Darkness is a literary transposition of the writer’s voyage to Africa from which he returned completely disillusioned with the world’s moral order, and outraged by the human deprivation he saw there. Conrad chronicled a phase of history and laid bare the strife that was going on in the late Victorian era. His narrator, Marlow, starts with a parable of a Roman conqueror of England “nineteen hundred years ago [...]” (HD, 8) who came upon the same barbarity as the Belgians,’ as revealed in *Heart of Darkness*. Greed, violence, and ruthlessness have indeed always existed. But Conrad never imagined the extent of the horrors he was to find in the Dark Continent. Colonialism, he says, is “the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration.”² It is “just robbery

¹ Cited in *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness*, ed., Ross C. Murfin (Boston, New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 100.

² Cited by Ian Watt, ‘Heart of Darkness and Nineteenth Century Thought,’ in *Joseph’s Conrad’s Heart of Darkness*, ed., Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1987), 77. Adam Hochschild also brought the horrendous situation in the Congo to the

with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind [...]”(HD, 21). The writer paints a hideous picture of the horrors of colonialist ventures: “They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got” (HD, 21). The images in Conrad’s narrative highlight not only man’s alienation but also his sense of absurdity. From the opening pages, the reader is filled with a sense of the absurd, the absurd gap between what man professes to be and what he is in reality; between man’s seeming rationality and a world out of focus: “It was as unreal as everything else – as the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work,” (HD,39) observes Marlow. If absurdity is acknowledged, then what are man’s guidelines? What keeps man from falling when tempted by the devil within, by corruption without? Such were the questions that preoccupied Conrad. In a letter to Cunninghame Graham, in 1898, Conrad revealed his most personal fears: that in a world of ever-shifting illusions nothing really matters and no one cares.

To make his argument forceful, Conrad uses comparisons and contrasts. At the start of his novella, he presents an image of peace, harmony and security gradually vanishing and giving way to insecurity and ominous danger. The sea and the sky “were welded together without a joint,” says the frame-narrator. The Nellie “was at rest [...] the wind was nearly calm [...]The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance [...] The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light” (HD, 27, 28). Even the name given to the ship, ‘Nellie,’ suggests the comforting, reassuring feminine presence, that of a mother for usually a vessel conjures up images of tempestuous seas and threatening

world’s attention. In *King Leopold’s Ghost* (1998) Hochschild denounced what he saw in the Congo as outright robbery and imposture, and compared the death toll in the Belgian Congo to the Holocaust and Stalin’s purges. He narrated the story of Henry Stanley Morton’s expeditions to Africa and his tendency toward brutality, his “sadistic streak” (196) and revealed the trickery and egoism that drove the colonisation of the Congo, the greed that fired Leopold’s interest in the Congo, and how this ended up in crimes against humanity. Yet this is only half the tale told in *King Leopold’s Ghost*. Hochschild reconstructed the largely untold history of the Congolese genocide through the work of several men, Europeans and Americans, black and white who dared unveil Leopold’s crimes. By situating his story within the wider context of European and African history, he showed colonialism as a phenomenon not just taking place in Africa but as one that had worldwide repercussions, one with which we still have to contend. Hochschild also used Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* to illustrate the forms of abuse prevalent in Congo. With convincing details, the author demonstrates the close relation between Conrad’s fictitious characters and the real people figures.

storms. These comforting qualities set at the very beginning of the novella, enhanced by images of light emphasise the presence of the life-sustaining Apollo.

In *Heart of Darkness*, the antithetical forces represented by Apollo and Dionysus are to be found in the opposition between light and darkness, between creation and destruction. Light corresponds to the ancient world before the coming of the coloniser while darkness is associated with the insecurity reigning in the new world. As the night - a symbol of darkness - descends over the river Thames, such reassuring qualities vanish giving way to Dionysian elements. The air above Gravesend “seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest and the greatest town on earth,” says the narrator (28). Here then starts the clash between the African civilisation threatened by the Damoclean sword, and the Belgian realm, destroying peace and harmony. Marlow rightly observes that it “did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention” (60).

As Marlow travels further from the outer station to the central station and finally up the river to the inner station, he encounters scenes of torture, cruelty and near slavery. Africa is no longer the “blank space”³ on the map he once dreamt to visit because it has become a place of darkness. Victorian explorers, missionaries and scientists flooded in supposedly to bring the light of civilisation. This light however is refracted through an imperialist ideology that sought in the first place the elimination of native so-called “savage customs” (*HD*, 66). But the purpose behind the work of those light-bearers was “to tear treasure out of the bowels of the land [...] with no moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe” (*HD*, 31). This is indeed the target behind the work of King Leopold II of Belgium who ruled the Congo State as an absolute sovereign trampling the natives’ lives.

³ As an adolescent, Conrad was particularly fascinated by maps. One day, he put his finger on a spot in the very middle of the then white heart of Africa and declared he would go there. Cited in *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness*, ed., Ross C. Murfin (Boston & New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 7.

For Conrad moreover, the imperial enterprise is not only senseless but inconceivably improvident. In this strangely insane world, a profusion of such images as the railway truck, a vestige of European civilisation, “lying there [...] as dead as the carcass of some animal,” (HD, 28) and above all the “objectless blasting [which] was all the work going on,” (HD, 30) reveals Conrad’s feelings about the colonial world which brought nothing but wars and disasters of all sorts. As Marlow puts it: “There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight” (HD, 29). The mid and late Victorians overlooked the fact that the building of the railroad would entail loss of human life. In his statement about the building of a railway, Conrad draws the reader’s attention to the violence against an alien country and its people. The “men toiling up the path [...] victims of an inhuman imperialist Inferno” (HD, 30) have become shades of themselves: One “[...] could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope [...] and all were connected together with a chain [...] rhythmically clinking,” (HD, 30) says Conrad. Hence, the railroad proved to be not an instrument of progress and civilisation, rather the best means for exploitation and oppression. It disfigured nature and destroyed whole communities.

However, it is not merely gunboats and railways that are depicted in *Heart of Darkness* but the people involved in colonialism. The vapid and gutless people Marlow meets have all succumbed to the “flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil” (65) of imperial Europe. Despite his great shock, Marlow seems to find excuses and justifications to the so-called pilgrims’ behaviour: all the crimes are committed in the name of progress for all these men were “emissaries of light, science and progress” (HD, 36). This devout gang Conrad adds, called itself the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, (HD, 46) but the chilling line written on page seventeenth of Kurtz’s report, “Exterminate all the brutes” proves quite the opposite. Exploration has turned into extermination. The European’s belief in the idea of “humanizing, improving and instructing” (HD, 48) has led to the most ruthless and appalling destruction the

white man has ever wrought. Against the “sinister backcloth” (*HD*, 61) of corruption and gloom, African men are dying as if stricken by a pestilence, or paralysed. Those once free men, exhausted by hard physical work, have become “nothing earthly [...] but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom,” (*HD*, 32) and dying slowly. The amazing juxtaposition from dying Africans and the waste caused by the trading company in Africa to the company’s chief accountant ridiculously done up in the fashions of Europe is food for thought and causes the reader to ask this question: Is colonialism a justifiable and glorious enterprise? Conrad’s narrator provides his answer to the question: “the conquest of the earth [...] mostly means the taking it away from those who have different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves [...]” (*HD*, 51).

Conrad thus lifts the curtain on a hideous world, a world which mocks the very basis of existence by emphasizing the supremacy of material commodities over humanity itself. The sense of human waste that pervades the story is best revealed in the white luxurious ivory itself which has become the white man’s own *raison d’être*. The pilgrims seem bewitched by it. That object takes on magical significance. It has become a kind of totem: “the word ‘ivory’ rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying for it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all,” says Conrad (*HD*, 38). It is for ivory that the ‘Dark Continent’ has been plundered and untold numbers of people maimed or slaughtered. These images suggest that resistant objects have superseded sensitivity, compassion, humanity itself. The natives, clearly, have become utilitarian objects.

It is the acquisition of that luxury commodity which has made Kurtz so contemptuous of individual lives. In the African wilderness, as much as in business, only the strong survive, and Kurtz obviously is one of the strongest. What counts for him is to amass a great fortune and the end plainly justifies the means. The depiction of the insatiable Kurtz on the stretcher with “his mouth wide [open which] gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had

wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him” (76) is telling. It recalls a hungry lion ready for its supper. Kurtz stepped over his threshold into an eternal darkness and found the tiger and ape within himself in the ‘Dark Continent.’ The frenzied Kurtz claimed the righteousness of God for doing everything he wanted. Like King Leopold, he became the Congo butcher, the very man whose acts cost life to millions of people. He went to the ‘Dark Continent’ to enlighten those so-called uncivilised natives, but in the process he broke tribal communities and destroyed not only the indigenous cultures but also disgraced the whole of Europe. The representative of Europe⁴ manoeuvred for advantage, searching for more power and he found the lever in the colonial adventure of ivory.

The end of the story is also shaped by the horror of the narrator’s inescapable nightmarish vision. Marlow returns to the sepulchral city, unable to shake off the phantom vision of Kurtz. The implacable vision of Kurtz, a “shadow insatiable [...] a shadow darker than the shadow of light, ” (90) accompanied him when he entered the Intended’s house.⁵ Marlow did not dare disclose that this ‘remarkable’ man had succumbed to “the fascination of the abomination” (*HD*, 21) lest the Intended’s world would rush asunder and “the heavens would fall upon [her] head” (*HD*, 94). This apparently heroic gesture compelled Marlow to realise that he had become indirectly an accomplice of the ignoble enterprise. He had become as he said: “as much of a pretence as the rest of the bewitched pilgrims” (*HD*, 42). The thought of his communion with the “pilgrims” became intolerable and odious to his soul.

Thus in *Heart of Darkness* Conrad maintained a crusade against Belgian colonialism. The Polish writer made it clear that greed and will-to-power were the incentives behind the progressive claims of those ‘conquistadores,’ the empire-builders of the twentieth century.

⁴ In a 1903 letter to K. Waliszewski, Conrad noted that “[he] took great care to give a cosmopolitan origin to Kurtz.”

⁵ The last part of *Heart of Darkness* recalls the apocalyptic ending of Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’: before the ancestral House of Usher collapses, Roderick Usher hears a strident and most unusual screaming which urges him to make a horrified confession: “Not hear it? Yes, I hear it, and have heard it [...] yet I dared not- oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! I dared not- I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb!” Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Fall of The House of Usher’ (Burton’s *Gentleman Magazine*, 1839), 11.

The novella emphasized the corruption of self, the absence of social morality, the manipulation of people for purely egoistic ends, and the failure to remain faithful to man and society, in the absence of the two moors, “a watchful policeman [or] a butcher at the corner” (*HD*,64). Despite the aura of success and greatness that surrounded the European man, Conrad’s spokesman, Marlow, finally discovered that the ‘idea,’ he thought to be behind the Europeans’ work in Africa was mere illusion. There was yet much to redeem in modern civilisation. The foundation of the so-called civilising mission was hollow at the core. The most striking example of the limitation of the imperialistic ideology was manifested in Kurtz. The representative of Europe failed to bring the light of civilisation, instead he brought death on a large scale. All his “burning noble words” (*HD*, 82) proved to be a varnish. Thus attuned to the oppressed, distanced from the oppressor, Conrad inevitably saw the colonial encounter as a painful disruption of the world’s order. The fate of the human race is also a question that compelled Irish writers such as William Butler Yeats and James Joyce to express their thoughts as to the imminent destruction of mankind.

7. 2. The Centre of Paralysis in Joyce’s *Dubliners* and Yeats’s ‘The Second Coming.’

In their indictment of colonial politics, which distorted the very meaning of civilisation by indulging in genocide, Yeats and Joyce scaled a height where one is reminded of Conrad’s vision of the world at the edge of apocalypse. It is instructive in this regard to consider the similarities between the world depicted in Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914) and Yeats’s ‘The Second Coming,’(1921).

In his letter to Constantine Curran, in 1904, in which he first proposed his collection of stories, Joyce explained that he “call[ed] the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city” (*Letters* I, 55). In another letter to his publisher, Grant Richards, Joyce stated clearly his purpose: “My intention was to write a

chapter of the moral history of my country, and I chose Dublin for its scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis” (*Letters*, II, 134).

Joyce’s series of short stories is a texture of epiphanies. The term ‘epiphany,’ deriving from Greek means ‘appearance’ or ‘manifestation’ and is related to a verb meaning ‘shine forth.’ In the early Christian period, the term ‘epiphaneia’ took on a religious denotation as a visible manifestation of a hidden divinity. The liturgy epiphany is transposed into the literary context of Joyce’s *Dubliners* not as a manifestation of divine power and hegemony, but as one of impotence, paralysis and death. In this sense, it could also mean ‘Revelation,’ the spiritual illumination to which Yeats referred and translated into the “rough beast” (line 21). These thematic inversions are heightened by inverse symbolism of the epiphany icons of light. Darkness and light function, as in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, as moral opposites: shadow, mist, dimness, light, all suggesting evil and death.

In *Dubliners*, Joyce explores the ways in which history dominates the lives of the characters and paralyses them into inaction. He uses a medical concept, that of ‘paralysis’ to depict the ills of Irish society, insisting on the fact that Ireland’s colonial experience is the cause of this malignant disease. From the opening story to the close of *Dubliners*, Joyce depicts a culturally and spiritually paralysed society as well as the dehumanizing experience of modern life.

If the strategy of a text is as Edward Said suggests, “the entrance to what is offered and the first step in the intentional production of meaning,”⁶ then Joyce’s first story, ‘The Sisters,’ corroborates the writer’s stated intention to betray the paralysis of his native city. The theme of paralysis is established right from the first paragraph of the story. The tale evokes a Dublin as a house of mourning, and opens with: “There was no hope for him this time”(*D*, 7). This first sentence prepares the reader for the physical decay overtaking the characters. In

⁶ Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 42.

topographical terms, the narrator's mental journeying represents a set of concentric circles enclosing a nuclear core of deadening paralysis. As Old Cotter gazes up at the window, he says "softly to [him]self the word paralysis. It has always sounded strangely in [his] ears, like the word gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism [...] It filled [him] with fear[...] (*D*, 7). Yet he longed "to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work"(7). If paralysis depicts the moral and physical condition of Dubliners and their search for freedom, transcendence and fulfillment, the term 'gnomon' re-emphasises its absence at a particular time in history, and the word 'simony' points to the corruption of institutions and their representatives such as the Church as the primary hindrance to people's fulfillment. Throughout the collection, Joyce describes the clergy as ineffectual, and even malevolent, and stresses that the differing economic circumstances of the two cultures, Protestant and Catholic are also responsible for the paralysis of Irish society.

This theme is dramatised in 'Araby' by the contrast between the grim circumstances of the narrator's family and the splendour of the Araby bazaar. Joyce suggests a Protestant link with the bazaar by having the narrator's aunt say that she hopes it is "not some Freemason affair"(30). In Ireland, the Freemasons were exclusively Protestants, the Catholics being prohibited by the Church from joining secrets associations. In 'Araby' moreover, darkness has enwrapped objects and people alike. Joyce lingers on the description of the environment. His images of a vacuous, joyless, and stagnant environment in 'Araby' recalls Conrad's. Though writing at different times and about different locations, in a sense, Joyce's depiction completes Conrad's. While Conrad presented a wider picture of the larger environment, the African landscape, Joyce enters into Irish houses, into the rooms. The boy's house, says Joyce, is at the "blind end" (*D*, 29) of a sombre and silent street set apart from the neighbouring houses that gaze at one another "conscious of decent lives within them," (*D*, 29) pointing out that no such decent life is lived in the boy's house. The selection of terms such as

“blind”, “uninhabited house,” “detached” and “imperturbable,” (D, 29) anticipate the final descriptive epiphany in “darkness.” The discovery of the abyss lying between dream and illusion is displayed precisely in that darkness. In the bazaar, the boy finds only demoralisation, almost total darkness and silence. The narrator’s eyes unceasingly run from interiors to exteriors in a series of flashbacks. Brightness and darkness meet continuously: the lamps of the street, the lights of the kitchens, the violet colour of the sky, the glowing of the hot bodies, with the “dark muddy lanes,” (D,27) “the dark dripping gardens” (28) and “the dark odorous stables” (28). The binary opposition between light and darkness serves to qualify what happens next. The wide economic and cultural gap between the bazaar which the narrator associates with the eastern enchantment suggested by the title, and his world drive him to escape to Araby. But as soon as he enters the bazaar and sees the Café Chantant where two men are “counting money on a salver,” (32) a young lady talking and laughing with two young “gentlemen with English accents,” (32) he realises that he has entered an alien world, a world of wealth. This sophistication is further underlined by the “porcelain vases and flowered tea sets” (32) and also by the well-dressed people at the counter. Looking up into the darkness, the boy’s eyes burn with anguish and anger (33). The Araby bazaar is definitely not Irish or Catholic. This also helps confirm the received idea that English and by extension Protestant is superior, and Irish/Catholic is inferior.

In Joyce’s view, gallantry also constitutes a variant to ‘thingification’ and depersonalisation in a Fanonian sense, one that is especially pernicious because it mimics as the final scene in Joyce’s ‘The Two Gallants’ makes it clear. Joyce associates cultural violence with militarism, and believes that gallantry and militarism are different forms of the same impulse, whatever the cultural context. Thus, he links courtly gallantry with the rage to conquer and acquire. This is the metaphor that presides over in this story. The ‘gallant’ Porthos plays his patroness like a tool, hoping for a reward. The patroness, unaware that she

has been fooled, participates in her own exploitation. Corley, another ‘gallant,’ plays the same game upon Mme Coquenard by invoking a superior, social status: “I told her I was in Pim’s [...] She thinks I’m a bit of class, you know” (51). Corley’s ostensible status, and of course his gallantry, is underscored by his military bearing. He is “the son of an inspector of police” (49) and “he had inherited his father’s frame and gait. He walked with his hands by his sides, holding him erect and swaying his head from side to side” (*D*, 49). Like a soldier moreover, he “always stared straight before him as if he were on parade” (49). Joyce adds that “he was tired of knocking about, of pulling the devil by the tail” (55). This paralysis of Irish men, their alienation and anomy is often counterbalanced by drinking.

Joyce views drunkenness in Ireland not only as an outlet for frustration and violence but also as providing some solace to unhappy men. Concurrently, in much of his work, Joyce advocates the qualities of alcohol, and drunkenness as a means of release and escape from the dreariness of the characters’ lives, what he calls the “moral paralysis” of Ireland. Linking colonialism, alcohol, and child abuse, ‘Counterparts’ portrays a man’s descent into a worthless existence. The core of the story lies in how Farrington, the protagonist, adapts himself to economic and political impotence. Farrington attempts to ‘restore’ his dignity through drinking, whoring and fighting. Like other characters, he is caught in a vicious circle: he drinks and this befuddles his mind, the result of which is a set of clerical errors, which enrage him. His rage leads him to violence and he drinks again. However, Joyce himself tries to find excuses to Farrington’s brutality. How could his character not be violent when his life has been vitiated by the morbid social context? Joyce explains: “I am no friend of tyranny, as you know, but if many husbands are brutal, the atmosphere in which they live is brutal, and few wives at home can satisfy the desire for happiness,”(*Letters*, 192). Viewed from this angle thus, Joyce’s ‘Counterparts’ stages drinking as an instance of cultural survival. But is drinking

not repeating, at the level of the individual, the violent apparatus of humiliation with its system of cultural subservience?

Economic dependence paralyses the characters in 'Grace' as well. Kernan's business difficulties are partially attributed to British hegemony. British rule has stifled economic progress in Ireland by preventing the establishment of competing industries. Kernan's friend is allegorically named Power. In Joyce's story, "Power" stands for the British master whose prosperity entailed Irish poverty. "The arc of [Power's] social rise intersected the arc of his friend's decline," (154) says Joyce. The Irish is ironically named a 'friend' because of his European descent. By lending money to the Kernans, Power makes himself more powerful. Indeed, his generosity appears less altruistic than it seems. His loans keep others beholden to him just as England maintains her economic hegemony by making Ireland economically more dependent upon her. The characters' economic insecurity betrays the political anxiety in Ireland. Not only has Britain appropriated the economic infrastructure but it would never allow the Irish to become fully British, as is the case of Kernan, though the latter works for the imperialist power.

And just as the economic hardships undermine the characters' political condition, their religious faith, far from uniting them, only testifies to their social paralysis. Joyce indeed underlines that the Church paralyses Ireland spiritually, and with the Church in power, Home Rule becomes Rome Rule. At the close of 'Grace,' Father Purdon's retreat sermon, with its text for business men and professional men," (171) displays the nature of that "old" and "original faith," (163) the faith in money and position. Since Catholics and Protestants alike share this old faith, they are brothers. Thus Crofton was right to remark that their belief was the same (163). By validating the economic basis of secular authority in sermons like Purdon's, the Church actually encourages submission. The sermon moreover, reveals the complicity of the Catholic Church with the capitalist ideology of British imperialism. Thus

according to Joyce, Ireland is doubly oppressed; it serves two masters, both “God and Mammon.”⁷ At the end of ‘Grace,’ Mr. Cunningham’s list of supposedly refined people in the congregation is a hint that although members of both communities serve Mammon, the latter has not rewarded them equally.

Like ‘Grace,’ ‘Ivy day’ demonstrates the failure of Ireland to cope with these two masters. Both stories emphasise the assumptions that in politics, the Catholics are more patriotic than the Protestants and in religion more pious. Three major issues are raised in ‘Ivy Day’: the unequal relationship between England and Ireland and that between haves and have-nots within Ireland itself and the cultural differences between Catholics and Protestants. The first issue which dominates the foreground of the story constitutes grievance for Irish politicians of all shades. In this story, Charles Parnell is dead and so are the other Dubliners buried under heaps of history. Joyce makes it clear that Parnell fought and died for Irish independence; yet his sacrifice is nullified. For the hangers-on of the Committee room, the determining fact is that they are all hard up. Joyce implies that if a new Parnell came to power, his efforts would be dwarfed like his predecessor’s since everyone in the story, except Hynes, would sell his soul to the devil for only a coin. The characters’ preoccupation with petty cash is a by-product of the material conditions under which they live, and the accumulated burden of centuries of colonialism. By portraying the Dubliners without any past or future other than Dublin’s, Joyce is evoking not simply the paralysis of a perpetually ensnared present, but the repression of something nightmarish in the intertwined history of the city and the country in Ireland. His final story completes the moral history of a country that Joyce felt was the centre of paralysis.

In ‘The Dead,’ Joyce presents an epiphany which exposes a culturally sterile society. Ireland’s political bondage is complete. The song, ‘The Lass of Aughrim’ summons up a history of oppression and grief. On the one hand, the lass is a peasant girl who is refused

⁷ James Joyce, *Critical Writings* (London: Penguin, 1964), 190.

admission by the lord whose dead child she bears in her arms as a result of which, she drowns herself. On the other hand, the reference to Aughrim is to defeat, thus to historical collapse. The battle of Aughrim in 1691 was deemed the most catastrophic battle in Irish history. Amidst havoc and brute carnage, William of Orange's army asserted its victory over Catholic Ireland giving the last blow to Gaelic civilisation. The inclusion of the image of the horse and cart circling around a statue of King Billy is thus not fortuitous. Moreover, it was the West of Ireland that suffered much from the famine caused by the destruction of the potato crops. Although there is no specific reference to the famine in 'The Dead,' a reader of the history of Ireland cannot read the final paragraph without recalling the Famine to mind. Joyce concludes his final story with Gretta, Gabriel, the protagonist, and the whole of Ireland, the living and the dead, all covered by snow, a white winding sheet suggesting paralysis, an apathy that also pervades Yeats's work.

Like Joyce's work, Yeats's poetry is caught up in the task of struggle, while the future as in 'The Second Coming' holds only violence and chaos. Whereas Conrad and Joyce concerned themselves with the violence of colonialism respectively in Congolese and Irish societies, Yeats went a step further. He wrote this poem at a time when Europe and much of the rest of the world was trying to recover from the catastrophe of World War I. The world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic moment, spinning out of control as history reached the end of the outer gyre and began to move along the inner one. The violence that pervaded Conrad's novella also informs Yeats's 'The Second Coming' in which the Irish poet predicted cataclysmic changes about to be wrought upon humankind. Line two of Yeats's poem also hints at technology advancing beyond man's ability to control it. It is worth pointing that Yeats's devotion to Ireland was as great as his hatred for an urban industrialised civilisation, one which fettered the imagination and denied it access to traditional modes of feeling. He was also aware that technology had advanced to the point where mankind does evil

purposefully. Yeats's interlocking gyres are an attempt to present his cyclical view of history in visual terms, a "turning and widening gyre" (line 1) like the one in which the falcon loses its point of reference. The poet divides each gyre into different regions that represent particular kinds of historical periods.⁸ As in *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce's *Dubliners*, "mere anarchy is loosed upon the world," (line 4) like a scourge and becomes a tide dimmed by blood, recalling the bloody seas of the Revelation of St John (Rev 8:8; 12:15; 16:1-4). "The blood-dimmed tide" (line 5) is a reference to the atrocities that occurred during World War I. The history of the world is red with the blood of its victims and its rulers' hearts have darkened to the point of losing their humanity. In an early draft of this poem, Yeats wrote "vile anarchy" instead of "mere anarchy." The change allows the subsequent images of violence to intensify, and wipe out the "ceremony of innocence" upon which civilisation's greatness depends. Innocence being essentially the perception of harmony in the world, so as Yeats has it "[...] everywhere the ceremony of innocence is drowned," (line 6) disrupting the normal course of life. A second coming of troubles following that of the ancient world was about to give way to an ominous period represented by the "rough," and pitiless "beast" (line 21) which stands for the kind of future society.

The poem indeed dramatises this anxiety of verging towards a great cultural shift. It evokes a sense of gloom intensified by the shadows of grim desert birds, and a lingering sense of doom and catastrophe as in Conrad's novella. Yeats starts his poem with a falcon that can no longer hear its master and a turning gyre that continues to unravel. The vision of modern civilisation as a murderous beast in Yeats's poem goes beyond ugliness to horror: here the Christian dove and lamb and Spiritus Sancti have been supplanted by predatory images: the

⁸ In a long note on "the widening gyre" (line 1) mentioned in the poem, Yeats observed: "All our scientific, democratic, fact-accumulating, heterogeneous civilization belongs to the outward gyve and prepares not for the continuation of itself but the revelation as in a lightening flash [...] of the civilization that must slowly take its place." Cf. Richard J. Finneran, ed., *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 493.

dove by the falcon, the lamb by the sphinx⁹ and the Holy Spirit by the Spiritus Mundi - the spirit of the world.¹⁰ Thus in our opinion, the second coming does not refer to the return of Christ, but rather to a return of barbarism as evidenced by the horrors of World War I, to a recurrence of troubles. Challenging a readership imbued with Christian symbolism at that time, Yeats used the Christian context in order to chastise the people and criticise the apathy shown by Christian people as they allowed such horrors to happen. “The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity,” says Yeats (Lines 7-8). The “worst” kill, destroy and trample human lives. Like Conrad, the poet imagined that the great heritage of Western civilisation was collapsing and that the world would be swept by a tide of savagery. He thus described the conflict as a throwback to the savagery of the seventeenth century in a similar way to Herbert Spencer and novelist, George Gissing, who long before Yeats, noted that a time of re-barbarisation was coming. In his essay on ‘Re-barbarization,’ Spencer stated that in the war atmosphere of the late 1890s, much like the atmosphere depicted in *Heart of Darkness* and Yeats’s poem, “the partially dormant instincts of the savage were reawakened.”¹¹ He concluded that re-barbarisation went hand in hand with “the movement towards imperialism.”¹² Spencer also claimed that “the white savages of Europe [were] overrunning the dark savages everywhere” and that Europe “entered upon an era of social cannibalism in which the stronger nations are devouring the weaker.”¹³ And Gissing wrote in 1885 that “[...] the Masses of men [were] still living in a state of partially varnished savagery,”¹⁴ adding that “a period of struggle for existence between the nations seem[ed] to

⁹ The sphinx image became in vogue in the 1890s, among those symbolist painters Yeats most admired. One of these artists was Charles Ricketts who designed Oscar Wilde’s *Sphinx* (1894) and Moreau’s *The Sphinx*, which appeared as an illustration in the 1897 volume of the *Pageant*, a magazine in whose production Ricketts had a large share and in which one of Yeats’s stories appeared in 1896 (Cordon and Fletcher, 96, 98).

¹⁰ It is worth noting that prior to writing this poem Yeats had become very interested in the ideas of Nietzsche. The image of the ‘spiritus mundi’ is evocative of the Nietzschean ideal of the ‘ubermensch’ or superman.

¹¹ Quoted by Jonah Raskin ‘Imperialism: Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,’ *Journal of Contemporary History* (1996), Vol.2, n° 2, 129.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Op.Cit., 130.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

have begun.”¹⁵ This struggle for survival is made prominent in Yeats’s poem. The repetition of “the second coming” (lines 10-11) sounds quite ominous. Yeats’s poem suggests that there will be indeed more deaths, war and famine and the current gyre of moral and stable society will eventually spin out and move onto its very own antithetical gyre representing the ensuing turmoil if the people do not take swift action.

Yeats’s horrific prediction for the future culminates in the second stanza. The “rough beast” is pointedly described as a sphinx “with lion body and the head of a man,” (14) a fusion of awesome humanity and potent beast. It is also worth noting that the lion-bodied shape, possessing a man’s head, is not only a biblical allusion to the “heads of the horses resembl[ing] the heads of lions” spitting fire in Revelation, (9:17) but also a reference to the male Egyptian sphinx, symbolizing both the mighty strength and protective power of Egypt’s ruler. But while the Egyptian sphinxes have positive qualities,¹⁶ Yeats endows his sphinx with quite opposite qualities: instead of bringing light or life, it brought darkness and deaths on a large scale.

The elusive nature of Yeats’s imagery has led to other interpretations of the beast. Many critics see the sphinx-like beast of the poem as representative of the violence and anarchy of the Russian Revolution, the Irish Civil War of 1916, Fascism, or Communism. An early draft of the poem shows that the poem was indeed inspired by the Russian Revolution of 1917, which Yeats viewed as a threat. It includes the following lines: “The Germans are [...] now to Russia come/Though every day some innocent has died.” The Germans to whom he refers were the proto-fascist Freikorps operating on the Eastern border of Germany, of whom Yeats approved. Such views typically emphasise the horrific and ominous nature of the beast referred to in the ‘The Second Coming’ and associate its appearance with the demise of

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ All the Egyptian sphinxes are representations of Horus, the Egyptian God of Light, who was reborn each day as the rising sun, the symbol of renewed life. Horus was also the Egyptian sky-god who took the form of a falcon, a bird whose figure represented his name and was thus sacred to him.

Western civilisation. The last line of the poem “And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?” initiates the final terror and creates apprehension over what Yeats believed will represent the new future of mankind. Bethlehem, originally the site of Jesus’s birth takes on a more symbolic meaning. It is our world, a world corrupted and corrupting as also suggested in Conrad’s novella, and Joyce’s *Dubliners*.

Thus the poet compels his reader to apprehend a known world made strange, urging him to question himself. Even the kind of syntax Yeats uses evokes adamant responses to his daring questions and predictions about the end of the world. At the start of the poem for instance, his sentences are short and succinct, creating a sense of urgency: “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold” (line 3). However, as the poem progresses and the realisation of the Second Coming is announced, the sentences become longer and more descriptive, allowing the reader to extract the actual meaning of what the Second Coming really entails that is re-barbarisation. And the image of the “rocking cradle vexed to nightmare”(20) leaves the reader with an uneasiness intensified by Yeats’s contrasts, “born/drowned”(6) and “best/worst” (7). These binary oppositions describe a society of people being drowned by the “beasts,” the leaders that are controlling it, a completely chaotic society. Yeats’s, Conrad’s and Joyce’s tragic visions of history as chaos find an echo in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

7. 3. The Frontiers of Chaos in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*

Wole Soyinka defines chaos as “a storehouse for creative and destructive essences [which] require[s] a challenger, a human representative to breach it periodically [for] the well-being of the community.”¹⁷ This fully captures the essence of Achebe’s first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, and sets the Nigerian writer as the interpreter and the chronicler of his society. The dissolution of Umuofian order into chaos which characterises Achebe’s fictional world recalls the

¹⁷ Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976), 2-3.

disruption, disintegration and discontinuities which marked Yeats's, Joyce's and Conrad's worlds.

Achebe turned to Yeats's poem, 'The Second Coming' with its prophecy of the approach of a new age, for the title of his novel. This poem is quite appropriate to the novel's account of the destruction of civilisation. What Achebe takes from the Yeatsian theory of the cyclic movement of history is the idea of the inevitability of change. In his novel, he portrays the events of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Iboland as marking the end of traditional Ibo civilisation and the ushering in of another civilisation, the Christian-oriented civilisation of Western Europe.

The Yeatsian gyre is used in *Things Fall Apart* to define the pattern of Umuofia's collapse when confronted by British imperialism, and sets the mood of a society unruffled, totally unaware of the tragic changes taking place. However, while Yeats was concerned with the last days of the two millennia long before the Christian Era in the West, Achebe's novel tells the story of the first contact of Ibo villagers in Nigeria (Biafra) with white European missionaries and colonial administrators in the 1890s, and of the coming of the Christian Era to Africa.

Achebe's novel depicts three epochal cycles. In the first cycle, the writer portrays Ibo tribal life before the invasion of the British towards the end of the nineteenth century. This cycle is followed by the Westernisation of Nigeria with its resultant disintegration of traditional society, while the third cycle is marked by the challenges for a future postcolonial country.

Achebe first travels back to pre-colonial times and depicts "the ceremony of innocence" in Umuofia. The writer recaptures that mood in the depiction of the village contest in the first part of the novel:

The drums went mad and the crowds too. They surged forward as the two young men danced in the circle. The palm fronds were helpless in keeping them back [...] It was a fierce contest. The one[Okago] knew what the other[Izekue] was thinking [...] *The drummers were no*

longer a mere disembodied sound but *the very heart
beat of the people*.¹⁸

This passage highlights the cohesion and strength of the Ibo people before the coming of the Western man. The narrative voice in the opening paragraphs of the novel merges with the voices of the “old men”(TFA, 1). It assumes a harmonious and unified world, one in which values are shared, past and present are fused. Furthermore, in reading about seed time, harvest, courtship and marriage, the reader gets an insight into the tribal society. The village is held together by a network of ties.

The second part of the novel, which marks the second cycle, deals with the arrival of the first missionaries and the encroachment of an alien church upon traditional Ibo life. Achebe is wrathful at British colonialism. The British pacification of Nigeria starts with the eradication of the natives’ beliefs and customs which they believed impeded on progress. British interference in the Nigerians’ way of life hence invites comparison with the Belgians’. Conrad’s Kurtz had also been entrusted by the International Society for the Suppression of the Savage Customs in the Congo Free State “to wean those ignorant millions from their horrid ways” (HD, 27). For both the expatriate and the Nigerian writer, the point of departure is a disturbance of the old system. By displacing old values and initiating a cultural invasion of both the Nigerian territory and its people’s mind, the British colonists like the Belgians gave a terrible blow to the once well-knit tribal society.

Like *Heart of Darkness*, Achebe’s novel exhibits the pitfalls of colonial politics which promised a better future. Achebe views the Christian missionaries as perfect nuisances, and places his novel in a tragic context. While the aim of the British is to spread Christianity and bring light to a benighted African people, Achebe’s book like Conrad’s, reveals the

¹⁸ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York : Anchor Books, 1959), 49. Italics mine.

bewilderment of a crumbling culture. In their attempt to model native society on the European's and inculcate it the ideals of progress and civilisation, the British like the Belgians, actually annihilated it. Achebe projects the tragedy of Umuofian society as an apocalypse: the old Africa with its beauty and strength is collapsing under the weight of white imperialism. Achebe insists that colonial rule has affected native society and culture to their core, and forces the reader to confront its enormity, the scope of its destruction: "Things fall apart, and the centre can [no longer] hold." Umuofian society is as dead on the surface as Joyce's, and its people are paralysed.

The Nigerian writer embodies all the fears, and apprehension of the whole community in his protagonist. The novel indeed opens with the image of the representative figure of the ancestral hero, Okonkwo, who like Conrad's Kurtz, is both a "challenger," a human representative in Soyinka's words, but also a carrier of chaos, though in a different way. The persistent metaphor of wrestling is consistent with the perception of the conflicts between coloniser and colonised, and the Ibo territory as booty. Both Achebe's and Conrad's characters are also shown to be an integral part of a social unit. But while "all Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz," (*HD*, 66) we can say that all Africa contributed to the making of Okonkwo. The latter is depicted in classical heroic terms as a man of action, and a warrior; yet he is also a man who unleashes the very chaos he tries to keep at bay. Achebe describes him as a man of fiery temper. His violence leads him to break societal rules on many an occasion: He beats his youngest wife, Ojiugo, during the preparations for the New Yam festival, forgetting about the time of propitiation for the Goddess of Peace. This transgression of the Week of Peace destroys the bond between him and his community. It is also Okonkwo's bad character that drives him to kill a fellowman: At Ezeudu's funeral, he inadvertently shoots Ezeudu's son with his gun and so destroys the peace of the village. And to do justice to the earth goddess and cleanse the land which Okwonko has polluted with the

blood of a clansman, Ezeudu's men retaliate. They destroy Okonkwo's property and kill his cattle (*TFA*, 87). The once respected tribal elder and his family are then banished from the tribe. Okonkwo's exile thus establishes a major premise of the novel: Like Conrad, Achebe implies that a man's character is rooted in the social fabric of his people, his society, and once away from the fatherland it changes. We have seen in a previous section that when removed from his natural environment, Kurtz reverted to barbarism. But Okonkwo's transformation is of another form. Life in exile with his mother's kinsfolk, in Mbanta village, is dull. Okonkwo becomes listless because of his inability to do any work beyond providing for his family. He can no longer act as a man among men. Instead, he is limited to violent reaction, especially when he hears his friend, Obierika's stories about the physical and moral damages caused to the natives by British men.

In its euphoria to seduce the natives into embracing Christianity, colonial politics has indeed cut into the tapestry of the African tribe, and so has become a threat to African culture for the new converts have turned against their native traditions and customs. Quite ironically, the first convert to Christianity is Okonkwo's son, Nwoye. What could be more tragic than this? Nwoye has betrayed the age-old tradition and culture and embraced the new religion for they told him that they "worshipped false Gods, Gods of wood and stone [...] Evil men and all the heathen who in their blindness bowed to wood and stone were thrown into fire" (*TFA*, 132). The new religion seems to answer the need of his soul. As Achebe explains:

It [is] not the mad logic of the Trinity that [has] captivated him. He [does] not understand it. 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 two twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed (*TFA*, 134).

It is not only the internal crises in Umuofian society which have made Nwoye vulnerable and led him to cop out his religion, but also his father's violent behaviour. But in *The Postcolonial*

Empire, Saswat Das gives another justification for conversion to Christianity: “The wish of the natives to explore the new religion arises out of the emptiness they find in their own religion. They discover that the new religion offers them what their own custom and tradition lacked,”¹⁹ and adds that Christianity has “a serious understanding of human problems that Umuofian tradition lacked.”²⁰ Without turning this discussion into a theological treatise, we would argue that all of religions are religions of love, peace, humility and do have a serious understanding of the human problems. To our mind, the disaffected native people proved receptive to Christian missionaries because they were bogged down by poverty and were conscious that there was no way to face the difficulties they were confronted to.

Achebe’s Okonkwo however views conversion to Christianity from quite a different angle. Not only does he lament the destruction of the spiritual values that sealed his people, (*TFA*, 171) but for him also turning one’s back to one’s religion is unmanly. Like the boy in Joyce’s ‘An Encounter,’ Okonkwo is obsessed with manliness as is revealed in this passage:

To abandon the God of one’s father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens [is] the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children followed Nwoye’s steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shiver run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation (*TFA*, 142).

At the end of the seven-year period of banishment from his village Okonkwo returns home and resumes his role as the leader of his people. He realises a fissure in his society, his household and his dreams then vanish. In Umuofia, things have tremendously changed. The new Umuofia has become another Dublin, and its people aphatic. It has become so pitch dark that Okonkwo feels annihilated. The white men and their Christian foothold have grown stronger. In a Fanonian way, this die-hard African traditionalist calls his people to take up

¹⁹ Das S. Saswat, *The Postcolonial Empire: Continuity of Colonial Discourse* (New Delhi: Universal Publishers Distributors, 2001), 50.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

arms to save their culture from the clutches of Christianity, but it is too late for the white missionaries have already divided his people. Quite paradoxically, though Okonkwo champions the cause of Umuofian society, it turns out to be his worst enemy for he fails to see that in fighting the alien, he has also to fight against his clansmen, who like Kurtz though in a different way, have sold their souls to the Devil. Not only have the Umuofians discarded their own religion but the new converts also aid the coloniser in the destruction of their ancestors' beliefs and traditions. A good instance of such sacrilege is when Enoch, a new convert, kills and eats the sacred python and dares unmask an ancestral spirit or *egwugwu*. This vilest crime brings upon him the wrath of the Ibo people. Contrary to his expectations, Okonkwo's clansmen have lost the power to fight. Obierika, his friend, tries to find justifications for the Umuofians' defeat:

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he 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 (*TFA*, 124-5).

The British have indeed kicked the earth to pieces. They not only sought converts, built churches, but they have also set up a government and a court system, one that does not respect native traditions or social order. They preach the benefits of European administration and its sense of justice completely disregarding the fact that the Ibos they were lecturing settled disputes and administered justice long before the advent of the European man. In addition to government and religion, the British have also built a trading post in Umuofia. This made it possible for farmers to get good prices for their goods. The coloniser has also tried to be less confrontational to gain the natives' sympathy.²¹ The missionaries have encouraged indigenous people to send their children to school so that it would be their own people, not strangers,

²¹ It is worth pointing that the British learnt a lesson during their colonisation of India. Their interference in the natives' way of life led to the Mutiny in 1857, a massacre during which untold numbers of people from both sides died.

(they said) who will manage the administration in the white man's government in Umuofia. But neither the British promise of self-rule nor their policy of compromise and conciliation have any impact on Okonkwo. This instead leads to conflict: when Mr. Brown, the District Commissioner, whose actions are as revolting as Kurtz's, pays him a visit after having sent his son, Nwoye, to a teacher training school in Umuru to the South, Okonkwo becomes mad and drives him away. In a final whirl of events, the District Commissioner's messengers disrupt a native ceremony. Okonkwo lashes out at them, draws his machet and beheads their leader. Conrad's Kurtz scrawls "Exterminate all the brutes!" and in a fit of rage, Okonkwo has slain Ikemefuna, his foster son and a court messenger in the alien government. Mistah Kurtz's cry "The Horror, the Horror!" in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* could be recalled here to depict Okonkwo's crime, one that stands isolated in its monstrosity. This hideous act definitely estranges him from the rest of the community. The whole village looks at him "like a startled animal [...] sniffing the silence, ominous air [...]" (TFA, 177). Okonkwo thus falls from his heroic image. Though he is aware that the terrible wound his conscience has received in the process cannot be healed, he does not repent for repentance is a sign of weakness and he cannot afford to be weak, like his father. Yet, however hard he tries to ward off his father's ghost from possessing him, he realises the heavy heritage the latter has bequeathed to him. Okonkwo shakes off his inhibitions and once again obeys that inner voice mocking him

[...] you, who are known in all the the nine villages for
your valour in war? How can a man who has killed five
men in battle fall to pieces he because has added a boy to
their number? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed (56).

This very thought sends chills down his spine. The effect is immediate. He calls on his friend, Obierika, seeking justification for his act but the latter also condemns him. Okonkwo feels humiliated by his clansmen's lack of assistance. He has paid a heavy price for his faith in the members of his community. Like Joyce's Gabriel in 'The Dead,' Okonkwo quite

paradoxically feels physically alive but spiritually dead, though the reasons for this paralysis are different as discussed earlier. The traumatic events which crippled his society together with the humiliation of his powerlessness in the face of the disintegration of his society lead Achebe's protagonist to commit suicide by hanging himself from a tree behind his house. He prefers to die rather than let the white man take his freedom and shatter his pride.

Hence Okonkwo, who has risen like the Greek hero in the majesty of power, falls like any ordinary man shorn of the dignity of the hero, and of the last vestige of the leader of the clan. His death is another blow on Ibo society because suicide is an offence, thus he is not buried by his clansmen. Okonkwo's abominable act leaves his friend Obierika, perplexed. The latter fails to understand how "one the greatest man in Umuofia" can kill himself and "[...] be buried like a dog" (*TFA*, 171). These comments convey the inevitability of the historical process, and the tragic consequences that follow both on social and individual levels. Okonkwo's death ends an important chapter in the life of Umuofian society. But if Okonkwo's tragic death has released the individual hero, it nonetheless offers little hope that the historical situation in Nigeria will be reversed. At the close of the novel, the society which has had but one heartbeat has become divided. The sense of communal life which has held people together is broken and "mere anarchy is loosed upon the [Ibo world],/ and everywhere "the ceremony of innocence is drowned" (Yeats, 'The Second Coming,' 4, 6). This chaos makes Umuofia all the more vulnerable to the encroachment of Western imperial powers.

The historical processes as those initiated under Belgian and British domination find parallels in North Africa under French colonisation. Most of Joyce, Yeats, Conrad and Achebe's comments about colonisation are also found in Assia Djébar's *L'Amour, La Fantasia* (1985).²² The historical facts are however written from the perspective of a female colonised subject.

²² I used the original version of Djébar's novel. Translations are mine.

7.4. The Specter of Colonialism in Djébar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*

Djébar draws on the alienation and acculturation which are the legacies of the colonial period and seeks to come to terms with that heritage. Blurring the boundaries of autobiography, history and fiction, Djébar not only excavates the story of Algeria's experiences of colonialism, but also the elements of a female self buried under colonial and patriarchal myths.²³ She employs a fragmentary narrative structure wavering between personal and historical accounts. Djébar depicts the traumatic dawn of colonial power right from the outset of her novel. Violence is contextualized historically in power struggles between the French coloniser and the colonised Algerian.

Djébar's novel opens with an epigraph from Eugène Fromentin's travel journal, 'Une année dans le Sahel' (1859) who like her seems to have been aware of the pain and suffering endured by the colonised: "Il y eut un cri déchirant - Je l'entends encore au moment où je t'écris - puis des clameurs, puis un tumulte,"²⁴ while the epigraph to part one on the next page²⁵ is taken from an eye-witness account by Barchou de Penhoen, an ADC to the General commanding the first French invading forces (Summer 1830). In contrast to Fromentin, Barchou writes as the arrogant European, the heartless traveler. He describes the Arab as the savage, barely distinguishable from the predatory beasts that threaten the French soldiers in the countryside, and records the speed with which the French soldiers learned, by experience, to discriminate between the alien sounds of Arab fighters and prowling wild animals. The epigraph form functions to mark one of the crucial points the narrative will amplify: the darkness and moral malaise that many Algerians experienced during the colonial period.

²³ I will deal with this second aspect of Djébar's novel in a subsequent chapter exclusively devoted to Djébar.

²⁴ "I heard a shriek – and still hear it as I am writing – then clamors, then tumult."

²⁵ " L'expérience était venue à nos sentinelles: elles commençaient à savoir distinguer du pas et du cri de l'Arabe, ceux des bêtes fauves errant autour du camp dans les ténèbres."

Responding to both Barchou and Fromentin a century later, Djébar introduces some new perspectives on Algeria's colonial history. She juxtaposes women's oral history²⁶ of the Algerian war with historical accounts of the French conquest of Algeria taken from French archives. In the opening paragraphs of *L'Amour*, the Algerian writer brings into view the French navy as it approaches the shores of Algiers, the capital city, and situates the historical reconstruction within the symbolic boundaries of space and time: "Aube de ce 13 Juin 1830, à l'instant précis et bref où ce jour éclate au dessus de la conque profonde; Il est cinq heures du matin."²⁷

The first glimpse of the impregnable city is depicted in Conradian terms. It emerges as a wraith-like apparition, sprawling on a carpet of muted greens. This "blancheur fantomatique" (*L'Amour*, 14) carries a hint of enigma and is underlined by the image of the city shedding its veil, but also its associations of beauty: "La ville, paysage tout dentelures et couleurs délicates," in the role of the Oriental woman, "motionless and mysterious."²⁸ When the first confrontation occurs, change comes over the waters. It is as if the invaders had come as lovers, (17) says Djébar ironically. But they are not lovers, only "hunters for gold [and] pursuers of fame," as Conrad would say (*HD*, 19). Soon after this invasion, torpor pervades the city. In that Joycean landscape, not the faintest sound of any kind could be heard. That silent altercation, "breathless with suspense" (*L'Amour*, 14) is ominous. In the immutability of the surroundings, suddenly the first human figure comes into view, Amable Matterer catches the first sight of Algiers, the white city, as it is commonly referred to. He is soon followed by a hord of "future invaders [looking] like circus animals" (*L'Amour*, 19). They stand there motionless and watch, their big guns ready to fire. The tension implied in that disturbing

²⁶ Before beginning the quartet, Djébar undertook an oral history project that involved probing Algerian women's collective memory. In the mid 1970s, she interviewed some women in her native region of Cherchell who had participated in the independence struggle.

²⁷ "Dawn on this thirteenth day of June 1830, at the exact moment when the sun blazes for above the fathomless bowl of the bay. It is five in the morning" (*L'Amour*, 14).

²⁸ "The city, a vista of crenelated roofs and pastel hues, makes her first appearance in the role of Oriental woman, motionless and mysterious." Ibidem.

proximity is underlined by this reciprocal gaze: “Amable Matterer regarde la ville qui le regarde.”²⁹ This gaze is an act of defiance on the part of both coloniser and colonised. The historical reconstructions following the opening scene provide detailed accounts of various stages of France’s advances. Their hearts swollen by a sense of superiority, those savage invaders advance determined not to surrender to the enemy (50-1). Like Conrad, Yeats and Joyce, Djébar stresses that this conquest is no longer a discovery of the Other but becomes a spoliation enterprise (67). This forcible conquest is further emphasized in *L’Amour* by the narrator’s reference to a “copulation obscène,” (32) foregrounding the violent nature of the colonial presence. The city of Algiers in the role of the Oriental woman resists its assaillant but she is taken against her will: “ Est-ce le viol? ” asks the narrator who adds “ [...] Ce monde étranger, qu’ils pénétraient quasiment sur le mode sexuel, ce monde hurla continûment [...] Y pénètrent comme en une défloration. L’Afrique est prise malgré le refus qu’elle ne peut étouffer.”³⁰ That rape bespeaks the violent subjection inherent in the colonial condition and deepens the horror implicit in the colonial encounter. It underlines the brutal force to which the colonised Algerian had been subjected.

The explosion of Fort l’Empereur on July, 4th 1830 opened the capital to rape and plunder by conquering colonial soldiers. It is that deep ‘explosion,’ the very word that opens Fanon’s *Black Skin White Masks* which also sustains Djébar’s text, and remains in some ways the subtext for the entire narrative. French colons poured into the country by thousands, grabbing the fertile land, displacing the peasantry and razing the city. The blazing fire gained all the city causing ravages. The pain and suffering inflicted by the French invaders are encapsulated in the “cortège de cris et de meurtres, qui vont emplir les décennies suivantes.”³¹ Those

²⁹ “Amable Matterer gazes at the city which returns the gaze” (19).

³⁰ “This alien world which they penetrated as they would a woman. This world sent up a cry that did not cease [...] Penetrated and deflowered, Africa is taken despite the protesting cries she cannot stifle” (28, 84-5). Declan Kiberd has also interpreted Yeats’s “ Leda and the swan” as the invading occupier and the girl as a ravished Ireland,” Kiberd Declan, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of The Modern Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995), 315.

³¹ “The multitude of cries and murders that will mark the following decades” (17).

shrieks resounded in the neighbourhood, and echoed between the walls. That was the first tangible victory for the French. The opposing sides “luttant au corps à corps” (26) and after a sudden palpitation found themselves mutilated or beheaded. It was the first “baiser de la mort” (26) in those military camps. In Djébar’s novel, l’amour (love) is actually ‘la mort’ (death). These close phonetic clusters symbolise the unending despair of a worn and debilitated population painfully shocked by such an outrageous attack.

The events leading up to the Algerian tragedy are recounted in the first section of the novel when the French Army subdued the local tribes and the Ouled Riah tribe took refuge in the caves of Nacmaria. Djébar records her impressions upon visiting the dark caves. The writer uncovers the barbarous act of fumigation: In 1845, the French military officer, Pélissier, set fire to caves in the vicinity of her native city, Cherchell, smothering to death one thousand five hundred rebellious Algerian men, women, and children. The caves became groves of death. The horrible spectacle of the natives depicted in *Heart of Darkness* is transposed in *L’Amour*, more terrible in its dimension. The similarity between Conrad’s and Djébar’s texts is further emphasised in the person of Pélissier. “[...] enfumez les à outrance, comme des renards,”³² ordered Governor Bugeaud, and Colonel Pélissier, the intercessor,³³ as a good soldier obeyed (102). Like Kurtz, he exterminated all the “brutes.” The shrieks of the dying Algerians resonated in the caves. The people of Nacmaria appeared in the full horror of their asphyxiated bodies:

Tous les cadavres étaient nus, dans des positions qui indiquaient les convulsions qu’ils avaient dû éprouver avant d’expirer. Le sang leur sortait de la bouche ; mais ce qui causait le plus d’horreur, c’était de voir les enfants à la mamelle gisant au milieu des débris de moutons, de sacs de fèves.³⁴

³² “Smoke them out mercifully like foxes” (97).

³³ We should note that the term “intercessor” in *L’Amour* describes the nineteenth century officer in charge of mopping up operations against the rebellious people of the hinterland, first trapped, then burnt alive in the underground caves where they sought refuge.

³⁴ “All the corpses were naked and in positions indicating their terrible agony before dying. Blood was flowing out from their mouths; but the most appalling picture was that of children at their mothers’ breast lying there in the middle of maimed sheep and sacs of beans” (105).

Such passages cause the reader to pause, reflect, and evaluate the effects of the French presence in Algeria. The spectacle in the grottos is so macabre that words are too poor to translate it: “Quelle plume saurait rendre ce tableau?” remarks Djébar, but French officers such as Joseph Bosquet relished that horrifying spectacle and found in it “toute la poésie possible [...] On respire dans toute la ville une *délicieuse* odeur de grillades [...]”³⁵ he wrote to his mother. When Pélissier visited the caves after the massacre, he too, was horrified, but he believed that he was merely doing his job. The “quasi-fraternal embalmer” (*L’Amour*, 115) of the tribe like Kurtz, was also entrusted to write a report on this long drawn-out agony. In the administrative report which Djébar finds more than a century later and uses to construct her own text, Pélissier revealed a macabre respect for detail. He explained how he hunted down the natives, butchered them and burnt their villages, reserving some of the girls ... and how every centime he earned cost a rape, a mutilation or a life. It was a victory paid for by innumerable and abominable terrors. But still it was a victory! (107) But Pélissier’s consciousness started to trouble him. He sorrowfully looked up and prayed to God. He had been the monster of crime, the butcher of Algeria. Christendom will rise with horror at the news, he acknowledged. A feeling of remorse pervaded him. He signed off his report with a personal comment on the harshness of such military raids that one undertakes only under compulsion he wrote, pleading God not to be entrusted with such horrible mission in the future (108). But we should acknowledge that without such a report, the massacre in the caves would have been removed from historical accounts, and transformed history itself. Djébar herself is grateful to Pélissier who dared unveil the violence inflicted on the Algerian population: “J’oserais presque le remercier d’avoir fait face aux cadavres, d’avoir cédé au

³⁵ “The whole city is enveloped with a *delicious* smell of grilled meat” (81). Italics mine.

désir de les immortaliser [...]”³⁶ Pélissier’s recollections of convulsions, and bleeding cut through the edifice of false rhetoric.

Djebar reconstructs other incidents of terror and brutality never flinching from the violence. Another horrifying picture which leaves a deep imprint on the reader’s mind is that of two Algerian women: one executed simply for calling a French soldier “chien, fils de chiens.”³⁷ She was lying on the ground in a state of agony beside the corpse of a French invader whose heart she had torn out; the other was running away, a child in her arms when a shot wounded her. Desperate, the mother chose to sacrifice her child: she crushed the infant’s head rather than surrender him to the enemy. The soldiers finished her off with their bayonets. Grouping all the women together as a “savage horde” who mutilate French soldiers on the battlefield, Barchou, the ADC to the General commanding the first French invading forces, did not acknowledge the contrast between the two women in this highly visual scene of violence. But for Djebar, those two heroines entered into recent history (29). By identifying Algerian women’s participation in the early nationalist struggles, Djebar not only emphasizes their courage, but also anticipates the participation of later women warriors, those who risked their lives during the Algerian War of Independence.

A similar horrible vision to that of the two women troubles the reader’s sight some pages later : “Au sortir de l’oasis que le massacre, six mois après, empuantit, Fromentin, ramasse dans la poussière, une main d’Algérienne anonyme. Il la jette ensuite sur son chemin [...]”³⁸ This cut off hand recalls the mutilation in the Congo. Indifferent like the Belgian coloniser, the French artist throws the hand of the victim on his way. After all, it belongs to an alien person, an ‘inferior’ being. Djebar exhumes other details that bear witness to the violence used against Algerian women. She also focuses on the depiction of a woman’s foot hacked so

³⁶ “I am almost tempted to thank him for having faced the corpses, for having yielded to the desire to immortalize them” (92-3).

³⁷ Dogs, sons of dogs! (80).

³⁸ “Outside the oasis that the massacre made fetid, Fromentin, six months later, picks up the hand of an anonymous Algerian on the dust, then throws it away” (*L’Amour*, 313).

that her anklet can be stolen. Djebbar describes this horrible act as a manly sport (75). In one of General Bosquet's letters to a friend, Bosquet passes flippantly over this image but for Djebbar, the detail stands out. It reveals the horror of the atrocities glossed over by colonial texts.

The cruel events of French colonisation of Algeria are also echoed in the section entitled "Voice." Djebbar tells the story of Chérifa at the hands of French soldiers. Her resistance to them precipitates her to the mountains, but she manages to escape and joins her brother Ahmed. She witnesses her brother's death as he falls on the ground, shot dead by a French soldier. The word 'burn' is reiterated seven times in the first seven paragraphs:

La France est venue et elle nous a *brûlés* [...] De nouveau les soldats revinrent; de nouveau, ils nous *brûlèrent* [...] Ils emmenèrent ma mère, ainsi que la femme de mon frère. Ils nous *brûlèrent* la maison une troisième fois [...] Les soldats vont venir nous *brûler* à notre tour ! [...] La Zaouia a *brûlé*; notre douar aussi va *brûler* ! [...] De nouveau, la France est montée et a tout *brûlé*."³⁹

The use of repetition serves to foreground the ongoing cruelty of the French army and underlines the emotional impact of Chérifa's story. The story proceeds as if in slow motion, as Djebbar foregrounds the odours, and sounds as if trying to hold back the inevitable scream of suffering. An ominous silence follows. Then it is suddenly broken by a prolonged scream, that of Chérifa. Her voice shrills out like "[...] une voile à peine dépliée qui frémit, au bas d'un mas de misaine."⁴⁰ Her voice merges with that of the mother tortured by the soldiers, with the voice of the old women of the douar who face the horror of the approaching death-knell, open-mouthed, with palms of hands turned upwards (176).

At the close of the novel, Djebbar's narrative leaves the reader disturbed. The dawn (aube), with which Djebbar started her historical account paradoxically stands for darkness. Moreover, *L'Amour* opened with the scream from Fromentin's journal entry and ends with another. But

³⁹ "France came and burnt us out [...] The soldiers came again and again burnt us out [...] They took my mother and my brother's wife away. They burnt our house for the third time[...] The soldiers are coming to burn us too. The Zaouia has been burnt and our douar will be burnt down too! [...] Once again France arrived and burnt the whole place down.[...] (167).

⁴⁰ "the shudder of a sail before it is hoisted on the foremast" (176).

this time, it is the scream of a Berber woman struck down by a suitor she had rejected, in the thundering passage of the fantasia, the mounted carnival of the Berber men (314). This is the vision that Fromentin ultimately articulates of Algeria, an image of savage violence as figured in this black tale. Djébar closes her story by returning to Fromentin's tale 'Chronique de l'Absent,' a story about one of his stays in Algeria, and uses Hawa's death as a symbol for the death of Algeria's tribal world. The woman's ravaged face expresses the slow agony of the conquered nation as the tribal system faces extinction during the period of French colonial expansion. Death, the reader might think, has here, as in Fromentin's tale, the last word. But the whole dynamic of Djébar's narrative is conceived so as to imply that there is no 'last' word. Indeed when the woman writer returns from France, she feels anxious about what is in store for her at home. The process of rewriting history allows Djébar to contribute further to Algeria's collective memory.

In this chapter, we have endeavoured to show the inadequacies of the colonial system and the degeneration of the civilising mission into a long episode of horror. The appropriation of the colonised's properties and traditions by virtue of their representation as benighted and inferiors has been shown to be the typical pattern of the colonising process. Inherent in this process is the usurpation of native identity. There has been therefore an imperative to assert an ethnic distinctiveness, and to re-fashion alternative National/Cultural identities.

Chapter VIII

Re-Inventing Ireland: W.B.Yeats's Poetry and James Joyce's *Dubliners*

What ish my nation? Ish a villain, and a basterd,
and a knave, and a rascal.

William Shakespeare, *Henry V* (II,ii, 124-126).

There is hardly a more cited line from Shakespeare in the context of Irish studies than MacMorris, the Irish captain's well-known question in *Henry V*. Centuries of conflict between Ireland and Britain have produced some of the most complex cultural identities possible. The greater the disruption of the traditional society under the impact of intruding colonial forces, the speedier the assertion of nationalism was to be. The void in Irish politics and life was indeed filled with a new cultural awareness and a questioning of Irish identity. As a result of their experience of alienation and the widespread prejudices which marked members of their society, W.B.Yeats and James Joyce attempted to come to terms with a fractured culture, hence became increasingly interested in the formation of national identity.

The years 1870 to 1890 saw indeed a new cultural awareness and a questioning of Irish identity. Key aspects of Irish identity were language, religion and an agricultural society that was quite different from the Industrial England which was so prominent. Various revivalist movements burgeoned in Ireland to attempt the purgation of Anglo-Saxon influence and return Irish culture to its pristine state. Those movements gained momentum with the establishment of such organisations as the Society for the Preservation of the Irish language (1875), the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884), the Irish Literary Society in 1891 and the

Gaelic League in 1893. Their goal was to reverse the “cultural obliteration”¹ of the colonising power. Part of the Irish efforts to free themselves from the stigmatised history and to establish their own identity had been the debate over the language issue.

8. 1. Linguistic Nationalism in Ireland

One major effect of centuries of colonisation in Ireland had been the dislocation of language, the loss of Irish as a spoken language and its replacement by English. In this section, we intend to examine the role that language plays in the enunciation of a culture, its capacity to chain and change.

In Ireland, Irish remained the language spoken by the bulk of the peasant population until the end of the seventeenth century, but by the nineteenth century, it vanished in Connaught and Munster, the two provinces where it was most predominant. In 1831, harsh legislation indeed made English the language of instruction, and prohibited the use of Irish language. Those who did not comply with the law were severely punished. This practice continued until the early years of the twentieth century. After the devastation of the Great Famine of the 1840s, a deliberate policy of replacing Irish with English was introduced in the national school system, and under the Intermediate Act of 1878, the Celtic language was even recognised as inferior to most other languages, and so was assigned the lowest number of marks compared to Greek or Latin. This climate of cultural imperialism was promoted by the educational authorities by means of syllabuses and textbooks devoid of the national factor. To reach their target, the Commissioners reduced the Irish child’s main knowledge of his history and roots through the exclusion of Irish national History from school syllabuses on the ground that their past was a story of crime and shame that had better not be disclosed. They also argued that Irish was a non-essential subject and insisted on developing the children’s intelligence through a better acquirement of the English language.

¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 190.

Hence the campaign waged by the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (SPIL) for the inclusion of Irish in the school programme. This society brought to the fore the question of inherent injustice of an education system which excluded the mother-tongue. The SPIL and the commissioners finally came to a consensus: from July 1878, Irish was introduced as an ‘extra’ subject and taught to the pupils of the fifth and sixth standards outside school hours. Still the examinations were conducted on a basis of translation. But the 1878 compromise, while altering to a certain extent the curricular status of Irish, did not fully satisfy the aspirations of the Gaelic League, an association founded in 1893 under the leadership of the SPIL. It grew around the slogan, “A country without a language is a country without a soul.” Its main objective was the preservation of the Irish language and culture together with the reform of the educational system along purely native lines. Its members travelled the country, without pay, to teach Gaelic language and culture. In his famous lecture on ‘The Necessity for de-Anglicizing Ireland,’ delivered before the Irish National Literary Society, on November 25th, 1892, in Dublin, Douglas Hyde, founder and president of the Gaelic League was particularly critical:

Anglicization that I had pictured to you had everywhere
eaten like a disease through Ireland. Nobody noticed it;
nobody was told of it; but when Irishmen know, then Irish
sentiment becomes a power in the land and refuses indignant-
ly to relinquish its birthright.²

Hyde proved very anxious to convince Irishmen of Ireland’s cultural value. He pointed to the many actions Irish nationalists could undertake to gain Ireland’s freedom from England, not just politically, but socially and culturally as well. To strengthen Ireland’s national identity, Hyde focused in particular on a purging of customs and culture associated with Britain. He called for a re-focus on Irish cultural markers, from knowledge of the Irish language, the

² Douglas Hyde, *Language, Lore and Lyrics: Essays and Lectures*, ed. by Breandan O’Conaire (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1986), 183.

study of the ancient Irish legends and folktales, to maintaining or adopting Irish surnames rather than Anglicised ones. Hyde also tried to rout the idea that Protestants' descent from English immigrants made them less Irish than Catholics. Hyde's insistence on the superiority of the Irish mind and race was striking and seemed to be a response to those writers like Edmund Spenser's scheme for coercive Anglicisation of Ireland and those who attempted to demonstrate the inferiority of the Irish. Hyde remarked that:

the nation which was once, as every one admits, one of the most classically learned and cultured nations in Europe, is now one of the least so; how one of the most reading and literary peoples has become one of the least studious and most un-literary, and how the present art products of one of the quickest, most sensitive, and most artistic races on earth are now only distinguished for their hideousness, [...] I wish to show you that in Anglicising ourselves wholesale we have thrown away with a light heart the best claim which we have upon the world's recognition of us as a separate nationality.³

The revival of the Irish language was for him a national priority because of the language itself, and because of the literature and oral tradition it encompasses. It would return the country to the high level of culture that he claimed existed when the native language was widely used.

Irish cultural nationalism thus engaged in a reversal of stereotypes akin to and in anticipation to the Negritude movement, and a recovery of a native culture through a restoration of the past. A serious endeavour to give literary expression to an Irish cultural identity thus began to appear after the parliamentary union in 1800 which assimilated Ireland to England, putting an end to the political identity of Ireland as a distinct kingdom. Narrative would deliver the colonised Irish nation from its discursive status as a foil to Europe. Irish

³ Cited in Willard Potts, *Joyce and the Two Irelands* (Austin University of Texas Press, 2000), 19.

writers began to look to the past to find values to rejuvenate the present. But what did it mean to be an *authentic* Irish person in the context of the vexed relationship between England and Ireland?

The sense of hybridity in postcolonial culture, that “cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in relation of Self to Other”⁴ is essential to an understanding of Irish identity. If hybridity and the ambivalence of colonial discourse describe the dynamics of the colonial encounter, they also describe the Irish internal situation. The valorization of Irish culture was an important component of nationalist representations, but instead of the harmony the leaders of the Revival aimed at, frictions intensified. The Irish Revival developed a Protestant side and a Catholic side. Religion indeed served as a demarcation line separating the coloniser from the colonised, master from serf. Thus the Irish only meaningful symbol of identity, their only real possession was a religious faith that would bring some sort of light to their dark, ugly lives, some hope in a desperate situation. Catholicism became the very symbol of a besieged way of life, the very essence of Irish Nationalism, and Protestantism an alien force, the very arm of imperialism. As O’ Farrell puts it, Irish Catholicism is “[...] a set of values, a culture, a historical tradition, a view on the world, a disposition of mind, a loyalty, an emotion, a psychology and a nationalism.”⁵ Hence while the Protestants focused on the literary revival, the Catholics dominated the Gaelic League and developed a rigorous form of cultural nationalism known as ‘Irish-Irelandism.’ Moreover, the Irish Revival was a movement mostly spearheaded by people belonging to the ruling class, the Anglo-Irish. The major writers of the Revival, W.B. Yeats, Douglas Hyde, John Synge, Lady Gregory were Protestants, except for James Joyce who was a Catholic. The exclusion of the Protestants by the Catholic revivalists was inevitable since the achievement of Irish independence required the vigorous promotion of differences between the coloniser and the

⁴ Homi K., Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 207.

⁵ Patrick O’ Farrell, *Ireland’s English Question: Anglo-Irish Relations, 1534-1970* (N.Y: Schocken Books, 1971), 306.

colonised, who was not only the English but also the Anglo-Irish. This composite of differences widened the gulf between the two Irelands, Gaelic Ireland and Anglo-Ireland, respectively referred to as Catholic and Protestant. In their enthusiasm, Irish-Irelanders often developed a deep intolerance for England and all things English, regarding their near neighbour as the source of all the influences which were corrupting Irish national values. The root of Irish culture was therefore considered by them to be its Gaelic traditions. The basic creed was that to be truly Irish one had to be Gaelic as well. And as Catholicism became for many Irish people also identified with Irish nationalism, to be Gaelic also meant to be Catholic. Accordingly, instead of attacking racial constructions, each of the two Irelands posited its own form of Irishness. In this sense, they stood as two different cultures rather than two different religions. Such opposition only helped reinforce the binary system of Otherness used in imperialist representations. Indeed as Vincent Cheng put it: “to base a nationalist response upon the terms of these essentializing binary distinctions is to play by the same rules of that binarity and thus to take on the same hierarchical assumptions.”⁶ Cheng concluded that “the discourse of race as it pertained to Ireland also inevitably shaded into the discourse of Empire.”⁷ In this sense, nationalism became a trap rather than a means of freedom.

If Irishness is itself a questionable concept then, how can an Irish person speak of authenticity? Uniting the two Irelands was thus the first task Irish Nationalism had to achieve. But there were so many divergences of opinion as to how to achieve the aims that collaboration between the two Irelands, Protestant and Catholic, was out of the question. For many Catholic Revivalists, curbing English influence meant establishing Home Rule whereas the Protestants insisted that the movement be kept free of politics. Douglas Hyde, one of the Protestant revivalists therefore called for the building of a nation formed by all classes and all creeds, and the restoration of Irish people’s self-respect based on a shared rediscovery of the

⁶ Vincent John Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 49.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

national culture. In his seminal 1892 lecture on 'The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland,' Hyde insisted on the elimination of

everything that [was] most racist, most smacking of the soil, most Gaelic, most Irish, because in spite of the little admixture of Saxon blood in the north-east corner, this island is and will ever remain Celtic to the core.⁸

This rhetoric linking soil, nation and race was a quasi-religious discourse in which the rural countryside was transcended into a holy ground of originary and inherited sacredness. What resulted was the construction of an Irish national identity around the glorification of a rural and primitive West of Ireland. This idealisation of the peasantry had political, nationalist as well as cultural implications. Poverty-stricken, illiterate and conscious of little beyond their immediate neighbourhoods, the peasant masses were to feel more the impact of alien forces. The Irish peasant's past was filled with the Famine and great losses of land to the British. Moreover for many Englishmen such as G.J. Watson pointed out, the peasant incarnated the barbarism and savagery of Irish rural life: "Paddy and his Pig stood for the comic slovenliness of the Irish, a kind of Caliban whose poverty and lack of education was proof positive of Ireland's inability to govern itself."⁹ Thus the task of the Irish Literary Revival was to dismantle the 'Paddy' image, invert the stereotype by making the peasant the living symbol of the Celtic imagination. Like Fanon, writers such as W.B. Yeats, George Russel, Kiberd Declan put the peasants at the vanguard of the revolution. Hence, the authentic culture and ethos of the Irish could only be found in the rural, primitive countryside of an Aran or a

⁸Douglas Hyde, ed., 'The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland,' in *Language, Lore and Lyrics: Essays and Lectures* (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1986), 169. This speech was delivered about a year after the death of Charles Stewart Parnell.

⁹ G.J. Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival* (London: Croom Helm Ltd.: 1979), 96-97.

Connemara, and certainly not the modern city of Dublin. This ludicrous category of un-Irish was among the weird achievements of Irish nationalism.¹⁰

This celebration of Irish culture and the Irish peasant in particular moreover created in the colonised subject a sense of self denied to them in colonial writings. Concurrently, modern Irish literature had been informed and motivated by the need to forge, as Joyce said, a distinct position in Irish society to distinguish their works from their literary rivals. With reference to the definition of postcoloniality given by Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* (1989)¹¹ ie. that “all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day” (8) are sites of postcolonial endeavour, the body of literary work produced by William Butler Yeats and James Joyce is in many ways a paradigm case of postcolonial literature. These writers’ works deserve consideration as being quintessentially postcolonial. Certainly ‘post’ implies the notion of ‘after,’ however, can we say that the identity crisis, the resistance to a prescribed identity coming from empire, the need to reformulate and voice an identity only comes after the departure of the colonisers? Since the postcolonial work is rooted in an identity conflict which starts with the advent of colonisation, we contend that the ‘post’ must necessarily mean after colonisation had started. The following sections explore the troubled conjunction of Irish identity in Yeats and Joyce and examines the questions of identity posed by their works.

8. 2. The Celtic Element in W.B. Yeats’s Poems.

Edward Said’s lecture on ‘Yeats and Decolonization’¹² has been an important catalyst for postcolonial study of Irish literature and culture. The Palestinian critic emphasised Ireland’s role in colonial history as a member of the periphery. Although noting in Yeats an

¹⁰ Kiberd Declan, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of The Modern Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995), 337.

¹¹ In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin exclude Ireland from the list of postcolonial nations (though Canada and the United States are included). Their *Postcolonial Reader* however, includes discussions of Ireland.

¹² Said’s lecture was first published as a pamphlet by Field Day in 1988.

overlapping of Irish nationalism with his English cultural heritage,¹³ Said places the Irish poet as an important artist within the Irish context of nationalist endeavours. He therefore sees Yeats's surge towards the construction of a national Irish identity as a vital act of decolonisation.

The experience of hegemonic ideologies and the imposition of foreign models on indigenous social structures, culture and traditions are made prominent in the poetry of Ireland. The reclaiming of the geographical space of Ireland, and the imagining of a community in Yeats's poetry act as resistance to colonialism. The poet's revival of Irish folk culture reflects Fanon's theories on the use of the pre-colonial past to fight against the cultural hegemony of the coloniser and restore native identity, endowing it with "dignity, glory and solemnity."¹⁴ And Yeats noted that he had "nothing but a book /Nothing but that to prove your blood and mine."¹⁵ But Yeats was in a precarious position to carry the weight of a burgeoning nation. How was he to serve the cause of the Irish nation through his poetry when the main thrust of Irish Ireland's critique of Anglo-Irish literature was that it lacked national authenticity? Yeats indeed changed the terms of Hyde's de-Anglicisation by writing about Irish themes in the language of the colonial master. By the very act of writing in English, Yeats was thought of undermining a seminal aspect of Irish-Ireland's identificatory matrix, the language. The adoption of the coloniser's language instead of Gaelic to express Irishness was believed to be hindering rather than helping the progress of the Gaelic language. But to write in the Irish language would be for Yeats to admit that historically, his tradition and religion were not 'Irish'. As he put it:

¹³ Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said, eds., *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Univ. of Minnesota P, c1990), 70.

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth*, 169.

¹⁵ William Butler Yeats, *Collected Poems* (N.York: Macmillan, 1959), 99.

[...] A people without a language of its own is only half a nation. A nation should guard its language more than its territories 'tis a surer barrier, and more important frontier than fortress or river.¹⁶

Although advocating a national literature Irish in spirit but English in language, Yeats intended his brand of cultural nationalism to be an all-inclusive, a big-tent movement that would welcome Protestants and Catholics, Nationalists and Unionists, Parnellites and anti-Parnellites. And although Yeats's hybrid position as an Anglo-Irish rendered his credibility as a poet of Irish nationalism quite difficult, he projected a discourse termed 'Celticism,' a seminal influence on the cultural productions of the Irish from the 1860s onwards. It is worth noting that Edward Said's argument about the relations of power inscribed in the discourse of Orientalism is equally applicable to Celticism. Like Orientalism, Celticism "depends for its strategy on [...] flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner [Englishman, in this case] in a whole series of possible relationships [with Ireland] without ever losing him the upper hand."¹⁷ In both the discourse of Celticism and Orientalism, the positional superiority of the English had been reinforced by theories of race which inscribed the Irish as a second-order race in relation to the English, hence Yeats's endeavour to counter the Othering performed upon the Irish by the imperialist state through a reversal of stereotypes.

From 1893 onwards, Yeats's Romantic Ireland receded and gave way to a more nationalistic and revolutionary Ireland. He believed that by delving into Celtic pre-history, a space where all Irish people were united by a common religion and a common language, the political and historical divisions that have characterised the Irish situation could be elided and thus allow Irish people to take pride in their own culture. To reach this end, Yeats sought an older form of Irishness, the countryside, in order to counter imperialist philosophies because

¹⁶ Cited in Sean Cronin, 'Nation Building and the Irish Language Revival Movement' in *Eire-Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Irish American Studies* (Vol. 35, Spring 2000), 8.

¹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 7.

he believed that it retained the true marks of Irish culture. His poems, 'Easter 1916,' 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,' 'The Fisherman,' (1919) 'Meditations in Time of Civil War,' and 'The Tower'(1928) provide a clear overview of the colonial denigration of the Irish and the consequent concern of Irish nationalist writers with the theme of national identity.

The years 1912-1914 marked a period of debate concerning the final pre-revolution Home Rule Bill introduced to the British Parliament in April 1912. That bill, designed to grant Ireland a separate parliament with jurisdiction over internal affairs was, after two years of heated Parliamentary debate, placed on the statute books in 1914, but not enacted because of the outbreak of the Great War. This resulted in the Easter Rebellion of 1916. While Britain was preoccupied with fighting on the Continent, various leaders came together in 1916 to attempt to throw off British rule. The purpose of the rebellion was the withdrawal of Ireland from the United Kingdom and the creation of an Irish Free State. The Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Citizen Army, using German supplied arms, carried out the revolt. The city centre in Dublin was practically destroyed with all the British artillery shelling. Civilian casualties outnumbered both the rebels and British casualties put together. The massacre of the leaders of the Rising by an English firing squad startled support for Irish independence. The Irish began to see them as martyrs and heroes for the cause of Irish freedom. The riots together with the British government's hardline response and its later attempts to conscript Irish forces, created a climate in which support for constitutional home rule in Ireland gave place to more extreme demands for complete autonomy. With hindsight, the 1916 rebels might be viewed as an early example of a decolonising elite. From that vantage-point, texts by Yeats (and other writers) found their fullest inspiration in the Rising.

Written in the aftermath of the unsuccessful nationalist uprising in Dublin against British rule, 'Easter 1916,' initiated a period in which real political action and violence was taken.

That this seminal literary work of Irish nationalism was written by a Protestant seems at first ironic, but the fact only enhanced Yeats's contribution to the establishment of an Irish identity, and in so doing sustained and confirmed in Irish Protestants a sense of identity with the nationalist movement which so dominated Dublin life in the early twentieth century. Though Yeats agreed with the ideals of the Rebellion, and acknowledged those who became national martyrs, his immediate attitude towards the uprising was disgust. This is made clear right from the first stanza: "I have passed with a nod of the head/Or polite meaningless words,[...]/And thought before I had done/Of a mocking tale or a gibe"(5-10). The poet was particularly disturbed by the violence the rebels engaged in, and certainly did not respect them. The poem indeed questions the revolutionaries' use of violence and whether the nationalist cause was worth such a sacrifice. At the end of the stanza, Yeats underlines the tremendous changes brought about by the 1916 Rising in Ireland and explores those changes in the third stanza. The nationalists animated "with one purpose alone/Through summer and winter seem,"(line 41,42) and were ready to "trouble the living stream" (44) of English rule. Contrasting the gray conformist city of middle-class Dublin before the rebellion with the new world of heroic possibility ushered in by the fighters and martyrs of Easter week, Yeats expresses vividly a range of emotions from fear of what lies ahead to disgust for ideologues such as James Connolly, leader of the Marxist political nationalists and cultural nationalists, Patrick Pearse and MacDonagh who lost their lives in the uprising. Ironically Pearse, a language revivalist, promoted the idea of national redemption through the sacrifice of life. The fact that Yeats did not write 'Easter 1916' as a poem of unquestioned praise for Irish nationalism is, to our mind, what makes it so reflective of Irish identity. Out of the blood and ashes of the dead Ireland of 1913 and the Easter Rising of 1916 was born a new beauty called Ireland, albeit "terrible" and with an uncertain future, but nonetheless a newborn nation. These famous lines from 'Easter 1916' exemplify the shifting sentiments of Yeats and many

Irish at the time. The meaning of the phrase “terrible beauty” (15,16) is two-fold: the physical fight itself is terrible because it resulted in bloodshed and many deaths; however, it is beautiful in the sense that Irish people finally could unite and stand up against the United Kingdom. The Ireland described as a terrible beauty reflects the hopes for an independent Ireland, but at what cost? The terrible beauty, in this sense, is the Free Irish State burdened by human sacrifices. This is an apt commentary on an Ireland where human lives continue to be sacrificed for historical causes. Blood sacrifice was the ultimate result of cultural nationalism. It is this sacrifice with which Yeats seems concerned for much of the poem. “Too long a sacrifice/ O when may it suffice?” (57-9) notes Yeats with despair. But it seems to us that the last two lines are not just particular to Ireland but can be universalised to the World War milieu in 1916.

A view backwards of the 1916 rising and the concurrent events is also captured in ‘The Fisherman’(1919). This poem not only presents a picture of an important part of Ireland, the west, but also alludes to Yeats’s struggles with the existence of an Irish identity so often attributed to him as an Anglo-Irish. The poem shows that the most basic element of Irish identity can be found in the working people of the West of Ireland. The rise of the poor and down-trodden Irish into romantic figures, mostly through literary representations such as Yeats’s signals an important increase in national pride. The ‘Fisherman’ is thus important in restoring dignity to Ireland, showing it as the home of an ancient idealism. In this poem, the romanticized image of the Connemara fisherman, and other rural Irish labourers becomes distinctly nationalistic, in that it counters the English assertion of Irish backwardness, so best suited for subordination. The imagery at the beginning of the first and second stanzas is telling. Although Yeats “can see him [the fisherman] still,” ie. paralysed, the freckled man has remained a “wise and simple man” (8). The phrase “wise and simple” implies an intelligent man, but one without the need for materialistic extravagancies. Yeats writes with respect of

the fisherman. The first lines of the poem reflect the simplicity of the man and his surroundings. His days are filled with physical labour, and his appearance is quite modest: his face is “sun-freckled” and wears “grey Connemara cloth” (Line 29, 30). Yeats looks at the man’s face and finds “What [he] had hoped ‘twould be/To write for [his] own race/And the reality/The living men [he] hated,” the English, and “the dead men [he] loved,” (line 13-15) his fellowmen. The poem becomes even more emotional in the second stanza, when Yeats moves on from the ideal person to the archetypal member of the masses, reeling off a list of everything for which he despises them. His criticism is trenchant here, the tension and anger almost burning its way off the page, building to a crescendo at the end of the stanza: “The insolent unproved/ [...] The beating down of the wise/ And great Art beaten down” (Line 16,23.24). The beginning of the third stanza seems slightly different in tone. It is as if Yeats paused to take a breath before continuing. After his frenzied rant, he is now facing the reality of the situation. Once again he describes his embodiment of the ideal man in the perfect rural setting, but this time admits that he is “a man who does not exist,/A man who is but a dream,” (35-6) and concludes his poem with these foreboding lines: “Before I am old/ I shall have written him one/Poem may be as cold/And passionate as the dawn” (Line 37-40). The poet is determined to use his poetry, the very thing the masses are trying to diminish, to retaliate against what he saw as the onslaught of the mundane world.

‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,’ and ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ may also be studied in the light of nationalist discourse, particularly in the light of the Republican and Free State¹⁸ appeals to Ireland’s noble past during the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty debates and the ensuing civil war (1922-23). Not surprisingly, both Republican and Free State groups, adopted the rhetoric of pre-independence nationalism, though with different ends in mind. While the Free State supporters tended to promote the treaty as the turning point in a century-

¹⁸ Yeats supported The Free State party.

old struggle, an ultimate validation of the heroic actions undertaken by previous generations; the Republicans saw it as a betrayal of the fundamental basis for the revolution, and a nullification of the sacrifices of the past few years. Year nineteen hundred and nineteen was, according to nationalist leaders such as Eamon De Valera, the year when the Republic envisioned in 1916 actually came into being.

Yeats's poem, 'Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,' signals the beginning of a new era after the Great War. In this poem, history whirls onward. A man remains "lost amid the labyrinth that he has made/in art or politics," (Line 70-1) while the dreams of those, including the poet, who sought to mend "whatever mischief seemed/To afflict mankind,"(84) have gone unfulfilled. In this poem all things went into a whirlwind of dust and chaos, a "desolate heaven/That image can bring wildness, bring a rage"(79,80). Such knowledge tempts the poet to despair, "to end /What [his] laborious life imagined," (82) yet that individual sense of bitterness is again linked with a broader "we," a peoples on both sides of the Irish Sea whose faith in history as evolutionary is now revealed as "crack-pated" (88). While Yeats's own earlier cultural nationalism would seem to find answers in history, in this poem, Yeats finds only questions which point to a profound need to (re)join Irish people with a new present. This poem gives a highly unflattering portrait of the Irish Republican Army during the Anglo-Irish War. The poet describes them as full of bloodlust, rather than as being guided by a strong ideological purpose. The poem expresses horror at the destruction of Anglo-Irish families' belongings: "Many ingenious lovely things are gone," (line 1) and the ivories, statues, and all the other beautiful things are broken (line 6-8). The mob, which the speaker calls "we," had pretty toys in childhood, including laws that functioned and were not vulnerable to threats or violence. With the line, "We too had many pretty toys," (line 9) the poem shifts to a more recent past. It is certainly naive to assume that the supposed greatness of the past has continued unabated into the present, observes Yeats. "Habits," (line 11) or

modes of reading the past have led to a blind faith in the stability of “future days.” (14) “We” thought we had a purpose, but we are nothing but animals engaged in a vain fight, says the speaker. The following lines are clearly designed to capture this mood of naivety: “O what fine thought we had because we thought/That the worst rogues and rascals had died out” (line 15,16). The Victorian values espoused by British cultural imperialism, Britain as the civilised nation whose aim was to conduct the colony toward a similar state of civilisation were simply hollow rhetoric, a set of beliefs no longer able to conceal during the Anglo-Irish War the true goals of imperialism: political subjugation, economic exploitation, and cultural domination. The speaker invites the reader: “Come let us mock the great,/[...] the wise,/[...] the good,” (line 93, 98, 103) who toiled greatly and left a monument. “Mock mockers after that/That would not lift a hand may be/ To help good, wise or great” (108-110) to stop the storm, for we deal in mockery, Yeats remarks. “Public opinion,” (13) be it British or Irish, has led to blind faith in historical progression, that which “made old wrong /Melt down,”(12) and the return of that faith leads to a state of profound violence in the present. In using “public opinion,” (13) the poet moves from a clearly nationalistic history, one that would immediately sanctify year nineteen hundred and nineteen and, by extension, the Anglo-Irish War, as another chapter of heroic sacrifice, to the exposure of British confidence in its own evolutionary imperial project as simple tyranny, the wanton killing of innocent people. The next two stanzas look Janus-faced toward both sides of the Irish Sea. As several critics have noted, the phrase “Parliament and king” (20) refers to the British Empire prior to the Great War, a world of imperial certainty soon to be undone, while the stanza that follows centres on Black and Tan attacks during the Anglo-Irish War:

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;
The night can sweat with terror as before

We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
And planned to bring the world under a rule,
[...]Who are but weasels fighting in a hole (25-32).

The death of the mother¹⁹ is viewed as part of a more abstract whirlwind of chaos and violence, and the local Kiltartan time and setting is replaced by a broader vision of days that were then “dragon-ridden” (line 25). Section four of ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen’ seems to refer to the confident mindset of the British, and perhaps the Anglo-Irish, prior to the Great War: “We, who seven years ago/Talked of honour and truth,” (line 89, 90) now shriek with the cries of the animal in the pit. “Seven years ago,” though certainly evocative of pre-war Britain, speaks equally of Ireland’s recent past. Yeats moves to the “we” form when describing the madness that is shaking his nation. The pronoun “we,” so rarely used by Yeats, abounds in this section, suggesting no clear demarcation between the Irish victim and the British aggressor. The two bound together in their desire to discover in the past a validation for the deeds in the present, be it in the service of an imperialist or a national cause, tragically failed to perceive the violent ends of such desires: “We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,/And planned to bring the world under a rule,/ Who are but weasels fighting in a hole”(30-2). The term “hole” here suggests that there was no way out of the situation in which the Irish were caught at that time. In ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen,’ the faith in achieving freedom is also dismissed as another example of the historical myopia from both sides of the colonial binary. However rather than replicate that binary by simply attacking imperialism’s

¹⁹ The mother referred to is Ellen Quinn, a woman “shot dead with her child in her arms” in November 1920, as Lady Gregory’s *Nation* article journal, “Murder by the Throat,” one of many nationalistic works decrying Black and Tan atrocities, reveals. Yeats too wrote an explicitly nationalistic poem on the subject. In ‘Reprisals,’ an unpublished poem, Yeats provides a useful context for Yeats’s handling of the same incident in ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen.’ In the former, agency is quite clear, as these “armed men,” move about the countryside, the traditional site, burn homes, and murder the Irish peasantry. In the latter, though Black and Tan murders are certainly evoked, agency is somewhat clouded. Cf. Patrick O’ Farrell, *Ireland’s English Question: Anglo-Irish Relations, 1534-1970* (N.Y: Schocken Books, 1971), 201.

rhetoric of “honour and truth” (90) and by positioning himself as an Irish nationalist who clearly perceives the betrayal that imperial discourse would belie, Yeats indicts all those who participated in the sanctioning of historical narratives. The articulation of a new national history along a progressive linear axis necessarily remains an ongoing and essentially temporal process, as both Fanon and Bhabha have emphasised. Throughout that process fissures are constantly erupting as the national intellectual is called to graft the amorphous, uncertain, and chaotic present of which he/she is a participant onto nationalism’s more stable master narratives. This, according to Bhabha, constitutes the central difficulty facing those who would write the history of a people. The present of the peoples’ history, then, is a practice that destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a ‘true’ national past, which is often represented in the coloniser’s reified forms of stereotypes. Such national narratives miss, in the words of Fanon, the “zone of occult instability where the people dwell.”²⁰

Writing in the “zone of occult instability” that was the civil war in ‘Meditations in Time of Civil War,’ Yeats attempted to construct a space in which a new vision of Ireland might emerge from the ongoing violence, Irish fighting against Irish. Though not published until 1928, this collection of poems, written in the whirlpool of violence that followed the treaty split, and the subsequent establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, is a severe indictment of Irish politics after the Anglo-Irish War. In this series of poems however, we find a more complicated engagement with nationalism.

In the first poem ‘Ancestral Houses,’ Yeats describes the difference between the Ireland of the past and his contemporary Ireland. Of all Yeats’s poems, this is perhaps the most personal in its explanation of his Protestant Ascendancy past, especially in the first section. The speaker seems ambivalent about his family history. Despite the beauty of the ancestral house,

²⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 152.

its seclusion and grandeur seem to smoothen the speaker and heighten his sense of otherness. The spirit of Ascendancy Ireland is characterised as an abounding glittering jet of water that “rains down life,” (4) choosing “whatever shape it wills/And never stoop[ing] to a mechanical/Or servile shape, at others’ beck and call”(6-8). In an Ireland gripped by a civil war, those who embrace violence and bitterness, certainly do so in a “mechanical”(7) way, obeying the “beck and call”(8) of their Republican leaders with the blind zeal of martyrs. But this awareness of the gap between past and present offers little comfort, only the knowledge as the poem’s closing lines suggest, that Anglo-Ireland’s noble past cannot be recreated in the present: “What if those things the greatest of mankind/Consider most to magnify, or to bless, / But take our greatness with our bitterness?”(38-40) While the past had greatness that stemmed from the violence of the Rising, that greatness at least had a purpose, but the violence of the Civil War was “tak[ing] our greatness,” (32) because “Bitter and violent men, might rear in stone,” (19) explains Yeats. A good guess at why the ancestor might have been embittered and looked to distance himself from the common folk with gardens full of peacocks (26) is that, as a Protestant in a Catholic farmland, Yeats was the hated overlord.

The second section of the series, ‘My House’ is a romantic description of the countryside with the tower representative of Ireland as a whole. “How [did] the daemonic rage”(16) destroy that beauty? asks Yeats. He worries that his descendants may “lose the flower/ Through natural declension of the soul” (line 9, 10). The “symbolic rose” (4) of Ireland is being over-used, and is losing its value as a rallying point for Irish cultural nationalism. It is also worth pointing that Yeats adopted in his poetry, the rose as a symbol of a future Ireland, a symbol designed to evoke an Irish state always poised to be again. The ambiguous verb “break,” (4) suggesting both the difficult eclosion of the rose and the destruction of a flower already in bloom, highlights the gap between past and present, the red rose of Ireland blooming from a ground soaked by the blood of martyrs. This tradition of martyrdom is

evoked in the “Old ragged elms” and “old thorns innumerable” (line 5) suggestive of sacrifice, but the repetition of “old” and the use of “innumerable” suggest a fundamental need to question that tradition in which violent death has led to a sterile cycle of further violence. The culture and the people are being “scared”(10) by such violence.

The poet captures his fears in the fourth poem, ‘My Descendants,’ a strong critique of the lost cause of the 1916 revolution. Though Yeats’s esoteric claims are applicable not simply to the history of Ireland but to history in general, the first stanza shifts the focus to a more local Irish context:

Life scarce can cast a fragrance on the wind,
Scarce spread a glory to the morning beams,
But the torn petals strew the garden plot;
And there’s but common greenness after that.
(line 5-8)

We are again in one of the gardens of ‘My House,’ a garden littered with “torn petals,” (7) a confirmation that the rose of Ireland had been broken. The closing image is an ironic commentary on ‘Easter 1916,’ where the heroes of the revolution, “Now and in time to be,/ Wherever green is worn,/Are changed, changed utterly” (77-80). Here we have a landscape scene in which an image of temporal progression, dawn, gives way to “common greenness” (8). In this poem, Yeats confronts his reader with the senseless violence of the living present and paints a picture of death, the death of Irish dreams for a better future, an image he also captures in ‘The Stare’s Nest by My Window.’

In this poem, the tower itself as well as the roses that grow in its garden are powerful images of Celtic Ireland. Yeats’s tower becomes a prison, “the key is turned/On our uncertainty [...]” (6,7) a symbol of Ireland in the grip of civil war, where death and decay do not give way to new growth. The bees nesting in the tower symbolise the danger taking long-term hold in Ireland. Indeed, the plea for “honeybees” to “come build in the empty house of the stare”(5) highlights Ireland’s “empty” present where Yeats is forced to bear witness to the

surrounding violence: “somewhere/A man is killed, or a house burned,/[...] That dead young soldier [soaking] in his blood,” (7,8,14) but this is violence unjustified, for which “no clear fact [can] be discerned” (9). This is what Yeats sees as the result of Irish nationalism.

The concluding section of ‘Meditations’ entitled ‘I see Phantoms of Hatred and of the Heart’s Fullness and of the Coming Emptiness’ moves us beyond the local Irish context. It is a fitting commentary on the Civil War. What started as a struggle for Ireland’s independence from England degenerated into fratricidal conflict. Although vengeance seems to be *the* solution, Yeats explains however that it “plunges towards nothing,/For the embrace of nothing” (line 13, 14). To this perceptive claim, we would add that the stanza is not merely concerned with violence born from revenge but with the core ideological component driving the compulsion for revenge in Civil War in Ireland: nationalist historiographic constructions of martyrdom.

‘Meditations in Time of Civil War’ functions to disrupt precisely those same types of constructions in Republican and Free State discourses, narratives spawned during a colonial period to counter-balance imperial versions of history and the tyranny they would legitimate. Those “monstrous familiar images [that] swim to the mind’s eye” (8) are more than fitting, more than familiar. They provide a tale of chaotic violence and hatred that imprisons the present in the past, a tale by which a transitional Ireland ceaselessly replicates the initial wrongs of colonialism, which Spivak calls repetition-in rupture.

A type of retrospective look on Ireland’s tumultuous decade marked by the two major events, the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War (1922-23) is also captured in Yeats’s ‘The Tower’(1928). In this poem, Yeats tries to come to terms with the changes his country is undergoing. Yeats turns to the tower itself, a hybrid image derived in typical Yeatsian manner from British literary culture and Irish local culture, which might serve as a physical reminder of some pre-existing unity. The iconic hill of Ben Bulbin (10) tells the reader that this is

Western Ireland, where Yeats used to go during the summers away from London. The first stanza reveals the poet's anguish. The speaker decries the absurdity of the contrast between past and present and asks: "What shall I do with this absurdity/O heart, O troubled heart - this caricature,/ Decrepit age that has been tied to me/ As to a dog's tail," (line 1-4) and more than ever "expected the impossible"(8). Drawing on a symbol from his earliest phase of cultural nationalism, Yeats emphasises the drive to graft an unstable present on a more stable past. This accounts in part for the reference to the "the day's declining beam," (22) and the call to "images and memories/ From ruin or from ancient trees," (23,24) in the second stanza. In the seventh stanza, Hanrahan, (58) shows a flash of glory. He is an Irish peasant, everyman, suffering the afflictions of lameness, whether physical or moral, and alcoholism that were rampant in early twentieth-century Ireland. Weary of the intoxicating and brutalising effect of fanaticism and hatred, of fighting for a lost cause, the speaker leaves "both faith and pride/To young upstanding men"(line 122-3).

Thus while Yeats could not boast of having fought in the streets against the British, he nonetheless used the occasion of his literary success to claim, retrospectively, a leading role in the national campaign that led to Irish independence in 1922. Though his rhetoric may well have inflamed rather than dampened sectarian passions at the time, Yeats's defense of what he referred to as the liberty of minorities, the Irish Protestants, explored through the above poems reveals the liberal basis for his conception of Irish nationalism. But to his political and cultural opponents such as James Joyce, the century's most well-known Irish poet was simply not a true Irish.

8. 3. The Question of Irishness in James Joyce's *Dubliners*

Fostered by Irish cultural nationalism during his youth,²¹ Joyce's awareness of and pride in Irishness, his conscious affiliation with the native population as opposed to the English Ascendancy, are central to his work. He is however unusual in his treatment of the cultural nationalism of his time. As Vincent Cheng points out, Joyce's "writings are nationalist in intention, [but] they repeatedly remind us to be vigilant about forms of national consciousness that simply reproduce the same binary, essentialist hierarchies inherited from Anglo-Saxon racism."²² Joyce's status as an urban writer certainly accounts for the complex forms of national identity and nationalism developed in his work. The modern city itself is more the expression of an emerging transnational modern culture than of any national identity. Given his ambivalent attitude to national identity, Joyce's work has often been regarded as presenting an immediate cultural challenge.

If Yeats associated Ireland's degeneration with the city and with Dublin in particular, how does then Joyce as a Catholic Middle-class, and urban writer compare with Yeats? Joyce repudiated the Irish Literary Revival going so far as to call Yeats one of "the blacklegs of literature."²³ The concept of rural authenticity implies and mandates the existence of its opposite, the urban. It is here that Joyce parted company with a Gaelic nationalism weaned, as he put it, on "the old pap of racial hatred."²⁴ For Joyce, Celticism had little to offer in terms of a modern notion of Irishness. He therefore did not see an ancient Irish past as a vital force, a point he made clear in a lecture given in Trieste on 'Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages':

²¹ Joyce became acquainted with the Irish Literary movement when he was a student at University College Dublin, a centre of fervent revival.

²² Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 291. Historically, the Irish Catholic Church opted to be the political accomplice of the British state in Ireland.

²³ James Joyce, *Selected Letters*, ed., Richard Ellmann Joyce (Viking, 1975), 187.

²⁴ Richard Ellman, *James Joyce* (Oxford University Press, Revised Edition, 1982), 237.

Ancient Ireland is dead just as ancient Egypt is dead. The old national soul that spoke during the centuries through the mouths of fabulous seers, wandering minstrels, and Jacobite poets disappeared from the world with the death of James Clarence Mangan. With him the long tradition of the triple orders of the old Celtic bards ended; and today other bards, animated by other ideals, have the cry.²⁵

And Joyce is certainly one of those animated by new ideals. The dialectic between alienation and the restless search for identity certainly emerges in his writings, but for him, Dublin as a modern city space is both all too Irish and at the same time a cosmopolitan space in which hybrid Irish identities could be created. Whereas the major preoccupation of Revivalists such as Yeats and Synge advocated a native literature in the service of the country, Joyce maintained that Irish writers needed to become more European by taking inspiration from continental writers.²⁶ For the nationalists however, cosmopolitanism was synonymous with West Britonism²⁷ in that it sought models for individual and national identity outside what they perceived to be Irish cultural traditions. So how did Joyce manage to sort out that ambivalence?

The paradox of Joyce's image of Dublin as a city of paralysis at the very moment of the Literary Revival can be explained by the fact that since the Revival was largely the work of the Anglo-Irish rather than the Catholic bourgeoisie of Joyce's background who fuelled the political Gaelic Revival, then the two views were the products of divergent experiences of history. The complicated relationship between the Catholics and the Protestants urged him as he says, to take "the first step towards the spiritual liberation of [his]country."²⁸ Though notorious for his attacks on the Protestants, it was upon the Catholics that Joyce focused his wrath. The basic failing of Irish Catholics, according to him, was that they did not take pride in their own culture, a root cause of West Britonism among Catholics. Another failing of the

²⁵ Cited in Mason Ellsworth & Richard Ellmann, eds, *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* (New York: Viking, 1959), 173-174.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁷ The phrase 'West Briton' alluded to their support of pro-English political measures such as the Act of Union of 1801.

²⁸ James Joyce, *Letters II*. Cf. Richard Ellmann, *Selected Letters* (Viking, 1975), 221.

Catholics was their obsession with politics. Joyce criticised them for focusing on political independence instead of cultural independence, a point at least he shares with Yeats despite their dissimilar views on how to address Irish identity. Joyce thus wrote *Dubliners* with the aim of bringing some change in the country.

In a letter to Grant Richards in 1906, Joyce argued that if Richards obstructed the publication of his collection of stories, he would “retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing Irish people from having one good look at themselves in [his] nicely polished looking-glass.”²⁹ The title of the collection of stories helps to foreground a conceptual approach to Irishness, first in its focus on the citizens of the capital city, seat of British administration and headquarters of nationalist movements such as Sinn Féin. Identity, in *Dubliners* moreover, is represented and negotiated in the space of the hybrid subject. In regard to the power of hybridisation, Bhabha explains that hybridity “is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures,”³⁰ instead, it creates

a crisis for any concept of authority based on a system of recognition, [allowing] other ‘denied’ knowledges [to] enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority- its rules of recognition.³¹

This crisis of authority is tangibly demonstrated in *Dubliners*. The crucial presence of Irish culture alters dominant English discourses allowing Joyce to question the authority of ideological systems. The recognition of the double cultural basis of the Irish is a prerequisite for an understanding of Joyce’s ideological positioning as well.

Although the stories follow an order which suggest the Revival’s development, they depict an Ireland far removed from the mythopoeic Celticism of the Revival. For Joyce, the main

²⁹ James Joyce, *Letters I*, 63-4. Cited in Michel and Patrick Gillespie eds., *James Joyce and The Fabrication of an Irish Identity* (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA : Rodopi, 2001), 100.

³⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Signs taken for Wonders,’ in *The Location of Culture*, 156.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

problem is that his Dubliners have appropriated the alien forms the colonisers have imposed on their minds and in so doing have tightened the colonial shackles, hence the struggle of Joyce's characters to maintain an individuality that threatens to sweep them away from all the identity landmarks contained in Irish culture, such as language. Language becomes the very symptom of a cultural clash. For Joyce as for Yeats, the relation between language and home vibrates with issues of political identity and national existence. Language in these writers' works is constructed as a Janus-like figure delimitating the boundaries between two kinds of home: the real home, the Irish, and the new and alien home constructed by the English. But how can the stigmatisation attached to the Gaelic language be reconciled with the Gaelic Revival when Gaelic was not the language of an urban culture? The Dubliners have indeed been speaking English since the seventeenth century, as explained earlier. The reader indeed feels the increasing frustration of Joyce's characters in their search for linguistic identity. The absence of a vital language infects his characters, rendering them unable to communicate with one another. Joyce transforms conversation into monologue, emphasising his characters absorption by the alien language.

The use of language as a means of wielding power and prescribing social roles is found in *Dubliners*. Each of the Dubliners stories chronicles an attempt doomed to failure because it couches itself in the forms and language of the enemy, and this becomes a prophecy of the failure of nationalism. In the first story of the collection, the adults seem indeed afflicted with linguistic inadequacy. The linguistic displacement expressed by Stephen culminates in the "unfinished sentences" (9- 11, 15- 18) of adults in 'The Sisters.' The story strikes the reader from the first page with the deliberate suspension of a number of words. The identity of the dead priest is disclosed through a series of unfinished sentences. Old Cotter may oppose the dominant discourses with silence, but his language has already been infiltrated by the alien language. He trails off as he tries to explain why the friendship between the Priest and the boy

is unhealthy. Prone to malapropisms, Eliza gropes and falters as she attempts to examine her brother's sad history. The story closes with one of her pauses, signalled by an ellipsis, a gap implying the failure of words (*D*, 16).

It is worth noting that *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1930) also exemplifies Joyce's complex identity as an Irishman writing in English. *A Portrait* tells the story of Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's alter ego, ensnared in the nightmare of Irish history and struggling to find his own place in history. The issue of lost language is reflected in Stephen's conversation with his friend Davin: "My ancestors threw off their language and took another [...] They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them. Do you fancy I am going to pay in my own life and person debts they made?"³² Thus one senses Stephen's unrest over the cultural differences inscribed in language and his inability to escape them. His malaise grows specifically from the English language. He feels both at home and not at home using it. And in an episode towards the close of *A Portrait* when Stephen meets the Dean of Studies, he expresses his profound sense of alienation as he listens to the Englishman speak: "His language so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech [...] I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language."³³ And it is at the very end of the novel during the Easter season that the protagonist will finally devote himself to writing as a means of redeeming his race hence as a way of reconciling his ethical self with his socially constructed identity. Even as he refuses to learn Irish or endorse the program of the Gaelic League, Stephen affirms the importance of his nationality to his art: "This race and this country and this life produced me [...] I shall express myself as I am" (220).

Associated with the displacement of Gaelic by English as the vernacular language is the central trauma of rural nineteenth century Ireland famine which disproportionately affected

³² James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), 203.

³³ *Ibid.*, 189.

Gaelic-speaking areas in the South and West. In this light, we might see Eveline's mother as deliriously exclaiming words half remembered from her parents' native Gaelic, a language displaced by English when the family moved to the city in the famine period, in the 1840s. This results in the formation of an identity that is neither that of the coloniser nor that of the colonised. Because of his ambivalent relationship to the dominant culture, the Irish finds himself in an in-between space, which Bhabha calls the "third space of enunciation,"³⁴ a position that would allow some ontological understanding of both reality and representation.

Most of the *Dubliners* stories moreover involve characters who walk aimlessly through the streets of the city of Dublin. The urban wanderers of *Dubliners* are paralysed by the effects of British colonialism and the Catholic religion alike. Although Joyce uses wandering as a trope to dramatize the alienation of man from his community and to express his views of an Irish degenerate culture, yet as an urban writer, wandering becomes a means for investigating new modes of identity formed through an acceptance of hybridity, one quite different from Yeats's. At times, Joyce stresses the characters' affinities and at others their differences. He does so in his characterisation of Farrington and Alleyne in 'Counterparts.'

The title of the story already calls attention to the various dissimilarities between the two characters. Farrington feels trapped in his situation. He is reprehensible like many other characters. He is the impotent husband and the displaced father, made so by his marginalisation. Joyce's reference to Farrington's wife being "out at the chapel" (*D*, 95) and his son's offering to say "a Hail Mary" (*D*, 96) for him singles out the protagonist as a Catholic, while the boss, Mr. Alleyne, his "North of Ireland accent," (*D*, 90) and domineering role identify him as a Protestant. The key moment in Farrington's downfall is his confrontation with his Ulster Protestant boss. He is brow-beaten by him. Conversation, in this story, becomes not the exchange of information but a ritual of domination and submission. So

³⁴ Ibid., 37.

Alleyne constantly asks: “Do you hear me?”(85) with the purpose of forcing an acknowledgment from his subordinate. Farrington later arm-wrestling with the Englishman, Weathers, is another reference to the sectarian difference. While Farrington regards the Englishman not as a Protestant but as a sport adversary, the spectators however, make of the wrestling match a national matter and so impel Farrington “to uphold the national honour” (D,93). After his double failure in the face of the Other, the London actress who snubbed him and his defeat by an English acrobat, Farrington feels a “spasm of rage,” that only a “good night’s drinking” (D, 95) at the Scotch House could appease. But this time, drinking did not win over his feelings. He feels that he has lost his reputation as a strong man. Joyce’s narrative even ceases to name him. The writer refers to him as “the man” (95). We also learn that Farrington is on bad terms with Mr. Alleyne because of his daily drunkenness and more importantly because Farrington dared mimic his boss’s North of Ireland accent in the pub. According to Bhabha, mimicry is an act of camouflage. It reveals a loss of agency on the part of the narrator, who is also condemned to paralysis. In Farrington’s case, the result of entrapment and defeat is clearly stated at the start of the final section of the story: “He cursed everything” (D, 94). Without pride, without a job, status, even among his family and reduced to nothingness by his boss, Farrington tries to regain some pride before his friends and prove that he is worth something by beating his son. Thus through such trivial details as the wrestling match or drinking, Joyce stresses how the innocent can fall victim to those who have been brutalised by environment, and how the violence of colonialism has impacted on every aspect of the colonised’s daily life and his very identity.

The harm to family life caused by alcohol is also suggested in ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room’ by the old caretaker’s ironic lament that his adolescent son, already addicted to alcohol, “takes th’upper hand of me whenever he sees I’ve a sup taken” (D, 120). Reinforcing this irony, Mr. Henchy later gives a bottle of alcohol to the teenage delivery boy from the

Black Eagle. The story also lays stress on the interconnectedness between drinking and politics. The owner of the Black Eagle is the Nationalist candidate, Tricky Dicky Tierney. This Joycean irony serves as a reminder of the unhealthy alliance between the Nationalists and the drink trade.

The background on the politics of the day, referred to in the first of the thesis, is a prerequisite to understanding this story. This narrative indeed examines the motives and character of Irish politics. While Ivy Day is the day commemorating Charles Stewart Parnell's death, (6 October 1891)³⁵ the committee room of the title also alludes to committee room number fifteen in the House of Parliament in London where on 6 December 1890, Parnell lost control over the Irish Home Rule Party. Parnell was the head of the Nationalist Party and the champion of the cause for Home Rule in Ireland, but he lost power because of an adulterous affair. The Irish Churchmen condemned him, and he lost the support of many Irish Catholics. That scandal undermined the process of Irish independence. The spectre of Parnell looms large in this story. Joyce juxtaposes the divide between nationalists and conservatives to the large amount of apathy many of the men exhibit. The writer also makes it clear that the canvassers are working for pay rather than out of any particular enthusiasm on behalf of the candidate they support, and some of them actually despise Tierney. Irish nationalism seems lost without its charismatic champion.

'Ivy Day' moreover shows that identity means little in the very political climate of Ireland. This story provides a field for the exploration of the issue of political relations between the two cultures, which is raised through Crofton's presence as a canvasser for Tierney. The party denominations already throw back to the existing political difference between Catholics and Protestants. We would like to recall that the United Irishmen's definition of identity was a secular one, where all Irish people were to be united in terms of their common Irishness

³⁵ It is clear from the story that the action takes place after the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901 and before the visit of King Edward VII to Ireland in July 1903.

regardless of religious and even political allegiances. The Defenders' view of identity was focused in exactly the opposite direction. Theirs was a sectarian vision wherein to be Irish was to be Catholic. Hence the uneasy alliance in 'Ivy Day' between the Home Rulers and the Conservatives. The characters embody the major political parties of Ireland in 1902. Henchy and O'Connor work for the Nationalist candidate, Tierney, who is sponsored by the United Irish League, an arm of the Parliamentary Party in local elections. Crofton and Bantam Lyons belong to the Irish Conservative Party, allied with the English Conservatives in upholding the Union with England, but since their candidate threw in the towel, the Conservative party has been canvassing for the Nationalist Tierney as "the lesser of two evils" (*D*, 128). The Conservatives' support of a Nationalist suggests that a political change has been taking place among the Catholics. This change is implied through Joyce's Henchy. This character's reference to King Edward as "a jolly fine decent fellow" (129) points out to his proscription of the previous political difference between the two Irelands. The story stresses not only the stagnation of political hopes after the fall of Parnell but also that the committee room is full of men of divided loyalties, whose only goal of the moment is to drink their beer. From this perspective, 'Ivy Day' can be seen as Joyce's critique of, and lament over the collapse of nationalism.

That change was taking place in Ireland is also underlined in 'Clay.' Maria, who "used to have such bad opinion of Protestants," (*D*, 98) realizes after working for them, that they are "very nice people to live with" (98). This phrase suggests her desire to associate herself with her Protestant employers. Moreover if 'Counterparts' and 'The Sisters' are paradigms of linguistic aggression, 'Clay' is a model of non-resistance to the speech of the Other: "Yes, my dear," and "No, my dear" (97) constitute the core of Maria's speech. Although aware of the uncomfortable linguistic situation in which she finds herself, she was convinced that "the

matron was such a nice person to deal with, so genteel” (98). Maria thus embodies the type of Catholic that in ‘After the Race,’ and in ‘The Dead’ are castigated as West Britons.

A key example of this thinking is also found in ‘An Encounter.’ The story gives us a broad view of Dublin itself. It tells of the Catholic and Protestant violence, Irish poverty, lecherous old men, foreigners and the schooling of boys at that time. When Father Butler finds Leo Dillon reading *The Apache Chief*, he remarks: “I’m surprised at boys like you, educated, reading such stuff. I could understand it if you were [... a] National School Boy” (D, 18). Father Butler’s reference to National School Boys suggests that Irish Catholic boys are ‘ignorant,’ hence ‘inferior.’ Joyce drives home the message that despising one’s own culture can have destructive consequences for the Catholics. This story about Leo Dillon, a Catholic boy who scorns a representative of his own culture is an apt commentary on the part of Joyce to show that Irish Catholics were a race of betrayers. We should note that the Revival encouraged this kind of ambiguity. On the one hand, it singled out the Catholics as the fundamental crystallisation of a great culture; on the other hand, that peculiar position made them seriously blamable because they did not take pride in their own culture. This Revival pattern runs through Joyce’s work, one side of which is devoted to attacks of Catholics for becoming West Britons, while the other side treats them as superior to the Protestants and the English. This issue of religious differences is also underlined in ‘Grace.’

In this story, Joyce presents the Church not only as a sustainer of intellectual and economic difference but also an instigator of difference within a culture and members of a family. Because Crofton believes that Protestants and Catholics, though worshiping “at different altars,” (163) have the same belief, he attends a Catholic sermon given by Father Tom Burke. Puzzled, Mr. Power remarks: “But [Crofton] is an Orangeman, isn’t he?” The Protestant Kernan replies: “Course he is, and a damned decent Orangeman, too” (163). But McCoy sees not much difference between the two Christian denominations, as he explains: “ We believe in

the Redeemer. Only we don't believe in the Pope and in the mother of God" (163). This distinction was also true during the Revival when the views heard were those of Protestants like Yeats, Hyde and others while the Catholics' remained unspoken. In 'Grace,' this discussion about the two religions is brought to an end by Martin Cunningham who explains: "But, of course, our religion is *the* religion, *the old faith, original faith*" (163-4, Italics mine).

The revelation of social differences and cultural biases is also evident in the interaction between the Nationalist movement and Mrs. Kearny in 'A Mother.' Joyce gives a cynical view of the effects of the Revival on the already created sense of identity of the Dubliners in question. This story portrays the supposed devotion of Revivalists to Irish language and music. It clearly shows the writer's antipathy for the Revival, which had been espoused for all sorts of reasons, a point he keenly makes through the characterisation of the protagonist. Joyce says: "When the Irish Revival began to be appreciable, Mrs. Kearney determined to take advantage of her daughter's name [Kathleen] brought an Irish teacher to the house" (*D*, 135). Although Mrs. Kearney encourages her daughter to study nationalist politics and the Catholic religion that is some aspects of her culture, she is not motivated by any nationalist spirit. Her main goal is to derive personal advantages. She believes that an association with the Revival movement will offer new life-prospects to her Kathleen. As the Revivalists put an emphasis on Irish music so she thinks they might not only pay for her daughter's fees at the Royal Academy of Music, but also open up jobs for pianists. This will promote her daughter's social standing, and perhaps provide her with a fortunated husband than herself, especially since the Revival movement is supported by titled Protestants. Another instance of Mrs. Kearney's preoccupation with status is also reflected through her arrangement to have Kathleen paid in guineas rather than pounds as great concert stars wer. 'A Mother' thus dramatizes what is basically called a West British snob. Joyce shows how for some, the new social self-respect

could verge on hard-nosed bourgeois materialism. Rather than being a simple tale about a woman whose concern with money underlies her apparent interest in the Revival, as it is taken to be, this story tells much about the damage done to a culture whose members long sunk into misery were ready to turn their backs on their own culture in order to survive. In this nicely-polished looking glass, the interest that Kathleen and her Nationalist friends take in the Revival consists merely in sending postcards to say “good-bye to one another in Irish,” (*D*, 135) says Joyce ironically. Thus while the Irish Revival movement was commonly credited with bringing new life to the spirit of Irish Nationalism as made clear in Yeats’s work, in Joyce’s story, there is no such rejuvenation.

Joyce’s ‘The Two Gallants’ also examines the politicisation of Irish cultural symbols, another effect of Ascendancy rule in Ireland. Irish cultural symbols become invested with political connotations to render them serviceable to nationalist ideology. In this story, the passage when Corley and Lenahan pass by a harpist playing in front of the club on Kildare Street cannot pass unnoticed for it is laden with meaning. Through this scene, Joyce provides an implicit commentary on colonialism and its consequent debasement of Irish culture. The harp represents Irish expression and identity. For all of its rich evocations of Irish art, the harp stands as Irish nationalism’s most ostentatious symbol. We have already explained earlier that the advent of colonialism led nationalists to eagerly reclaim ancient Irish symbols. In this respect, the harp represents for many nationalists the whole idea of a Celtic identity annihilated by the English; its notes play, the plaintive melodies of a ravaged Irish culture. With considerable irony, Joyce depicts how important a role icons play in mustering up allegiances to a sense of nationhood. We see Irish art degraded as the harpist plays “heedlessly” and glances “wearily also, at the sky” (*Dubliners*, 57) on a shabby Dublin street. Also the harp, Ireland’s most poetic and visionary symbol, no longer celebrates a Celtic ethos, because like Irish men, it has been rendered irrelevant by an intrusive alien culture and now

produces a “mournful music” (57) wrecked by tawdry commercialism. Joyce’s portrayal of the harp’s degradation in front of the club ultimately reveals how contemporary nationalist ideology owes its consolidation to colonial occupation.

Thoughts about the Revival also cross the mind of the dispirited Little Chandler in ‘A Little Cloud.’ The boy feels the smallness of his life and rebukes his more successful and cosmopolitan friend Gallaher. The lack of self-assertion which Chandler so bitterly resents is a by-product of his culture or rather that his culture is no longer his own as it has been borrowed from elsewhere. Little Chandler believes that “to succeed [he] has to go away [from] Dublin” (73). He dreams of the great city of London to escape from the dreariness of his native Ireland and acquire the worldly vision of the metropole. We are told that “every step brought him nearer to London, farther from his own sober inartistic life in dear dirty Dublin” (73). What Joyce draws attention to is that subservience is written into the boy’s ambitions because they focus not on Dublin but on London. In the capital city of England, Chandler could write a poem to express the melancholy about Dublin’s houses. But the boy is as indifferent to the nationalist aims of the Revival as Mrs. Kearney. His main target to become a writer of Ireland is to gain recognition “as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems,” (81) and above all have his writings published in an English paper. But then he remembers that his name was not Irish-looking. Perhaps his mother’s name inserted before the surname would do: Thomas Malone Chandler sounds quite right. So the end justifies the means. Nationalism thus aimed no longer at serving the nation but at deserting it. This point is also underlined in ‘After the Race.’

Mr. Doyle, who had begun life “as an advanced Nationalist has modified his views early,” (D, 41) observes Joyce in this story. Mr. Doyle has great respect for foreign accomplishments, and believes that cosmopolitan connections would secure for his son, Jimmy, “qualities often unpurchasable” (D, 43). Concurrently, he sends him to Cambridge “to see a little life,” (D, 41)

that which was not available in Ireland. Jimmy wears the mask of sophistication. The young man finds great pleasure in the company of those Continentals such as the Frenchmen, Segouin and Rivire, the Hungarian and their friends Routh, an Englishman, and Farley, a rich American, many of whom he met in Cambridge (*D*, 42). This also helps confirm the received idea that English, and by extension Protestant ways were superior, and Irish (Catholic) ways inferior. Despite his education and sophistication, Jimmy has difficulties in understanding and in speaking. In the car, he often had to “strain forward to catch the quick phrase,”(41-2) because Ségouin’s dexterity at directing conversation made him feel uneasy. Likewise, when confronted to a French competitor, he manages only “a confused murmur of compliment” (42). The imposition of the alien language, English, rendered him unable to express himself in either his own language or in the coloniser’s.

The conflicting desire for the local/national and the cosmopolitan/international is also represented in ‘The Dead.’ Whereas the earlier stories portray the Revival as an anemic sham, the last story treats it as a vital and powerful movement dealing with important Irish issues. Joyce realised that by giving a one-sided presentation of turn-of-the-nineteenth century, he did not do justice to his country. These changes are conspicuous in the writer’s depiction of Miss Ivors whose university education, interest in Irish and association with the Middle or Upper classes were typical of Catholic Revivalists. She remains by far a more congenial figure than the pseudo-Revivalists in ‘A Mother.’ The rhetoric of authenticity used by nationalists such as Yeats for instance, to discriminate against citizens living in the national capital of Dublin, is explored in the torn allegiances of the protagonist, Gabriel Conroy, whose trips to the continent are meant to make him more cosmopolitan. The portrayal of Gabriel is a typical case of ambivalence in accordance with Bhabha’s observations on the destabilizing effect of mimicry on the colonised. Bhabha has remarked that mimicry or partial assimilation of the colonised into the coloniser exerts a powerful effect on identity of the former. Hence loss of

personal identity is unavoidable for any of those who forge a false identity for themselves, as Gabriel. This character seems indeed to have come to terms with the problem of his subject position by choosing a cosmopolitan identity based on his disavowal of the Irish language, and his ability to speak French and German disregarding nationalist politics, as it were. With a position at university, his stuffy speech sprinkled with classical allusions, his house in Monkstown where High Class families live, his trips to the continent and even his dressing as a gentleman, Gabriel can be depicted as a Catholic who has become more Protestant than the Protestants themselves. The Joycean story's attack on the Irish habit of scorning things Irish offers here an even more striking instance of the story's harmony with Revival ideas. Gabriel has this habit as is made clearly in his outburst, "Irish is not my language. I'm sick and tired of my country" (187). Having accepted the English stereotype of Catholics as culturally inferior, Gabriel apparently has decided that they are not worth knowing. And on hearing "the indelicate clacking of the men's heels and the shuffling of their soles" (*D*,177) as they dance, he reminds himself that "their grade of culture differed from his" (*D*,177). He thus dismisses all the guests at the Morkans' party as vulgarians (195).

But Molly Ivors, as a loyal follower of the Revival, calls into question the protagonist's political and cultural disconnection from Irish life. The ardent Nationalist unnerves him by revealing her knowledge of his literary contributions to the Unionist Daily Express, a conservative publication opposed to the Nationalist cause. She also reminds him that instead of going abroad every summer to "keep in touch with [European] languages," (187) he should go to Aran Isles to renew his knowledge of the Irish language. Miss Ivors then whispers the insult "West Briton" (187). The implication here is that if one is interested in anything outside of Ireland, one is not Irish, though in Joyce, there is a more complex interaction between Western Europe as a desired place and the West of Ireland. The story however does not attack West Britonism itself. There is no suggestion that anything is wrong for instance with the

Morkans having English pictures on their walls or failing to have Irish music and dances at their party. It is however important to note that whereas the Revivalists condemned West Britonism because it damaged Irish culture, the point in 'The Dead' is that Gabriel's West Britonism has damaged his very relationship with his society and his very identity. Indeed beneath his veneer of sophistication, Gabriel has some serious doubts about what he has become. Those doubts clearly surface in his fear that "he would only make himself ridiculous" (*D*, 177) by quoting poetry in his speech. These doubts and uneasiness about himself also enable his transformation at the end of the story when he undergoes a sort of conversion that involves a reassessment of his cultural aims and an acceptance of his Irish roots. In this sense, Gabriel's epiphany at the end of the story might be viewed as an attempt to come to terms with these competing urges within Irish culture and identity. The final push that moves Gabriel toward the Irish heritage comes from Gretta, his "country cute" (175) wife's story about her former lover, Michael Furey, and the song he used to sing to her, 'The Lass of Aughrim.' Aughrim as the locus of the bloodiest Irish defeat, a year after the Boyne³⁶ defeat which fully sealed English domination of Ireland, becomes a poignant icon of that obliterated Irish past. Gretta's feelings about the boy of the gasworks have a profound effect on Gabriel partly because they show that she was not the person he thought and partly because they reduce to meaninglessness the grade of culture he has attained and has prided himself on. The sophisticated Gabriel learns that he has seriously underestimated his people and overvalued the image of the cultivated gentleman toward which he aspired. Likewise, Joyce's West of Ireland figures, Michael Furey and Gretta Conroy, are equally removed from the pious, Irish-speaking peasants inhabiting the West imagined by the Catholic Revivalists and from the quaint comic peasants at the Abbey stage.

³⁶ I have discussed this point in the first part of the thesis.

In Joyce's final story moreover, it is not only the Catholic who is the real victim but the Protestant as well. The cultural transformation implied in Browne's character serves as a counterpoint to the one that Gabriel has undergone. Quite paradoxically, while Gabriel feels uneasy among his own people, Browne feels at home among the Catholics. Joyce endows this ignorant, garrulous bachelor with key features of the Irish Catholic stereotype, including a fondness for alcohol. By giving Mr. Browne the role that had been assigned to the Catholics by the English since their invasion of Ireland, Joyce undermines the racist views of colonial discourse. He also suggests changes in the old relationship between Irish Catholics and Protestants. Reflecting on Ireland from the vantage point of Trieste, Joyce concludes his story by underlining that the important features of his country were its natural beauty and its hospitality.

Thus for all his fame as a hater of Ireland, Joyce produced a more sympathetic picture of Ireland than appears in the work of Yeats, and the other writers associated with the Revival. His final story clashes most obviously with the Revival dogma by revealing the presence of positive Irish traits in urban Dublin as well as in the rural West. Gabriel's after-dinner speech expands Joyce's meditation on the positive traits of the Irish such as humanity, which belonged to an older day (190).

In light of the cultural conflicts found in Joyce's stories, it is tempting to read them as some sort of during and after portrayal of Ireland's colonial experience. No doubt such a reading could imply that Joyce foresaw how Ireland's unresettled disputes and potentially violent internecine hostilities would soon run over into a national crisis. Joyce saw how the effects of colonial rule in Ireland continue to complicate the quest for an inclusive Irish identity, his depiction of the shortcomings of ordinary Irish people suggests that political, religious, and cultural antagonisms are always muddled by human error and weakness. To this end, his depictions of common Dubliners in all their shabbiness and petty jealousies remind us

that Ireland's inter and intraethnic and cultural tensions cannot be solved if nationalists and unionists continue to subscribe to constricted views of history and practice their own brand of cultural essentialism.

Irishness as discussed in this chapter is no longer the prerogative of the Catholic nationalist, Gaelic strand, but also of the Anglo-Irish, Protestant strand. While both Yeats and Joyce changed the terms of Hyde's de-Anglicisation by writing about Irish themes in the language of the colonial master, placing Joyce into the context of cultural nationalism allowed us to see how different his vision of identity and nation were, a vision that cannot fit into the prevailing modes of Irishness created by such Revivalists as Yeats. While Yeats endorsed the myth of rural Ireland as the only possible site for Irishness, thus leaving his wanderers nowhere to go, Joyce as an urban, cosmopolitan writer created wanderers free to explore new forms of Irishness.

Despite their ambivalent relationship to Irishness, these writers strove to represent an effective conception of identity that would enable them to continue the struggle for decolonisation in the face of the racial and cultural dichotomies encouraged by colonialism. The revolution for the Irish writers was to put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement, and demonstrate that the Irish *were not* and *are not* savages and that their values are worth those of any other civilisation. It is this revisionary strategy that I aim to discuss, in the next chapter, in relation to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, (1899) a jewel in the crown of colonial discourse analysis.

Chapter IX

Mapping the Subaltern: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

[*Heart of Darkness* is] a book which parades on the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities in the past and continues to do so in many ways and many places today. I am talking about a story in which the very humanity of black people is called in question. It seems to me totally inconceivable that great art or even good art could possibly reside in such unwholesome surroundings.

Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa, *The Massachusetts Review* (Winter 1977), Vol. 18, no. 4, 786.

As Ashcroft has remarked: "Postcolonialism is more than a body of texts produced within postcolonial societies [...] It is best conceived of as a reading practice."¹ The case of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is particularly instructive in this regard. It has become a key text in the burgeoning field of postcolonial studies. Critical opinion regarding the Polish writer's treatment of the issue of imperialism, in his novella, has been sharply divided. A growing body of critical writing draws attention to Conrad's commitment or non-commitment to imperialism in the light of which Said's approach in *Orientalism* seems quite appropriate to this discussion.

¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith & Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 191.

9. 1. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* under Postcolonial Eyes

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and the writer's lexicon have provided a hunting-ground for conjectures of all sorts because it teems with stereotypical images of the Other, and as such has raised a crucial question for African and non-African counter-discourse. In Said's view: "Every European, in what he could say about the Orient was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric."² Concurrently, he sees Conrad as a man "whose Western view of the non-Western world is so ingrained as to blind him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations."³ Said points out that Conrad's narrator, Marlow, "is a creature of his own time and cannot recognize that a non-European 'darkness' was in fact a non-European world resisting imperialism [...] and not as Conrad reductively says, [re-establishing] the darkness."⁴ The Palestinian critic also claims that Conrad allows the imperialist system of representations to speak for the cultural Other. Carried away by his understandable aversion to racial stereotyping, the Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, also believes that *Heart of Darkness* bears all the traces of the ideology of colonialism/imperialism and claims that this novel exemplifies various Orientalist assumptions and strategies of representation. He thus concludes that Conrad is a "purveyor of comforting myths," and a "bloody racist."⁵

In response to Achebe's arguments and by the same token to Said's, Cedric Watts states that "Conrad is [rather] offering an entirely plausible rendering of the responses of a British traveller of c.1890 to the strange and bewildering experiences offered by the Congo."⁶ Far from being "a purveyor of comforting myths," Conrad debunks such myths and has helped African writers develop their own assaults on colonialism and this influence is an evidence of

² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 204.

³ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 18.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa,' *Massachusetts Review*, 788.

⁶ Cedric Watts, "A bloody racist": about Achebe's view of Conrad,' 408. Cited in Nicolas Harrisson, *Postcolonial Criticism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 23.

his anti-imperialist stand, points out Andrea White. According to her therefore, Conrad's fiction cannot be a story of "unenlightened, backward 'them' and heroic, 'progressive us.'"⁷ Benita Parry offers an analogous critique and explains that by revealing the discrepancy between the white man's high-sounding rhetoric and the harsh reality of colonialism, "Conrad's writings [are] more destructive of imperialism's ideological premises than [are] the polemics of his contemporary opponents of empire."⁸ Which version is likely to be plausible? Our aim in the subsequent segment is to cast light on the foundation of this critical disagreement. We will explore the charge of racism held against Conrad with particular reference to Achebe's most acclaimed lecture, 'An Image of Africa.' Using the insights of the theorists dealt with previously, we shall examine how this seemingly 'racist' work is more ambivalent than Achebe and other critics have suggested.

In his 1975 lecture at the university of Massachussets, Achebe affirmed that Conrad "casually wrote words that continue to give morale to the barricades of racism."⁹ He therefore attacked him for "project[ing] the image of Africa as 'the other world,' the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilisation, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality."¹⁰ Chinua Achebe also reproached Conrad for his use of Africa as "setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor," and his reduction of the continent to "a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity."¹¹ In the light of such criticism, should we then read *Heart of Darkness* as a manifestation of Orientalism, or is there more to it than those African stereotypes?

It is important to note that Conrad's conception of Europe was largely determined by his Polish heritage. With a history of foreign invasion and domination, the 'Polish question,' like

⁷ Cited in KrajkaWieslaw, ed., *Beyond the Roots: The Evolution of Conrad's Ideology and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 97.

⁸ Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 10.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ 'An Image of Africa,' 783.

¹¹ Ibid., 788.

the Irish or African questions, was as much about a nation's desire for independence as it is a peoples search for identity. More than a century of occupation and several failed uprisings profoundly impacted Polish culture.¹² Like the English in Ireland and Nigeria, the Belgians in the Congo, or the French in Algeria, the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians not only dispossessed the Poles of their lands, but also assimilated Polish youth making it unaware of its rich heritage, destroying Polish nationalism as it were. However, even as the country remained partitioned, Polish arts driven by the Young Poland movement, *Moda Polska*, thrived and functioned as repositories of a national consciousness under siege. A major facet of the nascent national consciousness was a sense of loss of national and personal identity, hence the ambivalence which lies at the core of Conrad's cross-cultural, trans-national identity. As a writer who made his career in exile, Conrad's cultural identity is double and split. He is English and yet not English enough, just as he is Polish and quite paradoxically not Polish. This hyphenated character of Conrad's Polish-English identity contributed to the sense of utter isolation and alienation from humanity and from the self that pervades his work. Given this overwhelming sense of inadequacy and dislocation, it is no surprise that he became particularly sensitive to cultural differences. And as Said noted, Conrad's fictional representation of identity is "inseparable from his presentation of narrative."¹³ It is not only in his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, (1895) but also in *Heart of Darkness* (1899) that Conrad writes about cross-cultural contact and interaction.

The Politics of Representation of the African Native

Heart of Darkness arose out of a frenzied moment of the Victorian period. It explores the extent to which the crisis in nineteenth-century thought was linked to Europe's encounter. The patterns of asymmetrical oppositions ie. civilisation/barbarism, black/white, light/darkness and

¹² The Poles experienced three partitions of Poland (1772, 1793 and 1795), two uprisings (1830 and 1863), and several less drastic cases of social unrest, as well as the exile of large portions of the population to the West and imprisonment in Siberia of patriots in the Russian partition.

¹³ Edward Said, *The World , the Text and the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 81.

the stereotypical images of the natives that pervade Conrad's text, seem to support Said's thesis that Orientalism divides the world into two antithetical parts, and his argument of

the power of culture by virtue of its elevated or superior position to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, demote, interdict, and validate: in short, the power of culture to be an agent of, and perhaps the main agency for powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond it.¹⁴

But as Conrad explained in one of his letters to his friend Graham Cunninghame: "The meaning in *Heart of Darkness* is so wrapped up in secondary considerations that one may miss it."¹⁵ Drawing on Bhabha's argument concerning the ambivalence of the representation of colonised subjects resulting from the attempt to lessen and maintain their seeming otherness in relation to the colonisers, we can say that Conrad's ambiguous representation of the African natives and his manipulation of stereotypical images in his novella serve a purpose. Conrad's own conception of fiction and the role of the writer should not be overlooked. "Fiction is history, human history or it is nothing," he says and adds that "a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, and the expounder of human experience."¹⁶ It is therefore important to situate Conrad's text in the matrix of imperialism.

In Conrad's view, the Belgian exploitation of the Congo¹⁷ was imperialistic barbarism at its peak. In one of his protest letters to Roger Casement in 1903, he wrote that

barbarism per se is no crime deserving of a heavy visitation; and the Belgians are worse even, than the seven plagues of Egypt insomuch that in that case it was a punishment [...a] transgression [... an] infliction.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹⁵ Conrad's letter to Graham Cunninghame. Cf. Gerard Jean Aubry, *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters* (London: Heinemann LTD., 1927), Vol. I, 262.

¹⁶ Albert, Moravia, 'Images of Africa,' *Partisan Review* (1963), 392.

¹⁷ The Congo is actually not named in Conrad's novella. The writer uses such substitutions as 'Dark Continent,' 'The heart of darkness, or the 'jungle.' Robert Young remarked that it is to Conrad's shame that his novella never names the Congo and that this omission stemmed from racism. To condemn Conrad on such grounds seems to me cursory both historically and literarily. Conrad simply wanted to keep at bay from political matters and this omission shows that he wanted his novella to be a piece of literature not a political treatise. Cited by Nicolas Tredell, ed, in *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 143.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad recounts the story of the Belgian violation of the blacks' human rights. The natives, "victims of an inhuman imperialist Inferno," (HD, 30) are compared to animal-like creatures "walking on all-fours"(HD, 42). By making the blacks look like animals, and simply consigning them to the role of shadows glimpsed in a prehistoric wilderness, Conrad demonises the Europeans whose goal in Africa was supposed to be humanitarian. These pictures moreover provide grim landmarks of the Belgian massacres of the Other, and reveal the writer's indignation at their treatment of another culture. The sense of human waste is best revealed in the description of the grove of death to which exhausted Africans had crawled away to die: "half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair" (HD, 31). As after the visitation of a pestilence, the natives have become "nothing earthly [...] nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation [...] lost in uncongenial surroundings" (HD, 24). Moreover, when the writer used the word 'nigger,'¹⁹ it was when an African had been physically abused by somebody else; when the African had already been dehumanized. Thus statements such as "therefore he whacked the old nigger mercilessly," (HD,23) "the hurt nigger moaned feebly somewhere," (HD, 41) "a quarrelsome band of footsore sulky niggers trod on the heels of the donkey," (HD, 43) do not necessarily reflect the author's own ideology, but characterize the late Victorian and early twentieth century views of the Africans. And when the writer underlines the colour of the natives, they are black, he says, he is suggesting that before European incursion, the natives' skin colour was not a means of differentiation among the

¹⁸ Cited in Wieslaw Krajka,Ed., *Beyond the Roots: The Evolution of Conrad's Ideology and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 104. The infliction and transgression Conrad refers to apply to the French, the British and the Americans as well. It seems to me that if Conrad is not as negative about British imperialism, it is because he did not have a first-hand experience of it as of Belgian imperialism. Another explanation for his omission might be that as a new British citizen, he wanted to be very cautious.

¹⁹ It is worth noting that for centuries, the term 'nigger' has held negative connotations, and in modern times, in most contexts, it is considered a racial slur. In the 1800s, as 'nigger' began to acquire the pejorative connotation it holds today, the term 'coloured' gained popularity as a kinder alternative term to 'nigger' and associated terms such as 'negro.' Moreover, the term 'nigger' has sometimes been extended in meaning so as to refer to all disadvantaged people. In nineteenth-century literature, there are many uses of the word 'nigger' with no intended negative connotation. Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and Joseph Conrad, who published *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, in 1897, used the word without racist intent.

people. By marginalising the indigenous people, the European man drew the latter's attention to their appartenance to a different race, in which case, black becomes "ugly," for the Europeans. However these natives, Marlow points out, are not inhuman. What moves you is "the thought of their humanity - like yours - the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar" (*HD*, 51-2, Italics mine). So why are they are viewed as enemies and criminals by the white man? Simply because they are different, and have a different complexion and flatter noses than theirs (*HD*, 21). It is indeed ugly enough to see that appalling destruction of man by his 'kin.' The insistence on the white man's "remote kinship" leads one to ask: who is Conrad trying to convince? By drawing attention to the kinship between the blacks and whites, Conrad moreover, undermines scientifically-justified theories of race which have divided humankind into different groups. This consanguinity of the 'civilised' and the 'savage,' though disturbing for the Victorian man, erodes the distance between Easterner and Westerner as well as their differences. This rapprochement across cultures is another crucial evidence of Conrad's non-racist views and constitutes in itself an answer to Achebe's harsh criticism. Conrad's breach of the barrier between 'civilisation' and the mysterious world of the Other, is in my opinion, an attempt to bridge the gap between 'us' and 'them.' *Heart of Darkness* simply provides the reader with an insight into the politics of culture, not the native culture but the colonial culture and its nightmarish qualities.

The Other in the novella is endowed with great significance for what it reveals about Europe. Although Conrad depicts Africa as a shackled and conquered monster, he subtly shows that it is the European conquerors who relapse into latent savagery. This is suggested at the outset of the novella when the doctor takes cranial measurements in order to evaluate changes occuring in the wilderness. This might be seen as an instance of the scientist as imperialist and racist. "I always ask leave, in the interests of science, to measure the crania of those going out there," (*HD*, 26) says the doctor; and "when they come back too," asks the

narrator, to which the doctor promptly replies: “Oh, I never see them [...] The change takes place inside, you know” (26). The figure of Conrad’s Kurtz foreshadows this change taking place inside.

This evil-like character holds the centre stage in *Heart of Darkness*. It is through him that the writer explores the notions of evil and greed and underlines men’s inhumanity towards other men, not to a subhuman species as Achebe noted. It is through ivory that Kurtz has gained his power, his identity and it is through ivory that he loses it when he gives way to his baser instincts. Far from privileging the white man, Conrad flays him especially, when he refers to the protagonist’s relapsing into savagery and to the natives’ capacity for restraint (*HD*, 57). Thus the predator has become the prey, the victim of his own lusts. This is an irony that Conrad tosses up to show the grotesque facet of colonialism. The ultimate savage of the text is the coloniser and as such is a metonym for the failure of the colonial enterprise, for the degradation of the so-called civilising mission. This situation contrasts sharply with the Western man’s claims of superiority, and suggests a flaw in imperial ideology. Conrad also suggests that despite his European descent, Kurtz was not immune to barbarity and that the dehumanizing and devastating effects of colonialism are not only experienced by the colonised but also by the coloniser. Aimé Césaire warned against these baleful effects in his *Discourse on Colonialism*:

Colonization works to decivilize the colonizer and to brutalize him [...] to awaken him to buried instincts [...] and each time a head [or a hand] is cut off or an eye put out [...] a gangrene sets in [...] a poison has been instilled into the veins of Europe, and slowly but surely, the continent proceeds toward savagery.²⁰

But the image of the black as thoroughly Other is not only questioned through the depiction of Kurtz’s transformation into a savage but also in the contrasting description of the sensual black mistress and the pale, white Intended.

²⁰ Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955), 13.

The black woman is as evocative of bondage as she is of Venus, the Goddess of Love and Beauty. Though “wild,” she is “gorgeous,” and is “treading the earth proudly [...and] carrying her head high [...] She [is] savage [but] superb, wild-eyed [but] magnificent, [her] face [has] a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow,” says Conrad (*HD*, 77). However, her distress is different from the Intended’s, who was “proud of that sorrow” (*HD*, 91). While the black woman is mourning the destruction of her country and her culture, the Intended is lamenting the loss of her beloved fiancé, the very agent of that massacre. Moreover, the Intended’s grief is so intense that when Marlow meets her, he feels such immense compassion for the white woman that he resolves not to tell her the truth about Kurtz’s last words. That lie cancels that unflinching power of speech, which Conrad calls “triumph” (233) of expression in *Lord Jim* (1900). The end of the story reinstates the discourse of imperialism as a lie, a discourse described by Gayatri Spivak as a fallacy based on the “error-as-truth syndrome.”²¹ Conrad thus clearly shows the flaws in the colonial system and the discrepancies between the ugly reality and the sublimated ideology. The inadequacy of language in Conrad’s fiction is one of the backbones of his tragic vision, of his view of human identity as unavoidably split.

The Eloquent Silence in *Heart of Darkness*

Conrad’s concern with the power of the word stated in the *Nigger of the Narcissus* (1897) can be found in all his works, however it is in *Heart of Darkness* that the reader is confronted with the opposition between eloquence and silence, between language and its erasure from African society.

Heart of Darkness stresses the paradoxically corrupted and corrupting nature of highly refined, carefully wrought language. At the outset of the novella, Conrad juxtaposes the flowery language of the Europeans with the brief utterances of the Africans. The reader’s attention is captured by the noises, tones of voices of the so-called pilgrims. It is significant

²¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (N. York; London: Methuen, 1987), 101.

that the manager's talk to Marlow upon his meeting with him, seemed to him "bits of absurd sentences," (47) and that Marlow took him for "a chattering idiot,"(38) that "the pilgrims could be seen in knots gesticulating, discussing"(41) and that the young man likened to a papier maché Mephistopheles "jabbered about himself"(42). Speech is moreover rendered as either a pulsating stream of light, or "the deceitful flow from the heart of impenetrable darkness" (80). Concurrently, Kurtz's gift of expression is depicted as both bewildering and illuminating; "the most exalted," but also "the most contemptible" (83). Quite paradoxically, its very illumination becomes darkness. Kurtz has hidden the barren darkness of his heart in the "magnificent folds of eloquence" (74) and is therefore more threatening than the others. Mesmerized by Kurtz's "burning words,"(66) his audience is lulled into an apathy that it cannot shake. Marlow's fear that "his speech or [his] silence would be a mere futility," (40) is symptomatic of the loss of faith in language. Hence, language does not function as it should because words take on the "terrific suggestiveness they have in nightmares" (88). Language becomes in Marlow's words: "some small matter, which when the pressing need arose, could not be found [...] under his magnificent eloquence" (74). Very little of Kurtz's power of eloquence remains. Indeed, when Kurtz appears on the scene, he has become "very little more than a voice [...] like a dying vibration of one immense jabber [...] without any kind of sense. Voices, [mere] voices" (64). Marlow realises the double nature of language: its enlightening and ennobling power but also its power to corrupt. And Kurtz is a perfect embodiment of this duality. This recession constitutes another evidence of Kurtz's loss of identity. His eloquence is mere fabric. The key note at the foot of Kurtz's report for the Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs: "Exterminate all the brutes"(66) signals the collapse of the language of the coloniser into utter abjection.

Conrad juxtaposes moreover the various forms of communication, both verbal and non-verbal of the indigenous with the more complex exchanges that take place between the white

men. In contrast to the latter, the Africans are depicted as dumb, another bone of contention for Achebe. According to the Nigerian writer, Conrad makes the African speak English only to enable the Western reader glimpse his barbarism. But Conrad's point is to highlight the pernicious effects of colonisation, which rendered the native inhabitant speechless by destroying his environment, his culture and his language. The reader is confronted with a telling silence of condemnation. Every gesture, every look or cry is followed by "an appalling and excessive silence" (55). The black woman is the ultimate silence in the novel. Her silence stands in stark contrast with Kurtz's volubility. When she makes her apparition, she shouts something to Kurtz's disciples. But her "articulated, rapid and breathless utterance," (78) remains incomprehensible to them. And so is the helmsman's. The dying native settles upon Marlow an inquiring glance as though to put him "some question in an understandable language" (42). The language barrier is indeed a fundamental issue in Conrad's fiction. With the exception of Makola in 'An Outpost of Progress,' (1897) none of his African characters speak a European language. Likewise, none of his European characters, save for Kurtz, speaks any African language sufficiently to understand the native culture. The writer emphasises the lack of comprehension between the colonised and the coloniser. The latter interprets the native's language as "grunting phrases," (56) and "strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language" (56). So a 'civilised' man like the coloniser cannot be expected to learn the babbling of uncouth sounds made by the so-called savages. This is another opportunity for the Polish writer to show that so blinded by their sense of superiority, the Europeans make no effort to try and understand African languages. The significance of the culminating point of Marlow's experience is then a reminder of how language works. In order for communication to take place, there must be a mutual recognition of the humanity of the communicants.

Heart of Darkness thus manifests the mutism of a world condemned to silence by the destruction of core values. It reveals the moral failure of European civilisation of which language is merely a mask and therefore bankrupt. Language in Conrad's novella becomes the very vehicle of European pretence. The paradoxical tensions between speech and silence are a reflection of the oppression and repression to which the native African had been subjected. The writer deflates the idea of a voice and merges that of Kurtz, senseless with the natives' eloquent silence. Meaning thus resides in silence. Conrad leaves the reader poised, like the primary narrator "on the watch for the sentence, for the word that [will] give [him/her] the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by the narrative that [seems] to shape itself without human lips" (43).

So far, we have read *Heart of Darkness* in a different light from Achebe in order to stress the plurality of meanings in this novella. We also strove to demonstrate that Conrad has been the victim of that kind of 'first' reading which Roland Barthes condemned as reading which erases the problematics of the text,²² hence our attempt to rescue Conrad from some of the most disturbing implications of his position towards the African 'Other.' The Polish writer sought a way out of the prisonhouse of colonialism, an alternative world beyond the realities imprisoned in colonial texts by proposing a new order of knowledge, but one which takes a dual path: it is reconstructed in a way similar to that found in colonialist texts but only to interrogate its vision and its ideology in order to show what colonialism had created, what it had repressed. In this sense, the writer's perspective is a corrective to the views of difference offered by such European texts which construct Africa as the embodiment of primordial darkness while depicting Europe as having a civilisational history enabling it to control that darkness. We shall argue that Conrad's questioning of any biological divide between Africa and Europe simply becomes a means to reconstitute African identity which has been robbed

²² Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 17-8.

by the European man because of his cultural difference. Thus *Heart of Darkness* should be read as overcoming colonial discourse. The cultural controversy that surrounded Conrad's novella may therefore be construed as simply an argument about representation with the conflicting parties held captive by images, but oblivious to the reality. In this sense, Robert Hampson is quite right to say that: "*Heart of Darkness* [...] does not offer the representation of Africa: it offers a representation of [colonial] representations of Africa."²³ Hence, Conrad's anti-colonial position aligns him with the postcolonial endeavour to oppose colonial discourse as exemplified by Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

9. 2. Deconstructing the Colonialist Rhetoric: Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Until the lions produce their own historians,
the story of the hunt will glorify only the
hunter.

Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (Anchor. Rprt Edition, 2001), 73.

The Nationalist movement in British West Africa
after the Second World War brought a mental
revolution which began to reconcile us with our-
selves. It suddenly seemed to me that we too have
a story to tell.

Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (Garden City, NewYork:
Doubleday/Anchor Press, 1975),70.

The shift of perspective on the part of writers implied by the term 'postcolonial' is very clearly identified by Achebe in the above quotations. As in Ireland, the distinctiveness of the Ibo culture, its individuality had been effaced through the colonising agents of education, religion, and language. This inevitably resulted in feelings of profound cultural dislocation, and loss of identity. Achebe is thus a cultural nationalist whose fiction rests on a Fanonian belief that writing is a cornerstone of national culture. One of the most baleful effects of

²³ Robert Hampson, 'Heart of Darkness and 'The Speech that cannot be silenced,' *The Journal of The English Association* (Spring 1990), Vol. 39, n° 163, 213.

British rule on the Nigerian psyche was the creation of an inferiority complex resulting in the alienation of the self. In his analysis of the psychic structure of colonial consciousness in *Black Skin, White Masks*, (1967) Fanon draws attention to the effects of identity formation for the African colonised person who is forced into the internalisation of the Self as an Other and notes that:

The negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation. [...] In the man of colour there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence. Whenever a man of colour protests, there is alienation. Whenever a man of colour rebukes, there is alienation.²⁴

Thus imprisoned by a way of perception that denies him the right to define his identity, the black man has been compelled to look at himself not as a human being, but as a duplicated image of the coloniser. The violence of this representation is powerfully conveyed in Fanon's image of amputation. One response to colonial trauma was to embrace the white man's so-called civilised ideals, but however hard he tried to don the white mask, the black man has never been accepted as a full human being. The white world has excluded him because he was expected to behave as an Other or as Fanon puts it : "A man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man."²⁵ This demarcation line between man and black Other is an important feature of colonialism. At this point it becomes clear that colonialism can be brought to a real end only when this way of thinking about identity is challenged.

If skin colour has been the ultimate sign of the degeneracy of the Other in colonial discourses, then, how revolutionary is it to make 'blackness' the site of cultural difference and

²⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove P, 1967), 112-3.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

political resistance? This revolution was launched by the Negritude movement.²⁶ Leopold Sedar Senghor, a poet and philosopher of the movement defined Negritude as

the consciousness of being black, the simplest recognition of the fact, implying acceptance and responsibility for one's own as a Black man, one's history or one's culture. It is the refusal to assimilate, to see oneself in the Other. Refusal of the Other is affirmation of the Self.²⁷

The Negritude proponents opposed European constructions of African identity by promoting a view of the distinctiveness and dignity of African personality and constantly harked back to the African past. It is not surprising that the movement coincided with the great nationalist movements sprouting all over the colonies in the thirties and forties with the aim of reclaiming national independence for the colonies. Negritude of course, had its admirers as well as its detractors. Fanon views Negritude as a kind of ideological false consciousness and thinks that although the peoples' cultural heritage remains a basic resource in forging national culture, it is not enough to glorify the past for as he says, "to speak more of African culture than of national culture will tend to lead them up in a blind alley."²⁸ The South African writer, Ezekiel Mphahlele, offers an analogous critique. He disapproves of the extravagant claims of the Negritudinists and their romanticisation of Black and African values. Spivak for her part, believes that this nativist conception of African culture would result in what she calls repetition-in-rupture, ie. in his efforts to oppose colonial discourse and to show that he has a culture, the native finds himself trapped within the false conceptions of racial identity underpinning the colonialist myth. The danger for the Western-educated native intellectual is, to our mind, to become immersed in his cultural history. In this sense, nativism would work

²⁶ Negritude as an anti-colonial movement had its distant origin in the rise of the Harlem Renaissance in the early twenties. It attracted the attention of many African intellectuals in the forties and fifties, among them Aimé Césaire, (Martinique) Léon Gontran Damas (Guyana) and Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal).

²⁷ Cited in Romanus Okey Muoneke, *Art, Rebellion and Redemption: A Reading of the Novels of Chinua Achebe* (New York: Peter Lang Publishings, 1995), 60-61. Italics mine.

²⁸ Frantz Fanon, 'On National Culture,' 12.

against the construction of identity and culture. But the most virulent opponent to Negritude has been Wole Soyinka whose pithy statement “a tiger does not proclaim his tigritude, it pounces”²⁹ had been a terrible blow on the Negritude movement. For Soyinka, that notion of “African authenticity” is but a “mummification”³⁰ of traditional life. He concludes that authentic African literature cannot be the kind produced by Negritude writers, but by such writers as Chinua Achebe to whom he refers as the “crusader against the literary inequities of other writers.”³¹

Achebe was indeed among the first African writers to take up history in the construction of a postcolonial identity. Achebe finds that the white man’s book has distorted his people’s past, stereotyped them and scorned his cultural heritage, a point of view Homi Bhabha discusses in his introduction to *The Location of Culture*, where he lays stress on the colonial book as an emblem of domination. Along with its discursive capacity to narrate, Bhabha asserts that the colonial book disseminates a European cultural heritage and controls the imagination of the colonised. Yet, while it glorifies the permanence of European dominance, it is also a symbol of colonial ambivalence because it empowers the colonised subject with a mode of resistance against imperial oppression, observes Bhabha. His notions of ambivalence and resistance can therefore be interpreted as reconstructing a space from which to speak. Confronted by the overwhelming hegemony of colonialist rhetoric on Africa, Achebe thus felt impelled to redefine African identity insisting that

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans; their societies were not mindless, but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, and above all had dignity. It is this dignity that African people had lost during the colonial period and it is this dignity that they must now regain [...] and the writer’s aim is to help them regain it.³²

²⁹ Cited in Solomon O. Iyasere, ed., *Understanding Things Fall Apart: Selected Essays and Criticism* (New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1998), 49.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

³¹ *Ibidem.*

³² Lecture on ‘The Role of the Writer in a New Nation’ delivered at the Nigerian Library Association in 1964, p. 154. Achebe’s lecture also seems to be a response to the well-known British imperial historian, Margery Perham who wrote in her

From this statement, Achebe makes himself the spokesman for Africa and the Africans. The most painful thing for the Nigerian writer is that the African is led to believe that he is inferior to all other races, and for which he says: “If I were God I would regard as the very worst our acceptance - for whatever reason - of racial inferiority.”³³ He also explains how important it is “to counter racism with what Jean Paul Sartre has called an anti-racist racism, to announce that we are as good as the next man but that we are much better.”³⁴ Ibo culture, he observes, “lays a great deal of emphasis on differences, on dualities, on otherness.”³⁵ He thus claims his first book to be the first step in his nation-building, “an act of atonement with [his] past, the ritual return and homage of a prodigal son,”³⁶ as he says. At this juncture, it is worth noting that although Achebe shares certain things with the Negritude exponents such as the spirit of revolt, a commitment to the past and the notion of the restoration of the dignity of African values, he rejects their narrow perspective. He believes that by providing a golden image of Africa, the Negritude writers present only half-truths. Achebe is aware that objectivity is a prerequisite in all intellectual pursuits and that the history he is recreating to restore dignity to his people could only be credible if he presented a realistic depiction of Ibo history in which both the beautiful and the ugly co-exist.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe takes us back to the Ibo past to rehabilitate the dignity of the black man so badly bruised by colonial subjection. As reworked in Yeats’s ‘The Second Coming’ indeed, Achebe’s novel provides a frame for incorporating past and present. Like Yeats, Achebe invokes and asserts the validity of myth and legend in the face of the coloniser’s narrative which has denied Ireland and Africa the existence of a history prior to

study of Lord Lugard and the invention of Nigeria that the Ibos and other groups in the South East of Nigeria had no history before the advent of the Europeans. Cf. The chapter on Nigeria in the first part of the thesis.

³³ Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday/Anchor Press, 1975), 44.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 71-2. Curiously enough, Achebe seems to appropriate some of the arguments expounded by the colonialist when he says “we are much better.” This statement seems to evoke the same superiority complex, the racism that he claims to be fighting.

³⁵ *Ibidem.*

³⁶ *Op.Cit.*, 193.

invasion. Like the Irish poet, Achebe celebrates the culture of a peasant community outside Anglo-Saxon influence. By using the Irish poet's material to draw a contrast between the manifold periods of Ibo history and the concomitant changes in human history, Achebe not only reverses the white man's narrow definition of African culture and history, but also shows that the sense of historical decay, continuity, and rebirth is not only characteristic of the European tradition but also of the African one. He thus attempts a corrective view of Ibo cultural traditions reminding the outside world as well as his own people that it "was *not* one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them,"³⁷ insisting that it had contained much of value before the coming of the white man.

In a way similar to Fanon, Yeats, Joyce and Conrad, Achebe uses the language of the hegemonic culture to liberate the African's identity and history from the coloniser's demeaning images. In Achebe's own words, if colonialism deprived the African of "a song", it gave them "a tongue for singing."³⁸ Metaphorically, the song stands for the native language and the tongue is the language of the master. But Achebe insists, "let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in English, for we intend to do unheard of things with it."³⁹ He makes thus the English language carry his own experience, a point of view that Ngugi rejects. For the latter, language being the vehicle of an entire peoples' culture, colonial languages can only convey what Spivak calls the epistemic violence of colonialism and foster alienation. Ngugi thus believes that Achebe's work does not qualify as African literature, but rather as Afro-European literature. But Achebe explains that an African writer can use English but not like an Englishman. He should develop a local style of English.⁴⁰ The English he uses in

³⁷ *Morning Yet*, 72. Emphasis mine.

³⁸ Cited in C.Lynn Innes & Lindfors Bernth, eds., *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* (Three Continents Press, 1978), 69. Achebe has even emphasised the merits of English as one of the main media of communication in a multilingual nation such as Nigeria.

³⁹ *Morning Yet*, 7.

⁴⁰ Commenting on how Achebe alters English to reflect native Nigerian realities, Eustace Palmer argues that: "without seriously distorting the nature of the English, Achebe introduces the rhythms and speech patterns, idioms and other verbal nuances of Ibo[...thus] while everyone who knows English will be able to understand the work [...] but the reader has also the

Things Fall Apart is indeed “still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.”⁴¹

Achebe portrays Umuofia mostly in its idyllic form in the first thirteen chapters as a proud and stable society, vibrant with music, dance and festivities. He exploits oral speech patterns to express the African ethos and pathos. His choice of metaphors and proverbs help carry his message. The language used by the narrator and the Ibo characters is permeated with proverbs and idioms emphasising the identity of the Ibo man, and the existence of a once rich and living tradition. The writer also uses Ibo words. The presence of such words has a dual effect. On the one hand, they defamiliarize English for a native reader, remind him that the Ibos have their own language and that their culture is expressed through it. On the other hand, they make the language more hospitable for a native speaker of Ibo. By placing these words in his English text, Achebe provides concrete reminders of the historically violent process he is narrating. Contact with the alien culture has caused the indigenous culture to undergo flux, thus has undermined both the ‘I’ and ‘we’ experiences.⁴² The thrust of this shift is vividly underlined by the loss of the indigenous voice.

Significantly, Achebe’s novel both begins and ends with the polar attitudes of the Ibo and the English in regard to the use of language. The novel opens with the statement of Ibo linguistic aesthetics: “Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten,”⁴³ and ends with the counterbalancing linguistic perspective of Mr. Brown, the white district commissioner: “One of the most infuriating habits of these people was their love of superfluous words” (177). According to the District officer, “the leaders of the land in the future would be the men and women who have

sense of Black Africans speaking and living in a genuinely Black African rural situation.” Cf. Eustace Palmer, *The Growth of the African Novel* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 60.

⁴¹ *Morning Yet*, 61.

⁴² Michail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas P., 1986), 87. According to Michail Bakhtin, language does not exist for its own sake, but can only be understood in dialogic terms. Hence, discourse grows out of both the “I-experience” and the “we-experience.”

⁴³ *Things Fall Apart*, 4. In West Africa, palm oil is the dominant ingredient in all kinds of dishes. Its coloration makes the dish attractive.

learned to read and write,” (156) hence pointing to the demise of orality. This clash between divergent cultures finds expression in the person of Okonkwo, a perfect embodiment of that linguistic breakdown.

At the start of the novel, the protagonist is depicted as the greatest man in Umuofia, hence as the receptacle of the village's doctrines, and paradoxically also as a displaced person. The most obvious indication of this displacement from his culture are his linguistic slips of the tongue. In a community in which the art of conversation is highly regarded, Okonkwo's stammer appears as a tragic flaw. Although he resorts to proverbial speech to indicate his determination to break the white man's "wing," (15) his power both as warrior and leader of the clan are doomed to failure by his incapacity to speak coherently. Okonkwo's endeavours to stir his kinsmen's hearts with speeches at tribal council fails. He is left unable to utter a word, and in the end there is only utter silence. This is made conspicuous in the scene when Okonkwo and his elders are arrested after the burning of Mr. Smith's church, "the six men remained sullen and silent [...] they found no words to speak to one another" (167). The clash of cultures involved in the colonisation of Nigeria brought about a silencing of the indigenous voice. At the close of part two, one of the elders of the tribe laments over the loss of this great tradition of orality: "I fear for you young people because you do not understand how strong is the bond of kinship. You do not know what it is to speak with one[']s voice [...] I fear for you; I fear for the clan" (150). At the end of the novel, the Ibos see their language completely displaced because it does not fit the new situation. Thus the English have triumphed and the Ibos have become prisoners of the English language. This is potently reflected towards the end of the novel with Achebe's contention that "even now they have not found the mouth with which to tell of their suffering" (*TFA*, 145), an issue keenly raised in Spivak's essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' The closing paragraph of the novel stresses not only the replacement of Ibo culture by English culture but also that of the Ibo language by the English

language, hence the displacement of the oral tradition, of legend by the written word. Language is thus the arena in which cultural struggle between the folkways of the Ibos and the supposedly high culture of the British colonisers is ultimately fought.

Moreover, in the lively, self-assured and civilised society that Achebe recreates in *Things Fall Apart*, the will of the community remains supreme. It is worth noting that the African writer has been nurtured in a society where the sense of community is very strong. Hence, the popular sentiment among the Ibos, as found in other Africans is: “I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am.”⁴⁴ Achebe himself has insisted that the primary aim of African literature is its commitment to the notion of national community. In his own words: “A national literature is one that takes the whole nation for its province and has a realised or potential audience throughout its territory.”⁴⁵ Achebe’s depiction of Ibo community life functions not only as a Fanonian counter-weight against previous literary distortions of Africa, but also as a prophetic affirmation of postcolonial Africa’s future. In ideological terms, the circle formed by the community has a dual function: it allows Umuofia to evoke its identity, but it also permits the narrator to display the elements of alienation and disjunction. In this sense, the community in this novel can be viewed as a protagonist struggling against Western intruders to maintain its cultural practices. The family being the backbone of Umuofian (and African) society, the cohesion within the family contributes to the cohesion of the community. This is a community where the individual is lost in the fold of the many. Achebe captures this in a proverb of the elders: “If one finger brought oil, it soils the others” (*TFA*, 111). This proverb stresses the communal nature of Umuofian society. And the security which the individual enjoys starts with the community and vice versa. Okonkwo indicates that when a close relative breaks the rules of the community, loyalty to the community wins out. Achebe also states that the clan is “like a lizard, if it loses its tail, it soon grows another”

⁴⁴ Cited in Solomon O. Iyasere, ed., *Understanding Things Fall Apart: Selected Essays and Criticism* (New York: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1998), 108-9.

⁴⁵ *Morning Yet*, 56.

(TFA, 121). This proverb underlines the sense of longevity of the clan but also stresses that it cannot be completely destroyed.

Achebe's vision of community life in *Things Fall Apart* is also symbolically embedded in the ceremony of the kola nut, a sacramental ritual that binds the community together and provides a context within which human exchange occurs. The minute accounts of ceremonies in the first part of the book reveal what is at stake when this society is threatened by change when it comes into contact with the whites and its tragic consequences as summed up by Conrad's Marlow when depicting life in the Congo under Belgian rule. Such rituals are intended to provide a cultural background to the characters, and underline that they should not be regarded as merely exotic quirks.⁴⁶ This depiction points to a difference with the picture provided by the colonial text which marked off the Africans as a peoples without history and Africa as "a landscape without figures, an Africa without Africans,"⁴⁷ as David Carroll noted.

Moreover, by rescuing the pre-colonial past and constructing the ritualistic human ties of Umuofian society, Achebe fashions a cultural matrix to show its disintegration when the British arrived in the first decades of the twentieth century. We are told that "He who brings kola brings life" (TFA, 3). Hence what an Ibo person cherishes most is to live a good and worthy life here on earth, die and receive full and proper burial rites and this could only be achieved within a decent moral order. This assertion about Ibo lifestyle makes society come alive as a throbbing community of living beings, a picture dramatized in the drum scene in chapter five. As a musical instrument, the drum is very significant in African culture. To Africanists such as Du Bois, the drum is a "living and speaking thing through which the Black African man achieves the independence of human voice."⁴⁸ The significance of the drums is made more prominent in chapter six of Achebe's novel. The reader's attention is drawn to the

⁴⁶ Gikandi Simon, *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction* (Oxford: James Currey LTD, 1991), 33.

⁴⁷ Op.Cit., 27. This point had been discussed in a former chapter. Worse than that, many Africans in Achebe's time were ready to accept the European judgment that Africa has no history or culture worth considering.

⁴⁸ Cited in Mezu Rose Ure, *Chinua Achebe: The Man and his Works* (London: Adonis & Abbey Publishers LTD, 2006), 6.

ilo, the village, by the drums so that the time of celebration starts. The drums and “their frantic rhythm [are] the very heartbeat of the people,” (*TFA*, 43) underlines Achebe.

Even the notion of market is important in Ibo culture. In *Things Fall Apart*, it is shown not only as a microcosm of the community but it also serves as a place of wealth, one in which the spirits of the ancestors express “all the threads of which the social fabric is composed” (62). Wealth here is a mark of dominance and presence in a culture. The references to wealth also denote the transition from one period to another, from the pre-colonial to the colonial era. Wealth embodied in the number of yams owned is a symbol of a culture’s productive forces and colonisation in the novel is predicated on the usurpation of this wealth. Moreover, since manhood in Ibo culture is determined by the possession of wealth, its loss also denotes lack of self-worth.

Further instances such as the dance of the ancestral spirits, the gestures, the rituals and even the formal greetings are in no sense merely part of the decor, but are intended to give a cultural background to the characters, and point to the values that govern Umuofian society. It is also a way for Achebe to stress the foreignness of the Europeans and the differences in cultural aesthetics and show that what thrills one group represents to the alien Other “unspeakable rites” (Conrad). Such beliefs as the sacred symbol of the python for instance, appears to the Christians as ‘fetish.’ Evidence of an impending clash is looming when one of the new converts is reported to have killed and eaten the sacred python (138). These ideological symbolisations of a cultural order form the very texture of the Ibo world.

Traditional religion also helps to mould a collective conscience. African traditional understanding of the world and reality as a whole is religious and holistic. Divinities and patron spirits are manifestly the most outstanding features of Ibo religion. In Ibo culture, every person has a personal god or *chi*, crucial to his existence since it is the person’s spirit, it is also his very identity. *Things Fall Apart* brings out the working of the *chi* principle in Ibo

life. Okonkwo's father, Unoka, goes to the Oracle to find out why despite his good *chi* and the prescribed sacrifices he offered to the gods, his harvest is still poor. The Oracle responds that he should go home and work harder to reap bounteous harvests. Okonkwo is another example of someone who has a good *chi*, but his personal god refuses to give assent to his affirmation because he is consumed by his personal ambition: becoming one of the Lords of the clan is indeed his life-spring. In Ibo cosmology, even the supreme deity who communicates through an oracle is understood to be a communal voice. Man's success does not solely depend on his personal prowess, but it must get the blessing of the spirit world of the gods. The will of the God is sought before any major decision is taken. Likewise, the village meetings with the arrival of the masked spirits of *egwugwu* and the awe with which the traditional rituals are observed to their minute detail give the reader an insight into tribal laws and customs, the very cement of Ibo community. Moreover, every great issue, every war waged in Umuofia requires Agbala's consent, the Oracle of the Hills and Caves. Achebe explains that the Feast of the New Yam is held yearly before the start of the harvest "to honour the earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan" (31). Gods' commands have to be strictly obeyed or there would be a terrible punishment. Okonkwo is made to understand this when he beats his wife during the Week of Peace and is determined not to stop it "half-way through, not even for a fear of a god" (25). Consequently, Okonkwo is castigated for his negation of the basic laws that govern social relationships in his community.

Achebe also underlines that the Ibos have not only a well-developed system of religion which works as effectively as Christianity, but also that both religions operate along similar lines to support morality. Although Mr. Brown, the District Commissioner, cannot see the Nigerians' religious beliefs as equal in worth to those he holds as true, he nonetheless tries to learn about Umuofian religious tenets from Akunna, a titled man. Mr. Brown's successor, Reverend James Smith however, condemns this policy of compromise because as the narrator

adds ironically, “he saw things in black and white. And black was evil. He saw the world as a total battlefield in which the children of light, [the Europeans] were locked in mortal conflict with the sons of darkness, [the Africans]”(158). Concurrently he cannot see the Africans as anything other than mere savages. We should recall that it is on this ground that the missionaries operated a razing of Ibo culture, attempting as it were to re-shape the Ibos’ faith and world-view, creating discords within the family, thus undermining the whole structure of Ibo society. The priestess of Agbala in Umuofia spitefully calls the Christians “the excrement of the clan [and] the new faith [...] a mad dog that had come to eat it up” (101). The process of conversion advocated by the missionaries moreover is important because it questions the old hierarchy of values and re-centres those who have been marginalised. Achebe gives us the first Ibo description of the impact of that encounter between Ibo traditional religion and Christianity when Obierika laments the breakup of his clan’s harmonious existence:

How do you think we can fight when our own brothers
have turned against us. White man is very clever. He
came quietly and peacefully with his religion. We were
amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now
he 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 (152).

The above words articulate the sentiments expressed by an Ibo elder after realising how the new religion had gone in terms of winning converts and dividing the members of the clan. The Ibos’ despair is revealed through one of the listeners in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* who asks the missionary: “If we leave our gods and follow your god, who will protect us from the anger of our neglected gods and ancestors?” (126). In response, the missionary nastily replies “Your gods are not alive [...]They are pieces of wood and stone.”⁴⁹ The Christian missionary

⁴⁹ *Things Fall Apart*, 126-7. I would like to recall that the Philistines, the Babylonians, the Arabs, the Greeks and the Romans, all indulged in idolatrous worship. And Stonehenge in Southern England is a living evidence of Druidism, which was the heathen worship of the early inhabitants of the United Kingdom. Human sacrifice was a part of Druid worship and was only abolished in the Roman period.

in Mbanta also objects to the Ibo gods on the ground that they tell the Ibos to kill each other (132). From the British perspective indeed, war is a marker of African identity. The British missionaries believe that Africans are always fighting one another because they are primitive people, thus they require their presence to restore peace. But Achebe refutes this argument and underlines that the Ibos fight as a matter of survival and adds that the Europeans kill far more than the Ibos. He cites the example of the British who wiped out the whole village of Abame in retaliation for the death of one white man (119). In contrast, Achebe shows Ibo religion as providing for its people a viable system by which they seek to explain and control all space and time for the preservation of life. At this juncture, it is worth noting that Ibo philosophy is life-affirming because it is centred on the human being. Thus human life being sacred, it cannot be taken away with impunity. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of Ibo culture, for the European reader, is the law that requires the sacrifice to the gods of Ikemufuna, Okonkwo's fostered son. However the boy's sacrifice and that of the young virgin in Mbaino recall the sacrifices to the gods found in classical literature which is so basic a part of the British heritage. The Africans' attitude towards Gods as depicted in *Things Fall Apart* recalls the Greeks.' In both traditional Ibo and Greek societies, human sacrifice to the Gods is considered as a religious obligation and is different from killing a fellow human being. Thus the Christian missionary is mistaken about the perversity of Ibo religion.

In addition to revealing that Ibo religion is not inferior to Christianity, Achebe demonstrates that the Ibos have a well-established system of justice which the British have supplanted with the system of commissioners and court messengers. Achebe delineates the importance of the *egwugwu*, the greatest masked spirit of the clan as the upholder of the laws of the land. The strength and stability of Ibo social structure is highlighted indirectly through the respect given to the cult: "One of the greatest crimes a man could commit was to unmask an *egwugwu* in public, or to say or do anything which might reduce its immortal prestige in

the eyes of the uninitiated. And this is what Enoch did” (160). Enoch’s crime threw Umuofia in confusion. Desecrating an *egwugwu* is construed as the murder of the spirit of the ancestors. This is a crime even greater than manslaughter.

Achebe also shows the steps taken to maintain the anonymity of the judges, thereby ensuring probity, impartiality and avoiding corruption. Hence in the trial scene in part one of the novel, the reference to the white man who allocated the piece of land in dispute to Nnama’s family because she bribed the white man’s messenger as well as the writer’s reference to the fine of two hundred bags of cowries that the district Officer levied as a penalty, (167) are subtle ways from the part of the writer to illustrate the corruption endemic in the imposition of the colonial system of justice. The tribe has also institutions to control the anger of its own men: for instance, there is the Week of Peace, sacred to the earth goddess.

To further buttress his argument that the indigenous culture is as good as the coloniser’s, Achebe examines another aspect of Ibo people’s life. He demonstrates that the Ibo people have their own system of democratic government. A typical Ibo state is a small, democratic community, one that boasts of its rich arts and culture and where the voice of the elders generally predominates. The concept of democracy (*oha*, *umunnakwuru*) which is contained in the Ibo philosophy of republicanism is deeply rooted in Ibo life and thought as embodied in the Ummuna concept. Before taking any decision, the *Ndichie*, or elders, gather to discuss matters of interest in order to reach a consensus (*TFA*, 13, 180,183). This consultation or *Igba izu* is the basis of Ibo republicanism. Within this system, the Ibos reveal themselves as more tolerant of other cultures than the Europeans who see the Ibos as uncivilized (129-30). Greek democracy can also be seen in *Things Fall Apart*. Ezeudu’s speech for instance, shows a similarity with the Greek assembly: the orator is an old wise man. The implication of this assembly and the oratory in Achebe’s novel reveals to the Western world a classic case of democracy existing in a society that had no formal contact with Greece. In grafting this Greek

connection between Umuofian society, we aim not at dehistoricising but at showing that Umuofia and Greece practised the same system of government and the same way of life despite their lack of contact. We can also see in the evocation of Greek themes, names, and symbols, a rhetorical medium for the Nigerian writer to highlight aspects of Ibo culture which would recall ancient Greece to a Western reader. These Greek connections also serve to remind the Western world that pre-colonial Ibo men enjoyed a less alienated form of social existence, and that they had had a flourishing and dignified civilisation long before the establishment of the British protectorate.

The closing chapter of *Things Fall Apart* is dominated by the District Commissioner, the archetype of the European administrator who stands for the victory of colonial power. Achebe closes his tale with the body of Okonkwo ordered to be cut down from the tree by the District Commissioner, as if it were a mere “undignified detail” (179). In the face of the tragic death not only of a human being, Okonkwo, but also of his people, the DC’s reaction is that of recording a historical event in the progress of European civilisation. Hence, Okonkwo becomes a mere object of study, an instrument of conquest because he is different. To the DC then, Okonkwo ceases to exist as a person, and becomes part of the backcloth, some interesting “new material” (179) to write about in his book on *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, a reminder of Kurtz’s book for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs in Africa. Achebe also reveals with consummate irony that the DC’s characterisation of Okonkwo as “material” colonises the Ibo warrior even in death. The indifference displayed by the commissioner and the relegation of Okonkwo to a mere paragraph in his book is symbolic of the loss of the Ibos’ identity for a hundred and fifty years. Okonkwo’s death and the DC’s callous lack of humanity intensify the reader’s awareness of the demoralising effects of colonialism and negates the white man’s claim to being the bearer of the light of civilisation.

The analysis of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has shown that it bears a past which Edward Said has described as

scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past tending towards a post-colonial future, as urgently re-interpretable and re-deployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on territory reclaimed as part of a general movement of resistance, from the colonist.⁵⁰

In making the people the subject of his first novel, the Nigerian writer followed Fanon's lead who presented colonialism as neurosis, as a force that shaped and developed pathological responses in individuals and their relationships.⁵¹ Such relationships, though destructive for both oppressor and oppressed, devastated the latter even more utterly because he was forced to define himself in terms of the coloniser. Thus, Achebe used his novel as an act of self-definition. By giving a profile of Ibo culture, he underscored that Ibo society was bound by mores and beliefs indicative of an existing civilisation. His use of communal rituals, local deities, proverbial wisdom and the land itself reinforce the existence of a once powerful traditional society. Achebe's recreation of the Ibo past moreover was intended to establish in his people a sense of pride in their past, which will contribute to their sense of identity as a peoples. In asserting his faith in his native culture, Achebe moreover defended it against alien encroachment and colonial prejudices. In other words, while racist colonial regimes and their discourses maintained the white and non-white in different spheres, Achebe insisted that the colonised "belong to the same world and are not absolutely Other."⁵² Thus Blacks and Whites are one single unit, a human unit. In Cedric Watts's words therefore, "the Conrad of *Heart of*

⁵⁰ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 256.

⁵¹ Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 3.

⁵² Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (New York: Anchor, 1964), 204-5.

Darkness is the brother of the Achebe of *Things Fall Apart*.⁵³ Achebe's tendentious and reductive reading of Conrad fails to mask the very similarities in their thinking. Achebe's novel and Conrad's can also be viewed as complementary in the sense that by going back to pre-colonial times, Achebe provided a more detailed depiction of African society, which only a native African could have given, thus completed Conrad's. Metaphorically, we can say that Conrad's and Achebe's novels explored the plight of the African society dismembered as it were by colonialism, a mutilation also dealt with by Assia Djebar in *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985).

⁵³ Cited in Ross C. Murfin, ed., *Joseph Conrad: Heart of Darkness* (Boston & New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996), 295.

Chapter X

Making Sense of a Double Colonisation: Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*.

A woman is a miserable creature[...] as far removed from man as man is from the forest monkey, so that it is a question if she could have any pretensions to being human, or whether such pretensions can be reasonably respected.

Alphonse-François Donatien, Marquis de Sade, *Justine: Philosophy in the Bedroom and Other Writings*, Trans. Richard Seaver & Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Grove, 1965), 38.

To be a woman is a natural infirmity to which everyone accommodates. To be a man is an illusion and a violence that everything justifies and privileges [...]

Tahar Ben Jelloun, *The Sand Child* (N.York:Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 94.

This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.
This one shall be called woman for out of Man this one was taken out. (Genesis I:27).

Male and Female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Humankind when they were created (Genesis 5.2).

Donatien's and Ben Jelloun's views contradict the views expounded in the Holy Books in general. Man and woman have originally been made equal at creation and to complement each other. This implies that there is no superiority or inferiority as upheld by male chauvinists in traditional patriarchy. So why have men and women been seen as separate entities? How have women been written out of history? What forms of violence have been used to enforce patriarchal and colonial supremacy? Removed from the culture that informed their sense of place and their personal identity, how have women attempted to redefine

themselves and their relationships with the Other and recover the identity that has been suppressed by man's hegemony, both imperialist and patriarchal? This chapter will attend to these issues as they relate to women in Algeria through an analysis of a Francophone Algerian writer, Assia Djébar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia* (1985). As the conflict between oral and written modes of expression and the struggle to re-appropriate the written word for herself and other women remain at the heart of Djébar's identity as a woman writer, we shall therefore be considering the author's own relationship to the task of the writer and to her own peculiar position as a woman to see the ways in which she seeks a path to the liberation of her self and the wider community.

10. 1. Oppression as Culture

Colonialism has become a code word for any relation involving exploitation. It has come to refer to the relations between men and women as well. Both women and natives are minority groups unfairly defined by the intrusive male gaze, a characteristic of both patriarchy and colonialism. If colonial discourse has produced the colonised "as a social reality which is at once an Other and yet entirely knowable and visible,"¹ as Bhabha has it, the woman in many societies has been doubly 'colonised' and marginalised both by imperial and patriarchal ideologies. The woman has thus become entirely unknowable and invisible.

All over the world, although on different levels and in very various forms, women live an oppression simply because they are women. From time immemorial men and women have been seen in terms of the continual dialectic between nature and culture. This distinction has operated in both Western and Oriental traditions. The idea of woman as associated with nature and men with culture recalls the dichotomy 'us' (superior) and 'them' (inferior). Women's supposed biological and psychological 'differences' with men have been used against them through patriarchal history. Concurrently, they have been constructed as men's serviceable

¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture: Discussing Post-Colonial Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 70-1.

Others. The stereotypes of woman, to a large extent, define her role as submissive, nurturing, and emotional. In public as well as private lives, it has always been the woman who has followed along behind man, playing a secondary role in all spheres of social life. Moreover, to remain 'feminine,' a *good* woman is supposed to have no voice, no brain, simply a body, and is expected to desire nothing more than attending to her family's males while she remains at home. As it was assumed that women were less intelligent than men so they were not expected to aspire as high as men. Concurrently, they had been barred from some fields of study considered to be the only preserve of man. Man on the other hand, should be domineering, aggressive, mastering his feelings, and successful in his career. This *droit du seigneur* survived in its most drastic form in all societies, was (and is) generally regarded as the norm and accepted as a natural way of living. This alleged inferiority of women had been re-emphasised during the colonial period. Like the colonised man, women had been reduced to stereotypes and denied an identity by the dominant system. This notion of double colonisation has become the main thrust of postcolonial feminist discourse.

The feminist argument however is that if the subjugation of women takes on a universal face, gender disparities are even more marked in the Third World. While women's issues in Western culture have evolved with questions of universal suffrage, the development of women's concerns in eastern cultures has followed a different historical path. Third World women as a group are defined as more family-oriented, non-progressive, unaware of their rights, illiterate, more backward than the Western woman. This is how the "Third World difference"² is produced, says Chandra Mohanty. The Indian feminist explains that all women should not be regarded as a homogeneous group. One should take into account inevitable differences in ethnicity and circumstance. Mohanty is therefore highly critical of Western feminism, which she believes is rooted in a bourgeois, eurocentric prejudice that has to be

² Chandra Talpade Mohanty Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, eds., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1991), 72.

remedied in order to avoid the continued neglect of the Third World woman. Seen from the vantage point of the Other, Western women, Mohanty says, succeed in staging themselves as modern and developed, equal and free, exactly by constructing the mirror image of the Third World woman as Other. We would argue that this failure to acknowledge historical specificity is as damaging as other assumptions based in chauvinism and ignorance.

In her work on 'subaltern identity', Gayatri Spivak also discusses the impossibility of women, particularly those in the Third World to have agency or a voice. In her famous essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Spivak argues that the figure of the Third World Woman disappears into a "pristine nothingness" since her displaced figure is "caught between tradition and modernisation."³

Gender disparities vary from one country to another as each has its own peculiar customs and cultural practices. The position of women in Algeria for instance, compares unfavourably with that of Ireland and Nigeria. In the past, Celtic and Ibo women enjoyed many legal rights.⁴ In the colonial period however, the restrictions placed on women by colonial governments seriously undermined the prestige of the traditional occupations of these women. In Congolese and Algerian societies on the other hand, the stereotype of the home-bound woman who submits to male decision-making is highly predominant, but the Congolese woman's situation is less grim and repressed than that of the Arab/Berber woman.

In common with women all over the world, Arab and Berber women face a variety of social constraints, but the separation of the sexes is more thorough in their culture. In Algeria for instance, women are placed in the space of home which is in opposition to the male and

³ Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (N. York; London: Methuen, 1987), 306.

⁴ In Celtic society for instance, women kept their own property in marriage. Both husband and wife were allowed liberal grounds for divorce. A wife could divorce her husband for fourteen reasons, including his slander of her or for his sexual inadequacy. In traditional Ibo society, women were given land to farm and produce food after marriage. The man provided no food. It was the woman who fed her children and husband, which was not the case in the Congo and Algeria for instance. Congolese women were known to grow about eighty per cent of the food produced, yet few were allowed to own the land they worked. In the Congo, theoretically the right of land concessions is given to men and women without distinction but because of the influence of traditional attitudes, access to land remained the prerogative of men.

material world of the marketplace. The intersections between masculine and feminine spaces are carefully administered. It is men who take decisions and engage in public life, while women occupy the domestic sphere. While the masculine universe corresponds to the public sphere, the *Umma* or nation, the principles that regulate this masculine domain are equality, reciprocity, confidence and unity in the group of individuals. In clear opposition to this *Umma*, one finds the private, feminine sphere in which the main social rules correspond to an inverted model of the *Umma*. The private sphere is indeed regulated by quite opposite tenets: inequality, segregation, subordination and mistrust. The sexes are therefore separated by a rigid frontier that can be traversed only in abundance with accepted rules. Although many Arab feminists emphasise religion as sanctioning a gendered discourse of inequality, the imposition of social, spatial and religious restrictions on women was never inherent within Prophet Mohammed's teachings. Contrary to what is commonly assumed, Islam does not advance the thesis of women's inherent inferiority, but is based on an understanding of the specificity of gender roles. It affirms the potential equality between the sexes. In Islam, men and women are partners in life, complementing each other rather than living as separate entities or pair of polar opposites with man as Self and woman as Other as clearly stated in the following verses⁵:

Never will I suffer to be lost. The work of any
of you, be he male or female: Ye are members,
one of another.

Surat 3: Al-'Imran:195

If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male
or female [...] They will enter Heaven, and not
the least injustice will be done to them.

Surat 4: An-Nisa':124

⁵ Cf. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Goodword, 2007).

The Believers, men and women, are protectors,
one of another: they enjoin [...] God hath promised
to Believers, men and women, gardens under which
rivers flow, to swell therein, and beautiful mansions
in gardens of everlasting bliss [...]

Surat 9: At-Tawbah:71-72

For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women,
for devout men and women, for true men and women,
for men and women who are patient and constant,
for men and women who humble themselves,
for men and women who give in Charity,
for men and women who fast (and deny themselves),
for men and women who engage much in God's praise,
for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward.

Surat 23: Al-Mu'minun:35

The Koran is not only highly egalitarian but also stresses both women's equality with men and the equivalent worth of their labour. Political and social changes and the resurgence of Islamism have led to a clamping down on women's activity. To our mind, negative judgments towards women stem from a renewed sense of gender roles, men's sense. And if women's rights have been restricted, it is neither because of the Koran nor the Prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because those rights conflict with the interests of a male elite as Fatima Mernissi explains. The Moroccan sociologist asserts that the existing inequality between men and women is the outcome of specific social institutions designed to restrain women's power. This has led to a complete distortion of the implications of some of Islam's tenets regarding women.

Concurrently, in Algeria, Berber and Arab males are so strict that the country has in effect two societies within the larger society, that of men and that of women. As men dominate in all the fields, they are regarded as natural leaders, superior to women and born to rule over them. Hence women in Algerian traditional society have had to remain invisible because publicity in women is abhorred. Indeed to be a woman in Algeria, and in the Arab world in general, is to live incognito as Djébar has pointed out, because "il n'est pas séant de soulever le rideau et de

s'exposer au soleil."⁶ The phrase 'pas séant' (indécent) here marks the umbrella presence of the male who dictates what is acceptable conduct for a woman. In the past, the Algerian woman was not only confined to the domestic space, allowed to go in the streets only veiled to escape the male gaze, but silenced and silent as well because, as Djébar remarks, "toute parole, trop éclairée, devient voix de forfanterie, et l'aphonie, résistance inentamée."⁷ And armed conflicts exacerbated the problem of discrimination and violence against women.

During the colonial period in Algeria, the divisive tendency between men and women was not only heightened by a need to protect the woman from the foreign conqueror, but also by the fact that being demeaned by colonial society, Algerian men sought to recapture some of their manhood by asserting themselves even more strongly within the family circle. Algerian women moreover like the Irish, Nigerian or Congolese women were regarded as part of the spoils of war. The appropriation of women by the French colonists went hand in hand with their desire to make of Algeria a province of France. Fanon describes the imperialist dream of appropriating the resistant woman who "screams, struggles like a doe, and as she weakens and faints, is penetrated, martyred, ripped apart."⁸ Preys to male predators and rapists, vulnerable to the worst kinds of social and economic exploitation, and targeted not only for their ethnicity but also their gender, Algerian women like Irish and other African women had been subjected to sexual violence and torture during the colonial period, all of which resulted in post-colonial psychological trauma.

As in other dominated societies, the stigma of rape, torture and humiliation were (and still are) crushing burdens. Although African (and Irish) women had been reticent about disclosing the sexual abuses they had been victims of, vivid accounts of military raids on homes and their subsequent effects on women and girls are found in many sources. French, Belgian and

⁶ "It is indécent to raise the curtain and be exposed in the sunlight" (*L'Amour*, 252). Trans. Mine.

⁷ Ibidem. "Words that are too explicit become such boastings as the braggard uses; and elected silence implies resistance still intact." Trans. Mine.

⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove P, 1965), 46.

British forces retaliated against guerilla warfare by deliberately targeting women as part of a widespread campaign of intimidation against the civilian population. Armed groups used rape as a weapon to subjugate the civilian population, and a form of torture to extract information, punish and terrorize. As women embody the honour of a community, an attack on women therefore, was an attack on the entire community.⁹ In Algeria, the frequency of the use of sexual violence¹⁰ in armed conflict was staggering. Village women, who remained in the domestic sphere, were easy targets for frustrated French soldiers. Masked and uniformed men raped women and girls during night-time raids to assert their dominance on the conquered village. After a woman had been raped by up to ten men at once, more damage was caused. In many cases, the attackers shot into the victims' genital parts.¹¹ Hence to possess Algeria's women for the French colonisers was to possess Algeria. It is therefore the combination of colonial repression and disharmony with the behaviour and mores of her society that has provided a site for woman's agency, and precipitated her rebellion against both the coloniser and against patriarchal society. In the heyday of the cultural revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women in general, struggled to find a voice particularly through the medium of literature. It is therefore not surprising that resorting to writing was bound up with war.

10. 2. Breaking the Vow of Silence

J'écris à force de me taire. J'écris au bout ou en
continuation de mon silence. J'écris parce que,
malgré toutes les désespérances, l'espoir (et je

⁹ It is worth noting that the social stigma that rape carries in Algerian (and other African) societies caused many men to abandon their wives because of the shame these women would bring to their families.

¹⁰ A recent report about Louisa Ighil Ahriz, a young Kabyle, who fell into the hands of French torturers has set the ball rolling. The old Algerian partisan fell in an ambush by General Massu when she was twenty of age. Seriously wounded, she was taken to his headquarters. There, she was abused by Massu and General Marcel Bigeard. Today, Louisa is sixty four and still suffers from the physical and psychological consequences of the torture. On June 2000, Louisa tells Florence Beaugé, a journalist of *Le Monde*, the tortures she endured in Algiers in 1957. Those torturers had been protected by the law passed by Parliament in 1968 giving blanket amnesty to all acts committed during the Algerian War.

¹¹ I owe this information to a partisan woman, an eyewitness I interviewed in 2006 and whose name will remain anonymous on her request, given the taboo of the subject in Algerian society.

crois: l'amour) travaille en moi [...]¹²

Postcolonial feminist literature and criticism frequently use the tropes of silence and coming to voice to describe access of formerly oppressed people to writing. But what does writing mean for someone who emerges from confinement? For the woman writer, it is a rehabilitation of her womanhood "to correct the prejudices that generations of detractors have built up, to reveal the philosophy, depth value and beauty of a [female] way of life and to help [women] regain their lost dignity, their lost identity,"¹³ as Gordon Douglas Killam has it. By interpreting the culture and history of her people, the woman novelist thus challenges the outmoded views that have negated her life. Writing moreover serves as a unifying force, and establishes an alternative feminine history. It allows the woman writer to create an enabling dialogue between women to give them a sense of common purpose.

But in the Arab/Berber culture, a woman who writes is disapproved of. The act of writing is often interpreted as a transgression of the bans that define her place in patriarchal history. Djébar dares openly challenge social, cultural barriers she sees as inimical and oppressive to the full parity of the woman in her society, and she does so first through writing.¹⁴ To write thus for her, is to steal words, to tear them from social rule, from the masculine grasp. It is a

¹² "I write because I have been compelled to remain silent. I write to break the silence or in continuation of my silencing. In spite of my despair, I write because hope (and perhaps love) still pervade me," said Djébar in a letter published in *Présence des femmes*, "Gestes acquis, Gestes conquis," ed. Hiwar, Alger, 1986. Trans. Mine.

¹³ Gordon D. Killam, *African Writers on African Writing* (New York, 1973), 7-8.

¹⁴ Assia Djébar was born in a small coastal town near Algiers called Cherchell. After her secondary school studies, she became the first Algerian woman to be accepted at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (a training school for teachers) in Paris. She joined in the Algerian student strike of 1956, in the early years of the Algerian independence struggle. She made her debut as a novelist with *La Soif* in 1957, a novel written in two months during the student uprising in 1956. Fearing her father's disapproval, she adopted a pen name she has kept ever since. Her real name is Fatima-Zohra Imalahen. Since then she has become a prolific writer, translator and filmmaker. Djébar turned to cinema to reach those who could not read. Her first film, *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, (1979) won the International Critics Prize at the 1979 Film Festival in Venice. *La Zerda et les chants de l'oubli* (1982) chronicled life in the Maghreb from the early to the mid-twentieth century. During the Algerian War of Independence, Djébar collaborated with the anti-colonial National Liberation Front's (FLN) newspaper *El-Moudjahid* by conducting interviews with Algerian refugees in Morocco. Djébar taught history for many years at the University of Algiers, and Rabat and participated in various Algerian cultural activities. Although Djébar's strong feminist stance has earned her much praise, it also raised much hostility from nationalist critics in Algeria. After Algeria gained independence, Djébar was criticized for writing in French, when writers were supposed to switch to the national language, Arabic. Many of her books have been translated into English. Her novel, *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, was translated by Dorothy S. Blair into *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* (Heinemann, 1985).

way of overcoming her own dismemberment, and a means of acquiring self-knowledge: “L’écriture est un dévoilement [...] Ecrire réveille ma voix,”¹⁵ says Djébar who adds : “Tu vois, j’écris, et ce n’est pas pour le mal, pour l’indécence! Seulement pour dire que j’*existe* et en palpiter. Ecrire, n’est-ce pas *me* dire?”¹⁶ The violence and cruelty of colonialism, her experience of alienation and the widespread prejudices which marked members of her society have made Djébar increasingly interested in the formation of national and woman identity. Her work offers a substantial contribution to postcolonial thought.

The racist usurpation of the voices and identities of Irish and black people discussed in relation to Yeats’s, Joyce’s, Conrad’s and Achebe’s writings is also central to Djébar’s *L’Amour, la Fantasia*. The re-writing of history is indeed a common step in the project of nationalism, but most often the revised history of a colonised nation has been a male-centered history. The Algerian writer’s work continues Fanon’s efforts to decolonise the mind, but if she shares Edward Said’s transcultural experience and his preoccupations with cultural imperialism, she contends that nationalism must work to incorporate a gender-aware imperative if it is to be rethought in a fully liberatory and transformative way. In bringing to light the hidden colonial history that gave rise to nineteenth century literature, Said indeed largely marginalised most women. He posited Orientalism, the power-relation of the West over the Orient, as an exclusively male phenomenon, and the Oriental woman as a projection of European male fantasy.¹⁷ The Algerian author thus extends and develops her analyses of orientalism and imperialism in her work.

Like the postcolonial theorists and like Yeats, Joyce and Achebe moreover, Djébar engages in contrapuntal reading to bring new interpretations to the history of colonial Algeria

¹⁵ *L’Amour*, 256.

¹⁶ “You see, I’m writing, and there’s no harm in it, no indecency ! It is simply a way for me to say that *I* exist, *I* am pulsating with life! Is not writing a way of telling *I am* ” (87). Emphasis mine.

¹⁷ It is worth noting that although Edward Said seems to appreciate Assia Djébar’s literary production, referring to *L’Amour, la Fantasia* as “a wonderful fictional and personal reconstruction of the period,” his words of praise appear in a footnote to the chapter on Camus, not in the main body of the text. Cf. *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 349.

by including the previously occulted participation of Algerian women in their own national history. For her, the reconstruction of Algeria revolves around the role of women as well. Thus she chooses the female perspective to explore the problems involved in the emancipation of her nation from its former oppressors and parallels it with Algerian women's struggle for equal rights with the male population. By moving women from the margin to the forefront of her recreated history, Djébar documents women's historic roles as revolutionaries and makes the case that they deserve status as full citizens in the new nation they have helped to build. Her focus on women's alienation moreover is a reminder that in Africa not only men but women as well are disorientated by the ambivalent effects of colonialism.

L'Amour, la Fantasia deals explicitly with the double colonisation of women both by their male counterparts and by dominant colonial powers. Djébar writes about the devastating effects and the havoc wrought upon Algeria during the colonial period, and examines postcolonial issues of place, fragmented identity, marginal voices and language of rupture. As a document in a social history of Algeria, Djébar's novel is not only a window onto Algerian colonial life, but also an emblem of the ambiguities inherent in colonial discourse. The story depicts resistance to colonial power and questions the centre/margin paradigm of dominant discourse. *L'Amour* indeed engages critically with the notion of a haunting temporality found in Homi Bhabha's conception of the "postcolonial time-lag," a belated temporality that "impels the 'past,' projects it, [...] enabling colonial history and its repressed subjects to claim agency."¹⁸ The writer recovers the historical and cultural discourse of the French on the conquest of Algeria, giving it a sexualized¹⁹ nature to highlight the violation and sequestration of the coloniser, showing that the rape of Algeria by France is akin to the rape of woman by the male. Sexuality in the novel is interpreted as essentially an encounter with the forbidden Other, but instead of an erotic adventure, the feeling of estrangement related to the motif of

¹⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 254.

¹⁹ Djébar's preoccupation with sexual matters was hailed by Algerian revolutionaries as indecent, especially at a time when Algeria was torn apart amidst bombings and tortures.

the body (sexuality) goes hand in hand with the writer's feeling of not belonging to her own land.

Moreover, Djébar's examination of the fabric of repression and the counter-narrative of woman's consciousness show the convergence of interests between her work and Spivak's. The Algerian author's exposure of the erasure of the native population by the coloniser recalls Spivak's argument that absolute alterity is occluded by the coloniser's production of a self-consolidating Other. In 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Spivak has summarised her project of constructing a new model of female subjectivity. She has described the narrative within which the subaltern has been inscribed as a narrative of imprisonment that she can nevertheless interrupt. For Spivak then the production of historical counter-narratives gives way to an interventionist practice intent on reading these fragmentary instances of interruption.²⁰ By focusing on moments and practices that Spivak would describe as disarticulating the dominant logic, Djébar's text interrupts dominant histories in that she orchestrates her narrative in such a way as to sound the voices that have been silenced by them. Spivak's argument that the subaltern cannot speak for themselves and must not be spoken for by the intellectual is however marred by Djébar: the Algerian writer believes that it is not because the subaltern speaks up and begins to be heard that her social conditions have improved. A further similarity between Spivak's interventionist reading practice and Djébar's rewriting of history is the autobiographical dimension of their readings of history.

Autobiography for both writers turns out to be as much about fragmentation as about identification. Djébar was fully aware that exposing her self is a transgression in Muslim/Algerian culture. It is "sous le lent scalpel de l'autopsie à vif, montrer plus que sa peau. Sa chair se desquame, semble-t-il, en lambeaux du parler d'enfance qui ne s'écrit

²⁰ Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (N. York, London: Methuen, 1987), 241.

plus.”²¹ Nonetheless like Spivak, she had to grapple with the thorny issue of the *non-dit*. By the act of writing, the woman penetrates not only the public space, the masculine space, but also and especially the heart of the panoptical centre, where she becomes the object of all gazes and transgresses the prohibition on visibility. In this way, she becomes the target of voyeurs. It is therefore understandable that Djébar has chosen to ‘veil’ herself in order to venture into the public space first by assuming the pseudonym of Assia Djébar, a choice which enables her to evolve under cover of anonymity; second by writing in the language of the enemy. Djébar uses the trope of the veil in her fiction as indicative of patriarchal oppression, but also to bring the issues of women’s identity and freedom into a contemporary context.

The Significance of the Veil

The question of the veil has come to involve many areas of postcolonial discourse and has provided a unique template for the study of the development of feminist literary theory and criticism. The elusive forms attached to the veil suggest its cryptic nature. In postcolonial and feminist studies, the veil has taken centre stage as a symbol of both oppression and resistance, while in cultural studies, veiling has been thrust into the forefront of arguments surrounding identity, colonialism and patriarchy. From the feminist perspective, the veil is seen as an emblem of the crushing and exploitation of the ‘oriental’ woman both by man and, conversely, by the gaze of the Western colonising and neo-imperialist world powers.

In order to broach the discussion on the significance of the veil and its impact upon female identity, it is instructive to turn to some theorists, who have shed light on the problematic of veiling, namely: Arab/European feminisms, postcolonial theory, and Sigmund Freud’s theory of the gaze. This theoretical approach will offer a penetrative insight into the veil as mask of identity, as secluded space, and as means and symbol of female oppression and domination.

²¹ “To attempt an autobiography using the French language alone is to lend oneself to the vivisector’s scalpel, revealing what lies beneath the skin” (*L’Amour*, 224).

Using as a critical framework the issues elaborated by Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, and Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak, we shall investigate the multifaceted meanings and symbols of woman and veil in colonial and postcolonial discourse. This segment will expand upon current scholarship with an aim to elucidate a concept that has been grossly misinterpreted. Locating the veil as simultaneously a site of colonial fantasy, nationalist ideologies (both traditional and revolutionary) and discourses of gender identity, our discussion of veiling will of course be limited to the Arab/Berber context. The exploration of the veil as both reality and symbol will help to determine how far works by women in cultures where veiling occurs, such as Djébar's, offer particular insights into the problems and experiences of women beneath the veil, or into the role that the veil takes in her own culture.

Postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha views people in today's cultures as living in a state of suspension of time, space and identity. This state could also describe the position of the woman behind the veil. We would add that if the Indian-American theorist located the postcolonial man in a "third space of enunciation,"²² the woman has always been located in a third dimension and as such has become an intruder or as Djébar puts it "a thief in male space."²³ Yet, as Bhabha has underlined, one should be aware that it is "the 'inter,' that is the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, or the in-between space, that carries the burden of the meaning of culture."²⁴ The veil creates such an ambiguous space: it defines identity and yet simultaneously removes any identity. As the imperial 'gaze' turned inwards towards the Other at home, creating links between imperialism, and the 'othering' of women, the figure of the veiled woman is as much revealing of European attitudes as the more stereotyped alterity of the veiled Arab woman.

Veiling and unveiling are terms through which the East has long been depreciated and the West has constructed itself as superior. This hierarchy 'imagined' out of nineteenth-century

²² Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 37.

²³ Assia Djébar, *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (Paris : Des Femmes, 1980), 138.

²⁴ *The Location of Culture*, 1–2.

imperialism is riddled by conflicting strains of Islamophobia and Orientalism. As Edward Said has pointed out, “no area of experience was spared the unremitting application of hierarchies.”²⁵ The fallacious and imperialistic depiction of the East as a realm of the exotic, the seductive and the mystical, is nowhere more clearly seen than in the trope of the veil. In Western discourse, the veil is politically charged with connotations of the inferior Other, hence implying the inferiority of Muslim women. Such indigenous practice as that of veiling has been regarded as another evidence of backwardness and barbarity of Third World cultures and contrasted with the progressiveness of Western cultures. In Said’s terms, these negative representations have expanded and underlined the essentialist positions in European culture asserting that the Europeans should dominate, the non-Europeans be dominated.

At this stage, it is important to note that although in popular perception the veil has long been associated with Islam and in particular with Arab women, historical evidence shows that it existed for longer outside Arab/Muslim culture. It was in the Hellenic, Judaic, and Christian scriptures to which the West traces its roots that veiling was associated with seclusion in the sense of the subordination of women.²⁶ Thus veiling is not an exclusive feature of Islam. Fatima Mernissi provides a sociological background to the introduction of the veil (*stir*) in the earliest society of Muslims, that of Prophet Mohammad and his disciples. The original use of the veil in Islam was to distinguish the status and identity of the Prophet’s wives, “so that they may be recognised and not molested” (Koran, Surat 33, Verse 59). Mohammad suggested concealment as a way of protecting his wives from intrusion by members of the community rather than as a way of sequestration, repression, or subordination. Veiling was occasioned by an incident in which the Prophet had invited most of his Muslim male companions in Medina on the occasion of his wedding with Zaynab. At the end of the ceremony, when the guests

²⁵ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 120–1.

²⁶ However if we go back to the Byzantine Empire’s enforcement of veiling codes, we can see that high social rank was attributed to families whose women were veiled. Veiling was thus a mark of prestige and a symbol of status. In Greek and Roman societies, veiling was a symbol of male lordship over women. As elsewhere, men were the enforcers.

left, three of them continued to chat until late at night, which embarrassed Prophet Mohammed who wanted to remain alone with his newly-married bride. Then Allah called for a curtain (*stir*) to be placed between the couple and the male guests for the sake of intimacy, not sequestration (Surat 33, Verse 53). This boundary between prohibited space hidden by the veil, and permitted space was to become a key concept in the Islamic world. It is equally important to know that the first rule the Koran has for women refers to righteousness as “the best garment” ie. what is inside one’s heart is more important for God than the dress one wears as evidenced in this verse:

O children of Adam, we have provided you with garments to cover your bodies, as well as for luxury. But *the best garment is the garment of righteousness*. These are some of God’s signs, that they may take heed.²⁷

Koran 7:26. Emphasis mine.

In her analysis of the functions of the veil, Fatima Mernissi argues that “reducing or assimilating this concept to a scrap of cloth that men have imposed on women to veil them when they go out on the street is truly to impoverish this term, not to say drain it of its [very] meaning”²⁸ According to the Moroccan sociologist, this false interpretation of the veil split Muslim space into two (86). It has indeed shaped the outside world’s thoughts and opinion of the Arab world, the Muslim faith, and women’s roles in Africa and the Middle East.

In Arab/Berber culture, the veil is a double shield. It is a sort of female enclave that removes the woman from the masculine, alien gaze. It is the ‘wall’ that imprisons her within the domestic universe, that of the family. The veil ‘protects’ women against society and protects society against the ‘inherent evil’ of women. Sigmund Freud’s discussion of the gaze in relation to the problematic of veiling is quite relevant to my argument. In his *Three Essays*

²⁷ Cf. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Goodword, 2007).

²⁸ Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite : a Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam* (Cambridge: Perseus Books, 1991), 95.

on the *Theory of Sexuality*²⁹ Freud claims that the exclusive rights of the gaze belong to men. While men seek to define and control women through the gaze, women become the silent and passive objects of desire. While the owner of the gaze, according to the psychoanalyst, may desire to see, his overwhelming urge is to conceal, to contain, and to obscure woman as lack and as threat. Fearing that the female may eventually threaten to return the gaze, men place the veil over the female face to keep it from ‘contaminating’ the male subject. The woman is concealed beneath the mask (veil) which conceals a non-identity. For the feminists, Freud’s analysis of woman as erotic object, a non-entity, is both frustrating and oppressive. Yet I think that it provides one explanation for the roots of oppression under the phallocentric order. Thus the veil is not only sexual difference but a sign of subordination as well, but colonisation transformed the significance of the veil.

The colonial period in North Africa is a good example for understanding the issues and implications of veiling and the tensions between the East and the West formulated in the discourse of Orientalism. During the Algerian Revolution, the veil took on a central role in liberating Algeria from French colonial occupation, and became a symbol of resistance to colonisation, of emerging nationhood and traditional values. Frantz Fanon used the veil as an icon of nationalism and refuted the racist stereotyping by colonial powers. In his groundbreaking work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon advocated active and violent political opposition, an opposition that in Algeria was symbolised by the figure of the veiled woman. For Fanon indeed, the wearing of the veil was emblematic in the colonial struggle. The conflation of “Algerian society and its feminine component”³⁰ in the character of the woman within the veil allowed Fanon to reveal the way in which Orientalism functions. Veiled

²⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

³⁰ *A Dying Colonialism*, 63.

women were able to see the foreign coloniser without being seen.³¹ The veil thus constituted a barrier to the visual control of the French colonists in Algeria. But women's insistence on wearing the veil also meant the colony's resistance to French hegemony. Thus the French tactic was to pressure and sway Algerian women into rejecting their veils and assimilating to the dominant culture. By accepting French values, the patriarchal family structure of Algerian families would begin to erode. Concurrently, the Algerian men whom the French saw as the real obstacle to their successful domination of the country would be weakened, allowing the French to win the war. In this context, the veiled woman (the other sex) and the colony (the other culture) are intertwined. Therefore, having access to them and their bodies was the very means for a successful penetration into the heart of the colonised culture. Fanon thus reads the coloniser's desire to unveil the Algerian woman as an attempt to strip the Algerians of their cultural identity by reducing her to a sexual object. He equates the unveiling of the Algerian woman by the French colonial authorities to "tear[ing] her from her [traditional] status," and at the same time as a tactic used by the enemy to win over the Algerian man and "de-structure Algerian culture."³² According to Fanon:

If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the woman; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses where the men keep them out of sight.³³

The thrust of Fanon's argument is that the French colonisers viewed Algerian women as the very essence of the culture that was colonised.

But in many ways, the French tactics backfired, resulting in several of the many changes in the significance of the veil. Many women who previously gave up their veils once again

³¹ In 1787, Jeremy Bentham elaborated the plan of the Panopticon, an architectural figure that consisted in a tower central to an annular building divided into cells. The inhabitants of the cells were isolated from one another by walls and subject to scrutiny by an observer in the tower who remains unseen.

³² Frantz Fanon, *L'An V de la révolution algérienne*, re-edited in 1966 as *Sociologie d'une révolution*, (Paris: François Maspero, 1959), 20.

³³ *A Dying Colonialism*, 23.

donned them as a sign of resistance to the French, as a camouflage for carrying grenades, manifestos, revolvers and mines that *fidaiis* (revolutionary men) would plant in a European outpost in the city. For the revolutionary cause moreover, some traditionally veiled and cloistered women dared shatter the conventions of their society and unveiled to gain access to the European parts of cities. They cut their hair, wore French clothing, and even flirted with French policemen to fool them into thinking they had accepted French influence when in reality they were acting as key players in the war against their colonisers. Their historically placid, submissive image in the eyes of the French allowed them to move relatively freely among the French.

Invigorated by their participation in the national liberation, Algerian women thus emerged from behind the ‘veil’ with high expectations for the future nation state in which they could share some equality with men in all spheres of society. But the question of woman’s identity had been politicised in Algeria. In times of crisis and extreme necessity, Algerian men claimed that armed conflict was not a man’s war, but a peoples’ war, but soon after colonial power was thrown out, the nationalist ideology turned more extremist and reactionary defining woman’s place in Algerian society in a more restrictive way. One of the first slogans proclaimed on the eve of the independence in Algeria, in 1962, was: “Women go home!” Henceforth,

Revient alors le lourd silence qui met fin au rétablissement momentané du son. Le son est de nouveau coupé. Comme si les pères, les frères ou cousins disaient: “Nous avons bien assez payé pour ce dévoilement des mots!” oubliant sans doute que des femmes ont inscrit dans leur chair meurtrie ce dire qui est pourtant pénalisé d’un silence s’étendant alentour,³⁴

³⁴ “The heavy silence fell again putting an end to the momentary reestablishment of the voice. The voice was silenced again. It was as if the fathers, brothers and cousins were saying: we have already paid enough with this uncovering of words. They forgot that women had inscribed in their murdered flesh this new assertion of independence upon which silence once more descended.” Assia Djebar, *Femmes d’Alger dans leur Appartement* (Paris : Des Femmes, 1980), 188. Trans. Mine.

laments Djébar. The Algerian writer also notes that “les fils barbelés ne barrent plus les ruelles mais ils ornent les fenêtres, les balcons, toutes les issues vers l’espace [...]”³⁵ This seemingly abrupt change in attitude towards women clearly illustrates the permanence of the chasm in Algerian society in attitudes on the correct roles of the sexes. In this context of women’s captivity within patriarchy, Djébar emphasises the importance of women’s liberation from confinement in both male houses and male narratives.

Responding to the relegation of women to the domestic sphere and denied access to male public spaces, Djébar questions the iconisation of the veiled woman as the upholder of family and national honour. She suggests that the imposed veil is part of an extensive cultural and patriarchal system of domination of women to restrict their roles and mobility in society, and muffles the voice of the woman inside. The writer’s discussion of Algerian women’s literal shedding of the veil serves as a metaphor for the tension within Maghreban culture and more particularly to women whose voices have been stifled and whose bodies must remain in the shadow, sheltered from any gaze.

L’Amour, la Fantasia is rich in allusions to veiling and the trope of women beneath the veil. It seeks to redress the ‘invisibility’ of the woman beneath the veil. The prohibition against women’s seeing and being seen is at the heart of Maghrebian patriarchy, an ideological system in which the master’s eye alone exists. Djébar thus accords to the gaze³⁶ in the feminine violation of the boundary between men and women a great importance. The perception of the Other, the male gaze, as it penetrates the harem has been at the core of Djébar’s preceding novel.

In *Femmes D’Alger dans leur Appartement* (1980) based on Eugène Delacroix’s and Pablo Picasso’s paintings, whose compositions bear the same title, Djébar tells us that Delacroix, on

³⁵ Ibid., 60. “The barbed wire no longer blocks off the alley-ways, but instead adorns the windows, the balconies, all outside exits [...]”

³⁶ Djébar views her appropriation of the camera as a challenge to colonial and patriarchal legacies and an important political and symbolical event in the liberation and empowerment of Algerian women. It is clearly the logical outcome of her rejection of the dominating gaze.

his visit to Algeria in 1830, was allowed a glance into the forbidden territory of the harem. Such transgression of the cloistered female world, one must note, was allowed by the coloniser. To penetrate into an enclosed society of women who belonged to one man, had such powerful impact on Delacroix that he produced a painting representing the spirit of the Orient. Djebbar analyses “ce regard interdit, ce son coupé”³⁷ and comments on the significance of the painting:

Ces femmes, est-ce parce qu’elles rêvent qu’elles ne nous regardent pas ou parce qu’enfermées sans recours, elles ne peuvent même plus nous entrevoir ? [...] Elles demeurent absentes à elles mêmes, à leur corps, à leur sensualité, à leur bonheur.³⁸

These lines summarize well the situation of the Algerian woman. It is indeed because of the eye’s sexual power that she has been kept confined. She is the servant of man very much like the servant depicted in Delacroix’s painting. While the French painter invests his tableau with some sort of eroticism, Djebbar however undermines this notion of sexuality for she believes that as long as women remain incarcerated in that vast prison guarded by men, there could be no female sexuality at all.

In contrast to Delacroix’s painting, Picasso’s seems more optimistic. It reconstructs some sort of space for women, thus offers a faint ray of hope for women. The servant has gone. Although the women are still enclosed, they are naked and dancing. Women are therefore, unveiled, allowed to move:

libération glorieuse de l’espace, réveil des corps dans la danse, la dépense, le mouvement gratuit [...] Car il n’y a plus de harem. La porte en est grande ouverte et la lumière y entre ruisselante. Il n’a plus de servante espionne, seulement une autre femme espiègle et dansante.³⁹

³⁷ “That prohibited gaze, that silenced voice,” (*Femmes d’Alger dans leur Appartement*), 150.

³⁸ Ibidem. “Is it because these women are dreaming that they are not looking at us, or is it because, cloistered, they cannot perceive us? [...] They remain separated from themselves, from their bodies, from their sensuality and from their happiness.”

³⁹ “Glorious liberation of the space, the dance revives and releases the bodies [...] For there is no harem. The door is wide open and the light streams in. The spying servant has gone. There is simply another woman, a mischievous and dancing woman,” (*Femmes d’Alger*), 162.

Through his act of unveiling, it is as if Picasso has liberated the woman, making of this nakedness the sign of her rebirth (163). Picasso thus reinterprets the female space in quite a different way from Delacroix, allowing Djébar to dream: Picasso says that women must break into the open by re-inventing the language of the body for dance constitutes its own visual language and requires no speech, no words under veils. The women are naked, their language unveiled. Djébar's examination of the Orientalist painting in *Femmes D'Alger* serves as the basis for her study of the effects of women's enclosure in her subsequent novel.

The themes of alienation and displacement that haunt the works of Yeats, Joyce, Conrad, and Achebe culminate in Djébar's novel into an opposition between open liberating space and confined enclosures. In *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, metaphors of the "geôliers," (100) of the female suppressed, repressed, and cloistered indeed emphasise the sequestration that traditionally defines an Algerian woman's existence. This confinement robs her of her body, of her mind, hence of her identity. The narrator describes women as "fantômes blancs, formes ensevelies à la verticale, justement pour ne pas hurler ainsi continûment : son de barbare, son de sauvage, résidu macabre d'un autre siècle."⁴⁰ The white ghosts and buried forms refer to the veiled women. Traditionally, the *haik* or veil was white and covered the body, and a triangular scrap of cloth covered the face, except the eyes, but the wearing of the veil differed from one region to another. The outside universe being reserved for men, thus if the woman had to go outside, she could do so only when veiled so as to make herself invisible when she passed through masculine space. The female body as object of the male gaze must remain in the shadow, sheltered from any gaze. The sole gaze and sole voice permissible are those of man.

The writer moreover places in counterpoint to the infamous fumigations in the Dahra caves several oral narratives of the Algerian women who participated in the Algerian War, and sheds light on the often ignored sufferings of anonymous women whose hands and feet were

⁴⁰ "White walking wraiths, shrouded figures buried upright[...] to prevent them from uttering such a constant howl: such a wild, barbaric sound, macabre residue of a former century!" (*L'Amour*, 164).

severed for their jewels, the story of the Bride of Mazouna, and almost at the end of the book, she adds the voice of the Frenchwoman Pauline Rolland, deported to Algeria in 1852 for taking part in the 1848 Revolution, and who brought into the harem those Enlightenment ideals of equality and freedom for which her own nation exiled her. The writer juxtaposes these literal and epistemic acts of colonial violence to the patriarchal violence of Algerian society described in terms of women's "enfouissement," (184) "ensevelissement" (burial), and asphyxia, by linking the space of the cave to that of the harem. Although this specific enclosure, the harem, no longer exists as a physical reality in Algeria today, Djébar reminds her readers that its psychological walls are still present in Algerian society.

The cave therefore stands for women's exclusion from the outside world and her 'asphyxia.' The writer wonders "quel cadavre asphyxié en moi [...] pourrisant" (164). It could be that the suffocated corpse that inhabits her is the phantom of the woman she would have been if her father had not sent her to the French school. This image however suggests that she is also haunted by other more ancient corpses than those of the smoked-out caves. Indeed the 'enfumade' projects the writer to another kind of asphyxia: that of her veiled female relatives. The experience of asphyxia, specific to the historical trauma, is used here in conjunction with the idea of haunting, to configure the writer's ambivalent position in relation to both the French "intercessors"⁴¹ and to the women she interviews. Because women are not allowed to be outside, they can only become ghostly, suffocated.

The juxtaposition of the space of the cave with that of the harem, through the notion of asphyxia moreover inscribes the volcanic eruption of the voice in the multiple layers of oppression. The 'explosion' of the voice is included in the opening chapter of part three, 'Les Voix Ensevelies,' in which the narrator mingles her own voice with those of the forgotten participants in the Algerian war. She tells of her conversations with other women as she

⁴¹ The term "intercessor" in *L'Amour* describes the nineteenth century officer in charge of mopping up operations against the rebellious people of the hinterland, first trapped, then burnt alive in the underground caves where they sought refuge.

struggles to formulate the difficult issue of rape. This is the story of a certain Bernard who entered a house the night before the French soldiers were about to leave the village, and raped a girl in the presence of the silent old woman hidden in the shadowy background. This story is then offered up by the narrator to these widows twenty years later so that in turn, they keep silent because matters such as rape were (and still are) not usually spoken about in Arab/Berber society. Indeed how can the narrator speak of such humiliation? “Quels fantômes réveiller, alors que dans le désert de l’expression d’amour (amour reçu, ‘amour’ imposé) me sont renvoyées ma propre aridité et mon aphasie,”⁴² says Djébar.

It is against this aphasia that Djébar gives voice to silence in *L’Amour*. She renders the distinction between silence and invisibility on the one hand and voice and visibility on the other when she describes the culturally specific experiences of Algerian women. The power of the voice thus is revealed in that it can liberate the self (164). The impact of voice is thus potently staged, setting the scene for other voices to follow, those of the women caught up in the Algerian War of Independence. Paradoxically, this coming to voice is made possible through the coloniser’s language. The French language becomes the perfect ‘veil’ that allows Djébar stealthily to break into the outside world.

“La Langue marâtre”⁴³

L’Amour explores the process of readjustment, accommodation and acculturation, the quest for identity displaced by colonialism within the Algerian context, a quest she is forced to express in the coloniser’s language like Yeats, Joyce, Conrad and Achebe. Yet for female writers, the question of writing in the language of the enemy foregrounded in Ireland and Anglophone Africa is often seen as “a double betrayal, both of the national language and of a

⁴² “What ghosts will be conjured up in this absence of expressions of love (love received, “ love” imposed) I see the reflection of my own barrenness, my own aphasia” (283).

⁴³ My approach here is indebted to Anne Donadey and Soheila Ghaussy.

nationalist ideology in which women are viewed only as allegories of the nation,”⁴⁴ as Anne Donadey has it. It is not surprising therefore that Djebbar approaches the coloniser’s language with ambivalence. Clearly, to use a language known to her nation as the language of those who abused her is, she acknowledges, a kind of betrayal of her compatriotes’ sufferings, and it leaves her vulnerable to misunderstanding and condemnation.

L’Amour, la Fantasia foregrounds this link between language and identity, and elaborates on the divisive effect of the French language running parallel to patriarchy, which posits educated women as men’s rivals. Writing in the language of the enemy brings in a different dimension to the question of the veil. At times Djebbar compares the text to a body that can be covered up by the woven fabric of language. Language becomes an enclosure behind which the author can comment and yet remain unseen. The writer portrays language as the ultimate power to unveil. However, this very language that enables her liberation also violates her. In *L’Amour*, Djebbar writes of the power and danger of the very act of writing in French:

Ecrire la langue adverse, ce n’est plus inscrire sous son nez ce marmonnement qui monologue; écrire par cet alphabet devient poser son coude bien loin devant soi, [...] Langue [...], dépouille prise à celui avec lequel ne s’échangeait aucune parole d’amour [...] Mots de revendication, de procédure, de violence, voici la source orale de ce français des colonisés[...] Cette langue était autrefois sarcophage des miens, je la porte aujourd’hui comme un messenger transporterait le pli fermé ordonnant sa condamnation au silence, au cachot. Me mettre à nu dans cette langue me fait entretenir un danger permanent de déflagration.⁴⁵

The consequence of writing about herself in the French language is that she is flayed alive.

Such a dichotomy in language use, such “métissage”(*L’Amour*, 161) suggests the dislocation

⁴⁴ Anne Donadey, ‘The Multilingual Strategies of postcolonial Literature: Assia Djebbar’s Algerian Palimpsest,’ in *World Literature Today* (Winter 2000). Vol.74:1, 27.

⁴⁵ “Writing in the enemy’s language is more than just a matter of scribbling down a muttered monologue under your very nose; to use this alphabet involves placing your elbow some distance in front of you [...] This language [...] spoils taken from the enemy with whom no fond word was ever exchanged [...] Words of accusation, legal procedure, violence- that is the source of the colonised people’s French[...] This language was formerly used to entomb my people; when I write it today I feel like the messenger of old, who bore a sealed missive which might sentence him to death or to the dungeon” (*L’Amour*, 300).

between Self and Other, trapped between two discourses, French and patriarchal, reducing the subject to a being whose identity remains based on two linguistic and cultural domains, but fully belonging to neither, broaching that sense of cultural dispossession, that foreignness.

Djebar further draws attention to the struggle between the two languages:

La langue française, corps et voix, s'installe en moi comme un orgueilleux préside, tandis que la langue maternelle, toute en oralité, en hardes dépenaillées, résiste et attaque, entre deux essoufflements. Le rythme du 'rebato' en moi s'éperonnant, je suis à la fois l'assiégé étranger et l'autochtone partant à la mort par bravade, illusoire effervescence du dire et de l'écrit.⁴⁶

At this juncture, the struggle between what Djebar calls “la langue marâtre” or stepmother tongue and “la langue mère,” the mother tongue, bespeaks the cultural dilemma produced by colonialism. Djebar becomes at the same time the besieged foreigner and the native swaggering off to die. This psycho-cultural dislocation and alienation of the female subject is made conspicuous from the very first page through the narrator’s objective perspective. The first chapter of part one is preceded by an introductory scene which sets forth the experience of learning to write and that of sequestration. The language of the Other has enveloped her since childhood with Nessus’s tunic (302). The reference to Nessus is significant. The story of Nessus tells how Hercules slew the centaur Nessus, who attempted to rape his wife, Deianira. The dying Nessus gave her a potion mixed with his blood pretending that it was a love potion. Later Deianira, attempting to reclaim Hercules’s affection gave him a cloak soaked with Nessus’s potion. The cloak started to burn him and gave him such agony that he caused himself to be immolated. In a similar vein, the language of the conqueror the narrator/writer

⁴⁶ “The French tongue, with its body and voice, has been forcefully established within me , while the mother-tongue, all oral tradition, all rags and tatters, resists and attacks between two breathing spaces. With the rhythm of the rebato spurring me on, I am both the besieged foreigner and the native swaggering off to die, in the illusory effervescence of the spoken and written word” (*L’Amour*, 299). Djebar likens that space lying between the enemy’s language and hers to the rebato of the Spanish occupiers of Algeria in earlier times- a term used to refer to an isolated spot, a no-man’s-land lying between the aggressor and the aggressed, from which the former sallied forth to attack and to which he withdrew in search of asylum.

has received as a gift from her father, constitutes a rape in itself. It is a poisonous “potion.” The opening sequence painting the young Arab girl going to school for the first time is rich in cultural implications as the writer considers the specificity of her position as an educated girl. The narrator sets off for school for the first time, walking hand in hand with her father under the neighbours’ reproving gaze: “voilez le corps de la fille nubile. Rendez-la invisible. Transformez la en être plus aveugle que l’aveugle, tuez en elle tout souvenir du dehors,”⁴⁷ or she will become dangerous, says the male-dominated society. Thus the first day Assia Djébar set foot to school, accompanied by her father, started her bilingual and bicultural odyssey. By supporting a young woman’s right to education the father frees his daughter from some, but certainly not all of Algerian society’s conventions. The ambiguous position of the native schoolteacher in colonial Algeria is all too evident. On the one hand, he assumes the role of progressive educator, a catalyst for social change; on the other hand, he remains shackled to the Arab/Berber patriarchal order. Education has certainly given the narrator/writer a better understanding of her own identity; however it has done little to bridge the gap between her and the patriarch. The inevitability of conflict assumes form when at the age of seventeen, the girl receives a letter from a stranger (12). The letter written in French arouses in her an intense passion and in her father a consuming rage because it is indecent to receive love letters. The father insists upon control of the girl’s space and environment by continually evoking the idea of family. His daughters feel compelled to obey him partly out of fear, partly out of reverence for the idea of family, and partly out of limited opportunity in the Algerian society. When the father enters a room, his daughters and wife fall silent. They cannot frown upon his decisions. The father’s relationship with his wife also acts as a mirror onto the Algerian social scene. She lives in her husband’s shadow, defers to him and gives way to him in everyday routine. Like her foremothers, she never utters her husband’s name but refers to him in the third

⁴⁷ “Veil the nubile girl. Make her invisible. Make her blinder than the blind, destroy in her every memory of the outside world” (*L’Amour*, 11).

person ‘him,’ or ‘He.’ Such discourse is characteristic of traditional Algerian women. The mother’s quiet and non-confrontational manner in dealing with her husband provides the basis for Djébar’s subtle critique of patriarchy, and urges her to escape the painful and violent events of the past that have plagued her entire life as a woman through dreams and writing about her memories in the language of the coloniser.

The process of French assimilation resulting in Djébar’s proficiency in the language of the enemy and access to public space certainly uprooted and alienated her from her mother’s world by “une mutilation de la mémoire,” (13) nonetheless, it allowed her to break into a world that was the only preserve of man. The paternal gift of a French education becomes the very arm his daughter will wield against his unquestioned power: “ainsi cette langue que m’a donnée le père me devient entremetteuse et mon initiation, dès lors, se place sous un signe double, contradictoire [...]”⁴⁸ This duality which the subject undergoes stems not only from patriarchal coercion, but also from a desire for change aroused by the use of the language of the colonising Other. The French language has literally “lent her eyes” (256) to allow her to gaze back both at her former coloniser and at the patriarchal society that has stifled her. The blinded thus becomes the seer. The ‘veiled’ unveils. Writing in the enemy’s language allows the writer to free herself from the shackles of her male-dominated society, and break the taboos of her culture.⁴⁹ It has given her a space from which to speak. It has helped her chart her own life-story and recover her oral tradition.

But the French language is altered to suit the African local. Djébar uses Achebe’s strategy of displacing the language of the oppressor through what Loretto Todd calls a “relexification,”⁵⁰ a mixture of the European target language and the indigenous language,

⁴⁸ “Thus the language my father taught me, serves as a go-between and from then on a double and contradictory sign reigns over my initiation” (*L’Amour*, 12).

⁴⁹ Driss Chraïbi in *Le passé simple*, (1954) Rachid Boudjedra in *La répudiation*, (1969) and the later prominent Moroccan writer, Tahar ben Djelloun, expressed the same view. In a TV interview for Antenne 2, Ben Jelloun declared that he could not have written *L’Enfant du sable* in Arabic (1985) because it would have been condemned as heresy by the Islamists.

⁵⁰ Loretto Todd, ‘The English in West Africa,’ ed., Richard W. Bailey and Manfred Görlach, *English as a World Language* (Ann Arbor: Univ. Michigan Press, 1982), 303. Cited in Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (London &

which in both Djébar's and Achebe's novels functions as an "interlanguage,"⁵¹ a new register of communication, creating what Anne Donadey calls a bilingual "palimpsest."⁵² This technique allows for a recovery of Arab/Ibo identity while making the texts more accessible to the Arabophone/Ibo speaking readers.

This bilingualism moreover both reflects the process of violent colonisation of Algeria/Nigeria and subverts it linguistically. The use of Arabic/Ibo words and phrases in texts otherwise in French or English does not impede on the reader's understanding, but it turns the Western reader, in particular, into the Other by a process of defamiliarisation. As Djébar's and Achebe's writings become palimpsests of different languages, they achieve what Abdelkadir Khatibi calls "l'extraordinaire"⁵³ that is to write with two hands, with two languages in narratives which are constant transliterations.

In *L'Amour* moreover, Djébar distinguishes four layers of language used by her female Algerian contemporaries:

Le français pour l'écriture secrète, l'arabe pour nos soupirs
vers Dieu étouffés, le libyco-berbère quand nous imaginons
retrouver les plus anciennes de nos idoles mères. La quatrième
langue, pour toutes, jeunes et vieilles, cloîtrées ou à demi-
émancipées, demeure celle du corps [...] ⁵⁴

Djébar's French language thus becomes multilingual. By combining her own story with history, the writer links *qalam*, meaning both 'pen' and 'word' in the Arabic language, depending on the pronunciation of the first consonant of the Arabic word, to écriture and speaking to 'writing' in French, expressing the rapport coloniser/colonised in terms of

New York: Routledge, 1995), 314-318. In Todd's understanding of the word, the emphasis is both on lexis (the original speech, word or phrase) and on lexicon in reference to the vocabulary and morphemes of the language, and by extension on word formation.

⁵¹ Anne Donadey, 'The Multilingual Strategies of postcolonial Literature: Assia Djébar's Algerian Palimpsest,' in *World Literature Today* (Winter 2000). Vol.74:1,34.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ "The extraordinary." Ibidem. Cf. Abdelkadir Khatibi, *Maghreb Pluriel* (Paris: Denoel, 1983), 205.

⁵⁴ "French for secret letters ; Arabic for our stifled aspirations towards God ; Lybico-Berber which takes us back to the most ancient of our mother idols. The fourth language, for all females, young or old, cloistered or half-émancipated, remains that of the body" (*L'Amour*, 254-5).

gendered language. However, as Soheila Ghaussy remarks, re-writing those Arabic conversations in French not only allows Djébar to give voice to her mother tongue, but also permits her to use the *qalam*, an instrument of writing reserved to men.⁵⁵ By interweaving fragments of Arabic with French, Djébar writes as the “ex-centric,” which Linda Hutcheon defines as being “on the border or margin, inside yet outside, [having] a different perspective [...] since it has no centering force,”⁵⁶ making thus indistinct the borderline between the spoken and the written.

To carry her message, Djébar uses a variety of devices to provide a double view of Algerian society, pre-colonial and colonial. The use of the Arabic language represents a nostalgia for a pre-colonial time before the French language de-structured Algerian identity. Through transliteration and translation of Arabic expressions such as: “La France [the French army] arriva jusqu’à nous, nous habitons à la zaouia Sidi M’hamed Aberkane,”⁵⁷ and through repetitions, the writer creates a persuasive force and reveals more dramatically the impact of French colonisation on Algeria. We also have words such as *khalkhal*, (anklet, 83) *Cherif*, (tribal leader, 94) “demander l’aman,” (to ask for protection, 95) and *hannouni*, (117) an affectionate word which is set in relation to the French phrase “pilou chéri” (43) and some other substitutions such as “mon chéri,” (41) “mon lapin,” (41) “pilou,” (43) which Marie Louise, the policeman’s daughter, uses to refer to her fiancé, Paul. Such words seem to shock the narrator because in her culture “ne pouvaient exister que des mœurs à la pureté ‘Arabe.’”⁵⁸ She also believes that love should not give rise to a “tendresse voyante de ferblanterie, un spectacle.”⁵⁹ Thus the French language loses its capacity for expressing any emotion, any love while the Arabic language helps the narrator overcome the emotional

⁵⁵ Soheila, Ghaussy, “A Stepmother Tongue: ‘Feminine Writing’ in Assia Djébar’s *Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade*,” *World Literature Today* 68.3 (1994): 457-62, 450.

⁵⁶ Cited in “A Stepmother Tongue,” 2.

⁵⁷ “France came right up to our doorsteps, we were living at the Sidi M’hamed Aberkane zaouia” (*L’Amour*, 167).

⁵⁸ “could only exist morals as pure as that of the Arabs” (40).

⁵⁹ “to showy marks of affection, so making a spectacle of oneself” (43).

sterility of the paternal/French language. In this passage entitled, 'La fille du gendarme Français,'(33-42) Djébar depicts the origin of this negative correlation with the French language, whose acquisition has had an ever-lasting effect on her, producing what she calls an emotional "aphasie" and "autisme"(43). The repetition of the phrase "pilou chéri" also draws attention to the differences between the two cultures, French and Algerian. While such words of endearment are commonplace in Western (here French) culture, in Algerian culture, they constitute a transgression of *horma*, (dignity) which is understood as the *non-dit* but omnipresent social interdiction. The language Djébar uses to depict this aphasia emerges not as speech deficiency resulting from her contact with the outside world, but as a point of obstruction that must be overcome if the narrator wants to free herself from the mandates on silence imposed by *horma*.

Djébar also resorts to French terms to transcribe cultural concepts essential in the Arab/Berber world such as "honte" (shame) or *hichma*. This concept, which is one of the virtues expected of women, recurs time and time again in Djébar's text. The word is first used with reference to the letter that the girl's father sends to her mother. The word takes on an added meaning as the latter could speak of her husband without *hichma* (49). It is worth pointing that the word *hichma* also means decency and chastity, and is linked to family life and the ideals of woman's respectability. As such lack of *hichma* entails lack of dignity, lack of *fantasia*. Such form of slander causes severe damage to family honour, and sometimes violence towards the girl.

Some other words are used between quotation marks to express Arabic concepts, words such as "medjnoun"(208) meaning crazy or possessed by evil spirits. The word "hadj" (54) referring to a pilgrim, or "la fatiha," which in Islamic law constitutes a moral and religious contract of marriage. The "fatihah" was and is still recited in some areas of Algeria in the absence of the bride-to-be. There is one instance in *L'Amour* when the Caid's wives come to

announce to the young Badra that “Si M’hamed a demandé aujourd’hui ta main pour son fils aîné! Ton père l’a accordée. Ils viendront vendredi prochain pour la Fatiha et t’emmener le lendemain.”⁶⁰ Thus “le maître de la maison,” (the master of the home, 220) has chosen the girl’s husband without seeking her consent, which is contrary to Islamic law. In this sense, the girl becomes a vulgar merchandise to be taken away on the father’s demand, and the father becomes the family “justicier.” (22, 142) The word “justicier” calls to mind the predominant image in the novel of the father-master (père-maître) both at home and at school. Djébar also resorts to substitution as an instrument of narration. For instance, rape being a taboo subject in Arab/Berber culture, thus to elude the term, Djébar uses substitutions such as “l’indécent,” (indecent, 87) “blessure,” (wound, 282) or “dommage” (damage, 283). The two last words refer not only to rape of woman but also to the rape of Algeria by the French soldiers.

The violence of colonialism is also highlighted in the struggle between Arabic and French. In the first sentence of the chapter entitled ‘La mariée nue de Mazouna’ (the naked bride of Mazouna): “El-Djézaïr, était depuis quinze ans, tombée entre les mains de l’Infidèle.”⁶¹ The juxtaposition of the Arabic name for the capital city and the term ‘infidel’ (*Kafir* in Arabic) to refer to the French together with the repeated references to “La France” and “les Frères” introduce the Manicheistic binary opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ coloniser and colonised. This opposition is reinforced towards the end of the novel by the word *fellaghas* and the French translation of the word used by the Algerians, ‘brothers.’

But the fourth and most important level of language in Djébar’s novel remains that of the body:

[... Le] corps que le regard des voisins, des cousins, prétend rendre sourd ou aveugle, puisqu’ils ne peuvent plus tout à fait l’incarcérer; le corps qui dans ses trances, les dances ou les vociférations, par accès d’espoir ou de desespoir, s’insurge, cherche en analphabète la destination,

⁶⁰ Today Si M’hamed has asked for your hand for his eldest son! Your father has given his consent. They will come next Friday for the Fatiha and will take you the following day (125).

⁶¹ “El-Djézaïr had been in the hands of the infidel for fifteen years” (*L’Amour*, 119).

sur quel rivage, de son message d'amour.⁶²

It is worth noting that in texts analysing the colonial enterprise, the colonised land and the female body are often perceived as analogous, a parallelism which is symbolically represented in the double metaphor of 'dis/covery' to refer both to journeys of exploration and the exposure of the female body. The female body becomes a synecdoche for a nation. This metonymic relation between female body and the Algerian nation is the keystone of *L'Amour*.

Djebar reads the Algerian woman's body metonymically. Fallen in battle, she represents the conquered Algerian nation, dismembered. Sealed into that crushing objecthood, re-assemblage of the body that is split apart enables woman's subjectivity. As she recalls memories of her own struggle against social prescriptions that confine woman's body, restrict her physical presence in public space, and support the patriarch's refusal of any other masculine gaze, she now identifies with her traditional sisters. Djebar's text invites interesting comparisons with Fanon's writings. She corroborates twenty years later the relationship between body, veil, and self-image which Fanon calls in *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, "the new dialectic of the body and of the world"⁶³ for the revolutionary woman.

In Fanon's view, the urgency of recognizing the black man's subjectivity is tied to an ethics he prescribes, one that comes from his own bodily experience. Revolutionary thought and action for him, proceed from knowledge of Self (body). Djebar too identifies the body as the site to be liberated not simply from colonial history but also from patriarchy. For Djebar, the gaze that seeks to dominate is a threatening one since it aims at objectifying the female and confining her to the capacity of a receiver. In casting off the voyeur's gaze, Djebar's women are able to re-appropriate both the coloniser's gaze and the masculine gaze thus giving the female body a freedom of movement it was deprived of before. All attempts by patriarchy

⁶²"[...] the body which male neighbours' and cousins' eyes require to be deaf and blind, since they cannot completely incarcerate it, the body which in trances dances, or vociferations, in fits of hope and despair rebels, and unable to read or write, seeks some unknown shore as destination for its message of love" (*L'Amour*, 254-5).

⁶³ Frantz Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove P, 1965), 59.

and white culture and history to fix the woman in eternal femininity are blasted open by an explosion that comes from the ethical agency of woman's consciousness. For Djébar, the recovery of the body captured by the Orientalist gaze contributes to its liberation. But to lift the veil and expose the body to the full light of day, to allow speech to flow freely, is perhaps also, paradoxically, to run the risk of a certain alienation from traditional society. The writer's treatment of the veil, her own escape from cloistering, and her subsequent access to academia and writing suggests that the female body is a locus of potential power, rebellion, and knowledge that threatens the *status quo* of male privilege. Here inheres a reciprocal form of interactivity between the Self and the world in which the body encounters space, and space is re-oriented through the agency of this body-subject. It is here that one can find an effective delivery of the basic Sartrean formulation that existence precedes essence. Much is at stake, then, in this quest for a woman's most basic encounter with herself. Her body structures her experience, thus re-establishes her selfhood outside the various constraints that have been actualized through the history of colonialism and patriarchy. Djébar explicitly links access to the French written word for the narrator to the sensual discovery of her own body. She thus breaks the taboo of the Arab/Berber culture which shuns any foregrounding of the physical, and the personal, because a woman's freedom for her can only come when the body freely unveils itself. This is brought further in section three of the second part of the novel when the bride-to-be, living in Paris, still part of the Algerian community in exile refuses to allow the women of her family to practise the rituals of the wedding night (155). To allow them to police her virginity on behalf of the tribe would be to accept the alienation of her body. She enters into knowledge of her body on her own terms, as she sees French women do. In Algeria, where she could not have resisted the pressures of conformity, marriage would have assigned her to a passive femininity, joining her to the enclosing circle of watching women, who in Algeria mediate and maintain patriarchal power. In Paris however, marriage brings her

the liberating power of independent critical perception. As in Part one of the novel, Algeria and France are set to mirror one another and the reflections reveal a proliferation of forms of unequal power relations between the two countries, which have repercussions onto the internal life of the citizens. The image of the cut off hand of an Algerian anonymous woman that the French artist, Eugène Fromentin, throws away in the dust, in the concluding pages of the novel, completes the tableau. It functions not only as a metaphor for the past history of Algeria, its mutilation by centuries of colonial occupation, but also as a metonym of a woman's maimed body. Much later still, having seized this living hand, the hand of mutilation and memory, Djébar tries to make it hold the pen "*qalam*," (*L'Amour*, 313) to write her story, the story of a mutilated woman, one that leaves the reader with a disturbing and enigmatic emblem of the country's future. This highly evocative seizure of the pen by the living hand, suggests an inevitable act of violence against those who are withholding the *qalam* from the author. The act of the woman writer taking power from her usurper is double folded. For her, the usurper is both the coloniser and the patriarchal power of male domination. Thus, the choice of the word *qalam* in Arabic suggests that the mutilation of the memory spoken of is not only that of the external coloniser but even more the result of the internal stifling patriarchal system that seeks to enforce the enclosure of the female within society.

In a dramatic parable near the end of *L'Amour, la Fantasia*, the Algerian author returns to one of Fromentin's personages in *A Year in the Sahel*, (1858)⁶⁴ and evokes Haoua, a stereotypical 'femme orientale' from the orientalist past. What does it mean for Djébar to cite a text of the former coloniser? Is she not betraying her culture? We would argue that the Algerian writer recuperates this heroine from the colonial past to express her own plural identity and to make known new understandings of intercultural identity that reveal possibilities of transformation and liberation. Like Haoua, Djébar is also an outsider: an

⁶⁴ This book narrates Fromentin's first trip to Algeria in 1846.

Algerian woman who has made the conscious decisions to write about herself and to write in French, one who lives as a result in exile. Facing the risks of cultural betrayal by writing out of the restrictive cultural context of Algerian Arab/Berber society in which autobiographical writing is not approved of, Djébar uses the figure of Haoua not only as an autobiographical deflection to avoid exposing herself to derision and condemnation, but also to dissemble and reveal herself, and to represent a mythical genealogy of Algerian women writers who attempt to discover and express their own subjectivity in written language. In Freudian terms, identification is a “psychological process by which an individual assimilates an aspect, a characteristic, or an attribute of another,”⁶⁵ in order to transform him/herself. Djébar’s evident identification with Haoua occurs first in the enunciation of the “je” (I). In this passage, Djébar writes in the first person, but from the perspective of Haoua. This enunciation in the singular then extends to the collective with the anaphoric phrase “toute femme dressée libre,[...] toute vie surgissant au soleil pour danser”⁶⁶ referring not only to Haoua before the mare’s hoof mortal blow, but also to other Algerian women, including herself. Djébar plays on the meaning of Haoua’s name, the original woman and the mother of all in both Muslim and Judeo-Christian religious traditions, but also the first female lawbreaker who takes from the tree of knowledge. Although Djébar has highlighted Haoua’s groundbreaking qualities at first, she is the “première Algérienne d’une fiction en langue française à aller et venir, oiseusement, première à *respirer* en marge et à feindre d’ignorer la transgression.”⁶⁷ But in the end, like Achebe’s Okonkwo, she pays the highest price for her violation of the laws of her society, though in quite a different way. Both characters are defeated by the structure they had defied. Through her retelling of Haoua’s story, Djébar reveals a hidden tragic story of internal

⁶⁵Cited in Gordon Collier, *Us/Them Translation, Transcription and Identity in Post-Colonial Literary Cultures* (Amsterdam, Neth.: Rodopi, 1992), 46.

⁶⁶ “[...] any woman who dares to stand up freely, [...] all life that comes out into the sunlight to dance” (*L’Amour*, 314).

⁶⁷ Ibid., 311-2. “The first Algerian heroine to make a brief appearance in a story written in French, the first to breathe, the first to pretend not to realise she is transgressing.” Emphasis mine.

division pitting one Algerian against another, namely a man against a woman. By listening to the muffled stories of her countrywomen, she foresees

l'instant immanquable où le coup de sabot à la face renversera
toute femme dressée libre, toute vie surgissant au soleil pour
danser! Oui, malgré le tumulte des miens alentour, j'entends
déjà, avant même qu'il s'élève et transperce le ciel dur, j'entends
le cri de la mort dans la fantasia,⁶⁸

as Haoua did. The narrator's predictions have come true. Haoua's second husband, the man she dared divorce upon learning that he murdered her first husband in order to marry her, takes his revenge. During a fantasia performance at a clan festival, he turns his charging steed against her, and tramples her to death.

It is worth noting that in his depiction of fantasia, Fromentin represents North Africa as Ancient Greece: "La fantasia, c'est à dire le galop d'un cheval monté est encore un spectacle unique ... [De] ce monstre aux proportions réelles, qui n'est qu'une alliance audacieusement figurée d'un robuste cheval et d'un bel homme, elle a fait l'éducation de ses héros, l'inventeur de ses sciences[...]"⁶⁹ In Djébar's novel, the horse metaphorically stands for the Arab/Berber male whose domination of the woman is *unique*. But while Greece made of this horse-shaped man, her hero, the inventor of her sciences, the Algerian society made of man the inventor of a woman's space. The writer's closing words, "j'entends le cri de la mort dans la fantasia,"⁷⁰ sum up her own situation, and reveal the impossibility of turning the clock back. How better can one express the confusion of identities! The figure of Haoua is superimposed upon Djébar's "je," (I) reinforcing thereby Djébar's identification with Haoua and with other women who put themselves forward, and underlining Djébar's understanding of the dangers

⁶⁸ Ibid., 314. "[...] the inevitable moment when the mare's hoof will strike down any woman who dares to stand up freely, will trample all life that comes out in the sunlight to dance." It is worth noting that a woman's mutilation or death by the "coup de sabot à la face" is a recurrent motif in Djébar's corpus developed further in *Ces voix qui m'assiègent*, a collection of essays. Mutilation and torture start the story of *Women of Algiers*; dismemberment and maiming close this novel.

⁶⁹ "The fantasia ie.the gallop of a well-mounted horse is still a unique spectacle[...] [From] this well-proportioned monster, which represented audaciously the alliance of a strong horse and a handsome man, Greece formed her hero, the inventor of her sciences [...]" Eugène Fromentin, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Guy Sagnes (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 354-5.

⁷⁰ "I hear the death cry in the fantasia" (*L'Amour*, 314).

of the woman's transgression. By portraying Haoua as a victim, Djébar is inevitably signifying the nature of Algerian society. Haoua's tragic death may be read as a mark of violence which has not loosened its grip on Algerian women.

In contrast to Fromentin who leaves the scene of the dying woman to provide his readers with ethnographic details such as food and dance for Haoua's friends and relatives, Djébar draws her reader's attention to Algerian history. She situates Haoua's birth at the time of the French conquest of 1830, explaining that her childhood and adolescence spanned a period of intense warfare between the Algerian tribes and the French military. Moreover, 1852, the year Fromentin was traveling in Algeria, marked the fifth anniversary of the defeat of the Algerian nationalist and military leader, Emir Abdelkader. At that point in time, tribes that had joined the Algerian leader to fight the French were progressively weakened, economically, militarily, and psychologically. Djébar writes: "Et c'est le vrai tragique de la fantasia que Fromentin ressuscite: gesticulation de la victoire envolée, assomption des corps au soleil dans la vitesse des cavales [...]"⁷¹ This is also the tragedy that Djébar rescucitates in her novel. The writer uses the fantasia to convey the ambiguity of her relationship to her maternal relatives: they are the silenced women who allowed her to speak, and urged her to write. The fantasia is also a valuable concept because it helps visualise the narrator's wandering between several territories, none of which she belongs to. The cultural doubleness of the fantasia connotes her double cultural heritage, Western and Algerian. It therefore emphasises the constant need to re-negotiate her position within a complex socio-historical text. Indeed, the woman who came to confident self-consciousness through the language and culture of France, and who returns from France to embrace the traditions of her family, feels trapped again. She wonders what the rhythms and shrieks of the fantasmagoria symbolized by the fantasia in which her community celebrates itself have in store for her (314). Inside the tumult of the fantasia, the

⁷¹ "And this is the real tragedy of the Fantasia which Fromentin resurrects: a gesture in honour of the vanished victory, recognition of the bodies left lying in the sun as the horse's hooves pound into the distance" (*L'Amour*, 312).

dancing woman is the emblem of the desire of all the oppressed for freedom and movement. The form of the image is not fortuitous. The writer joins her own voice and life story with the stories and voices of Algerian women revolutionaries, replacing silence and the coloniser's version of history with a celebration of the female experience and expression. Speaking neither for nor to her subaltern sisters, Djébar speaks with them, emphasising the collective nature of female expression.

Thus the quest which Djébar's text undertakes is for a 'parole féminine,' one which articulates Algerian women's experience. While evoking the anguish and ambiguity of the colonised subject, issues of language and difference are also of paramount importance for the reconstruction of a feminine identity. Djébar meditated on the ideology of colonialism which excluded the colonised from the diachrony of history. But she also set out to retrieve suppressed feminine voices, rescuing Algerian women from occlusion both by colonialism and patriarchy. In doing so, she sought to restore Algerian women to their rightful place within the new nation, to have their voices speak and be heard as full participants in the project of decolonisation and nation-building. The writer's skills in French carry those stories into the public arena, out of the darkness of domestic space to which tradition has consigned her, and beyond the local, limited audience of the Berber tongue.

To conclude, We will leave the final words to Djébar: "Je ressors de cette exposition du moi en texte publié: ainsi, [...] je finis par sortir de la mise sous silence; je finis par m'en sortir."⁷² While Djébar first saw hopeless imprisonment for women, in her later prose, like Picasso, she reconstructs some sort of space for women. From an odalisque figure, Haoua is recreated as a woman set free. Haoua thus becomes a living example of the changing experience of the Algerian woman. The clearly positive valence of Djébar's version of the character serves to legitimise and reinforce the writer's identity as an independent woman

⁷² "[...] I come out from this autobiography: [...] I finally emerged from silence; I managed to come out of it" (*Ces Voix qui m'assiègent*, 106).

first, then as an independent author. For Djébar, re-imagining Haoua in this way is not only a positive recuperation of a dead heroine in colonial literature, but also a way for her to express a mosaic self-portrait of multiple cultures and influences, and her identification with Haoua in the construction of her Self reflects one of the elements of her plural identity. In this coming to life anew, Djébar also foregrounds the syncretic identity of Algerian culture, a liberatory beginning of a myriad of cultural perspectives that result in an open culture of evolution rather than restriction. If Djébar re-defined the role of Algerian women in a patriarchal society, and attempted to release them from their obscurity of being exclusively the 'angel of the house,' what are Yeats's, Joyce's, Achebe's and Conrad's attitudes to women in general?

Chapter XI

Woman's Place in: Chinua Achebe, Joseph Conrad, W.B. Yeats, and James Joyce.

To those multitudes not as yet in the wombs of humanity
but surely engenderable there, he [the artist] would give the
word: Man and woman, out of you comes the nation that is
to come, the lightening of your masses in travail [...]¹

Alphonse-François Donatien, Marquis de Sade: *Justine: Philosophy in the
Bedroom and Other Writings*, Trans. Richard Seaver & Austryn
Wainhouse (New York: Grove, 1965).

Out of man and woman comes the nation, says Donatien. Unfortunately, this notion is far removed from the reality of women's daily existence. Gayatri Spivak contends that the dialogue between race and gender has considerably complicated the discourse of postcolonialism as far as the situation of women is concerned. She claims that in the narratives of nationalism, the woman is "even more deeply in shadow [...]"² One might construe this with the examination of the works of the male writers cited above to see if they sustain unequal gender differences or challenge them. To start this feminist analysis, we propose to remain within African literature for a while to see the convergence of Djébar's arguments about woman's oppression, dealt with in the preceding chapter, with Achebe's. As Fanon has reminded us, the colonial experience has invested definitions of culture with special significance, and so did Achebe, though in quite a different way from the Martiniquan. Indeed if for Fanon the colonised man is "elevated above his jungle status,"³ Achebe's woman is lost in that jungle.

¹ Cited by Suzette Henke & Elaine Unkeless, eds., *Women in Joyce* (University of Illinois Press, 1982), 31.

² *Ibid.*, 28.

³ *Women in Joyce*, 17-8.

11. 1. The Anxiety of Masculinity in Chinua Achebe's Work

Achebe's works are obvious classics but a feminist reading reveals that the women of his early novels are "peripheral to the larger exploration of man's experience,"⁴ remarks Carole Davies. In response to the feminist criticism of his earlier work, Achebe wrote *Anthills of the Savannah*. This section explores Achebe's portraiture of women in his fictional universe. In an effort to narrow down this complex issue, we have limited the scope of this segment to a comparison of Achebe's first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, and some of his later novels such as *No Longer at Ease*, (1960) *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) to try and see if there is any diachronic development, as the writer himself pointed out in an interview I had with him on Sunday, October, 12th 2008.

In his analysis of colonialism, the Nigerian writer has suggested that there is a balance to all systems and that when that balance is lost, the system is reduced to chaos. This imbalance can be traced down to an inequity between masculine and feminine forces. In examining Achebe's fiction, one faces a great dilemma. The African male occupies simultaneously the role of the oppressed in relation to the coloniser and oppressor in relation to the African woman. Achebe's world is an androcentric world in which patriarchy intrudes oppressively into every sphere of existence. Manhood is the frame of reference while womanhood clearly stands for the dominated, subjugated, repressed, shunned, and is used to qualify irrationality, inferior being. Female identity is indeed mediated through traditional conceptions of the wifely role. The shadowy female figures mutely fulfill their traditionally ordained roles as compliant wives, daughters and mothers. Most of these women lack individuality and cannot assert their selfhood even in their own homes. Women's debased position is given credence in Achebe's first novel.

⁴ Carole Boyce Davies, and Anne, Adams Graves, (eds) *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1986), 247.

Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* to redeem the Ibos from the dark image of colonial distortion, for as he claimed, his duty as a writer was to restore dignity to his own people. However it seems that for him, women are not part of the mainland. In this novel, the Nigerian writer endorses what might be called a cult of Ibo masculinity. Wives, yam barns, and social titles are the highest bestowal for the successful farmer, warrior and man of worth. They determine his social status. Achebe explains that yam, “the king of crops [is] a *man*’s crop”(*TFA*, 28) while coco-yam, of a smaller size and lesser value than other yams, is regarded as female. This all-important crop is synonymous with virility, and “he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a great man indeed” (23). In Umuofian society moreover, the man who earns the most important title should boast of at least nine to ten wives as illustrated by Nwakibie who has “three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children, and the highest but one title which a man can take in the clan” (15).

Umuofian men, like many African men, chauvinistically believe that a woman’s place is in the home. They lump together women, chickens and cows, and want to be the loudest voice in the affairs of the community. This near-invisibility of women in *Things Fall Apart* is acknowledged by the omniscient narrator. Describing a communal ceremony, he confesses: “it was clear from the way the crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men. There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsiders” (77). Likewise, the society of *egwugwus* is a secret society of men. No woman was ever allowed to see what was going on inside: “If they imagined what was inside, they kept their imagination to themselves. No woman ever asked questions about the most powerful and the most secret cult of the clan,” (78) explains Achebe. Moreover, when Umuofia was deeply offended by one of its neighbours, all of the men, but only the men, assembled at the marketplace in order to decide what the consequences would be. If a woman had reason to address the elders, who were all

men, her case would be presented and argued for by her closest male relatives as was the case of Mgbafo, a woman who ran away from her abusive husband.

Through his authorial voice thus Achebe seems to condone sexism. The constant opposition in the narrative between manhood and womanhood is rendered mostly through the central character who is obsessed with the show of masculinity. The novel famous for the macho image of the protagonist leaves indeed little room for the projection of feminine values. The most important conflict in Okonkwo's masculinity and male pride is his inner struggle against his emotions which he tries to conceal for he thinks that sentimentality is womanish (24). Paradoxically however many of the qualities, which for Okonkwo are the marks of femininity and weakness, are the same qualities respected by the society the protagonist wished to champion. For instance, in suppressing his fears and those attributes he considers as signs of weakness, Okonkwo denies those human responses of love and understanding which Umuofia recognises as prerequisites for greatness. The crucial instance of Okonkwo's inner conflict is when he kills his foster son, Ikemefuna, which for him is a mark of manhood. It is significant that after the murder of the boy, Okonkwo has no other refuge than his mother's town, which of course, has to be called *Mbanta*, or small town, which one can read as being contrasted, in Okonkwo's mind, to the strong-featured, wild, thus masculine connotations of his Umuofia, meaning 'children of the forest.' Nonetheless, despite his hyper-masculinity, Okonkwo cannot shake off the memory of his murderous act. Feeling a cold shiver descend over his head, Okonkwo tries to regain some sort of countenance and reason himself: "When did you become a shivering old woman?" he tells himself (56). Indeed to tremble after killing the boy will only betray him as a woman or an effeminate man. And to prove to himself that he has not become a woman, he issues commands to his daughter: "Go and bring me some cold water," (55) and his daughter rushes out of the hut. No sooner has she come back with the water than Okonkwo orders her to fetch his bag. Indeed

“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,”(10) explains Achebe. The novel presents the wives as accepting ungrudgingly whatever humiliation befalls them, or mistreatment at the hands of the husband. They are paralysed with fear. Many male critics believe that “one of Achebe’s great achievements is his ability to keep alive our sympathy for Okonkwo despite the moral revulsion from some of his violent, inhuman acts,”⁵ but most fail to underscore the abuses suffered by Okonkwo’s wives.

These women remind the reader of the silent women in Djébar’s *L’Amour* locked in the discourse assigned to them as passive sexual property. Sandwiched between yam barns and titles, wives are part of men’s acquisitions. Achebe’s cultural universe is one in which women are scarcely heard. They go and come with mounds of foofoo, pots of water, market baskets, fetch kola, are scolded and beaten before they disappear behind the huts of their compound (*TFA*,32). One can ally the existence of such women to that of women as described by Djébar’s metaphor of “cadavres asphyxiés” (*L’Amour*, 164). As such they certainly have no real power in their relationships with men, simply waiting for the commands of their ‘masters’ who take all the decisions. This explains why Okonkwo is always dictating to his wives and resents their views as is revealed through one of his conversations with Ekwefi, his second wife, who dares ask if Ikemufuna would stay with them: “Do what you are told, woman. When did you become one of the *ndichie* [elders] of Umuofia?” (12) thundered Okonkwo. For a man also to consult his wife before doing anything is but a womanly act. This is why Okonkwo despises Nduluo, who in his view, is a hen-pecked husband because he is so close to his wife. Worse than that, Okonkwo’s legitimate wives could not even raise a voice of

⁵ Iyasere Solomon, ‘Narrative Techniques in *Things Fall Apart*,’ in G.D. Killam, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 98.

protest when he has illicit affairs with women in his own residence. His escapade with Ekwefi prior to making of her his second wife is an example of such machismo.

This monomania of male dominance is actually rooted in childhood fears. Okonkwo's father, Unoka, an indolent and unsuitably idle man, favoured staying at home, playing his flute, drinking and frittering his money away rather than toiling to cultivate the crops needed to support his family. Concurrently as a child, Okonkwo endured taunts from other children who labelled his father an *agbala*, meaning both 'woman' and a 'titleless man.' From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, one might say that the protagonist's warped sense of masculinity and honour due to his father's weakness and unfortunate position in the village of Umuofia is what has caused his perverse relationship towards his wives and his intense feelings towards his son, Nwoye. Okonkwo's ill-treatment of his wives is but a way for him to maintain them in total subjugation for fear of appearing as a weak man, unable to govern his household, hence his rigid separation of the masculine and feminine, and his ferocious war on the feminine. After his father's death, Okonkwo became obsessed with gaining as many titles as he could and he did succeed. Having gained wealth, many wives and children, Okonkwo then felt that he had dominated over his father's feminine follies.

In his extreme pursuit of masculinity, he also teaches his sons the male value, and pressures them early in their lives to believe that "no matter how wealthy a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women), he was not really a man," (45-6). Thus, although Okonkwo often vents his anger on his eldest son, Nwoye, he is inwardly pleased when the boy grumbles about women. This shows that "in time he would be able to control his women-folk" (45). In his anxiety to make of his sons true men, he also urges them to sit with him and listen to his "masculine stories of violence and bloodshed," (46) instead of relishing women's story of the "tortoise and its wily ways," (46) a tale which Nwoye is actually very fond of. Okonkwo thus encourages his male progeny to sever their

connection with their own mothers in favour of the connection with their father and his masculine side. Paradoxically, one should note that it is through women's storytelling that the children learn important lessons about the human condition, that they are taught the Ibo creation myths, such as those in the birds and the tortoise story, and master the art of communicating so much praised in Umuofian society. Although Nwoye feigns that these stories are for foolish women and children, a tactic to avoid being rebuked and beaten by his father, he proves hermetic to his father's teachings. The boy's inability to fulfill a traditional role of masculinity, and above all "his incipient laziness" (11) become a constant source of frustration and anxiety for his father. Okonkwo's alienation of the boy because of his feminine tendencies, and his murder of Nwoye's friend, Ikemefuna, increase the boy's resentment at his father. Achebe carefully constructs Nwoye as a young version of Unoka in certain ways in order to help demonstrate the intensity of Okonkwo's aversion for anything feminine, or anything that reminds him of his father. The boy's disdain for his father and what the latter stands for, strangely similar to the disgust Okonkwo feels toward Unoka, ultimately makes Nwoye an easy convert for the arriving European Christians. His rejection of Ibo values strikes the direst blow to Okonkwo's hopes for his son. It is as though all of his hard work to distance himself from the legacy of his father is destroyed. Of this, Okonkwo reflects: how he, Okonkwo, "a flaming fire, could have begotten a son like Nwoye, degenerate and effeminate? [...] Perhaps he was not his son! No! He could not be. His wife had played him false. He would teach her!"(133). Having found in his wife the ideal scapegoat, the 'greatest man' of Umuofia repudiates his eldest son and warns the others: "I will only have a son who is a man, who will hold his head up among my people. If anyone of you prefers to be a woman, let him follow Nwoye now while I am alive so that I can curse him"(148).

But Okonkwo is luckier with his daughters. He has always regretted that Ezinma was a girl. A strong bond has grown between them because of all the children, she alone

understands him well. Looking at his favourite daughter, he desperately ponders: “She should have been a boy” (55). If Okonkwo shows much concern for the female child, he however mistreats her mother, Ekwefi. The reader senses a great sense of injustice.

Achebe’s women cannot find sanctuary within the confines of their own homes, in the arms of their own husbands and in their society as a whole. They have actually no respect outside their role of mothers, wives or child bearers. Accordingly, due to the phallocentric view that women must ‘produce’ many but robust male descendants to be valued within their cultural milieu, Ekwefi has been stigmatised and even considered a cursed woman because after ten live births, only one child, a daughter, has survived. In the eyes of her society, Ekwefi is considered a failure, not because she cannot have a viable child, but because she cannot provide her husband with male progeny who would then carry on in his father’s name. Ekwefi has thus become a very embittered woman and feels a streak of jealousy towards the first wife who has given birth to hardy male children. Okonkwo is certainly concerned about the deaths of the children, but impervious to Ekwefi’s heartache, and does not even comfort her when she is forced to watch her dead child being mutilated and dragged through the streets by his ankles, and finally laid to rest in the Evil Forest with other *ogbanje*⁶ children and outcasts as it is the custom in Ibo culture. This sense of injustice towards women that one gleans from *Things Fall Apart* appears even more offensive when we learn that many years earlier, it was the then impoverished Okonkwo, unable to pay her bride-price, who had won Ekwefi’s heart. It is also for Okonkwo that she has abandoned her husband. Yet a sound beating is the retribution she receives for her love and devotion.

Okonkwo has indeed transformed the matrimonial home into a battleground through consistent wife beating and physical assaults. It is worth noting that although Ibo women are expected to submit to their husbands, physical abuse is generally despised in Ibo culture. For

⁶ An *ogbanje* is a child who dies and returns to its mother to be reborn.

instance, when Mgbafo's case was presented at the town meeting, the elders sided with her while her husband was advised to humble himself before her relatives and beg her to return to him: "It is not bravery when a man fights with a woman," (82) remarks one of the elders, but for Okonkwo masculinity is viewed in terms of courage and violence. In a fit of male chauvinism, he beats Ekwefi, his second wife, for merely cutting a few leaves off a banana tree to wrap some food (33). His anger then satisfied, he went hunting. Although Okonkwo is a great man, says Achebe, he is very bad at hunting. So when he hears the wife that had just been soundly beaten murmur under her breath something about guns that never shot, the protagonist becomes mad and aims at her, nearly killing her because she dared make such a remark (33). It was not until his wife fell on the floor that Okonkwo realised the cruelty of his act. His savage treatment of Ekwefi does not even warrant attention from the elders, but his flogging of Ojiugo does. Achebe says that Okonkwo was provoked to "justifiable anger" (24) by his youngest wife because she went to plait her hair and did not come back early enough to cook his meal. So when she returned home, he beat her heavily, much to the dismay of the village because it was unheard of to beat someone during the sacred Week of Peace. Thus the peace of the tribe takes precedence over personal considerations, especially when these concern women. Curiously enough, this breach of the Week of Peace is considered as an offense to Aní, the Earth goddess who wreaks such havoc on the townspeople's lives.

Indeed while Achebe's text draws attention to the marginal place occupied by women, womanhood is also the symbol of all the powerful fetishes/oracles which regulate people's affairs in Ibo society. Aní is a powerful goddess to whom Okonkwo bows (36). She is the ultimate judge of morality and conduct and the goddess of fertility: she gives or withholds children. If a woman has twins, she orders her to abort both children and bury them, for twins are believed to bring bad luck. Aní also bans those inflicted with shameful diseases from

burial in her soil. Thus a woman has a life-giving power that is to be revered. In other words, “Mother is supreme” (116). This is what Uchendu reveals to Okonkwo:

Why is it that one of the commonest names given to our children is Nneka, or mother supreme? We know all that man is head of family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to his father and his family and not to his mother and her family (116).

After a pause, the old man answers the question himself:

It is true that a child belongs to his father [...] A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness, he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you [...] And that is why we say that mother is supreme (116).

Uchendu’s words reveal that women are the foundation of the clan and its people. They are the nurturers and caretakers of the people. It would then seem logical that a society which views its women in such terms should not represent them as inferior beings. Nonetheless, despite the importance ascribed to the mother, in *Things Fall Apart*, the figure of the mother recedes to the backstage, allowing Okonkwo to achieve prominence. The mother appears only in chapter nine and significantly is nameless like most of the women in Djébar’s novel. When asked about his very pronounced marginalisation of women,⁷ Achebe himself insisted that he presented a somewhat more palatable view of women in his later fiction and in particular in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987).

A cursory look at the place of women in Achebe’s later works seems to reveal that he has embarked on a revisionist course. The writer seems to be making amends for feminist critiques of his treatment of women in his earlier fiction by presenting professional women operating on the same wave length as the most powerful men in the land. *No Longer at Ease* (1960) for instance, set on the eve of Nigeria’s political independence, explores the malaise of

⁷ My interview with Achebe on Sunday, October, 12th 2008 at 16.45, at the Park Inn hotel, where he was staying during the conference given at the University of London to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Things Fall Apart*.

modern Nigeria: the uneasy co-existence of traditional ethos and European values and the absence of a coherent cultural framework that could give a firm direction to the country in general, and its educated elite in particular. In this novel, there is a discernible change in the style of Achebe's female representation. Obi, the protagonist, receives an excellent education in an English university. When back home, he is unable to integrate his anglicised attitudes and indigenous values. He rejects certain Ibo cultural practices, such as the caste system that ostracises the *osu*; yet he does not have the moral courage to marry his girlfriend, Clara, because his parents violently object to having an *osu* daughter-in-law. Obi's mother even threatens to commit suicide if he married the girl from the outcast tribe. And when Clara announces that she is pregnant, instead of shouldering her, Obi gets her an abortion, and lets her down. At the end of the novel, Obi has thus surrendered to the implacable force of traditional ethos. The *osu* woman disappears from the scene and again Achebe gives prominence to his male protagonist.

In a similar vein, in *A Man of the People*, (1966) images of women playing traditional roles such as singers and dancers, are contrasted to those of rich, independent, assertive women. Chief Nanga's wife, an educated woman, is cheated by her husband. She complains to Odili about her husband's extramarital relationship and impending marriage to the young Edna. But when Odili is about to dismiss the woman's husband, she changes her mind. She chooses to remain a dependent, marginal figure, living in the shadow of her husband. Achebe thus pushes her back into her traditional role of helpmate fighting to retain her precarious marital position.

But the most prominent female character in *Man of the People* is Eunice, the lawyer. She is the fiancée of Odili's schoolmate Max, and founder of the Common People's Convention that opposes corrupt Chief Nanga and his ilk. When Max is shot by thugs of a political adversary, Eunice decides to retaliate: "She opens her handbag as if to take out a handkerchief, [takes]

out a pistol instead and [fires] two bullets into Chief Koko's chest" (160). But Achebe pointedly adds: "Only then [does] she fall down on Max's body and begin to weep *like a woman* [...] A very *strange* girl, people said" (160, Italics mine). Eunice is depicted in stereotypical terms: she is a woman whose outstanding characteristic is weeping. Moreover, in a story of the utter breakdown of law and order, where plundering, arson and political murders have become rampant, a counterblow by a girl is regarded as "strange." But the protagonist in *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) may look even stranger to the male reader.

Achebe's fifth novel, set in a military regime in present-day West Africa, illustrates a culture in which women must save the country from its downfall. Speaking through his alter ego, Ikem Osodi, a journalist and writer, Achebe acknowledges that the "origin of oppression of Woman [is] based on crude denigration," (AS, 89) and that the malaise the African party is experiencing results in part from the exclusion of women from the scheme of things. The Nigerian writer thus twists mythical history by masculinising somehow his female characters. Killing off all the men and recreating mythical history allows Achebe's female characters to rise above the oppressing patriarchy. Beatrice Okoh, a graduate from Queen Mary College, University of London, seems to project Achebe's new vision of women's roles. She is an articulate, independent, self-realised woman charting the course of female emancipation. In order to dismiss patriarchy and male superiority, Achebe evolves a new system of power through a series of myths. At the final Kangan naming ceremony for instance, the largely female community reaches a consensus that a mother should name her child: "What does a man know about a child anyway that he should presume to give it a name?" (206) asks the writer. The author indeed strives to affirm the moral strength and intellectual integrity of African women, but as Beatrice explains, "it is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn sight too far and too late!" (91-92). The point is driven forcefully in the following quote "We [men] never asked you before. And perhaps

you've never been asked [...]," but soon the writer adds, "You may not have thought about it [freedom]; [because] you may not have the answer handy"(90). Disappointingly, Achebe plunges again his woman into nothingness. It seems that he could not rid himself of those old-aged prejudices describing women as brainless. Serving the sexual appetite of the lordly male appears to be the limits of female destiny in this novel. Ikem, the sensitive writer, values Elewa more for her sexual athletics than her pure soul: "[...] her love-making is just sensational,"(AS, 38) he notes, but finished with, she is despatched home in a taxi at midnight. Shortly before, Chris and the young student have subjected the young woman to the characteristically predatory male scrutiny in Achebe's novels. Although Beatrice indicates Achebe's growing sympathy for feminist issues, in relation to the two male figures of the novel, she is again marginalised since the narrative space accorded her is also circumscribed. Beatrice's function as a liberated woman gradually fades away as the narrative progresses, she is again perceived in reductive physical terms. Beatrice, like the career girls of Achebe's earlier works, seems to rely mostly on her body for survival. For Beatrice moreover male support seems indispensable. First she leans on Ikem; next on Chris, and as soon as Chris is out of the picture, the Nigerian major takes over. And at the dinner, Beatrice fails in an apparently patriotic effort to supersede the American female for the President's attentions, "her tears flowed in torrents" (AS, 81) like Eunice in *A Man of the People*. Beatrice's resentment at the peremptory summons of the male dictator, expressed in her refusal of the appropriate seat in the official car is, she herself recognises, but "a puny empty revolt, the rebellion of a mouse in a cage" (AS, 72). Despite her admiration for Ikem's willingness to speak out against female oppression, Beatrice seems to understand his failure to give any "clear role for women in his political writing," (74) not as an expression of personal weakness, but because she is fully aware that the entire female identity is based more upon societal constraints: women are taught to be mothers, while men are conditioned to dominate

and control. This reveals that the patriarchal system of Ibo society is ingrained in the lives and culture of the people so that they do not even question its existence. Achebe's awareness of the ambivalent situation of women thus remains that of an outsider, a male perspective. His women are just as irrelevant to the practical decisions of running the world as they were in the old days. It even seems that in their very maligned femininity, women are crucial to the development of Achebe's setting, plot and character, and that his main goal is woman's place within larger social and political forces, which are in the order of things men's affairs.⁸ This is how "things fall apart" for women in Achebe's oeuvre, creating an extreme imbalance between masculine and feminine forces.

Some of Achebe's advocates may of course argue that the views about women expounded in Achebe's oeuvre do not reflect the writer's personal opinions. While we are aware that narration inevitably manipulates the reader's perception of the virtues and vices, the strengths and weaknesses of fictional characters, after much research, and above all after the interview with the writer himself, it appears that Achebe's views are those expressed through his protagonist.

Other defenders of the writer may invoke his realistic depiction of Ibo society and claim that he is merely presenting what he sees. This defense is valid to some extent since Ibo culture is undoubtedly patriarchal in many ways, but the reductive picture of women in such a situation appears to be not necessarily a realistic portrayal of Ibo society. A study of West African women reveals that they were not completely tyrannised as has been the case in most African communities. And in Ibo culture in particular, one can see that historically the woman of the clan held some very powerful positions: socially as queens, princesses, chiefs, warriors; spiritually as priestess; symbolically as the earth goddess, and literally as the nurturer of the

⁸ Carole Boyce Davies & Anne Graves, eds., *Ngambika: Studies in African Literature* (Trenton, NJ : AWP, 1986), 12.

Ibos, the caretaker of the yam crops, the mother and educator of Ibo children. These rich and titled women enjoyed higher prestige and influence than men. This power of the Ibo woman comes from two women organisations: the Umuada, Organisation of Patrilineage Daughters, and the Alutaradi, Organisation of Patrilineage Wives.⁹ Though their power was limited in their marital homes, the Umuada were very powerful in their natal homes and seldom could men from the patrilineage oppose their decisions. The Aturadi were the weaker of the two organisations. Ibo women moreover held a complementary rather than subordinate work-position to men in much of indigenous pre-colonial Nigerian society. To produce an abundant harvest, the traditional farmer needed a good workforce, and women always constituted a reservoir of labour in farming, tending animals, nurturing children, among other activities. They also wielded power to manage their own affairs in the traditional patriarchal society. Therefore, Achebe's depiction of the elders as powerful men dominating virtually silent women and making important decisions for their society without the input of women seems questionable. Achebe seems rather careful to remain true to the teachings of his society. It is for this reason that he no longer feels at ease with this new woman he strove to create, but prefers to remain a man of *his* people, thus discards her in the 'Savannah.'

Upon conclusion of this feminist reading of Achebe's above-cited novels, one can say that if *Anthills of the Savannah* revived the writer's reputation in Britain when it was shortlisted for the Booker, it seems to us that it did not do much for his reputation as a sexist. Polygyny in his work remains intrinsically destructive to women's autonomy. It dehumanises them in numerous ways. Masculinity in these novels, reproduces a constellation of behaviours, many of which are destructive and most of them injurious to women. In his attempt to improve on Joseph Conrad's characterisation of Africans in *Heart of Darkness*, and restore the dignity and pride of the black person in his culture, Achebe simply undervalued the humanity of a

⁹ Cf. Theodora Akachi Ezeigbo, 'Traditional Women's Institutions in Igbo Society: Implications for the Igbo Female Writer,' in *African Languages and Cultures* (Taylor & Francis, Ltd, 1990), Vol.3, n° 2 : 149-65.

great portion of the Ibo population, the women. What is then the situation like for women in his most terrible foe's work? Is Conrad also a chauvinist insensitive to the lot of women? These are the questions we purport to investigate in the section that follows.

11. 2. The Woman Question in Joseph Conrad's Work

The presence of female characters in Conrad's novels has been subject to the greatest controversy among his critics. Not only was he hailed as a male-oriented writer of sea-tales but he also had the reputation of being very awkward with women. Lady Ottoline Morrell, an acquaintance of Conrad, saw the Polish writer's relationship with his wife, Jessie, not as one of affinity, but as one where Jessie is merely "a good and reposeful mattress for his hypersensitive, nerve-wrecked man, who did not ask from his wife high intelligence, only an assuagement of life's vibrations."¹⁰ Such inelegant "depiction of Jessie stressing her passive role and lack of sophistication contributed to establish his reputation"(6-7) as a sexist. Some feminists continue to comment on Conrad's inclusion of female roles in his novels by referring to the writer's commodification of them, reading into his presentation of women a blatant misogyny.

Feminist writer, Joyce Carol Oates for instance, asserts that Conrad's heroine is always someone who "effaces herself completely, who is eager to sacrifice herself in an ecstasy of love for her man."¹¹ Polish criticism however was less harsh: in her review of the first Polish translation of *Lord Jim*,¹² in 1904, Emilia Weslawska, Conrad's contemporary, drew attention to the difference in perception between English and Polish readings of Conrad's women. She pointed to the "Polishness" of Conrad's presentation of female characters, and noted that most of his passive, silent heroines were drawn from Polish Romantics such as Adam Mickiewicz. To explain what Weslawska means by "Polishness" might take a full-fledged book, but

¹⁰ Quoted in Susan Jones, *Conrad and Women* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1999), 6.

¹¹ *Conrad and Women*, 7.

¹² Emilia Weslawska, 'A Tribute to Joseph Conrad,' *The Polish Review* (1984), Vol., 29, n° 3, pp. 7-9.

succintly, one can say that there are two factors which have preeminently shaped the traditional Polish concept of femininity: one is Judaeo-Christianity, and more specifically Roman Catholicism; the other is the identification of feminity with Patria (both in Polish and in Latin, fatherland/homeland is feminine; the word ‘Polska’ - Poland - is likewise, feminine). Both the concept of Poland, the loving Mother of all Poles, and the concept of a Polish Mother, suffering like Mother Mary at the foot of the cross when her children sacrifice their lives for the country, are inextricably bound with the biblical mother of faithfulness, love, suffering quietitude, meekness, passivity and obedience, the phallogocentric construct of the Mother of Christ. Thus even today, Polish girls are raised to conform to the Mother Mary ideal. Even today the definition of the word ‘Woman’ is a definition of very strictly defined boundaries. Polish women are scared into beauty for fear of non-identity: a tom-boy is no longer a woman! Moreover, the Polish expressions: ‘Adam is a decent man’ and ‘Anna is a decent woman’ mean two different things: to be decent, Adam has to be a reliable partner in business, has to keep his word, has to be able to pay for his own drinks and return debts when he makes them. For Anna however, to be decent means that she must be sexually available to one man only, must not get drunk and must be clean. No dictionary explains this distinction in gendered terms, yet every Pole understands that the word ‘porządny/porządna,’ decent, means something different according to whether it is applied to a woman or a man.¹³

Expanding on Emilia Weslawska’s thoughts, Ruth Nadelhaft, a contemporary of Joyce Carol Oates refutes her reductive view of Conrad, and asserts that rather than relegating women to a secondary role, Conrad more generally “uses the characters of women to question the prevailing value system and to suggest, in their lives and in their practices, an alternative set of values.”¹⁴ She also adds that in depicting the isolation in women’s lives, and their struggle to establish and maintain their identities, Conrad undoubtedly “identified with the

¹³ Cf. Zdzislaw Nadjar (ed), *Conrad’s Polish Background* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

¹⁴ Ruth Nadelhaft, *Joseph Conrad: A Feminist Reading* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 68.

isolation imposed on and felt by women, first as an exiled Pole and seaman, then as an outsider.”¹⁵ A more thorough psychoanalytic analysis would also reveal that such an attitude towards women is understandable for Conrad’s novels bristle with the shock he felt when his protective mother could no longer defend him from the brutal world. It is therefore not surprising that the boy, in this situation, felt the need to repudiate women and all their feminine attributes. The dismissing of women that is found in his fiction, may well have its roots in this repudiation. It is in the light of thus formulated criticism that we purport to analyse some of Conrad’s early and later works.

A comparative study of Conrad’s early fiction with his more mature works reveals a reshaping in the characterisation of his female characters, the question that arises then is: was that new emphasis on women, a commercially motivated strategy meant to attract a wider audience and increase his sales or did Conrad’s views on women really change? A study of *Heart of Darkness*, (1899) *Nostromo*, (1904) *The Secret Agent*, (1907) ‘Freya of the Seven Isles,’ (1912) *Chance*, (1913) and *Victory* (1915) will help to answer these questions.¹⁶

Conrad’s attitude vis-à-vis women in *Heart of Darkness* is quite ambivalent. This narrative is the product of both the imperialist ideology of civilising through conquest and the patriarchal ideology of separate spheres that characterise the late nineteenth century era. Marlow’s narrative aims to ‘colonise’ and ‘pacify’ both darkness and women. The narrator’s view of women embodies the typical nineteenth century view of women as the inferior sex. Concurrently, the female characters are silenced and cast as cultural archetypes in this novella. Only three main women are depicted in this novella: Marlow’s aunt, Kurtz’s mistress and the Intended. These women’s roles, though limited in their descriptions, represent the stereotypical positions of women in society, i.e. the mother, the whore and the dutiful Lady/virgin. Through the representation of his aunt and the Intended, Marlow constructs a

¹⁵ Ibid., 80.

¹⁶ For the sake of economy of space, and because my point is to show a change in Conrad’s attitude towards women, my analysis will be more focused on *Heart of Darkness*. The other novels will serve as indices of this change.

masculine world of “idea,” that very idea that “redeems,” (21) for “the conquest of the earth, which means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion” (21) also means the conquest of a woman, the taking away of her basic rights as a human being. Quite ironically, it is his aunt, who transcending the traditional role of women in those times, interceded for him. “Would you believe it?” Charlie Marlow exclaims. He, a man “set the women to work, to get [him] the job” (23). The narrator’s words suggest that women should not interfere in men’s matters for the world of work is masculine; it is men’s club. Deeply hurt in his manhood, Marlow tries to hide his feelings through such comments:

It’s queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, [...] Some confounded fact we *men* have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over (*HD*, 27).

Marlow is referring here to the ideological and material separation of women from men, and is suggesting that women being shut out from the truth-producing world of men, should “stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest [theirs] gets worse” (64). Men’s constant fear is to have their lives turned upside down, to see their masculine sphere deteriorating if women got out of their world. Men’s world would then “go into pieces” (27). In man’s world, “there had never been anything like it,” (27) observes Marlow. To this exclusively masculine sphere of truth, Marlow then adds the potential for belief. He first defines a man’s “true stuff” as “inborn strength,” (52) and then concludes that this manly stuff is a “deliberate belief” (52). Women are thus deemed to be uniquely gifted in the realm of human relationships by virtue of their greater emotional sensitivity. Thus though his aunt got him the job, Marlow thinks she is not strong enough to experience savagery as the pilgrims and himself do. The corresponding imagery to her feminine experience of imperialism is that of tender sympathy overriding reason and intellect. This is brought further in the narrator’s depiction of Kurtz’s fiancée.

The Intended conforms to the usual female stereotype in the traditional male narrative: she stays at home waiting for her beloved as in the epic romance. The narrator depicts the white woman's "pure brow," as "illuminated by the un-extinguishable light of belief and love," and underlines her "mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering" (91-2). Though Marlow hates lies, he resorts to lying to the Intended as a chivalric sign of his heroic manhood. It would have indeed been "too dark altogether" (94) to tell her the truth. And the Intended's responding to the lie with "an exulting and terrible cry" (94) completes the demeaning picture of woman. The white woman is incapable of distinguishing the truth. Marlow's lie to the Intended therefore functions to separate the two spheres, the feminine sphere of "saving illusion" (27) and the masculine sphere of "confounded fact" (27). The ghostly figure of the white woman is further contrasted with the black female character.

The appearance of the black woman as Kurtz is being carried onto the ship is the culmination of the discourse of both imperialism and patriarchy. A Victorian reader would see the black mistress as rather masculine. She preserved an air of unfathomable indifference, careless of the fact that her beloved was dying while the Intended would look more feminine. Her innocence would suggest her purity. A postcolonial reader however would view the Intended as naive and her mourning of a man she barely knew as foolish whereas the African woman looks more akin to reality. The reader cannot fail to notice Polish traits in both the characterisation of the Intended and the Black woman. While the former stands for Mother Mary who is suffering, the latter is presented as a symbol of both female sexuality and *Patria*, here Africa: "She is savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent, [but] ominous and stately" (77). As she approaches the ship however, she "looks at Marlow like the wilderness itself" (77) thus becomes threatening. This look destabilises Marlow who then begins to lose some of his masculine power. The process of turning the African woman's body into an icon of the jungle serves both his imperialist and masculine ends. It is an effort to defuse and

control both the native and the woman. Marlow is not immune to the century's vision of the woman: Not only is she silenced but he also sees her as "fecund"(77) ie. in a prejudiced manner. His insistence and concentration on the woman's bracelets suggest that she is feminine in the conventional way, but may also be read as a simile for the very condition of women.

In *Nostromo* (1904) however, despite the harsh criticism elicited by *The Daily Telegraph*, on Conrad's belittling of women,¹⁷ we think that caught between two cultures, Polish and British, Conrad struggled with the creation of his female characters. He had two options: either remain faithful to the traditional Polish picture of woman or offer an alternative image by making his woman a typically modern and emancipated woman. We would opt for the second. The behaviour ascribed to women in Conrad's fiction indeed already reveals his own thoughts about the new status of women. In the chapter entitled 'The Isabels,' Antonia Avellanos for instance, appears as a heroic leader in the political struggle of Costaguana. She is "terribly learned and serious,"¹⁸ an achievement for a woman of that time who was viewed as having no mind, and supposedly passive. Conrad not only underscores her femininity, especially through her swaying of her fan, but he also stresses that she has an intelligence equivalent to men. Antonia attends to her father, the very role assigned to women of her time, but she also actively helps him in his job: "She often [writes] State papers under her father's dictation and [is] allowed to read all the books in his library"(*Nostromo*, 133). She is therefore a new woman, quite different from the traditional one. The narrator even emphasises her difference from ordinary women, "the other young ladies of Sulaco stood in awe of her character and accomplishments" (125). Antonia gradually gains power and at the close of the novel, we see her planning another revolution with her uncle, which is unprecedented for a woman of the time.

¹⁷ Unsigned review, *Daily Telegraph*, 9 Nov. 1904, 4.

¹⁸ Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo* (London: Penguin Books, 1904), 125.

In *The Secret Agent*, (1907) Winnie, the protagonist's actions are also revolutionary but different from Antonia's. In this novel, people seldom get any justice. This is so because London, the Centre of Empire, has become the city of lost illusions. It is the city of anarchists, spies, double agents, police informers as well as a city where women are relegated to the margins. While Winnie's actions are fundamental to the outcome of the novel, some critics however remarked that the larger theme of the novel, the role of the anarchists, obscures her central role. Alongside the critique of the anomalies in the operations of law and justice, Conrad uses instances of failed paternalism to illustrate the larger failings of society with regard to women. Winnie's father, abusive of his mentally-disadvantaged son, Stevie, beats him, forcing thus his daughter to stand up to his abuse by protecting her brother. The writer not only highlights the violence of Winnie's father, but also the continued violence in her marital home. Winnie is depicted as entrapped in the prison of a *mariage de convenance*. She conforms to Victorian social standards of female behaviour, that of a dutiful and submissive wife, devoted to her home and her husband's domestic comforts. In this male-dominated environment, what could a girl do? We are told that Winnie has made abstraction of all feelings and sacrificed her love for the butcher to marry Adolf Verloc and keep her family from poverty. But her husband considers her as an object. He loves her "as a wife should be loved that is maritally, with the regard one has for one's chief possession."¹⁹ In other words, she is hardly worth the piece of furniture she brought with her when she married him. After the blasting at Greenwich Observatory, which resulted in the blowing off of her young brother Stevie, whom she raised as if he were her own child, Winnie comes to realise that her husband extended as much recognition to her and Stevie as a man may give to an unloved animal (41). Unmoved by the tragedy of which he was the instigator, Mr Verloc sits before the table and eats his supper. Profoundly shocked by Stevie's demise and by her husband's selfish attitude,

¹⁹ Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., [1907] Ed., 1958), 179.

Winnie sees then that her life has been built on a lie. Her constant refusal to look beneath the surface of things and her lack of flair are responsible for her hardships. The vision of seven years of her life sacrificed for the security of her brother and mother comes to her mind. Her protection of Stevie is associated with tempestuous action: “She had to love him with a *militant* love [like a mother]. She *battled* for him[...] his loss had the bitterness of defeat with the anguish” (*The SA*, 215). In despair, Winnie stabs Verloc with a carving knife and runs away with Ossipon. The act of desertion depicts the woman’s yearning for emancipation and efforts at conquering a wider public space. It may thus be read as a woman’s brutal awakening, as a challenge of patriarchy, but also as another sign of Conrad’s change of attitude towards women pointing to the fact that women could extricate themselves from prescribed social roles. Female assertion reaches its peak when she abandons the dangerously greedy suitor, Ossipon. Unlike Achebe’s women who remain oppressed all through his fiction, their place is fully acknowledged in Conrad’s post 1910 fiction.

In his late work, Conrad investigated the gender relationships more fully, responding more specifically to the role of women in popular forms. He reversed the patterns of the formerly passive heroines, ‘liberating’ his female protagonists. In his later prose, Conrad’s female characters indeed emerge more triumphant while their male partners are deprived of their manliness as evidenced by ‘Freya of the Seven Isles,’ in *Twix Land and Sea* (1912). This story is about the daughter of a retired sea Captain who postponed her marriage to Jasper Allen until her twenty-first birthday. Such decision for a woman at that time was already unheard-of, as were her musical talents. The description of her musical performance is suggestive of an explosion: during rainstorms, she

would play fierce Wagner music [...] with thunderbolts
falling all around enough to make your hair stand on end
and Jasper would remain stock still on the veranda ...
[lamenting]: ... If I had been a man, I would have carried
her off, [but] she made me a child [...] I discovered that

I had no power over her.²⁰

These words offer a starting point for a critical re-evaluation of Conrad's female characters. This reversal of roles does not necessarily imply the emasculation of the heroine, rather a subversion of traditional expectations, and a questioning of assumptions about gender. But Conrad's attitude towards women is best expressed in *Chance*, published at the time of bitter public resentment at the women's franchise question.

In his study of *Chance*, (1913) Lawrence Davies concluded that the novel was in some ways a rewriting of *Heart of Darkness* and its "deadly patriarchs."²¹ But the orientation of the narrative around a woman's history, in this novel, constitutes an important development in Conrad's work. Famously designed to appeal to a female audience, *Chance* references topical issues like financial fraud and women's liberation. Throughout the novel, Conrad alludes to the plot developments and gender issues that have been at the heart of *The Secret Agent* and 'Freya of the Seven Isles.' The writer recasts his vision of the free woman liberated from the conventions of genre, if not entirely those of society. In this narrative, Flora de Barral, is just as her name implies, a flower of femininity. Conrad ascribes to his protagonist an omnipotent role. Captain Anthony like Jasper, is merely a pawn at a woman's whim and fancy. On board her husband's ship, Flora faced the hostility of the crew because of her crippling effect on the captain. The latter preoccupied with Flora forgot to issue orders. This nearly led to a collision between his ship, 'The Ferndale,' and another ship at sea. It is Flora herself who saves the ship from the catastrophe. Speaking of Anthony's behaviour towards Flora, the narrator confirms her impressive power: "Man has captured electricity [...] it lights him on his way; [...] very much like a woman" (327). Therefore the woman emerges as a light to man no longer as that "darkness" which had to be pacified in *Heart of Darkness*. *Chance* indeed

²⁰ Joseph Conrad, 'Freya of the Seven Isles,' in *Twix Land and Sea: Three Tales* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1912), 149-50, 236.

²¹ Laurence Davies, 'Conrad, *Chance*, and Women Readers,' in Andrew Michael Roberts, ed., *Conrad and Gender* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 80.

offers a challenging portrait of a woman and draws “attention to the disparity between what a woman is, or might choose to be, and the roles that have been prescribed for her,”²² as Susan Jones has noted. The reference to Sophia Antonovna, the governess, a middle-aged woman who “harboured a secret taste for patronising young men of a certain sort,” (70) could be read as an instance of the liberated femininity of the fin-de-siècle. In dating young men, she prioritises her own desires and this points to her estrangement from traditional conventions.

After *Chance*, Conrad attempted to create a woman with an autonomous identity in the person of Lena who achieves the ‘real’ victory of women in the novel that bears the same title (1915). Rita da Lastaola chooses an independent existence; Adèle de Monteverso is finally given voice: she directly tells a male audience the story of her failed marriage, but Conrad’s depiction of Lena is the most telling. When Heyst meets her outside Schomberg Hotel, she is depicted as “white and spectral”²³ dying of a double death, that of being relegated to the backstage and a *natural* death. Her voice is described as magical, a voice “suggesting infinite depths of wisdom and feeling” (209). It strikes Heyst with special force for he comes to see himself locked in old prejudices. He realises then that a woman, whatever her culture, is not only “feeling” but also “wisdom,” throwing away old stereotypes applied to women. Conrad suggests that Lena is a living and human being.

Interestingly if Conrad’s later works appealed to women, a certain nostalgia for the predominantly male-oriented texts was felt in intellectual circles. Thomas Moser for instance, attributed Conrad’s ‘decline’ to his change of attitude towards women.²⁴ With a note of regret, he asked: “Why did Conrad cease those explorations into moral failure, the masculine world that had enabled him to achieve artistic success” (102)? Achieving success for Moser thus, is to retain women prisoners in men’s world in order for them to live happily. F.R. Leavis expressed the same nostalgia as Moser’s and hoped for a return to the earlier type of

²² Susan Jones, *Conrad and Women* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1999), 102.

²³ Joseph Conrad, *Victory* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.[1915] , (The Wordsworth, Classics Edition, 1995), 86.

²⁴ Thomas Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), 50.

fiction, the fiction of the great tradition,²⁵ one in which women were inexistent or lived in the shadow of men. Leavis saw in Conrad's account of the mysterious woman, a failure to provide an "objective correlative," to use T.S Eliot's words. Such criticism may well account for the negative interpretation of women in Conrad's works.

And to cap it all, Dr. Meyer's psychoanalytic biography of 1967 attributed Conrad's decline to his nervous breakdown, which resulted in his loss of control over his misogyny.²⁶ Should we understand then that the Conradian love theme can only be explained in terms of the writer's mental condition? While new perspectives on the canon are now beginning to emerge they continue to advance the assumption that Conrad is a sexist, one of whom is Chinua Achebe's. But one has to refer to Conrad's most famous definition of art, in his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, (1897) as "a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe" (vii). We would argue that the Polish writer simply realised that women, though kept invisible, were also part of that "visible universe" and sought to do them justice in his later fiction. From a sexist thus, Conrad emerges as a strong advocate for women very much like William Butler Yeats.

11. 3. So Beautiful Altogether: The Female Image in W.B. Yeats's Poetry

In her essay on the depiction of women in contemporary Irish poetry, Patricia Coughlan argues that in Irish literature women are constantly "associated with that which is material," and that beneath the critique of political systems, Irish women are portrayed as either "icons of ideal domesticity" or "as passive creatures who exist for men's pleasure."²⁷ In her study of *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry*, (1993) Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, the first sustained feminist analysis of Yeats, re-situates his love poems in their cultural and historical context, and argues that the politics of sexuality are at the heart of his creative enterprise.

²⁵ F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (Harmondsworth: Chatto & Windus, 1962), 247-8.

²⁶ Bernard C. Meyer, *Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 62.

²⁷ Cited in Toni O'Brien Johnson & David Cairns, ed., *Gender in Irish Writings* (Philadelphia: Open UP, 1991), 90.

Taking as a basis these two women writers' views, we would like to demonstrate that if sexuality is at the heart of Yeats's poetical works, it serves a purpose.

When Yeats began his writing career in the 1880s, deep and resounding advances for the rights of women were being enacted. In 1870, the Married Women's Property Act was passed, finally giving married women some sense of relief in securing property. Irish women also began to acquire greater access to higher education. Between 1904 and 1914, the woman question became one of the major cultural issues of the time, one which was met nonetheless with great resistance by the male community. This 'fear' of woman sometimes caused violent reactions as Irish men pondered if their female compatriots would then, in the course of their emancipation, exact a terrible revenge upon their male oppressors. However unlike many men of the time, Yeats was sympathetic to women's liberation. In a letter to Lady Dorothy Wellesly, written on November 28, 1936, the poet said: "I can make a woman express herself as never before. I have looked out of her eyes, I have shared her desire."²⁸

Indeed although Yeats lived in an extremely oppressive and sexist time, and despite Patricia Coughlan's claims and Gayatri Spivak's affirmation that in him, "woman is objectified, dispersed, or occluded,"²⁹ his poetry does not always reflect this thought. The seeds of Yeats's woman struggle must have been planted in his youth by his father, a man who championed the rights of women. As Cullingford noted indeed: "Yeats loved, liked, collaborated with, and respected women most of the time. He encouraged their intellectual and creative work, assumed their professional competence, chose them as allies. His best friends were all women."³⁰ The political period of unrest of the times together with the strong feminist women with whom Yeats associated contributed to shaping his attitude to life. He believed that the masculine and feminine constituted the foundation on which all other types

²⁸ Allan Wade, ed., *Letters* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), 868.

²⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (N. York; London: Methuen, 1987), 19.

³⁰ Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9.

and forms of oppositions were created. Although those oppositions were both internal and external, the genders are ultimately interdependent and interactive and cannot survive without the other. Both are needed in order to create harmony and unity of being, a very much cherished phrase for the Irish poet. This philosophy has actually its roots in the Occult that Yeats spent many years practicing. As Cullingford affirmed, since the feminine symbol is central to Occult theory, Occult societies attracted many rebellious women who were given power where Orthodox religions denied them (48). Also because many followers of the Occult, like Yeats, embraced female strength, they were labeled ‘feminine.’ For women in general, and specifically for the women in Yeats’ life, Occultism offered a way of refuting the prescribed roles that society had determined for them. This upsetting of prescribed gender roles influenced Yeats in a profound and lasting way, a way that is played out in his poetry.

The images of women are the key to Yeats’s blending of his life, artistic theory, and poetic symbolism and helped to structure his poems in form and content. Through Occultism, Yeats recognised that women were needed to provoke male spirituality. He also found that beauty was quintessentially a female attribute, and would mould his female characters accordingly. Concurrently, beautiful women often presented as having strong power on men recur as icons in Yeats’ work. Lest the reader should view this notion of beauty in stereotypical terms, it is important to note that the very identity of the Irish has always been tied up with their conception of beauty, and their notion of beauty inextricably tied up with their concept of nationality. As a corollary, the “terrible beauty” (16) of the 1916 Easter Rising, which dramatically transformed the moral landscape of Ireland, was still on Yeats’s mind when he wrote his subsequent poems. Also the beauty of Yeats’s woman seems to be a compensation for the “terrible beauty” of Ireland herself and her long troubled history. This image of woman remained as Yeats became more involved in Irish nationalism through Maud Gonne

MacBride's influence,³¹ who according to Kiberd Declan, "epitomised [the] manly woman"³² involved in the national movement. Gonne was a strong advocate for girls and women and the feminist founder of *Inghinidhe na hEireann*, a woman's organisation which gathered all the girls who resented being excluded as women from national organisations. Born during an age when women were expected to let the rough-and-tumble world of politics to men, Maud rose above that prejudice to leave a deep imprint on Ireland's history and Yeats's heart. She became Ireland's Joan of Arc, and the poet's muse. She can be found spilling over into his words and into his works. Gonne moreover helped the poet found the National Literary Society of London in 1891, the same year she refused his first marriage proposal. Undaunted, Yeats would propose time and again in the future, but to no avail. His frustrated love for Maud Gonne prompted several poems.

In 'When You Are Old,' (1893) based on Ronsard's 'Quand Vous Serez Bien Vieille,' Sonnets Pour Hélène (1578), which maintains the Maud Gonne/Helen of Troy parallel that Yeats so often draws, Yeats reflected upon his unrequited love for a woman who was not ready for a serious relationship. Maud's beauty and extremely strong personality fascinated him. Not only was she sensual, seductive but also threatening like Kurtz's black mistress, she had

a stature so great that she seemed of a divine race [...]
 She looked as though she lived in an ancient civilisation,
 Where all superiorities whether of the mind or the body
 were part of a public ceremonial [...]³³

³¹ Her influence extended much further. She was well known among Irish nationalists. Returning to Ireland, Gonne co-founded the Transvaal Committee, which supported the Afrikaners in the Boer War, and on Easter Sunday 1900 she co-founded *Inghinidhe na hEireann* (Daughters of Erin), a revolutionary women's society. Later she would write many political and feminist articles for the monthly journal of the *Inghinidhe*, *Bean na hEireann*. For the rest of her life Gonne would continue to support the Republican cause and work for the Women's Prisoners Defense League, which mobilized again in defense of Republican prisoners in 1935. Her influence on Ireland and the world continued after her death through her son, Seán MacBride.

³² Kiberd Declan, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of The Modern Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995), 182.

³³ Quoted in Toomey Deirdre, ed., *Yeats and Women* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 62.

In celebrating Maud Gonne, Yeats identifies her with Ireland. Thus as in Poland and Africa, mother land is supreme and feminine. It should also be noted that life having been so barren under British rule, it was dangerous for Irish poets during that time to mention the name of Ireland in their poetry so they were compelled to retreat into poetic symbolism.³⁴ Irish poets wrote of Ireland as a maiden of extraordinary beauty. The power this feminine mask exerted over the minds of Irish poets and patriots down through the years can be seen in the intense anger they felt towards England. This explains their constant search for beauty. The portrayal of Ireland and Africa as feminine goes from being a marker of ineffectualness to a symbol of all that is good in the home identity: The British, Belgians and French used such a portrayal to emphasise Ireland's and Africa's subordinate status, but in nationalist ideologies, woman came to embody the culture, traditions and identity of the nation. Concurrently, whether based in the mythology or (more infrequently) as representatives of Irish peasantry, Yeats's female characters are often his moral centres, mothers and lovers of Ireland's men: that is, they are Ireland itself. As a representative of Irish womanhood, Maud is thus venerated for her strength of character and sacrificial love. Yeats is clearly enthusiastic about Maud's patriotic fervour, and celebrates her decision to give her life for Ireland. Amidst a male-oriented and dominated world, Yeats presents women taking up leadership positions. He defies the stereotype that women cannot be potential leaders and do not possess organisational capacity through his presentation of Maud Gonne.

Woman as emblem of Ireland is also a theme in 'To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time,' (1893). The poet uses a red rose to represent the mythological Ireland, beginning and ending the poem with: "Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!" Yeats invites the rose to come close to him as he sings the ancient songs of Ireland. Typically the rose symbolises a nationalist vision of Ireland as well as Maud and woman at large. The similarity is

³⁴ Cf. Mark, Storey, ed, *Poetry and Ireland since 1800: A Source Book* (London: Routledge, 1988), 54.

emphasised by the somewhat foreboding atmosphere of the first stanza, and the beginning of the second: “Come near, come near, come near - Ah, leave me still/ A little space for the rose-breath to fill” (lines 13, 14). The poet is calling for “a little space” for the rose (Ireland and the woman) to breathe. By using phrases and words such as “the bitter tide,”(3) “ruin untold,”(5) “thine own sadness”(6) and “grown old,” (6) Yeats refers not only to his unrequited love for Maud, but his words also refer to the bitter tide Irish women suffered from as a result of both colonialism and patriarchy.³⁵ Having gone through so many perils, Yeats finds that the “Eternal beauty,” (12) Ireland and the Irish woman, still wandering on their ways. The poet claims that this perfect vision can only be seen if it is not obscured by “man’s fate,” (12) a subtle reference perhaps to man’s tendency to oppress women. Yeats seems to allude to the universal dictum that man is born to dominate woman and that the latter is born to be dominated. This is where the main theme and concern of the poem is first properly stated. Yeats wants to be above the normal trappings of everyday life, those of patriarchy, and to transcend what is commonly referred to as ‘normal’ life and moves towards the glorification of the woman by helping her articulate her needs.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the figure of the Irish nation as a woman to be fought for called for a blunt response, a defiance from female Irish poets. The latter’s first great challenge was to contend with the various ways in which Woman and Mother Country have been conflated in Irish literary and political tradition. Since the rise of feminism in the 1960s, contemporary Irish women poets have indeed attempted to revise this ‘reductionist’ image of Ireland as woman, both to bear witness to real Irish women’s oppression and to criticise the long history of British colonialism which has limited Irish conceptions of gender and nationality. In her Donald Murphy-Prize-winning book, *Women Creating Women*, for instance, Patricia Haberstroh provides a succinct explanation of this issue. She writes: “The

³⁵ Marjorie Howes, *Yeats’s Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 78.

objection to the idea of nation is largely centered on the way in which poets from the romantic period onwards converted the Ireland of strong feminine images (warrior queens and saints) into two weak remembered images of the oppressed Ireland”³⁶ either as “the passive victim, Mother Ireland” who is “all-suffering [and] accepting,” or as the “idealistic Cathleen Ni Houlihan,” (22) the beautiful *femme fatale* who seduces men to die for her, that is, Ireland’s cause. As we may notice, Haberstroh’s reference to Cathleen Ni Houlihan is a direct attack on Yeats.

Critic Karen Steele for her part, tells us that one tactic Irish female poets have developed in order to refuse what she calls the “poisoned Chalice”³⁷ of gender representation they have been offered directly from Yeats onwards is to “reject the old images and to adopt a new subject matter that examines [...] *real* history and *real* women.”³⁸ But the whole point of Yeats’s poetic enterprise has been the *real* history of women, *real women* and those *old images* that debased them. Further evidence of the poet’s struggle, through his words, to help free woman from the bonds of oppression, is provided by the following four poems: ‘No Second Troy,’ (1910) ‘A Prayer for my Daughter,’ (1919) ‘Michael Robartes and the Dancer’ (1921) and ‘Crazy Jane’ (1933). Each poem deals directly with the woman question.

‘No Second Troy’ is a poem organised into four rhetorical questions in lines: five, ten, eleven and twelve. The opening statement could be interpreted as absolution for Maud Gonne, but also as Yeats’s acknowledgment of woman’s increasing social power: “Why should I blame her [...]?” the poet asks. She is simply seeking her own freedom. The second statement “[...] she would of late have taught to ignorant men most violent ways, /Or hurled the little streets upon the great,/Had they but courage equal to desire?”(lines 3-5) contains both praise

³⁶ Patricia Boyle Haberstroh, *Women Creating Women: Contemporary Irish Women Poets* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1996), 191.

³⁷ Karen Steele, ‘Refusing the Poisoned Chalice: The Sexual Politics of Rita Ann Higgins and Paula Meehan,’ in Catherine Wiley & Fiona R. Barnes, eds., *Homemaking: Women Writers and the Politics and Poetics of Home* (New York: Garland Press, 1996).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 316. Emphasis mine.

for woman and criticism of man. Woman, here, is taking up the role of chivalrous warrior. She does not remain silent like the stereotypical woman of her time, but defies her society and challenges traditional roles. Yeats's heroine rebels and transgresses the stereotypes of femininity: she is violent, courageous. Her beauty is a weapon, a "tightened bow" (8) rather than a lure. This new woman encroaches upon the affairs of men, creating enormous conflict in society, and Yeats pointedly closes the poem with these words: "Was there another Troy for her to burn?" (12) Yeats's heroine becomes Helen of Troy, the woman men fight for. Woman, here, is empowered, and sets herself free. Man feels threatened in his world because she dared get out of her so-called "beautiful world" (Conrad). This threat to man's world and reversal of roles are further discussed in 'Michael Robartes and the Dancer.'

A conflict between the 'He,' Michael Robartes, and 'She,' the Dancer, takes place in this poem. 'He' tries to convince 'She' that "Opinion is not worth a rush,/In this altar-piece the knight,/ [...] Loved the lady; and it's plain/ [...] Her lover thought, upon the glass/ And on the instant [she] would grow wise" (lines, 1,2,5,11,12). Resentful, 'She' reminds 'He' that a woman must be free to express her opinions, and is entitled to the same rights as man. The dancer infringes on Robartes's patriarchal attempt to restrict women's role, and challenges him: "May I not put myself to college?" (19). But Robartes relentlessly tries to convince her that true blessedness comes from perfecting the body and not from developing the mind: "What mere book can grant knowledge/With an impassioned gravity/Appropriate to that beating breast,/That vigorous thigh, that dreaming eye?" (21-4) Access to knowledge thus becomes the dividing line between men and women. But 'She' arrogantly responds to the male gaze with: "And must no beautiful woman be/Learned like a man?" (26-7) to which 'He' replies that man and "his sacred company/ Imagined bodies all their days" (29,30). But 'She' is prompt to answer: "I have heard say/There is great danger in the body" (40-1). Christian patriarchy has indeed informed her that the body is dangerous. And still trying to reduce her

worth down to her body, ‘He’ counters with a sacramental argument: “Did God in portioning wine and bread/Give man His thought or His mere body?” (42-3). But ‘She’ also knows that women are more than their bodies. They have a mind too, and must not sacrifice the development of their mind for the sake of men’s blessedness. But Robartes argues: “[...] all beautiful women may/Live in uncomposite blessedness,/And lead us [men] to the like - if they/Will banish every thought [...]”(lines 48-51) to which ‘She’ retorts “[but] they say such different things at school,”(55) in the final line of the poem. This final thought from the dancer undermines all of Robartes’s denigrating arguments in the poem. Yeats makes it clear that modern education has empowered women to question and challenge man’s oppression.

This questioning of male authority is also found in the series of seven poems,³⁹ entitled ‘Crazy Jane.’ The title refers to a fictional character whom Yeats based upon an actual woman named Cracked Jane whom he met in Sligo, a small village near Galway in Western Ireland. Crazy Jane becomes an important symbol in this collection of poems. The poet admires her audacious speech and thirst for life. In Crazy Jane, woman has the voice, and because she dares speak she is viewed as an outlaw, a ‘crazy’ person by her male counterparts. She speaks from her body. She speaks from desire and is defiant as Lynn Innes has noted.⁴⁰ She is a triumphantly liberated character who overtly affirms both her sexual experience and the flesh as having authority over the Bishop’s bias. Elizabeth Cullingford rightly observes:

Against the power of what he [Yeats] called the ‘ecclesiastical mind, Protestant and Catholic,’ he pitted an erotic and licentious female figure, the old madwoman, Crazy Jane, who disputes through her ballad poetics and carnivalesque insistence on the grotesque body the monologic identity constructed by a celibate clergy, and enshrined in law by the State.⁴¹

³⁹ I will use some of these poems where appropriate to my argument.

⁴⁰ Lynn Innes, *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1993), 97.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, op.Cit.227.

'Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop' is the climactic poem of the series, the affirmation of woman's wholeness. It is a female curse against patriarchal ecclesiastical hegemony. The ideological battle takes shape in a debate between a Bishop and Jane over the question of body and soul. The Bishop sees the kingdom of Heaven and the Earthly realm each as sovereign states. To the Bishop body and soul are distinct. To Crazy Jane however they are but one entity. It is at this point amidst the increasingly eroticised description of this presumably spiritual encounter that Yeats turns the image of the traditional dutifully submissive woman, rewriting female desire by divorcing woman from the spirituality she is traditionally expected to embody. Yeats chooses Jane as someone who defies the rules and mentality of church religion and who is not married. She represents the truth of the body and its desires as opposed to the dogma and puritanism of the Catholic Church as Yeats saw it.

Significantly, Yeats does not uphold the female purity epitomised in the Virgin Mary. The cult of the virgin sanctions not merely purity and motherhood as womanly ideals, but also submissiveness and passive suffering. It is precisely these womanly ideals of humility, obedience, and silent suffering that Yeats throws away by making his Jane a prostitute. And he does so not merely by discarding Catholicism, or Christianity in general for that matter, but by refashioning language and symbols to provide a new perspective. Sex and spirituality have become polar opposites in Christian teaching. By making of his protagonist a whore, Yeats also seems to reinforce the view that women whatever their social background are entitled to freedom. Perverted was what Jane desired to be and this woman was to pervert social and religious conventions. She chides the clergyman with puns in her reply: "Love has pitched his mansion in/The place of excrement;/For nothing can be sole or whole/ That has not been rent" (line 11-14). The key cultural determinant in this poem is the paralysing effect of the Irish Roman Catholic Church within the stagnant political situation and its effects on women. In 'Crazy Jane Reproved,' Jane becomes more defiant, arrogant: "I care not what the sailors

say,”(line 1) she says. This is Crazy Jane claiming her independence from the constraints of society and speaking with authority: “Bring me to the blasted oak,/That I, midnight upon the stroke,/[...] May call down curses on his head”(1,2,4). Yeats makes of Jane some sort of figurative witch to reinforce her power. When Jane situates herself under “the blasted oak,” the oak symbolising the state that Jane hates, in order to curse the Bishop, her occult power anticipates her later allusion to Macbeth’s witches: “Fair and Foul are near of kin,/And fair needs foul” (Lines7,8). While “fair and “foul” could be a reference to body and soul and by implication, in the first lines of the last stanza, to male and female sexuality and experience, “Fair” here may also be a reference to man and “foul” one to woman as seen through the eyes of patriarchy. However by making them kins and stating that “fair needs foul,” Yeats underlines the interdependence of male and female genders. Jane recalls to the Minister of God that in the sight of the Almighty, man and woman are complementary and stresses that both are needed in order to create unity of being as we mentioned earlier. The Bishop, a representative of society and culture arrayed against the marginal female figure relentlessly tries to move her back inside the traditional realm of womanhood: body and home. The ‘charitable’ priest claps an inquisitive eye upon Jane’s bosom and notes:“Those breasts are flat and fallen now,/Those veins must soon be dry;/Live in a heavenly mansion,/Not in some foul sty” (line 3-6). Yeats seems to be criticising the crudity of the bishop’s gaze. These lines raise further questions in the reader’s mind when one looks more closely at the scriptural overtones of the bishop’s language such as the biblical allusion to one’s “heavenly mansion,” (5) and the possible allusion to the parable of the Prodigal Son in “some foul sty”(6). The bishop represents an orthodox interpretation of life’s meaning, but his pharisaical judging of Jane suggests that it is he who as a man is essentially implicated. In effect, Yeats seems to ask the reader to look beyond the niceties of poetic diction to the brutal dichotomies: man/woman, religion/sex that are central to the controlled discussion between these two characters. These

dichotomies are most obvious in the use of puns in the last stanza, specifically the play on the words “sole” and “soul,” “hole” and “whole” (13). However, it was all for naught, submitting to the Bishop. Jane’s breasts may be “flat and fallen,” but her retort is an exuberant celebration of the fact that this same body remains for her the very means to fight man and reclaim herself. Repossession of the body indeed encourages the speaker to seek selfhood, and later to assert that selfhood through language, and Yeats’s poem perfectly illustrates this process, for here we find Jane going about the task of reinscribing female identity from the experience of the female body and feminine pleasure. In this poem, Jane is indeed beyond rational thought in the ‘chapel’ of unreason as ‘flames’ shoot from her mouth. Jane tells the Bishop that he “[could] scoff and lour/ And scold for an hour”(9) and still he does not impress her. In the second stanza of ‘Crazy Jane and the Day of Judgment,’ Jane further challenges the Bishop : “Naked I lay,/The grass my bed;/Naked and hidden away,/That black day[...]”(Lines 11-14). This indicates the woman’s determination to free herself from societal constraints, her desire for independence from man. Jane defends her body, her very identity. It is through her sexuality and through freeing herself from the “home” and all its trappings that true freedom for her can be found. Here is a point of convergence between Yeats’s and Djébar’s views. Djébar also insisted that true freedom for the woman rests on the liberation of her body. This poem therefore illustrates the desire of woman to reshape tradition by feeling her way, which dignifies, reveals, and revalues female experience in all of its complexity. In Jane, Yeats allies to Djébar in writing of a gloriously free and openly sexual woman defying the nature of traditional womanhood. The poet’s celebration of female transgression opens an imaginative space for women, including his kin, in a culture that occludes them.

In his 1919 poem, ‘A Prayer for my Daughter,’ Yeats ponders on his daughter’s future possibly “because of the great gloom that is in [his] mind,” (line, 8) the misogynistic streak of the time as highlighted in the opening statement: “Once more the storm is howling, and half

hid" (1). Yeats uses the image of his daughter in this poem to represent woman, but also his fears regarding what is in store for her as a woman. "May she be granted beauty," (17) he says, but not too much beauty. Yeats thinks that too much beauty causes men to destroy the gifts that are given by the "Horn of Plenty"(32). The poet shows how images and stereotypes can acquire a depressive power over people. Too much beauty makes man's eyes "distracted." (18) This may be "a sufficient end," (21) for him, man, to objectify her. This beauty is enough for man to assume his rights as a virile race and control woman. These lines clearly show the poet's position as a progressive male, an Irishman acutely conscious of women's repression and exclusion. This may have been enough to create an empathic man who struggled with the woman question both in his life and his poetry. The poet moreover, hopes to see his daughter become "a flourishing hidden tree"(41). Although one might interpret the word "hidden" as meaning out of the male space, but this word might well mean 'discreet,' a woman who is not too well-known but beautiful, yet not too beautiful to make man's heart suffer. Here, the poet has certainly Maud Gonne in mind, the beautiful woman who refused to become his companion for life. The poet also hopes that his daughter will lead a life "like a green laurel,"(47) happy in a house "where all is accustomed, ceremonious," (74) the very house that the creator assigned to woman, but one that has been turned upside down by man. Man, the poet concludes, should learn "at last that it is self-delighting,/Self-appeasing,...]" (67-8) to restore woman to her "dear perpetual place" (48) insisting that she is his partner not a sexual object as is made clear in his 1924 poem, 'Leda and the Swan.'

The story of Leda stems from Greek mythology. Leda is the Spartan king, Tyndareus's wife. The supreme ruler of the Greek gods, disguised as a swan coupled with her, which yielded her four eggs. Out of these hatched Castor and Polydeukes as well as Clytemnestra, but first and foremost the noted Helen of Troy. But Yeats takes a different view from classical Greek mythology. Rather than feeling such an intimate relationship with a god as an honour,

Yeats reads the event as a rape, that of Ireland by England, and that of woman by man.⁴² The text presents the rape scene, painting a vivid and terrifying picture of its aggressive violence and its subsequent transition to passivity: “A sudden blow: the great wings beating still/Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed/By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,/He holds her helpless breast upon his breast” (Lines 1-4). Starting the poem with this instance of violence, Yeats brings the reader immediately in on a moment of supreme horror. The combination of such words indicating powerful action as “sudden blow,” “beating,” “staggering,” “shudder,” “mastered,” (1- 13) with adjectives and descriptive words that indicate Leda’s (woman’s) helplessness such as “helpless, terrified, vague, loosening” (5,6) increase the sensory impact of the poem. This evocative language makes the poem all too powerful, and the compact nature of the lines of the poem, all written in iambic pentameter, along with their rhyming endings, further intensify the fever pitch of the moment and the ringing assonance of end words such as “still” and “bill”, “caressed” and “breast” all work to keep the reader riveted on what is occurring. The stanza captures the terror that Leda must feel as she is overwhelmed and virtually smothered by this living creature. Yeats gives the reader a graphic image of the rape, alluding not only to English power over Ireland, but also to the power of man over woman.⁴³ The swan (man) is described as “great wings,” “dark webs,” that “white rush,” “blood,” “indifferent beak,” and “feathered glory.” This implies a confrontation both real and imagined, moral and physical. It is worth noting that swans usually are not birds of violence, but birds of beauty and grace, and symbolise elegance and peacefulness. This might imply that Zeus chose this bird for his disguise in order to attract Leda. The swan is described as having just dropped down on Leda, yet the word “still” implies a timeless continuity, which can be read as a reference both to colonialism and patriarchy, both of which have dropped on Ireland, and on woman from time immemorial. But

⁴² For more details see Deirdre Toomey, ed, *Yeats and Women* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 43.

poetical representation is not the only genre that uncovers the stereotypical image of women as mothers, wives and marginalised beings, the short story also does. Joyce's collection of stories, *Dubliners*, is one such instance.

11. 4. The Gender Issue in James Joyce's *Dubliners*

Joyce acknowledges the marginalisation of women in terms of gender perhaps more strongly than Yeats. In a letter to Nora Barnacle, who was to become his wife, Joyce wrote:

My mother was slowly killed, [...] by my father's ill-treatment, by years of trouble and by my cynical frankness of conduct. When I looked at her face as she lay in the coffin, [...] I understood that I was looking on the face of a victim and [so] cursed the system which made her a victim.⁴⁴

And it is in his collection of short stories that Joyce presented his most comprehensive picture of the victimisation of women in Ireland. Before exploring the issue of gender in Joyce's work, it might be useful to construct a framework of recent observations about the relationship between the use of literary tropes and indications of gender. In *Reading Lacan*, Jane Gallop investigated the gender relationship of the two key tropes in contemporary critical theory, metaphor and metonymy. Following Roman Jakobson's⁴⁵ lead, Jacques Lacan correlated metonymy with realism and metaphor with poetry,⁴⁶ but Gallop assumed that metaphor and metonymy have gender implications as well. She wrote:

Metaphor is patent; metonymy is latent. The latency, the hiddenness of metonymy, like that of the female genitalia, lends it an appearance of naturalness or passivity so that realism [...] appears either as the lack of tropes, or as somehow mysterious, the "dark continent" [Freud's term for female sexuality] of rhetoric.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ James Joyce, *Letter II*, 48. Cited in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 128–9.

⁴⁵ Cf. Roman Jakobson, 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,' in *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), 55–82.

⁴⁶ Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, Trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 266.

⁴⁷ Jane Gallop, *Reading Lacan* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), 127.

Drawing on the work of the feminist psychoanalyst, Luce Irigaray, who associated the privileging of metaphor over metonymy in contemporary psychoanalytic theory with a “phallogentric neglect of femininity,”⁴⁸ Gallop concludes:

The most extreme and explicit form of metaphor’s privilege
In Lacan’s text inhabits its association with liberation, which
contrasts with metonymy’s link to servitude [...] [M]etonymy’s
ellipsis can be considered “oppressive” [...] Metaphor, on the
other hand, is “the crossing of the bar.” The word for “crossing”-
“franchissement”- has an older meaning of liberation from
slavery enfranchissement. The “bar” is an obstacle; metaphor
unblocks us.⁴⁹

In this way, Gallop has extended Irigaray’s discussion on the existing correlation between metaphor and the phallogentric on the one hand, and between metonymy and the feminine on the other to imply that liberation, movement, and activity are associated with the ‘masculine,’ while oppression, servitude, and passivity are connected with the ‘feminine.’

This groundwork offers a useful context for a discussion of Joyce’s collection of short stories as they waver between the metaphoric and the metonymic. Indeed, *Dubliners* could be read as an expression of the binary oppositions of symbolist poetry and realist prose, since the stories focus on both a scrupulous meanness in representing the details of everyday Dublin life and the transformative power of metaphor with which Joyce associated epiphany. However, what is of interest for us in this section is to reveal the clear gender correlations of these binary oppositions in Joyce’s collection of stories where the ‘feminine’ is consistently linked to the constrained, restrained, and repressed position of those in the bourgeois “room,” while the ‘masculine’ is connected with the impulse to travel, to organise desire as a quest for a variously defined possession or purpose.

While Joyce’s references to important Dublin milestones illustrate the prevalence of Ireland’s colonial past in the Irish experience, his tales possess another underlying theme, the

⁴⁸ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985).

⁴⁹ Jane Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, 128.

exploitation of women by Irish patriarchy, and the degradation of Irish manhood. The latter suggests that a major by-product of colonialism is the emasculation of the Irish male ego, and the deprivation of traditional male roles for many Irish men led them to sublimate their rage against women. Poverty and the subsequent effects on men's behaviour have had dire consequences on women in *Dubliners*. Women are often coerced into supporting on their meager incomes men who have chosen to view life through the bottom of a beer mug. They are exploited for the purpose of gaining money for a night of drinking. This insight is central to 'A Little Cloud' and 'Two Gallants.'

In 'A Little Cloud,' Ignatius Gallaher and little Chandler are united in the worship of the cheap and the spurious. The former keeps showing off and patronising little Chandler who wishes to vindicate himself and assert his manhood by "put[ting] his head in the sack" (78) like everyone else if he could find the right girl, which for Gallaher is no problem at all. As the latter points out, he could easily "have the woman and the cash"(79). Getting a woman for him is but a business. There are thousands of rich Germans and Jews, rotten with money who would only be too happy to marry him, he boasts, but there is no hurry. Why should he tie himself up to one woman when he can have plenty of them?

Similarly, in 'Two Gallants,' Joyce scolds men who use women as a pastime. Corley and Lenahan view women as sexual playthings. The writer presents these two characters as fortune seekers by indulging in a series of love affairs that end in a fiasco. Sexual conquests function as a game in which the male ego seeks self-affirmation from a successful score on night game. The most Corley and his friend Lenahan can hope for is to find "some good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready" (48). Corley whose name is associated with "racing tissues,"(48) recalls with sadistic pleasure how the "fine tart" (48) he spotted under Waterhouse's clock brought him cigars and paid for his tram tickets. He also relishes the easiness he has to deceive women: "She thinks I'm a bit of class, you know" (51). Upon their

second meeting, Corley, sure of knowing “the way to get around her,”(51) went away to Donnybrook with the girl under his friend’s admiring look. Lenehan’s attitude toward women however is not as self-arrogating as Corley’s. Corley and Lenehan’s debasing treatment of women and their subsequent corruption of the girl expands the issue beyond man’s betrayal of woman to a devaluation of Ireland itself. The unabashed stratagems to which they resort to get a gold coin from the girl’s employers reveals how these two characters operate outside the Anglo-Irish establishment’s social order, but their complicit role in degrading themselves, Irish womanhood, and their country brings to light another indirect outcome of colonial rule: Irish male chauvinism. It should be noted that on many an occasion, in his essays and fiction, Joyce has showed his intolerance of the extremes of chauvinism because he believes that chauvinism has often been the natural concomitant of a nationalistic consciousness. Certainly in ‘Two Gallants,’ we see female disempowerment by the two ungallant men, yet Joyce’s blunt depiction of the Irish male ego does not simply insinuate that Corley’s and Lenehan’s condescending attitude toward women is due to the abiding side-effects of colonialism. As the politically and culturally disenfranchised, these two men continue to bear the brunt of the colonial past, but their abuse of women is a covert act of complicity with the colonialist ideology that subjugates them. The victims thus become the victimisers. We might see their deception as a rather pathetic attempt to take revenge on the dominating Anglo-Irish establishment, but still there is the preservation of the gender *status quo* to confront. Joyce underlines the fact that these ironically called ‘gallants’ restore their fragile ego through the abnegation of the feminine ego. Corley’s and Lenehan’s contrivance illustrates how, as Irishmen, they evade their responsibilities by responding to the Anglo-Irish presence in their own particular manner that is by denying Irish women respect. But it seems that in so doing, they further demean themselves and buttress the Irish lout stereotype given currency to by colonial imperialists. Ultimately Joyce makes it clear that the

inferiority complex resulting from the failure of some Irishmen to construct a self-affirming response to colonial tyranny leads many of them to treat Irish women as a storehouse for their contained violence.

Apart from the obvious reduction of women to chattel, as in Djebbar's *L'Amour*, the female body is represented as the object of the male gaze. Trying to maintain a position of power over Corley's girlfriend, Lenehan "makes a swift anxious scrutiny of the young woman's appearance," (55) objectifying her with his gaze. The stare of the dominating male freezes her. But when he enters a bar, the roles are reversed. It is he who finds himself under the gaze: "The mechanic and the two-work girls examined him point by point before resuming their conversation in a subdued voice" (55). Lenehan is placed in the uncomfortable place of the feminine as he sees himself exposed and objectified in the eye of the Other, the woman. This is a harsh reversal of his expectations. Joyce strikes a terrible blow on these characters' ego. He seems to take revenge on both Lenehan's and Corley's demeaning treatment of woman.

'Counterparts' also suggest such an attitude. Farrington cannot achieve self-esteem until he has mastery over women. When walking in the streets, he "star[es] masterfully at the office girls." (92) Later in the pub, he gazes admiringly at an attractive woman with a London accent, who seemed to be returning the gaze. The oblique staring expression fascinates him. However, when the party is over, the beautiful woman leaves the pub without even looking back at him. Deeply hurt in his male ego, he starts to curse everybody and everything and in particular his lack of money, which he believes is one of the main reasons for his lack of success with women. Once again, Joyce shatters a man deep in his manhood, and so challenges patriarchy.

Joyce's criticism of patriarchy is even more biting in 'Eveline' and 'The boarding house.' The women in these tales also bear the stigma of a patriarchal society. Their dilemma seems to be between oppression and escape from it. Like most of the young Irish people, the

heroines strive to leave Ireland and be free, but they do not have enough will to do anything and in the end, both choose to continue their domestic roles.

‘Eveline’ for instance, considers the special meaning of home for women and reveals Joyce’s ambivalent attitude towards the social position of women. ‘Home’ is not a haven but the lifeless monotony of domestic routines. Eveline, the heroine, stands for the miserable life of the Irish woman. She is an even more tragic portrait of the loss of identity. In ‘Eveline,’ domesticity is clearly associated with details, with metonymy and synecdoche. Eveline has been ‘feminised’ by a concern for details, since she has become the keeper of the pitifully meager household funds. She is depicted as a young girl overburdened by responsibilities because of a deathbed promise made to her mother, that of “keep[ing] the home together as long as she could” (37). She has thus taken her dead mother’s place in every aspect: she does the chores, the shopping, the cooking and looks after the younger children. And she dutifully hands her wages to her father. Her life is not her own, and nowhere in the story does she have any audible voice. Her passivity is suggested right from the start of the story: “She sat at the window, watching the evening invade the avenue” (34). The evening, suggestive of sunset, metaphorically stands for torpor, fatigue that will bring people to their beds, but besides evoking the end of day, it is also suggestive of the end of the girl’s life. The girl’s struggle for money, the misery in her life wearies her tremendously. She feels like “a helpless animal” (39) ensnared in a cage. Frightened by the memory of her mother’s sacrifice of her own life, and bullied by a drunken and abusive father, she would like to escape, “Yes, she must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. [And] she wanted to live [...] She had a right to happiness,” (38) emphasises Joyce. In contrast to the stasis of her life at home where she is confined, Frank offers her the prospect of ‘travel.’

The metaphor of flight to another country requires special attention. Frank offers Eveline the possibilities of travel in a variety of modes. He takes her with him imaginatively by telling

her stories of his voyages. He tells her of his first voyage on “a ship of the Allan line going out to Canada,” (37) of his sailing through the “Straits of Magellan” and relates “stories of the terrible Patagonians” (37). These details, which he may offer as a legitimization of his authenticity as a wooer, are metonymies of her desire for his Frank-ness, for his being something more than the sailor of countless jokes with what Lily in ‘The Dead’ will call “palaver” (176). The narrative makes it clear that the possible trip with him to Buenos Aires, where he claims to have a house, is a metaphor for a new realm of experience that his love promises to open for Eveline. She would like to explore new horizons with him, but is it wise? When Frank asks her to come with him onto the ship to Buenos Aires and offers the possibility of a new life, she has no voice to refuse him directly. The poor girl weighs the consequences of her escape: “What would [people] say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow?” (35). The young woman knows from her own life and that of her mother that the only escape offered to her is an escape into marriage. Like the Algerian girl, she has been taught throughout her life that marriage is the great end. It is the very price a girl has to pay to gain some respectability and status in her society. But Eveline does not know Frank as a person, thus the escape he offers is but illusory. She also comes to realise that marriage can also mean hell for a woman. It is only a life “of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness,” (38) therefore it would be another form of imprisonment. The reader expects that her musings on her mother’s life would bring some sort of awareness that would lead her to take action against her oppression, but she does not. She prefers blindness to a direct confrontation with the standards of her culture. At the last moment, she decides to draw back and let Frank amid the Seas. The closing image of Eveline as immobilised, her hands frozen to the railing is significant. This scene reveals to the reader not a woman wailing for her lover, but one passively allowing the ship to sail with Frank yelling for her to jump aboard. Eveline’s paralysis seems to be part of a systematic lack of self-

identity due to the pressure of patriarchy. If metaphor, as Jane Gallop said, is “the crossing of the bar,” the liberation from the bonds of patriarchy, (128) Eveline has been lent a prospect of enfranchisement, the crossing of the bar, but she has evaded the opportunity of ‘travel’ and passes a life sentence on herself as a housekeeper, a servant of details, the servant of metonymy. But woman’s situation is rendered even more complex in ‘The Boarding House.’

This story also offers an example of Joyce’s subtle counterpointing of a woman who bears the stigma of femininity. Joyce depicts Mrs. Mooney as “a woman who was quite capable to keep things to herself: a determined woman” (59). Yet one can see her determination in another sense: her identity as a tough, shrewd businesswoman has been shaped by her history as a Dublin woman. She is contrasted to her husband, who after her father’s death, ran headlong in debts and so ruined his family. Against this backdrop of irresponsibility and physical assaults, Mrs. Mooney opts out of the dehumanising marriage. In the exclusively male world of butchering, Mrs. Mooney manages to hold her own. She opens a boarding house which she governs cunningly and firmly. All the resident young men call her ‘Madam.’ Joyce castigates Mr. Mooney through a series of humiliations and disempowers him, making him a pawn in his wife’s hands: “She [Mrs. Mooney] would give him neither money nor food nor house-room”(59) emphasises Joyce, content of his punishment. Since Mr. Mooney has proved incapable of functioning either as a butcher or as a husband/father, Mrs. Mooney must not only provide for herself and her children, but also fulfill a father’s responsibility, finding an eligible husband for a daughter. Mrs. Mooney has thus allowed her daughter Polly, a girl in her teens, to have the run of the clerks who comprise the resident population of the boarding house. But Bob Doran, one of the house’s guests, took advantage of the girl’s youth and inexperience. After the delirium of passion had passed, Bob could not make up his mind whether he liked Polly or despised her. One thing he was sure of was that he could not imagine himself married to this “vulgar girl” (64). But the imposing Mrs. Mooney and her

violent son, Jack, win over his doubts. As Doran leaves the enclosure of his room to walk down the stairs to the life sentence his prospective mother-in-law is about to hand down, he stops to wipe the moisture from his steamed-up eyeglasses, he dreams of escape to “another country where he would never hear again of his trouble [...]” (65). Like Eveline’s desire to travel to Buenos Aires with Frank, however, Doran’s impulse toward flight is rendered impossible by the implacable face of the powerful Madam. In preparation for her ‘interview’ with the man who has traduced the family’s honour, the ‘Madam’ is about to prove to him that not only as a clerk but also as a mother whose daughter has been wronged, she is *his* master. To match her ‘feminine’ concern for detail, Mrs. Mooney has mastered the ‘masculine’ decisiveness and initiative: “She deal[s] with moral problems as a cleaver deals with meat: and in this case she [has] made up her mind” (61). Why should a man go his ways as if nothing had happened, having had his moment of pleasure and the girl bear the brunt? (62) Mrs. Mooney asks herself. Bob Doran must atone for his sin. The end of the narrative focuses on Polly, after a hiatus marked by ellipsis points, as in ‘Eveline.’ After crying for a while, Polly refreshed her eyes with cold water and looked at herself in the looking-glass, then fixed her gaze upon the detail of the bed pillows with which she metonymically associates “secret amiable memories” (66) but her “hopes and visions of the future” (66) leave the present reality so far behind that “she no longer saw the white pillows on which her gaze was fixed or remembered that she was waiting for anything” (66). This gazing at the white pillows suggests a Lacanian “regard” reading the Other in her. What the detail reads is the essence of Polly’s ‘femininity’ in a traditional context, the vulnerability of a subject as confined and helpless as her counterpart Eveline. Also since the genuine power of this patriarchy is reserved by the English to the east, escape from the stigma of ‘femininity’ can be no more than fantasy for Irish people such as Eveline and Polly, or even for a Bob Doran. Like Eveline, Polly as the future Mrs. Doran faces a confinement to domesticity. This is the ‘bed’

that patriarchy has made for her and one on which sadly she will have to lie. Thus Eveline's and Polly's stories are replicas of the African woman struggling against patriarchy, male supremacy and social custom.

In 'A Painful Case,' Joyce goes a step further in his criticism of patriarchy. Emily Sinico appears as a female subject capable of active desire, outside of marriage. After her husband had dismissed her from "his gallery of pleasures," (108) she turned to Mr. Duffy. Mistaking his interest in her, she goes on revealing to him her own desire. Shocked by her inconvenient behaviour, he rejects her. Marriage for Roman Catholics and Protestants alike is a sacrament, so adultery is a mortal sin and betrayal of the wedding vows. Desperate, Emily commits suicide. Mr. Duffy then seems to realise that he is responsible for her death and questions himself: "Why had [I] withheld life from her? Why had [I] sentenced her for death" (114)? He sees "his moral nature falling to pieces" (114). This story reveals Joyce's harsh criticism of fixed gender roles. The story intimates that man appropriates the gaze. Why should it be indecent and unfeminine for a woman to return the gaze or show desire for a man? ponders Joyce.

In 'A Mother,' while portraying male control in looking at females' bodies, the story also reveals Mrs. Kearney severely punished by the male committee for daring refuse her daughter's services as a pianist at the concert organised by the *Eire Abu* society until she receives advance payment for the performance. The burden of Mrs. Kearney's gender grievance is the violation of her daughter's contract. The mother's fear that the committee would not honour her contract points precisely to women's historical need to resort to the law and to juridical devices to defend themselves against gender prejudice. Mrs. Kearney's endeavours to enforce a contract must also be set against the powerful political campaign by Victorian feminists to secure the legislative protection of the Married Women's Property Acts

of 1870 and 1885.⁵⁰ The fact that Mrs. Kearney was able to sign a contract at all was the result of a hard-won legal turning point in the Western history of women's rights. This fundamental civic right was only several decades old when Mrs. Kearney relied on it, only to find it transgressed and ineffectual to protect her interests or those of her daughter. Mrs. Kearney's final bitter complaints were not only about the money: "I'm asking for my rights" (*D*, 146) she tells the men, but also about Holohan's refusal to answer her questions and to admit her, as an equal, into the community whose practices forge the social modifications of conventions and contracts (*D*, 146). Both Mrs. Kearney's complaint against the concert management, and Mr. Holohan's final condemnation of her, are phrased specifically in gender terms. Mrs. Kearney's sole intention was to draw attention on her daughter, but instead this turned to "the most scandalous exhibition [...] ever witnessed"(145) by this male-dominated society. Mr. Holohan's rebukes her: "You must have some sense of decency [...] I thought you were a lady [...]" (*D*, 147), but she proved not to be 'decent' or a 'lady' to the males because she dared stand for her rights. Regarded in this light, we could surmise that at stake in this gendered disapproval of female activism is nothing less than the historical judgment of feminism itself. Joyce suggests that when a woman such as Mrs. Kearney mounts a successful attack against the existence of the committee, the Law of the Father is left with only one shaky leg to balance upon. Mrs. Kearney's behaviour came as a shock and "was condemned on all hands," (146) points out Joyce. In the eyes of O'Madden Burke and the concert committee, Mrs. Kearney's 'crime' is an act of cultural terrorism; her ultimatum, that she will not go on without her daughter's money, (*D*,146) is seen as a threat to ruin a collective cultural enterprise to which she had contractually committed her daughter's service. The male characters' reactions reveal the danger inherent in a woman who makes a scene. Women

⁵⁰ In her 1988 edition of John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988), vii, Susan Moller Okin explains the stakes of this legislation: In the 1860s, married Englishwomen had virtually no rights under the common law. Upon marriage they entered into a legal condition called 'coverture,' in which they could not own property (even the wages they earned if employed), make a contract or a will, nor sue or be sued.

become a threat to the very world of man, a threat already sensed by Conrad's Marlow. But Joyce is quick in disempowering Mrs. Kearney. The latter's powerful glare at Mr. Holohan when she tells him, "I'm not done with you yet" soon dissolves as he dismisses her with his cold reply "I'm done with you"(147). Warren Beck exults over Mrs. Kearney's defeat which he thinks "is to be fully approved of, especially for its kind of poetic justice in the ruination, by her own excesses, of the very ambitions she most sought to advance,"⁵¹ and Garry Leonard writes that "masculine order has been resoundingly reaffirmed by the conclusion of the story."⁵² Yet we would argue that Joyce's final image points to the difficulties encountered by Irish women to be totally freed from their traditional roles. Joseph Valente's brilliant reading of the story as the intersection of two forms of differend, the colonial and the sexual or gender, gives us the last word on the story. He wrote:

I want to focus here on a narrative ['A Mother'] wherein this sort of colonial differend, toward which Joyce himself bore the status of disenfranchised Other, intersects with another, the sexual or gender differend, regarding which he occupied a position of relative privilege.⁵³

In 'A Mother,' gender becomes Joyce's own filter for exploring the confounding of strength and weakness in the arena in which art, justice, and politics intersect.

Joyce threads the same line in 'Grace' in which woman's servitude and reproductive role are also emphasised. The true test of woman continues to be the marriage institution. The marriage paradox lies in the fact that it is both sublimating and subsuming. In this closed-in arena, every married woman has to fight out her survival as an individual. Joyce describes Mrs. Kernan, an active woman, who after only three weeks of marriage, starts to find a wife's life irksome. We are told that when life was becoming unbearable to her, she fell pregnant and

⁵¹ Warren Beck, *Joyce's Dubliners: Substance, Vision, and Art* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1969), 276.

⁵² Garry M. Leonard, *Reading Dubliners Again: A Lacanian Perspective* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 271.

⁵³ Joseph Valente, 'Joyce's Sexual Differend: An Example from *Dubliners*,' *James Joyce Quarterly* (Winter 1991), 28:2, 430.

then she was left with “few illusions,” (155) and that her husband became “a habit” (155). Joyce stresses that she believed steadily in “the Sacred Heart as the most generally useful of all Catholic devotions and approved of the sacraments, [but] her faith was bounded to the kitchen [...]”(155). This story reveals again the writer tirelessly fighting to extricate woman from the shackles and manacles of discrimination that entrap her, and finally he seems to have come to terms with these difficulties in his last story.

The people portrayed in ‘The Dead’ represent a wealthy Irish class in the early twentieth century, gathered at the house of the Morkan sisters for an annual tradition of feast and dance. Of particular interest is Gabriel Conroy, a respectable middle-aged Professor and writer whose passivity and resistance to change is like the “beeswax under the heavy chandelier” (184). Throughout the story, Gabriel is seen in a universe of women. Unlike Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, this story opens not with one aunt but two, Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia, who very much like Marlow’s aunt, worry about Gabriel. The quivery aunts act like martial sergeants: “Take them in,” orders Aunt Kate, and Mr. Brown, “a tall-wizen faced man with a stiff grizzled *moustach*” obeys (180, italics mine). Proud of himself, the latter adds, “I am the man for the ladies” (180). “Two gentlemen and two ladies,” (181) commands Aunt Kate. Joyce’s use of metaphors to describe Aunt Julia’s singing, as she “attacks” her song “with great spirit” (190) and the audience receiving it “with an irregular musketry of applause,” (190) reinforces the battle subtext, the power of women and the subsequent male vulnerability.

Gabriel’s weakness as a man and his moments of “pure and clownish lusts” (216) indeed strike the reader. His lack of self-esteem and courage ultimately result in his becoming a pawn in the hands of the people with whom he has the closest contact, which eventually stifle his own identity. Concurrently, he feels he is a “penny-boy for his aunts,” (216) the hostesses of the congregation, and a victim of his own inability to have any faith in his own talents as an orator, considering his speech “an utter failure,” (177) just as he doubts his worth in his own

marriage, with a wife who “had locked in her heart for so many years” (216) the image of a former lover, then dead. As a result of his fear to communicate his feelings of love to his wife, the gulf between them has widened. The couple has grown so distant that Gabriel feels that “he and she [have] never lived together as man and wife” (219).

Furthermore, all of Gabriel’s speech is addressed to women and is formed by the ideological positioning of male versus female in turn-of-the-century Dublin’s bourgeois circles. The encounters with the women are crucial because Lily, Molly and Gretta refuse the conventional role he wishes to thrust upon them. Unlike the slavey in ‘Two Gallants,’ Lily, the housemaid, has a voice. She responds to Gabriel’s patronising question about her marriage prospects with the disconcerting retort: “The man that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you” (176). Gabriel also loses his composure when Miss Molly Ivors criticises him for visiting the Continent instead of trying to learn more about his own country. Miss Ivors, a Professor of politics and Gabriel’s academic peer, differs from the rest of the characters because she depends on no one. Joyce endows her with an intelligence and an openness of mind that are not attributed to any of the characters in ‘A Mother’ for instance. She has a free life of her own, not encumbered by obligations or sadness (195) like Gretta.

Gabriel’s image of his wife reinforces the reader’s understanding of her as an object created for man’s pleasure. Objectified by her husband’s gaze, Gabriel’s wife seems to be a fine acquisition: “his admiring and happy eyes [...] wander [...] from her dress to her face and hair” (180). Not only does he want to possess Gretta’s body, but “he [also] long[s] to be master of her strange mood. He long[s] to overmaster her,” (214) underlines Joyce. Like a victorious conqueror, Gabriel believes that “now that she had fallen to him so easily he wondered why he was so diffident” (215). However at the moment the protagonist feels sure that “she was *his*,” (215) Joyce strikes the direst blow on his ego. Absorbed in her past memories triggered off by ‘The Lass of Aughrim,’ a song she heard at the party, Gretta seems

completely transposed into an other world. She confesses that Michael Furey, a boy of the gasworks, used to sing that song to her and that she loved him intensely: "Such eyes as he had: big, dark eyes! And such an expression in them [...] It was great with him at that time [...] He was delicate [and...] he died for me" (216-7). It was more than Gabriel's ego could bear. How could she think of a man of the gasworks when he, her husband, a learned man, is showing her so much desire? At the end of this section, giving up Gretta to her memories, Gabriel lets her hand "fall gently" and "retreats quietly to the window" (218). He then realizes that he had lost his battle against the dead. The view of the snow covering the houses and all of Ireland seems to cover his heart as well. It is freezing, hardening as it is. His own identity as a domineering male starts to fade out. At that moment, roles seem to be completely reversed, the living, Gabriel, becomes dead while the dead, Michael Furey, resuscitates and challenges him. Gabriel, the angel of annunciation, feels alienated from his lady and from the rest of the world. He feels part of a "wayward and flickering existence," (220) akin to the dead souls. Finally with "the dull fires" of his lust glowing "angrily in his veins" (215) he falls asleep, in harmony with the snow which is "falling faintly" dragging him into the descent (220). Joyce's anticipated allusion to Milton that "the great ones whose fame the world will not willingly let die," (203) could be pointing to the struggle of men, "the great ones," to keep control over women. Men, whose 'fame' for oppression is well known by women all over the world, certainly "will not willingly let to die" their reputation. As Gabriel falls silent, Freddy Malins, "acting as soldier," (206) the Man, attacks with his fork on high. The reader cannot fail to perceive the comic reduction of the status of man. The reference to the attack with the fork, a utensil used to keep meat in place, stands as a metaphor for man's loss of control over women. Quite appropriately, in the last section of the story, the multiple references to brownness seem to complete the picture of decay. The juxtaposition of "brown" with "gas" also reinforces the idea of change in the role of women. An explosion is taking place. In this

sense, the title symbolically refers to the death of the passive woman, the subject, and at the same time to the death of the domineering male.

The stories analysed above are thus redolent of violent tensions generated by the marginalisation of women. We have seen Joyce each time sounding his strong resentment at patriarchy and taking revenge on his male characters for the denigration of women and in particular that his mother suffered at the hands of his father. In the persona of Gretta, he has created a new woman, one who dares challenge the authority of her society by rejecting the masculine claim on desire. Joyce's woman thus emerges as triumphant as Conrad's and Yeats's.

This chapter has attempted to add another dimension to the looming question of stereotyping in literature through a gender lens. The exploration of male First World and Third World views of women has revealed that women constitute a major subculture within every culture. All females who claim respectability are expected to be submissive. Their conduct as well as their language have been restricted. They have had to conform to an externally imposed code. The price for such 'virtue' is living death and complete aloofness. The imperialist and patriarchal ideologies that have colluded to silence and subjugate women are reflected in Achebe's, Yeats's, Joyce's and Conrad's works but the place these writers attribute to women differs. The dichotomy of public/private certainly underscores the Ibo patriarchal victimisation of women. Achebe's supposed progressive vision of woman remains a regressive one. The author merely laments the death of his culture and strives to counter the negative and stereotypical view of traditional Ibo culture with the stereotypical view of the Ibo woman. His female characters are projected typically in traditional and pastoral roles: woman's honour and dignity often consist in her strict adherence to idealised norms of wifedom and motherhood. Her obligations indeed range further to cooking the family meals, honouring her husband's bed and at other times battling

to overcome infertility and the abuses in the absence of fecundity. These aspects were in vogue in the earlier novels of African male writers. They wrote at a time of nationalist ferment and were caught up in the miasma of recapturing Africa's glorious past that was dented by colonialism. Their chauvinistic approach was punctuated by the challenges of the period which necessitated the heralding of the masculine traditions. Such excessive emphases on virility, sex-role stereotyping, gender discrimination, and violence have created an imbalance, a resultant denigration of the female principle. This painful drama of hostility and submission, of command and obedience, of belonging and estrangement has been vehemently criticised by James Joyce. The various depictions and manipulations of females and feminine traits in *Dubliners* has shown that Irish and African women have much to say to each other. Unlike Achebe however, Joyce inscribes woman into the political space, thus redeems her from the position of perpetual victim, and so did Conrad. Indeed the apparent imbalance in the literary sphere which hitherto was male-centred has been given a critical re-think. There is compelling evidence that the female gender is given an extended treatment that takes into cognizance their multifaceted roles in contemporary societies. With the onset of the feminist movement and the attempts to re-constitute the distorted image of the female gender, Conrad like most male writers, revisited his earlier approach by presenting women in an all-rounded perspective. The Conradian texts studied above demonstrated the writer's struggle between accepting the traditional role of woman and that of helping to usher in a new and progressive vision of womanhood. Yeats took this tendency a step further. The poet filled the gender gap between male and female characterisation in Achebe's work and showed the other side of the coin. His work signals a long-awaited departure from the stereotypical female portraiture in male-authored literature. The subservient woman has been replaced by a rounded and assertive human being fighting for, claiming her own space. The poet radically departs from

the script of the traditional Irish woman in the peripheral role of the passive victim of a masculine-based cultural universe.

For the last word on this chapter, we would like to quote Achebe, who on behalf of all the men of the globe, offered an apology to women for men's degrading stereotypes of women. In an interview with Anna Rutherford, after the publication of *The Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe declared:

We [men] have been ambivalent, we have been deceitful even about the role of the woman [...] We have said all kinds of grandiloquent things about womanhood, but in our practical life, the place of the woman has not been adequate [...] We are] aware of [our] limitations [...] We are] aware that radical new thinking is required [...] We have created all sorts of myths to support the suppression of women [...] The time has come to put an end to that [...] The woman herself will be in the forefront in designing what her new role is going to be with the humble co-operation of men.⁵⁴

Co-operation is indeed a prerequisite in any relationship. Developing relationships with people you meet, communicating efficiently, understanding others however, remains a very complex task because of the perception one has of the other, as demonstrated throughout this thesis.

⁵⁴ Anna Rutherford, 'Interview with Chinua Achebe,' *Kunapipi* (1987) 9.2, 1-7.

CONCLUSION

It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly, [...] meaning reveals its depth once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue which surmounts the closedness and onesidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures.

Michail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin:University of Texas P., 1986), 7.

This research work has proved that contrary to Bakhtin's assumptions, it is in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture did *not* fully reveal itself because to many people 'foreign' has become a synonym of 'inferior.' If interculturality underscores the 'inter' space shared by two cultures in contact, it should have been a space in which neither culture dictates how that space is to be shared. Unfortunately, it did not promote the symbiosis of cultures, the coming together of difference. This type of intercultural interface is monological. Instead of meaning 'negotiation,' and 'osmosis,' the term 'interculturality' has come to mean 'conflict,' because of stereotypes and prejudices. As such it has more often been marked by an asymmetry of power. This 'us' and 'them' relationship is usually one based on the Self/Other dichotomy ie. oppressor/oppressed, or 'civilised'/'uncivilised.' At this juncture if civilisation were to be re-defined, it could be characterised as the ability to define through the power of conquest, control of knowledge, and the legalisation of injustices. Europe's claim to civilisation has indeed been based upon its destruction of another nation's civilisation.

Civilisation by European criteria has to be understood in a different way from that it has traditionally applied: it is neither the material condition of life nor the content of development, but the power derived from the results of violent conquest to enforce definitions and human

stratification: high/low, civilised/savage, and so forth. These terms served no purpose in defining the cultural successes of societies or peoples, but merely to illustrate that development could be created through violence, death and suffering, and in this field, the colonisers had no peer.

Colonialism was a lucrative commercial enterprise for the Western nations through the exploitation of others. It not only helped revive old resentments against other races, but also ruined any chance for cross-cultural interaction and communication. The establishment of formal British, Belgian and French administrations and implantation of settlements meant utter transformation of both the physical and cultural landscapes of Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria. The study of these colonial models revealed that there were many more similarities in the organisation and administration of their colonies than often assumed. It has often been claimed that Britain favoured indirect rule and the safeguarding of cultural and social differences among the natives in order to govern efficiently, whereas France and Belgium used direct rule, championing assimilation of their subjects in order to bring them French language and culture. This dichotomy is not always valid. Belgian rule in the Congo and French rule in the old colonies such as Algeria, Guyane, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Senegal and Réunion did involve heavy elements of assimilationism, especially from the mid-nineteenth century onward when citizenship rights were extended to all inhabitants with the notable exception of Muslims in Algeria. The British, too, tallied to the model of indirect rule in much of Africa, following Governor-General of Nigeria, Lord Lugard's notion that it was a system that met the need to rule vast areas with millions of subjects from diverse races with the least possible expenditure and a minimum of British staff. However, it is not difficult to find examples of British policies that resembled direct rule, or of French approaches that reflected indirect rule. For instance, one could observe important features of direct rule in British colonial administrations in India, Ceylon, Burma, South Africa, parts of West Africa

including Sierra Leone and Gambia, and in the West Indies, echoing the philosophy of direct rule more typically associated with French colonisation. Conversely, there was a move in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries away from policies of assimilation and direct rule in France's colonies. By 1892, colonial policy objectives in Algeria that were geared towards subordinating the administration to Parisian ministries were abandoned in favour of a combination of parliamentary representation and local autonomy. The most popular idea among French governors and colonial officers was the idea that French rule could be set up more smoothly if they tried to win the co-operation of the native inhabitants, applying thus "civilising pressures slowly and 'indirectly.'" ¹

Moreover, in many ways the British, and the Belgians shared the notion of a civilising mission with the French. In their endeavours to civilise the natives, these colonisers however created for them a state of perpetual Otherness. They de-structured then re-structured the colonised man and in the process depersonalised him. To achieve their goals, these Western rulers followed two lines: on the one hand, they encouraged an English, or French and Christianised education; on the other hand, they pursued a systematic denigration of Irish, Nigerian, Congolese and Algerian cultures, stamping out the natives' mind. Crucial to the domination of the mental universe of these colonised people was also the domination of their languages. During the colonial period, the language policy put in place by the British, Belgians and French tended to promote the languages of the colonisers to the detriment of the indigenous languages because the latter were key obstacles to successful colonial rule. These colonisers did not feel they had accomplished their duties until they brought their subjects to accept without question the very assumptions of their cultural inferiority, a tool used by the colonisers to justify their presence as Frantz Fanon put it in *The Wretched of the Earth* (43).

¹ Von Albertini cited by Gifford Prosser & Louis William Roger, ed., *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 62.

The anxiety, frustration and hostility produced by acculturation tended to create two general types of personalities. First of all the ‘malcontents,’ generally highly educated and professional, who clung to their traditional world and attempted to escape the unabated climate of denigration set up by the super-elite group, the colonisers. Out of this group came the Irish, Nigerian, Congolese and Algerian nationalist leaders who waged a relentless crusade against colonial rule. But the ‘conformists’ were by far the most predominant type of personality. They sought to protect themselves by modelling themselves after the colonisers, slavishly aping their external traits, or in Fanon’s words, wearing a white mask. The Irish, Nigerian, Congolese and Algerian natives indeed adopted Western ways of life, and imitated the cultural behaviour of the colonisers in order to escape their characterisation as Others. This ‘whiteness’ process or mimicry, in Fanon’s and Bhabha’s words, was accelerated by education, the military power of the colonisers, and the general discredit of Irish and African traditional beliefs and customs. To reinforce this conformist behaviour, the colonial government took drastic measures to ensure that the educational system served this purpose.

The tool used by the Belgian, British and French colonisers to enslave the elite was found in the mission schools which gave the indigenous elite a Western orientation. Students were taught French or British history, the French constitution or the British parliamentary system, the geography of France, or that of the British Isles and British or French literature while the missionaries devoted themselves to teaching people to read so that they could absorb the lessons of the Bible. To conformist students nonetheless, education offered a new vista of the world, a passport to white-collar employment, prestige, and the status that had been denied to them, hence a way to gain ‘acceptance’ or ‘equality.’ Gradually an educated class began to emerge quite distinct from the populace. Fanon described this colonising vision of the colonial space as a “mise-en-sac”² of the colonised social panorama, a vision which enabled

² Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 43.

the coloniser to empty the colonised's cultural landscapes of their values, to erase the physical presence of the colonised.

Colonial conquest however, as has been demonstrated throughout this research work, was not just the outcome of superior weapons, political power or economic wealth, but it was made possible, then sustained and reinforced by colonial texts. Colonialist discourse as disseminated in many European modes of thought and 'knowledge' about the Other, functioned within intricate, violent structures and acts of domination, whose psychological effects, the negative aspects of the so-called hybridity left scars and is still felt by today's former colonised countries. The phenomenon of the Other in the context of British, Belgian and French colonialism was rooted in the perception of racial difference. Differences between cultures, genders, classes and races have been reduced to fixed biological differences. There was a unifying theme that ran through most of the judgments made about Ireland and Africa and that theme had a distinctly ethnic and racial character. Stated simply, this consensus amounted to an assumption or rather a conviction that the native Irish and Africans were alien in race and inferior in culture to the Anglo-saxons, the Belgians or the French. More to the point however, this idea about the existence of a profound gulf between English and Irish/Nigerian, Belgian and Congolese, French and Algerian characters and cultures derived a good deal of force from theories about race based on pure fancy or malice aforethought. Words like 'stereotype' and 'image' became key words bandied about by social historians and social scientists to explain human behaviour. For the ethnocentrist, all groups other than his own tend to become out-groups which are by definition inferior, subordinate and unworthy of consideration. Scholarly works bristled with such epithets as 'primitive' and 'backward,' and were fraught with references to the Irish and Africans' deficiency in intellectual power, which of course rendered them unfit for self-rule. Cultural forms in traditional societies had therefore been reconstructed and transformed by and through this 'knowledge.' This lack of

knowledge about the native culture together with pseudo-scientific allegations helped strengthen the white man's belief of superiority. To many Social Darwinians at the turn of the nineteenth century, the image of the strong races spreading across the earth seemed like a law of Nature. This so-called cultural superiority served as evidence for the imperialists to promote themselves as the saviours of a world weighed down by an inferior civilisation, and to legitimise the takeover of the so-called primitive peoples on the ground that advanced societies like theirs should have first claim on the global environment. This gave them the right to trespass the laws of humanity and morality, the right of genocide as shown through the peculiar experiences of Ireland, Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria. Relegated outside history, culture and civilisation, the colonised lived in a 'mummified' society and existed only as an adjunct aspect of the colonial wilderness. In this desertification of the colonial space, the colonised was never an involved subject but a silent Other.

As a result, postcolonial cultures became inevitably hybridised involving a dialectical relationship with the colonising culture and the desire to re-create a native identity. The twentieth century was indeed the century of colonial demise, and of decolonisation for millions of people once subjected to colonial rule. This led to the growth of various forms of "writing-back" (Bill Ashcroft et al.) that is a revision of the 'reality' that had been desecrated by the colonial encounter. This became the focus of the vast field of postcolonialism and postcolonial theory.

There emerged, in the 1950s, important works which attempted to record the psychological damage suffered by the colonised peoples who internalised colonial discourses. Prominent among these was Frantz Fanon's. The Martiniquan wrote extensively and passionately about the damages colonialism caused to native peoples. The force of his writings lay in their arresting insights into the disquieting life of colonial society. Having borne witness to the unspeakable suffering inflicted by the French Army to the Algerians, he came to believe that

revolution contained the seeds of redemption, not only for Algeria but also for the entire colonial world. He explained that the Negro remained Other to all the qualities against which the colonisers derived their sense of superiority. His 1952 book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, offers a penetrating analysis of racism. Racism according to him, impaired psychological health, blinded the black man to his subjection and alienated his consciousness. One good example Fanon provided to support his thesis was the use of the oppressor's language. Speaking the language of the coloniser meant that one was compelled to accept the widespread view that blackness is evil. In an attempt to escape this association of blackness with evil, the black man was forced to put on a white mask ie. to assume another identity. To overcome the binary system in which black is evil and white is good, Fanon argues that an entirely new world must come into being. This desire to be free of the past requires "absolute violence" (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 37). Violence purifies. And true revolution in Africa, according to Fanon, can only come from the peasants, or *fellaheen*. His emphasis on African peasantry highlights his disgust with the greed of the bourgeoisie in new African nations.

Like Fanon, Edward Said explored the extent to which colonialism created a way of seeing the world by looking in particular at representations of Egypt and the Middle East in a variety of texts. The Palestinian critic's influential analysis of the emergence in European thought of the concept of Orientalism provided a model for considering how peoples and cultures could be coerced. Said applied Foucault's conjunction of knowledge and power to an analysis of European imperialist control of the world during its phase of colonial expansionism. He argued that colonialism created hierarchical relations in which the coloniser was always and inescapably the Self to the marginalised Other or the colonised. Fanon's and Said's works influenced a new generation of literary critics keen to apply their ideas to the reading of literary texts. This issue was pursued in different ways in the 1980s by two leading and most controversial theorists, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Charavorty Spivak.

Like Said and Fanon, Bhabha believes that colonial discourse is fraught with stereotypes of savagery. The Indian-American critic's major contribution to postcolonial theory are his concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and intercultural space where a hybrid identity is formed in an in-between space. In developing his theory of colonial mimicry, Bhabha owes much to Fanon's work. It is through the figure of mimicry that colonial discourse exercises its hegemony. On the one hand, the colonised subject, or the Oriental in Said's jargon, is an alien kept at bay by the coloniser; yet on the other hand, the Western man attempts to domesticate him and abolish this alterity by 'civilising' him, making him "knowable and visible,"³ thus reducing the distance between him and the colonised subject. This ambivalent position of the colonised subject never secures him into place.

Gayatri Spivak's main focus was also the uncertain place occupied by the colonised subject. But if postcolonialism is involved in the necessity of decolonising the mind, to use Ngũgĩ's famous phrase, the feminist critiques of postcolonialism demanded that we consider *who* undertakes this task, *whose* interests decolonisation serves, and more importantly *who* the main beneficiaries are. Spivak explored the question of whether or not it was possible to recover the voices of those who had been made subjects of colonial representations, in particular women. Her theory takes its cue from Edward Said's, but her texts also exemplify Bhabha's notion of hybridity. However unlike Bhabha who argued that a native voice could be recovered, Spivak asserts that caught between the twin discourses of imperialism and patriarchy, there is no space from which the subaltern could speak.

The project undertaken by postcolonial male and female critics and writers was thus to give voice to the subaltern who had been written out of historical accounts. This vision also governed William Butler Yeats's poetry, James Joyce's *Dubliners*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of*

³ Homi K., Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,' in *The Location of Culture: Discussing Post-Colonial Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996), 70-71.

Darkness, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*.

These narratives, as Ernest Emenyonu put it, are

classic stud[ies] of cross-cultural misunderstanding and the consequences to the rest of humanity, when a belligerent culture or civilization, out of sheer arrogance and ethno-centrism, takes it upon itself to invade another culture, another civilization.⁴

As members of societies victimised by systemic and long-standing imperial violence and colonial domination, these writers emerged with the same faith: the faith in man's freedom, the faith in man's right to life, both of which had been taken away by colonialism. These authors exposed the moral bankruptcy of imperialism, and opened the reader's eyes to the horror of an imperial mission whose Christianity and civilising mission were just a cloak for the political intrigues of ambitious men and for the extermination of alien populations. Speaking in the voice of the oppressed, in the language of the oppressor as a weapon to make cultural difference visible, these writers analysed the problem of identity crisis, displacement, disintegration and the effects of colonialism on the culture and psyche of the colonised subject, and offered possibilities of dismantling polarized constructions of alterity. In doing so, they sought to rescue the native Irish, Nigerian, Congolese and Algerian from the discourse of the Western world which fixed them in what Said termed "a comprehensive vision."⁵ By disrupting the hegemony of colonial discourse, these writers showed that cultural differences nurtured potential conflict and that the perception of colonised countries such as Ireland, the Congo, Nigeria, and Algeria as the inferior Other was not a biological fact as the racist scientists attempted to demonstrate, but a purely ideological fact and a pretext to exclude these so-called inferior peoples. It is worth noting that Ireland's peculiar position as

⁴ Ernest Emenyonu, *Literature and society: Selected Essays on African Literature* (Nigeria: Zim Pan African Publishers, 1986), 84.

⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 56.

both 'white' and 'native' threw into disarray some of the categories of colonial discourse. The otherness of the Irish experience was all the more disconcerting precisely because it did not lend itself to racial divisions. This lack of clear racial markers led some commentators to conclude that the everlasting quarrel between Ireland and England had no rational basis.

Despite their differing conceptions of Irishness, both William Butler Yeats and James Joyce repudiated things English and helped to defend their history as well as regain pride in their race. The Other in these writers is presented not in terms of colour but conceived in relation to city/countyside, past/present, and Protestant/Catholic. The urban elite, in a veritable Manichean delirium, as Bhabha would put it, sought to efface all traces of their shared identity with the poor, malnourished, badly housed, hence Yeats's idealisation of the peasantry. The invocation of landscape and Celtic mythology was not only a way for the Irish poet to lay claim to the land and assert the existence of a distinctively Irish culture, but also an appeal to his fellow Irishmen to participate in the creation of the new nation. Yeats indeed brought about the formation of a collective identity among Irish people. He articulated a principle of toleration, liberty, and the protection of religious and political rights that would make possible the unification of a diverse and culturally heterogeneous Irish peoples.

While Yeats looked to the past to inspire the Irish to political struggle, Joyce was less inclined to be nostalgic because he believed that the past denied the writer the more urgent task of projecting society in the future. Joyce thus began with the present and looked toward the future. He started with the Parnell crisis and like his father attributed the malaise of Ireland both to English oppression and to Irish self-betrayal, especially their betrayal by the Catholic Church. Because Joyce did not look to the past and wrote about contemporary subjects, the postcoloniality of his work evaded some critics. Yet we saw that Joyce asked many of the questions that came to the fore in postcolonial nations, questions such as those relating to culture and nation and its survival. His literary strategies responded to the

dilemmas of national culture that resonated in some postcolonial theorists' works such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. But Joyce's strategies of hybridisation unlike Yeats's were not restricted to native Irish culture but mixed with elements coming from the world over, in particular from Continental traditions. Thus the real debate of the revivalist generation was whether the literature it created should be national or cosmopolitan. The controversy established Yeats as the upholder of nationalism and Joyce as the defender of cosmopolitanism. The cultural nationalism of the late nineteenth century emphasised national distinctiveness and, in the minds of many, to be truly Irish was to be Gaelic and Catholic. This narrow and more exclusive definition of Irishness brought the term 'Anglo-Irish' into common currency. This phrase was used to indicate that one section of the people was less truly Irish than another. Nationalism as preached by Yeats thus called for a decontamination. The Irish essence was to be restored to its pristine purity, and the Gaelic League founded by Eoin MacNeill and chaired by Douglas Hyde in 1893, pointed towards such restoration. It brought a new and powerful element to nationalism: the preservation and revival of Irish as a living language and a conscious promotion of the Gaelic past in all its cultural aspects. Fired by Hyde's example, that of founding Irish pride on something lasting than mere hatred of England, Yeats hoped for a life where all Irishmen could share: Protestants and Catholics alike. His agenda therefore was to liberate and unite Irish people through the use of literature. Art, spiritually based on his gyre system from ancient Ireland, became a religion for Yeats.

The question of using art in the service of politics was another major difference between Joyce and Yeats. The relationship between literature and politics was not for Joyce mediated through a movement, or a party. Yet despite their different views of the role of the artist, both believed that a writer could bring about a change in the oppression of the Irish by England.

Having re-invented Ireland, Yeats and Joyce pointed the way for writers from other oppressed cultures to invent a space from which to speak.

Place, history, and identity are also major issues in African literature. The theoretical questions that haunted Chinua Achebe's career as a writer were also prompted by the desire to re-orientate cultural discourse and initiate a discourse of resistance. In his commitment to questions relating to identity and the relationship of the individual and history, Achebe like the Irish writers above-mentioned, contributed to the analysis of colonisation and the natives' resistance to oppression both at the level of the individual and that of the nation. Yeats's notion of a world spinning out of control, the loss of a common purpose, and great unrest were all implicit in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). The title he chose for his first novel refers to the Yeatsian prophecy of the degradation and fall of the West and he used it to depict the downfall of Ibo society after the incursion of British missionaries, implying thus a cultural parallel.

The revolution Achebe undertook in *Things Fall Apart* was to regenerate the beauty of his civilisation both to teach African peoples and to enlighten Africa's detractors. If Hegel painted a rather horrific picture of African society in his *Philosophy of History*, (1837) Achebe portrayed it as a society with intricate social orders formed according to Ibo cultural beliefs and customs. Throughout *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe evoked the authority of Ibo culture and its aesthetic codes to demonstrate that the West's knowledge of Africa was culture-based, and to recover what the colonising structure had repressed. However, Achebe neither romanticised the past as Yeats did, nor looked at the cosmopolitan world in a Joycean way. The pre-colonial society in *Things Fall Apart*, whose tragic hero Okonkwo mounted doomed resistance to encroaching European power, was far from idyllic.

While the deeper subject of the novel was the historical transformation of Ibo society, the novel also focused on the fracturing of this very society from within. Achebe depicted not

only the encounter between opposed forces, African and European, but he was also concerned with the continuity of that confrontation within Umuofian society. This was also a characteristic feature of Yeats's system. The conflicts between the modern and the traditional, the individual and the community were highlighted in Okonkwo's conflict of loyalties: Divorced as he was from each world, the old and the new, Okonkwo had to confront two terrible foes: the British and his clansmen. Despite his best efforts to live by the traditional values of Iboland, he became further separated from his nation and fell victim to social, religious and political chaos beyond his control.

Also though praising the past, Achebe did not present it without flaws. He showed that pre-colonial Ibo society was materially less developed than societies in other regions of the world, but no less balanced and self-contained than any elsewhere. The writer's main focus was with the cultural dislocations provoked by the harsh circumstances entailed by the colonial encounter in Nigeria and their far-reaching consequences in human terms, the very focus of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899).

A hundred years ago, Conrad destabilised the authority of that exclusively European telling of the world's story, anticipating the colonised's "writing back" (Bill Ashcroft et al.). Conrad provided a connection between the writings of early decolonisers such as Yeats and later ones like Joyce, Achebe and much later Djébar. Like them, Conrad used his experience of marginalisation to criticise a political situation in his fiction. However, whereas these writers spoke for their people to the world, Conrad spoke for others. As another marginalised writer Conrad anticipated Yeats's prophecy in his 1921 poem, 'The Second Coming,' several years earlier with the publication of *Heart of Darkness*. Whereas Yeats saw the spiral shapes of history, Conrad saw the emptiness at the centre of civilisation and the atrocities at the margins. He showed the hollow morality at the centre of the imperialist enterprise, one that could not hold. He too wrote about the "best [who] lack[ed] all conviction," ('The Second

Coming,' 7-8) about the paralysis of modern society, the disruption of traditional society under the impact of intruding forces as expressed in Yeats's poetry, Joyce's *Dubliners*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Djébar's *L'Amour, la Fantasia*. Yet despite his grandest insight into the politics of his time, Conrad has been criticised for the imperialist, racist viewpoints, perhaps most vigourously by Chinua Achebe.

Our argument about Conrad's novella therefore showed the pitfalls for literary critics and writers who speculated on the meaning of *Heart of Darkness*. But, as has been demonstrated, Conrad's novella draws its force from a vision of marginality which dismantles the force of the centre. Although Conrad (like Fanon) did not come from the nation of which he became the spokesman, he called attention to how colonial narcissism taking the form of hostility toward the Other and idealisation of the Self, was promoted by the late Victorian discourse of race. Although he was a Westerner, the Polish author undercut the West's self-righteousness by inverting his narrative about the Other, and like Achebe and Djébar, by showing that Africa has a history of its own and embodies a truth. To reach this end, Conrad deployed a series of tactics to deconstruct those processes by which the imperial world rationalised and justified its domination of the rest of the world. The 'othering' of the Blacks, somewhat disconcerting to the reader, allowed the writer to highlight the significance of the racial attitude of the coloniser.

Conrad moreover created two distinct realms, that of the coloniser and that of the colonised. He contrasted the metropolitan centre, a so-called icon of order, with the marginalised world in which disorder predominates, a sign of its peoples' powerlessness. But nowhere did Conrad show a definite sense of European superiority vis à vis the Africans. He rather subverted prevailing European values, and countered the belief in the superiority of the Europeans, demystifying as it were, nineteenth-century notions of progress and enlightenment. Through the character of Kurtz, Conrad explored the evil and greed in

humanity and underlined men's inhumanity towards other men, not to a subhuman species as Achebe noted. The horror of the story thus, was not that the Africans were a deviant form of humanity, but that evil was also within the Europeans who viewed themselves as superior. His letters from the Congo testify that his Congo experience left him with a residue of distrust in humankind: "Everything here is repellent to me [...] Men and things but above all men [...],"⁶ he pointed out. His views in *Heart of Darkness* therefore were "purely human."⁷

Thus to re-state Achebe's words, in his article on the image of Africa, *Heart of Darkness* indeed portrays Africa as "the other world," ('An Image of Africa,' 783) the antithesis of Europe but only in the sense that it is a culture different from that of Europe. Africa and the Africans had been projected as Other, but an Other that exists. Hence, the world-view implied by the narrative is not synonymous with the author's own ideology. Conrad simply sought to restore Africa's human face as African writers such as Chinua Achebe and Assia Djebar did.

This research work has also shown that the idea of Otherness conceptualised in Simone de Beauvoir's theory of objectification was relevant in clarifying issues of relegation and positionality in the literature written by women. Although patriarchy, machismo and sexism have demonstrated a remarkable resilience not only in the First World but also in the Third World, in many instances Irish and African women writers have been marginalised by their male counterparts and their works either remain unacknowledged or tokenized by literary critics. The place of women in the tradition of Irish literature, both as the subjects and producers of novels, poems, plays, and non-fiction prose is a perplexing one. Women like Augusta Gregory spearheaded the Irish Literary Revival and produced dramatic work; and Nuala ni Dhomhnaill and Eavan Boland are central figures in contemporary poetry. Yet remarkably few women writers appeared in the comprehensive Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing published in 1991.

⁶ Frederick R. Karl & Laurence Davies, *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad* (Cambridge: Cambridge PU, 1983), Vol. 6, 61 -63.

⁷ Conrad acknowledged this view in one of his letters to Alfred A. Knopf on July, 20, 1913.

Similarly, for a long time African women writers remained invisible from what is characterised today as African literature or postcolonial literature. There are some reasons which contributed to their exclusion from the African literary canon: the first reason is the low number of African women writers when compared with their male counterparts. Second, African women did not have the same educational opportunities, then fewer acquired literacy or university education that have been prerequisites for writing in European languages. Written literature thus remained the prerogative of men.

During the colonial period, power was used to force Irish and Africans into distorting identities, but those power relations also distorted society, rendering it incapable of doing more than reflect colonial constructions on women. And it seems that postcolonial nationalisms entrenched rather than dismantled the power of patriarchy. Nationalist discourses constructed the symbolic roles of men and women, which best served the nationalist project. As Elleke Boehmer put it “Mother Africa may have been declared free, but mothers of Africa have remained manifestly oppressed.”⁸ Despite the promises of national freedom, African women continued to be excluded from full national participation on an equal footing with men. In the nationalistic rhetoric, those nationalists claimed masculine identity as the norm and the woman as just the bearer of the sons of the nation with a valuable place in the construction of the nation. Due to the inferior position they were placed in, both in relation to the coloniser and patriarchy, women were disempowered and relegated to the position of Other. At this juncture, one might ask this question: which of patriarchy or colonialism was more detrimental to its subjects? Racial Otherness is arguably damaging, but patriarchy appears to be even more damaging because it automatically entails the continuous threat of misogynistic beliefs, given that the great bulk of the world’s societies are male-dominated. In any case, it is never acceptable to be a ‘savage’ native nor is it to be regarded as only an “ant

⁸ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 7.

trodden upon by heavy, merciless elephants,”⁹ as Ngugi put it in his discussion of the marginalisation of African women.

On the basis of Michel Foucault’s understanding of power, the feminists have therefore sought to challenge accounts of gender relations which emphasise domination and victimisation so as to move towards a more textured understanding of the role of power in women’s lives. The real challenge for postcolonial women writers was to break out of the straight-jacket of representational tokenism by struggling against the myths of subordination of women, against woman’s position as the insignificant Other. Postcolonial women writers share many of the concerns of their male counterparts, especially a history of colonialism, but they demystify accepted and oppressive aspects of cultural tradition and deromanticise male writers’ portrayals of women as Supreme Mother, self-sacrificing, suffering willingly and silently, an image that both contemporary Irish women poets and African women writers have attempted to revise both to bear witness to real Irish/African women’s oppression and to criticise how the long history of colonialism has limited Irish and African conceptions of gender and nationality.

Djebar’s *L’Amour, la Fantasia* is both a feminist and postcolonial text in its contestation of the mutually supportive projects of patriarchy and colonialism. It is replete with passages that project male dominance and inadequately plead the case of the African woman. In her battle against stereotyping, the Algerian writer, like Yeats, Joyce, Conrad, and Achebe, has used literature as a means for a re-definition of the Self, a forging of a new identity. Djebar’s literary contribution has however been a subversive literature that attacked malecentric views of women as inferior beings. In *L’Amour*, Djebar revealed the oppression she experienced both at the hands of the dominant culture, and male members of her society. The writer’s double quest was thus to recreate a sense of national and personal identity. Djebar thus joined

⁹ Wa Thiong’o Ngugi, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (African Publishing Group, 1976), 14.

her own voice and life-story with the stories and voices of Algerian women revolutionaries, replacing silence and the coloniser's version of history with a celebration of female experience and expression. Real involvement of women in Algerian history was highlighted in *L'Amour* by frequent references to concealment by veils. Djébar therefore set out to 'unveil' a feminine Algerian identity, rescuing Algerian women from occlusion both by colonialism and by Islamic law and giving voice to their repressed specificity. However rather than condemning Islamic tradition, Djébar recuperated Islam and denounced misinterpretations that associated it unequivocally with oppression. Djébar focused on the gaps and silences of history and reinscribed women into history while foregrounding her own status as an educated elite and mediator in the process. Being a scholar of literature became a vantage point for waging a relentless struggle regarding the culture and political audibility of Algerian women. Like the male writers cited above, Djébar used the language of the enemy as a medium that allowed her to reflect upon and represent her world. But while she felt indebted to the French language for her own personal liberation, she was aware of that language's subjugation of the greater community she identifies with: Algeria and more specifically Algerian women. Her narrative moreover highlighted the narrator's problems as a woman who wants independence, a career, and control over her own body, but one emotionally torn between tradition and modern life.

L'Amour addressed the imbalances in the portrayal of the female persona which reduced women to mere objects of voyeuristic attention, only fit as portrayed through types and stereotypes. The whole point of the Algerian writer's literary enterprise had been to claim that women embody none of the characteristics traditionally ascribed to them by African writers. The ideal female character created by male writers in the early phase of African literature encouraged the marginalisation of women and often acted within the framework of her traditional roles as wife and mother. So strong were social values that the respect and love

which a woman earned was relative to the degree of her adaptation to these roles, a point brought into evidence in Achebe's novel.

Central to the plot construction and characterisation of the Nigerian writer was the patriarchal subjection of women, fostered through the gender socialisation process which connected macho strength and heroism to males and associated the traditional roles of wife and mother to females. These illustrations reflected demeaning stereotypes depicting different spheres of influence for men and women. The ensuing gender asymmetry conceived, internalised and borne out of this had been strongly criticised by Djébar. Djébar's personal story therefore might be viewed as a counterpart to the silencing of women in Achebe's oppressively masculinist novels. Borrowing from the Marxist ideology of haves and have-nots, Djébar pointed to the marginal position of women in Africa, as reflected in Achebe's work, and dislodged the marginalisation of women by creating a central character that was a woman and used her to explore woman's life from a woman's perspective. She therefore attempted to restore woman's dignity and pride as Yeats and Joyce did, both of whom saw Ireland as a wronged woman and wrote about misrepresented women. While the poet eulogized women, the concern with culture and tradition as agencies of gender inequality was buttressed by Joyce who identified the traditional structure as the main source for the marginalisation of Irish women. In his later works, Conrad also acknowledged the intense repression of women by an entrenched social structure. Unlike the Nigerian writer whose women remained on the periphery all throughout his works, Conrad did provide a revisionist picture in later prose as he attempted to break through the myth of woman as the eternal feminine, in the same way modern Irish and African women are just doing nowadays.

These women are now becoming increasingly powerful and visible in their societies where their voices had traditionally been squashed, their identities and roles fixed and subordinated. They are now trying to construct from the margins in which they had been kept a discourse of

power, and struggling to enjoy full participation with men. Although attitudes toward women appear to be more positive in contemporary times, the struggle for complete recognition is still far from over. On the political front, women all over the world have become an integral part of the political set up of their communities and play active roles in the administration of their states, but one must realise that the statutory provisions still do not favour African women in many respects.

Indeed despite their achievements, women in most African societies remain among the most politically, socially, and economically marginalised members of society. The voices of difference have never been completely stilled because African societies in general, are still characterised by intense machismo, which inhibits African women's progress and maintains them permanently in the suffocating stench of submissiveness. Representations of power persist, and the notion of the male as 'his/story' continues to dictate and dominate. One of the most relevant forms of oppression is the African tradition that most times empowers man and disempowers woman. Within traditions, marriage remains the most oppressive for African women in general. Concurrently, the contemporary patriarchal organisation with its new structures of male empowerment in education and politics has given the males added prominence and power and has exacerbated African women's problems by pushing them further down the valley of subordination.

In any case, patriarchal or colonial, as long as the Other is denied the right to belong domination will continue and will always find alibis and subterfuges. As long as the relationship between the powerful (ex)colonisers and the powerless (ex)colonised is maintained through the perpetuation of all structures and forms of inequality: gender-based, economic, technological, political, military, the debate on colonialism will continue. Indeed if the quest for subjecthood inspired the Irish as well as the Nigerians', Congolese and Algerians' struggles for national independence and the latter produced pride in their peoples

by giving them a sense of identity, however the pattern of oppression has often been repeated in the present conditions of globalisation.

Though observers of the contemporary cultural scene of Ireland are much impressed by its dynamism, it has often been described as a Third World country in terms of its conditions of structural dependency and the Irish Catholics as the Blacks of British history. Despite the new exuberance of self-expression in Ireland today, the future of the island remains as always unsettled. With hindsight, we realise that the Act of 1920 and the Peace treaty of 1921 have had strong psychological bearings on some of the political difficulties that have beset Anglo-Irish relations. The Treaty of 1921 presented under the threat of an imminent war was actually followed by the Civil War whose effects are still visible today. Both acts proved to be major impediments to the development of a better relationship. Britain still regards 'native' Ireland as a threat to British and loyalist interests, a wretched society afflicted by Catholicism, cleavages and sedition. The basic Irish demands have remained the same through centuries. The Irish have remained imprisoned by their religious history, and civil strife in Northern Ireland nowadays partially results from the unresolved issues raised by partition.

In Africa unlike Ireland, the experience of the last fifty years reveals a disenchanting history to African post-colonial attempts at development. With most African countries still only tottering on their feet and many close to collapse, the inevitable question is: Are Nigeria's, the Congo's and Algeria's post-independent woes due to their colonial experience or ascribed to other factors?

Colonialism remains a controversial issue, as many people disagree about its effects on peoples in former colonies, and whether it is responsible for poverty in developing countries today. As part of the hypocrisy of colonialism, it has become fashionable to speak about the benefits Europe brought to Africa. The European powers that once ruled much of Africa prefer to recall the 'civilisation' they bestowed over the abuses they committed. The argument

suggests that, on the one hand, there was exploitation and oppression, but, on the other hand, colonial governments did much for the benefit of the Africans and they developed Africa.

In Britain for instance, historian Niall Ferguson¹⁰ described British colonial rule in Africa as nation-building. He also asserted that the British Empire gave rise to a lengthy period of relative world peace and a global order within which economic development was undeniably facilitated. The impoverishment of Third World countries, according to Ferguson, is not a by-product of colonialism or globalisation, but is mainly due to the fact that these countries have no contact with globalisation.

Likewise, in *Culture Force: Makers and Defenders of the French Colonial Empire*, Barnett Singer and John Langdon argued that for all the ills that France brought her colonies, they also brought a great deal of good.¹¹ This was brought further into evidence by the law adopted by the French parliament on 23 February 2005. That law provided a retrograde vision of history and tried to justify the barbarity of colonialism by erasing the most hideous acts committed by French forces in Algeria. Not only did that law turn into a ploy for presenting the French colonists as victims not criminals, but it also made it mandatory to enshrine in textbooks France's 'positive' role in its far-flung colonies without conferring the matter to historians when drafting the law. Article four of that law stipulated that

University syllabuses must grant the place that it deserves to the history of France's presence overseas, particularly in North Africa. School courses must [...] recognise the positive role played by the French presence overseas, particularly in North Africa, and must accord the prominent position that they merit to the history and sacrifices of members of the French armed forces.¹²

What the law sought to impose was contrary not only to the freedom of thought at the heart of secularism, but also to the etiquette of academic research as it undermined the very work of historians and researchers who condemned colonialism. Minimizing the suffering and

¹⁰ Cf. Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2001).

¹¹ Barnett Singer & John Langdon, *Culture Force: Makers and Defenders of the French Colonial Empire* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 63.

¹² Loi n° 2005-158 du 12 Février portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés. For the full text, see the *Journal officiel*, February, 24, 2005.

dispossession brought about by the French in Algeria was an insult to its victims, to the Algerian population as a whole, a profanation of its Martyrs' tombs. That law stirred an uproar in France and elsewhere, and aroused much ire not only on the part of French historians, politicians, teachers, but also from representatives of former colonies, especially Algeria, until its abrogation the same year it was enacted.

France's right-wing government was not alone in attempting to revise the colonial past. The orthodox discourse, through statements, and school books as well as the general public view concerning Leopold II's and Belgian rule in the Congo was that Belgium brought progress and civilisation to this unfortunate region, sweeping under the carpet Leopold's rubber terror. The view that some 'excesses' had been committed in the Congo Free State (CFS) is well established, but the argument is that such abuses had also existed in other colonies, and were excusable on the ground that the colonial agents were isolated from the rest of the world as well as on the financial weakness of the CFS. An outright Leopoldian cult developed immediately after the King's death in 1909. This cult contributed to the formation of a true colonial spirit in the Belgian population, an attitude absent before the take-over of the Congo. This colonial ideology in turn became a new instrument in the forging of a lively Belgian patriotism.

As in France two thousand and five was a significant year in Belgian history. It marked the one hundred twentieth anniversary of the close of the Berlin Conference, Chancellor Bismarck's initiative that led, among other things, to the creation of the Congo Free State under King Leopold II's sovereignty. It also marked the forty fifth anniversary of the accession to independence by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As in France all the horrors of the Congo were expurgated from Belgium's official memory. The Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, suburb of Brussels, chose 2005 as the year in which to open a large historical exhibition on the 'Memory of Congo: The Colonial Era,' to glorify Belgian

colonialism in the Congo. According to Guido Gryseels, the director of the government-owned museum, the purpose of the show was to provide information about a neglected past, but certainly not to unleash old demons. Mr. Gryseels stressed that his generation was brought up with a very positive and flattering view of Belgian colonial activities. So he was convinced that Belgium brought civilisation to the Congo, and the Royal Museum became the icon of the 'good' works that Belgium brought to its former colony.

However, hardly anything done during colonialism could remotely be termed a service to African people. Social services were built as a matter of policy, and means of communication were certainly not laid down to facilitate internal trade in African commodities. All roads and railways were built to make business possible for the timber and trading companies and agricultural concession firms, and for white settlers. Thus any catering to African interests was purely coincidental. In all colonies, the whites created an infrastructure only to afford themselves leisured and enjoyable lives. The welfare and development of Europe had been built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of its victims. Confronting this wretched world, the Europeans sprawled, boasting their opulence, an opulence built on slavery and colonialism, nourished with the blood of its victims and coming directly from the soil of that underdeveloped world. The colonial powers through coercion condemned the younger nations to backwardness. While acknowledging the baleful effects of European colonialism, and the ways in which the colonial legacy prevented the development of many African countries other factors however must be imputed to their downfall.

We can discern the outlines of Fanon's sketch of neocolonialism in the particular post-independence history of Nigeria, the Congo and Algeria. As Fanon has suggested, central to any definition of neocolonialism is the notion of the exploitation of the newly independent nations by native elites working with Western capitalism, and primarily interested in their financial gain rather than in the development of their nations. Instead of the paradise they

promised, the elite produced governments riddled with bribery, corruption, nepotism, violence and murder. The leaders' lack of responsibility, their misguided leadership, and economic mismanagement contributed greatly to the impoverishment of their countries. The implication is that these rulers have become either willing puppets or involuntary subordinate of Western powers.

When Nigeria achieved its independence in 1960, the Nigerians temporarily had to accept the Queen of England as the Head of State. Consequently many years after its independence, Nigeria still has had her policies influenced by England, and, to some extent, still feels its dominating presence as embodied in her membership in the British Commonwealth. In no other African country were the challenges of constructing the nation out of this mosaic more overrated than in Nigeria with her two hundred fifty ethnic groups, over four hundred languages, multiple religions that include the two most antagonistic, Islam and Christianity. This amalgamation of diverse peoples and regions into an artificial political entity created socio-economic and political troubles. The string of events in Nigeria's postcolonial history produced a country utterly disunited, and undermined its democracy. The failure of the democratisation process to survive its ethnic conflicts resulted in several coup d'états that further weighed heavy upon the people. Self-rule thus has toughened ethnic cleavages, politicized them, and made them simultaneously integral to and inimical to healthy governance. The story of Nigeria calls to mind some of the same issues faced by the Congolese.

The post-independence era also found a fledgling Congolese government groping in the dark for stability. At independence in 1960, the Congo inherited the limitations of the Belgian administration. From the outset, turmoil wracked the post-independence government as Kasavubu and Lumumba struggled for control of the government. As the two leaders fought for power, ethnic conflict spread throughout the country and a secessionist movement

emerged in Lubumbashi, the capital of the southeastern province of Shaba. And less than four months after gaining independence, the Congo began to sink into a state of chaos when Joseph Mobutu, the inheritor of Leopold's methods, firmly backed by the army, staged a military coup deposing both Kasavubu and Lumumba. The Congo's catastrophic situation, its deep economic crisis, the many years of squandering, corruption and mal-administration under the Mobutu dictatorship and the civil war that had torn the country apart after its fall in 1997 resulted in a grave paralysis of state functions. Quite paradoxically, the main decisions on which the whole future role of the Congolese people depended were taken in Europe and America rather than in the Congo. As a matter of fact, many of the Congolese politicians enjoyed the protection of foreign groups and were guided by them. Thus political life in the Congo is not a struggle for political power to serve the people and the nation, but a hard struggle between foreign powers which use Congolese leaders to further their ends.

The post-independence history of Algeria is also largely the story of rival groups claiming the mantle of revolution. The crisis in Algeria is in part the consequence of the way in which the Algerian state began its independent existence. As in Nigeria and the Congo, since independence, the Algerian military has exercised great power behind the scenes, openly intervening in politics on several occasions. The post-independence Algerian state has also encountered many difficulties at the economic level, and these predicaments have been replicated at the political and social levels.

But the 1990s was the most wretched period of Algeria's post-war history. After the suspension of the electoral process in January 1992, Algeria sunk into a bloody terrorist civil war. Worst of all, that decade saw the largest exodus of Algerian intellectuals, many of whom were persecuted by terrorists. The political consequences of the social and economic crisis that followed lie at the roots therefore, of the catastrophe that Algeria faced during the dark decade of terrorism. Despite these glaring problems, Algeria could survive the onslaught.

Thus as has been seen through the post-independent situations, unlike Algeria, neo-colonialism in Nigeria and the Congo can be defined as the continuation of the colonial system. In spite of the formal recognition of political independence, these former colonies have become the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical means. Whether through aid, arms sales, or other means, the West still manages to have its influence today. Ultimately, this is slowing down the development process, and weakening the state forms required by the global system.

At this juncture, it should be noted that globalisation, which is supposed to improve the economic situation of the globe, has widened the gap between First World and Third World countries. Although globalisation has economic roots and political consequences, it has also brought into focus the power of culture in this global environment, the power of binding or dividing at a time when the clash between integration and disunion tugs at every issue that is relevant to international relations. The impact of globalisation on culture and the impact of culture on globalisation is therefore worth discussing.

Globalisation is a vital step toward both a more stable world and better lives for the people in it. It should contribute to establishing harmony and removing not only cultural barriers, but also many of the negative dimensions of culture. Globalisation should first and foremost serve the progress of knowledge and bring together people and nations for the common good. However, the gates of the world are groaning shut. Human history and the everyday experiences of the world's peoples do not provide a glowing picture of the Self/Other relationship. The events happening in different parts of the globe nowadays have seriously impaired the notion of a multi-cultural or multi-religious society.

If colonialism collapsed, the world indeed still remains organised along the lines set up centuries ago by European expansion and reinforced in the twentieth century to the extent that the predominance of Europe/America over the rest of the world continues to define the

contemporary world order. The ongoing strife between the dominant forces in society and its Others, whether these be people of colour, women or whatever, suggest that the Europeans/Americans have not yet accepted otherness as simply a different way of life. The desire to control others remains ingrained in their minds. Indeed, the philosophy of biological race differences which divided the world into superior and inferior beings still plays a fatal role in the modern world. That notion of a culture's being superior or inferior, progressive or backward is still predominant in the thinking and behaviour of Westerners and Americans in their relation to other peoples whose cultures are different from their own. The problem is being made more complex with the continuing perpetuation of imperialist aggression, which is justified by a more complex ideological system of what can be referred to as imperialist culture, rather than cultural imperialism. The ideological role of imperialist culture has been the association of the Other's different ways of life with under-development, violence, and terrorism, just as non-European modes of life were associated with violent barbarism in the past. Would there ever be then, a way out of this crisis of understanding?

We would argue that schism between different cultures can only be resolved through peace, and the basic principle of peace is respect for diversity. Cultural diversity is instrumental to human development. Thus re-establishment of multilateralism is a *sine qua non* condition because unilateralism is paralysing societies. By multilateralism is meant the co-operation among nations. Multilateralism creates a framework that sustains common action, and the reconstruction of a new world based on multilateralism can survive only if carried out through dialogue and respect of the identities of each culture. In this sense, globalisation becomes a phenomenon of interdependence among societies. Multicultural policies give recognition to differences, champion diversity and promote cultural freedom to enable all individuals to communicate in their own language, practise freely their religion. Cultural freedom also implies choice. People should be allowed to choose who they are, to

choose their own identities, and live accordingly. This could be achieved by learning to live together. Ignorance of diversity, ignorance of the Other encourage the emergence of misunderstandings, stereotypes, prejudice and xenophobia. Thus, fighting ignorance is crucial for expunging tensions. It is certainly naive to expect broad success in avoiding future conflicts among people or cultures, but at least we can try to diminish the disparities that will fuel some of these conflicts. One way, perhaps, to minimise its effects would be to try and see others in a new perspective, as full-fleshed human beings rather than people belonging to a different culture, a different religion or speaking a different language. A new world is possible if we work hand in hand to resolve present-day problems, if we put an end to intolerance, to racial prejudice, to indifference. This is the true meaning of globalisation. Globalisation should cause inclusion not exclusion. It should go well beyond the economic field, and not cancel out other factors such as culture, human rights and communication. The term 'globalisation' indicates that our world is becoming a single place. In practical terms, it also means that boundaries are disappearing.

To bring this cross-cultural survey to a close, we would say that the dream of every person, like Martin Luther King's, like Frantz Fanon's, is the liberating transformation of everyday life involving an absence of Otherness. In such a world, as Fanon had it, man would be "a man among other men," and we would add, a woman equal to man "in a world that [is] *ours* and to help to build it together."¹³

¹³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 112-3. Italics mine.

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GLOSSARY

Amir-el-Muminin: the leader of the believers

CFS: Congo Free State

Chefs historiques: historic Chiefs

Chicotte: whip made of sun-dried hippopotamus hide with razor-sharp edges

Code de l'indigénat : A special native code

Colonies scolaires : School colonies

Comité d'Etudes du Haut Congo : Studies Committee of the High Congo

Communes indigènes: indigenous communes

Communes de plein exercice: full exercise communes

Communes mixtes : mixed communes

Compagnie Maritime du Congo: Maritime Company of the Congo

Drame linguistique: linguistic drama

Etoile Africaine : The African Star

Evolués: native elite

Fellaheen: peasants

Fidaïs: revolutionary men

Force Publique : Public Force

Grands Chefs: great chieftains

Habus lands, the religious foundations

Haik: veil

Inghinidhe na hEireann: a woman's organisation which gathered all the girls who resented being excluded as women from national organisations.

Mouvement National Congolais: National Congolese movement

Porządny/porządna: decent, applied differently to qualify a male or a woman.

Régime du sabre: government of the sword

Roumi: foreigner

Royaume Arabe: Arab Kingdom

Régime d'exception: exceptional regime

Sharia: Islamic Law

Terre vacante: vacant land

Umma: nation

IBO WORDS AND PHRASES

Alutaradi: Organisation of Patrilineage Wives

Agadi-nwayi: old woman

Agbala: woman; also used of a man who has taken a title

chi: personal god

efulefu:worthless man

egwugwu: a masquerader who impersonates one of the ancestral spirits of the village

eze- Agadi-nwayi: the teeth of an old woman

iba: fever

ilo: village

iyi-uwa:stone which forms the link between an ogbanje and the spirit world.

Kotma:court messenger

Kwenu: a shout of approval and greeting

Mbanta: small town

nchidie: elders

nno:welcome

obi:The large living quarters of the head of a family

ochu: murder or manslaughter

ogbanje: a child who repeatedly dies and returns to its mother to be reborn

ọha, umunnakwuru: concept of democracy

osu: outcast.

uli: dye used by women for drawing patterns on the skin.

umuada: a family gathering of daughters, for which the female kinsfolk return to their village of origin.

umunna: wide group of kinsmen