

University of Algiers 2-Bouzaréah

Faculty of letters and Languages

Department of English

DISCOURSE, COUNTER DISCOURSE AND THE MANICHEAN  
FACTOR IN THE FICTION OF CONRAD, CARY AND  
CHINUA ACHEBE

A Dissertation Presented in Partial fulfilment of the Requirements for  
The Degree of Magister in Literature

Submitted by:

Miss. BECHANI Fatima

Supervised by:

Prof.M'hamed BENSEMMANE

2014

DISCOURSE, COUNTER DISCOURSE AND THE  
MANICHEAN  
FACTOR IN THE FICTION OF CONRAD, CARY  
AND  
CHINUA ACHEBE

## Examination Board

Chair: Prof. Yamina DRAMCHIA , University of Algiers.

Supervisor: Prof. M'hamed BENSEMMANE , University of Algiers.

Internal / External examiner: Prof . Fouad DJEMAI , University of Algiers.

## Declaration

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

Date:

Signed:

*To the ones who love me faithfully*

*And are there behind me*

*Those who encourage me strongly*

*And keep pushing me*

*Those who help me seriously*

*And kindle my way*

*.....this work is dedicated*

## **Acknowledgments**

This Magister dissertation could not have materialized without the careful and insightful contributions of many people, from whom I received help and support along the way of my research.

I am sincerely thankful to my supervisor professor. M'HAMED BENSEMMANE for his academic commitment to supervise me. Truly, it is thanks to his knowledge and wisdom that I have been provided with continuous guidance, valuable advice, helpful suggestions and motivating discussions that have given me a valuable learning experience. All along the preparation of this work, my supervisor's constructive criticism, insightful comments and feedback enlightened my way, inspired me and enriched the scope of my thesis.

Additional thanks also go to the board of examiners who willingly accepted to read and assess my dissertation.

Further, I owe much, to Mrs. Bezzazzi Amina and Mr.Samir Boufekane who kindly afforded useful bibliographical materials and information through the different stages of this work.

My profound thanks are extended to my loving parents for supporting me financially and emotionally; in particular, my mother who has always motivated me to complete this project. I thank them for their continual prayers and sincere encouragements.

Last but not least, I am heavily indebted to all my friends during my years of education and learning and especially my Magister colleagues in the 'theoretical' year 2010-2011, with whom I kept good companionship and felt understood when needed.

I am endlessly grateful to the librarians in the periodicals room of the English department for supplying me with the bibliographical sources that were the building blocks for the whole work.

## Abstract

In this dissertation, I attempt to examine the relation that dialogises the discourses held by European colonialism and African resistance to them stressing the concept of the Manichean dichotomy which insists on the absolute distinction between the colonizer and the colonized. Light is shed particularly on the issue of representation as it is apparent in the colonial discourse expressed in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Cary's *Mister Johnson* and as it is employed in the anticolonial discourse of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. The latter two novels deal with the colonial as well as the postcolonial era and present a markedly different African image from the one to be found in the former pair.

Approached from a postcolonial theoretical perspective, these fictional works set in the African continent are to be considered as an explicit picture in which the reader distinguishes between an old racist vision and a new realist revision of the African image.

Throughout this dissertation, we aim to look into the Western discourse on Africa, characterized by an increasing knowledge on the basis of the colonial paradigm of the Dark Continent and the myth of the savage African inhabitants. Both Conrad and Cary are regarded by many as racist writers since their Eurocentric perspectives are illustrative of white prejudices and productive of western stereotypes and biased as well as distorted images. My analysis expands onto the feminist reading of the figure of the black woman who is in Conrad's novella and Cary's romance subjugated to male dominance that caused the subject to be in the double bind of colonial white racism and native black sexism.

The central point that is paid critical attention in this study is Achebe's articulate and firm proclamation regarding the existence of a legitimate set of mores and customs in Africa. African dignity, history and civilization are thus brought to the fore by this writer whose preoccupation with Conrad's and Cary's literature is notably of importance since it marks a turning point in African literature. His sense of

commitment is reinforced by a literary rhetoric that is chosen to enhance an African identification and to redirect the Nigerian people towards reflecting on the beauty of original Africa. In his novels, Achebe seems to represent his countrymen's deep link with their ancient past and he calls his readers to acknowledge the existence of an African environment with an agrarian way of life based on an oral tradition rich with proverbs, songs and storytelling. Moreover, I argue that his response to Conrad's and Cary's depiction of women is characterized by a duality in representation, and ambivalence in perception. This points to the subordinate functions these women played in their narratives.

In sum, this comparative research stresses both the resemblance in themes and the difference in approaches and readings to be adopted for each novel. Indeed, the two-sided visions and the Manichean link in Conrad's, Cary's and Achebe's novelistic agendas result from the complexity of the works. Hence, it is concluded that the discourses on gender and race are tackled differently by each writer on the basis of the messages intended.



# Table of Contents

Examination Board.....	<b>i</b>
Declaration.....	<b>ii</b>
Dedication.....	<b>iii</b>
Acknowledgement.....	<b>iv</b>
Abstract.....	<b>viii</b>
Introduction.....	<b>p.1</b>

**❖ Part One: The Colonial Discourse in the British novel: Racism, Ambiguity and Biased imagery.**

**Chapter One: Western Narrative Discourse: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Cary's *Mister Johnson* Prejudices and Ambivalences.**

1-Introduction.....	<b>p.12</b>
2- Reading Foucault's discourse within the literary colonial discourse of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century.....	<b>p.14</b>
3- <i>Heart of Darkness</i> and <i>Mister Johnson</i> : Racism and the African Wasteland of Conrad and Cary's imagination.....	<b>p.21</b>
4- The colonial situation, experience and organization between irony and ambivalence.....	<b>p.33</b>
5- Conclusion.....	<b>p.45</b>

## **Chapter Two: Europhone Novels: Stereotypical Representations and Manichean Oppositions.**

1-Introduction.....	<b>p.47</b>
2-African natives: from a discourse of silence to a discourse of childishness.....	<b>p.48</b>
2-1 <i>Heart of Darkness</i> : the negation of the Congolese.....	<b>p.49</b>
2-2 <i>Mister Johnson</i> : Stereotypes of the Nigerians.....	<b>p.54</b>
3-Discourse on gender: binary relations between African and European women.....	<b>p.61</b>
4-Conclusion.....	<b>p.68</b>

### **❖ Part Two: African Awareness and National Consciousness: Towards an Affirmation of the African Self.**

## **Chapter three: Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*: towards a revaluation of the African image.**

1- Introduction.....	<b>p.70</b>
2- Achebe and the re-enactment of a truthful past.....	<b>p.71</b>
3- The Igbo heritage: A socio-cultural preservation through an ambivalent nostalgic vision.....	<b>p.73</b>
4- The dynamics of reconceptualising gender in Achebe's world.....	<b>p.84</b>
5- Conclusion.....	<b>p.94</b>

## **Chapter Four: The Anglophone Nigerian Novel: An Afro-centric vision of the Achebean model.**

1- Introduction.....	<b>p.96</b>
----------------------	-------------

2- African anticolonial discourse: A redirection of Western knowledge and power.....	<b>p.97</b>
3- Achebe’s decolonizing project through the use of ‘African English’ oral aesthetics: proverbs, storytelling and songs.....	<b>p.105</b>
3-1 Oral literature in order to restore the culture.....	<b>p.108</b>
3-1-1 Proverbs and sayings: wisdom to achieve freedom.....	<b>p.111</b>
3-1-2 Storytelling: a cultural weapon behind political fighting.....	<b>p.114</b>
3-1-3 Singing and reciting: going back to the origin.....	<b>p.117</b>
3-2 Forms of resistance: A means for self and collective defence.....	<b>p.119</b>
4- Conclusion.....	<b>p.124</b>
General Conclusion.....	<b>p.126</b>
Bibliography.....	<b>p.131</b>
Abstract in Arabic.....	<b>p.140</b>

# Introduction

“The modern world is a product of both European imperialism and of the resistance waged against it by the African, Asian and South American peoples”

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o

## Introduction

---

The present comparative study examines the relation between two bodies of literature about Africa, namely English literature and African writings in English. Both literary traditions under consideration whether from the Western world as in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939) or from the African world as in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964)<sup>1</sup> provide varying degrees of opposition in representation. Our intention is to concentrate on literary texts that reflect different histories and experiences of colonial and postcolonial power relationships. These relations have been built on Western derogatory perceptions of the 'dark continent' and African counter representations of the same. The focus is on the examination of cultures, the one supported by segregative policies and the other by the rise of nationalism and its literary manifestations.

It is clearly felt that both colonialism and imperialism as policies or practices were regarded as an absolute necessity and an urgent need of Western powers to establish the world order on their terms. These unfair exploitative processes through which the West took hold of Africa had far reaching effects on the colonized people and the land which was left ridden with lasting troubles. In the context of this study, the case of Africa is similar to that of India, Caribbean and Asian countries and others which are included within the notion of the East or the Orient. Nevertheless the boundaries of this indelible historical period went back to centuries, the realities experienced in Africa were hard to bear and affected the development of a civilization that witnessed "a European crime against man."<sup>2</sup>

A set of beliefs, mainly religious and racial, documented the West's ideology of improvement and justified their ideas of occupation and ruling. In their eyes, it was only through the possession of foreign lands and the dehumanization of native people

---

<sup>1</sup> References concerning page numbers are indicated between brackets in the texts.

<sup>2</sup> Aimé Césaire, 'Discourse on Colonialism' in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze(ed) *African Philosophy: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1998), p.223.

that their Christian religion would spread within the programme of a 'civilizing mission' to bring light and progress to the world. Moreover, the racial excuses based on skin pigmentation and other physical traits were stronger in the interference of the West in the affairs of the East. In accordance with them, imperial domination was the most natural "order of things" since the natives were allegedly incapable of running their countries, so it was thought the duty of Europe to carry this 'burden' for them . This idea of racial difference resulted in the classification of people into separate races which led to the construction of an unjust racial hierarchy in which the placement of "the African culture at the bottom and the Western culture at the top of scale"<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, racist prejudices differentiate the self from the alien races which were racialized as 'inferior', 'savage', and 'barbaric' while Europeans ranked themselves with attributes of 'superiority', 'light' and 'civilization'. This is thus regarded by Frantz Fanon, whose theory of race and colonialism asserts that the arrival of the colonizer created new colonized subjects or what Edward Said called "a complex Orient suitable for study"<sup>4</sup>. The stance of this racial superiority resulted in the creation of the notion of the Manichean allegory which emerged as an aspect of the discursivity of the colonialist imagination. The word has derived from Fanon's employment of the term to refer to the Manicheism of the imperial system in the colonial societies which were defined as being "a Manichean world.....a world divided into compartments.....cut in two....inhabited by two different species"<sup>5</sup>. The word has been further extended by Abdul JanMohamad who refers to it as a dichotomy of binaristic terms that ruled the colonial societies and structured the relationship between the two categories: 'white and black', 'master and slave', 'self and other', 'centre and periphery'.

As a historical marker in global relations, colonialism was not just "a way of maintaining an unequal international relation of economic and political power"<sup>6</sup> that created racial assumptions and Manichean divisions in reality. However, it was a process of cultural immersion that is celebrated in literature, and which provides an

---

<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Obiechina, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p15.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Group, 1989), p7.

<sup>5</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Group, 1961), p30.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Prentice hall, 1993), p4.

open site for a close examination of the relationship between the West and East. Although the colonial period in Africa was over thanks to the political revolutionary movements of independence, the 'superior' west refused the idea of losing its former territories. As a result, they have continued their hegemonic enterprise by using culture as another alternative strategy serving the same purposes of maintaining power over the colonized and reinforcing their 'inferior' status by making the colonial rule legitimate, the racial order valid and by muting the exploitative nature of the colonial administration.

This way of exercising power is based on a 'cultural imperialism', a situation that was helped by the emergence of the 19<sup>th</sup> century literary novel<sup>7</sup>. Like political and economic colonialism, the cultural phase created racial oppression and problems of inferiority complex for the 'other'. This 'colonization of the mind' is represented and clearly felt within a number of Western British canonical works of fiction like Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Cary's *Mister Johnson*, Forster's *A Passage to India* and the list is long. All this wide range of literary texts are used as a source for understanding and tackling the dynamics of imperialism and colonialism that resulted in the creation of a colonial discourse in reality as well as in fiction.

In this discussion, I will examine the British attitudes towards Africa in the above-named colonial texts and the misrepresentation of its people as a salient feature that can make us distinguish the colonial discourse from other discourses. Generally, the colonial discourse is a concept that has attracted the attention of several writers and literary critics and has been popularized first by the postcolonial theorist Edward Said, and developed by various scholars like Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, as an instrument of power and a system gathering within it a range of colonial

---

<sup>7</sup> Growing up as a popular genre in Europe, the novel was connected first with the expansion movements and the hey-day of colonialism that spans between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Arguably, the birth of this aesthetic form and cultural means of expressing one's heart and mind contributed to the reinforcement of the West. It plays an immense role in the reflection of the concern of colonialism through the depiction of the natives and the foreign landscapes as well as the representation of the colonial activity and situation like in Conrad's and Cary's novels. See: George Lukacs, *The Theory of the Novel: An historic-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature*. Trans by Ann Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p.56.

practices. Usually, in literature, this kind of discourse refers to the writings that originate from the days of expansion of colonialism and reinforces assumptions about the need to colonize 'backward' races. Since it defines their thinking about the non-Western world and examines the role played by the representations, this discourse supported more than a century of colonialism showing it as an apparatus of power and a process of spreading knowledge to the rest of the world.

Since they are concerned basically with the issue and theme of the Belgian and the British colonial rule in the African lands of the Congo and Nigeria, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* are two examples of the hegemonic discourse of the West. Both novels belong to the corpus of Western Victorian narratives that attempt to continue the colonial original tradition. Conrad's novella, derived from his experiences in the South Sea, Central Africa and Asia, and Cary's novel that centers on colonial relationships between the natives and the settlers are equally important in their 'redemptive' Eurocentric ideas, visions of the other and in colonialist tendencies about the blacks as inferior and construction of their land as a mythical place of frightful darkness.

Building upon an Orientalist reading of novels like *Heart of Darkness* and *Mister Johnson* in which theoretical concepts such as otherness and stereotyping, appear and are familiar in colonial literature, one can note that Conrad and Cary employ a kind of rhetorical strategy which foregrounds their subjective 'knowledge' about the colonized race. Indeed, in both novels selected in this study the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer is highly dominated by racial stereotypical representations in which the figure of the Other is dehumanized, silenced and made invisible while the image of the self is glorified, given a voice and made visible. These stereotyped and negative images and generalized views, attitudes made by the superior Occident are emphasized by racist and prejudiced portraits. Colonial fictions like *Heart of Darkness* and *Mister Johnson* created an abusive and distorted picture of Africa and its inhabitants that unfortunately carved images in the Western public imagination about Africa as "the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of



self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of night”<sup>8</sup>. These colonialist writers use racist images in order to stress their racial vengeance towards the black race. In Conrad’s novella, the Congo is referred to by Marlow as a mysterious, dark and wild place with a gloomy atmosphere. Equally the same is the image of Nigeria in the eyes of Cary who shows it in his social romance as an uncivilized and corrupt place for Westerners to settle in. Similarly, the degraded picture of the natives is also focused by these authors whose writings include images of Africans as evil creatures, inferior in both biological and intellectual terms.

Behind this fabricated knowledge about the other, Europe’s power is effectively further exercised by silencing the indigenous people in order to extend their hegemony and expand their territories. This idea tends to show that colonialism with all its forms and all its negative connotations is monitored through knowledge and power, thus, this colonial ‘ism’ functions as a discourse for its role in the production of hegemonic discourses that are concerned with the relation between opposed races under the light of the colonial period. Moreover this knowledge, through its representations of the Orient, as Said recalls, has contributed in many ways to the establishment of a set of binary oppositions identified by Abdul JanMohamad as a ‘Manichean Allegory’ that functions not only to denigrate the native but also “enables the European to increase by contrast, the store of his own moral superiority; it allows him to accumulate ‘surplus morality’.”<sup>9</sup> The Modern production of the ‘Other’, who is for Europeans the antithesis of themselves, led thus to an implicit self-permission to dominate distant territories and impose their rules on them. Both knowledge about the Other and power over them are closely related, fundamentally, because this knowledge about ‘them’, the inferior races, seeks to establish a colonial authority, which was according to the West, a historical necessity so that exploitation could continue under the guise of bringing light and combating ignorance as a part of ‘the civilizing mission’. In the spirit of Victorian novels like *Heart of Darkness*, it is clearly seen that individual authors who produce

---

<sup>10</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (London: The Colonial Press, 1899), p.91

<sup>9</sup> Abdul JanMohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature” in *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Autumn), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1985), p.84. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343462>.

culture support the colonial enterprise and participate in a coercive system of knowledge with which they are allowed to describe the Oriental cultures and societies.

The African continent has been involved in a long process of struggle to resist the colonial powers, whose impact has been deeply felt in social and cultural terms. However, even after being granted their political independence, the Africans have been struggling to register their sense of identity, to define their personality and the richness of their culture. As a result, along with the development of literature, the second half of the twentieth century was marked by the development of research in the field of African studies as an object of close examination, particularly from African scholars. The concept of post colonialism has emerged to refer to the study of the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized by taking into consideration the latter's status in the light of colonial ideology taking the post-independence period into consideration. In addition to its interest in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century European novels, the theory of postcolonialism has shown its concern with national cultures after the departure of the imperial power. Pioneers of post colonialism such as Frantz Fanon and later Ngugi and Edward Said have concerned themselves with such themes and developed the concept of post colonialism to deal with the cultural oppositions and to address the differences because of their awareness of the failure of the European theories to deal with the complex nature of cultures in post-colonial writings.

Contemporary African literature has been partly preoccupied with “revising” Western colonial works. In order to correct the prejudices inflicted, acknowledged creative African writers like Achebe have tended to convey a different image of them. Through the use of their pens, they have contributed to writing a literature committed to defending their race and culture. African agendas in literature involve an urgent need to show the realities of Africa in earnest, as they are, in order to put African values on a par with those of other cultures. Achebe's response to the misrepresentation of his society consisted in focusing on the themes used in colonial texts to debase African culture and rewriting them in a way to revise colonial history. So, through the medium of a post-colonial literature that expresses a sense of revolt and protest, he has striven to counter the negative pictures created by some European

writers such as Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary. He aims to ‘decolonize’ the colonialist discourse as a way to restore the ‘truth’ about his culture and to develop a discourse which would put in perspective the portrait of Africa made by European writers. This discourse is known in literature as a resistant discourse that has been adopted by postcolonial studies in order to challenge the discourse of the centre whose power was faced by a resistance of the periphery. As there was a need to write a new kind of literature free from the colonial hegemony, Achebe aims at creating an “independent local identity”<sup>10</sup>. This is why it is seen that the post-colonial writings stand in a contest with the colonial writings and their stereotypical representations.

Chinua Achebe, like other African writers, sees it important to give another voice to the Africans and give them a right to express their ideas through the use of a literature that mirrors Africa and Africans as they were in the past and as they are in the present. In all his productions, he refers to this elaboration of new knowledge of Africa with a realist African perspective in order to help his society to emerge, making African communities knowable and their traditional customs visible. His intention is to salvage the history of his people and write against the humiliating representations made by English literature which denied Africans their culture, their identity and even their humanity. Achebe’s attempt to create a literature specifically African, independent of Western literature, even if through the use of the same medium, that is the English language, intends to be actually not only a writer but also a teacher, an orator, a historian and a politician.

Throughout the pages of this dissertation, the focus will be centered mainly on Achebe’s commitment to ‘writing back’ to the English canonical texts. In both his novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the writer makes a ‘literary revolution’ in which he challenges the Western representations of Africa and clarifies its picture. His works were written as a response to Conrad’s novella and Cary’s romance that pushed him to claim that the African people had a philosophy that permitted them to value a culture of their own, that stresses their beauty and dignity. In order to reach his goal,

---

<sup>10</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2009), p95.

Achebe relies on a 'realist discourse' to give a clear and direct sense to the African way of life and behaviour. Through his sense of realism, an authentic image of Africa and its people is received by the reader, whose previous reading of western, stereotyped novels has misled him in his apprehension of Africans. His works concentrate on tribal life and the important role played by the tradition and culture of an African community. Using rhetorical elements such as proverbs, local idioms, traditional folktales, storytelling and oral tradition in literature, Achebe writes Igbo novels from an African perspective, and thus obliquely conveys his nationalistic and democratic feelings.

Gender issues became more importantly brought up in the twentieth century as they raise fundamental questions and develop a set of ongoing debates because they deal also with the notion of power and knowledge in the field of literature. The concern of this study lies also with the discourse of gender and the position of native women in both the colonizer's and colonized literature. Indeed, feminist discourse theory analyses the dehumanization and the representation of the 'subaltern' by both the imperial and patriarchal discourses. According to them, Third world women are affected, like men, by the coming of colonial powers who justify their mission by saving women from patriarchal oppression. However, instead of ameliorating their position, women have been the subject of 'a double oppression'. They suffer from the yoke of colonialism and patriarchy. Within the colonial discourse, the question of female representation has been investigated by many critics, like Spivak, whose notion of the doubly marginalized non white women stresses the negation, dehumanization and silencing of this category. Through a post-colonial feminist reading of Conrad's and Cary's works, one can see that the female figures are described with stereotypes and racial terms. This colonial novel exemplifies the western patriarchal gender roles in which women are given an inferior status. Moreover, the position of 'the second sex' in the post colonial African writings ignores what has been depicted by the West. Through a deep insight into the world of women from a post-colonial feminist reading, it is realized that the depiction of the figure of women in the African novels is varied. The female characters are shown as living in a patriarchal society where men are predominant and women are regarded as subjects silenced, somehow absent and

dehumanized. On the other hand, they are shown by writers as dignified characters and valuable actors in society's search for progress and welfare.

The principal aim of this dissertation is to focus mainly on the problematic relationship between the African writings and the Western narrative discourse. Showing it as a relationship between the East and West, the colonized and colonizer and the whites and blacks, the discussion also aims at enunciating how cultural knowledge shapes these relations. This comparative study of colonial and anti-colonial discourses will attempt to examine Conrad's and Cary's novels on one hand, and Achebe's on the other hand. Therefore, this investigation purports to dwell on a dialogue between four representative texts with a main focus on the portrayal of the colonizer and the colonized. Questions about the ways in which postcolonial literature can be considered as a means of showing the oppositional portrayal of Africa and Africans in the Western literature and questions of why the empire needs to "write back to the center" have crucial importance. I will show how the colonial discourse developed from the colonizer's point of view and examines the representation of the colonized in colonial literature and their negative picture of Africa in particular and the East in general. I will also investigate the way in which postcolonial literature tries to challenge those representations and tries to rewrite the story of Africa from an Africa-centered point of view. In effect, it is on the basis of Achebe's discourse that I propose to show the strategy used in African texts to counter Western prejudiced views, so as to 'decolonize' the colonialist discourse intended in order to silence the colonial subject. His discourse seeks to consider how the writing of post-colonial African literature realistically reflects the African practices and their way of life and bring into being a faithful picture of reality.

This discussion will be conducted with a frequent use of some key words that have been central to the postcolonial theoretical perspective such as racism, realism, otherness, gender, stereotypes, resistance, colonial discourse, African counter discourse, tradition. For this purpose, I shall refer to literary and philosophical theories that complement each other, namely Edward Said's theories of Orientalism as well as of Culture and Imperialism, Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, Frantz Fanon's

concept of nationalism, Gayatri Spivak's theory of double marginalization of women, Bhabha's ambivalence, Abdul JanMohamad's Manichean allegory and others as well. These concepts will be mentioned repeatedly for their significance in constructing the nature of the literary texts mentioned above. At the same time, I shall concentrate on the textual and comparative studies of the fictional works by using different approaches that can lead to an analysis of the Semantic/semiotic distance of opposition that exists between African and English texts.

The projected work contains two major parts that are divided into four chapters. The first part handles the issue of the colonial discourse in English literature, particularly in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Cary's *Mister Johnson*. The first chapter will bear on the Foucauldian concept of discourse with reference to the question of power, knowledge and how these notions are applied within the colonial discourse in the literary works selected. Furthermore, the position of the subject is worth mentioning with a connection to the colonial situation, experience and organization as portrayed with racial prejudices in the colonial fiction.

The second chapter will investigate the stereotypical representations portrayed by writers of Western canonical texts like Conrad's and Cary's. I also include in this investigation the reductive representations of female characters as silenced and dehumanized by the imperial power.

The second part of this dissertation is preoccupied with the anti-colonial discourse in African literature that was given birth with the publication of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The third chapter goes deeply into the heart of Achebe's novels and will center on the question of Achebe's realism, and his reaction to the misrepresentations with references to the strengths and weaknesses of traditional tribal life in Nigeria before and during the colonial presence. Besides, this chapter will take into consideration a study of the figure of women in Achebe's world as a part of a discourse on gender in which women despite suffering from the yoke of colonial oppression and the patriarchal marginalization, are respected.

The final chapter will deal with an analysis of the oppositional discourse as seen in the works of Chinua Achebe mainly *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* that represent an anti-colonial stance through the writer's usage of the English language, oral culture in proverbs, storytelling, songs and his focus on the resistance of the protagonists who are struggling to keep their traditions, in a period of transition and Westernisation.

# Part One

The Colonial Discourse In

The British Novel

Racism, Ambiguity and biased imagery



# Chapter one

Western Narrative Discourse:  
Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Cary's *Mister  
Johnson*  
Prejudices And Ambivalences

“Addressing themselves to a general public caught up in the enthusiasm of the overseas venture the generality of authors adhere strictly in their treatments of the African setting to an image of Africa which was in large part formed before they came to write their books.”

G.D.Killam

## Chapter One:

### Western Narrative Discourses: Prejudices and Ambivalences.

#### 1-Introduction:

Any study of the colonial discourse of the metropolitan European countries, as manifested in English novels, requires an introductory discussion on the meaning of discourse. In this chapter, I attempt to highlight the link between Foucault's concept of discourse with its dichotomy of power and knowledge and the bulk of literary works that were born out of the issue of colonialism and colonial legacy. I will try to focus attention on how Foucault was an effective, important and a crucial figure in the transmission of his philosophical ideas into the literature of different parts of the world and gave birth to a wide range of different theories in cultural studies, like that of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The chapter is based on two axes of study: the first one deals with the term 'discourse' whereas the second one evolves around the term 'Eurocentrism' or what is also known as 'colonial discourse'. The aim is to draw the reader's attention to the symbiosis between power and knowledge by using some relevant literary works to examine how the theory of discourse is developed through specific texts of the colonial era. A compelling source of interest for literary critics is the way in which writers of the white race have attempted to portray other races in literature. For such reasons, I will examine English attitudes towards Africa as presented by the English authors and works selected for this discussion.

First, reading the corpus of English novels about Africa from a modern African perspective in a different light of the twenty first century makes us see the extent to which they are highly problematic texts because of the racism detected between the pages. Writers seem to be writing from a typical 19<sup>th</sup> century racist European point of view. Thus, their novels were an example of the racism that prevailed at that time in the Belgian Congo and British Nigeria. Books like *Heart of Darkness*, *Mister Johnson*, *Passage to India* and others received many praises for their being 'modern' pieces of writing and great works of art ; however, changes occurred with the appearance of

various kinds of responses like that of the famous novelist Chinua Achebe who strongly stands against the content of these novels .

As follow-up to Achebe's polemical responses to Conrad's and Cary's misjudgments as well as their blunt racial discrimination, I will be dealing with the foundations of discourses about the African societies and cultures which contributed significantly to the establishment of a particular kind of perception of Africa, as reflected in the use of the African setting which is clearly present in most of the 'great' twentieth century works of literature. The latter contain the subjectively sketched images that portray Africa as a place of primitiveness, mystery, darkness and savagery as seen from a European eye. This racially constructed environment is a powerful sign of 'othering' in books in which the protagonists' arrogant attitudes against the 'Rest' of the world belong in reality to the author's deep conceptions of race and racial differences. These conceptions have shaped the readers' imagination concerning the notion of the Dark Continent. I will highlight in the following pages Conrad's view regarding his description of the Belgian Congo and Cary's portrayal of the British Nigerian Fada Station to foreground their refraction of the image of the above locations. Their treatment of the African landscape and atmosphere disclosed a subjective viewpoint, so their readers were directed to a partial judgement. There is indeed a gap between the real Africa and the land of imagination that caters for the European taste for exotica, and that was reflected in their writings.

A discussion on colonialism and imperialism is significant to this study since both novels selected are set in a the colonial era where powerful nations expanded territories to spread their colonialist ideology as well as their authority in the guise of bringing light and well being to people. As a theme widely discussed in colonialist writing and English literature in general, it reflects the colonial situation and the administrators' experience in the colonized lands of Africa. It is also worth considering that the bulk of these works is a representation of not only the colonized and his conditions but the colonizer and his situation and experience as well. The European representation of the self is based on a paradigm of superiority and also an ironical pattern of mockery and division of the subject races. This ambivalent structure

raises debates and opens a way to various kinds of interpretations on the part of scholars and critics in the field of postcolonial theory and criticism.

## **2– Reading Foucault’s discourse within the literary colonial discourse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century:**

In his well known seminal work *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault, the French philosophical historian and sociologist, comes up with a range of definitions which build a meaningful overview of what discourse means. Originally, the notion derived from the Medieval Latin term ‘discurses’ that denotes argument, conversation, speech, representation. This definition has become a subject of a continuous debate because of its various dimensions and senses. Foucault argues that discourse is characterized by having “the right to speak, the ability to understand licit and immediate access to the corpus of already formulated statements and the capacity to invest this discourse in decisions, institutions , or practices to a particular group of individuals”<sup>11</sup> and he follows by saying :“the term discourse can be defined as a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation: Thus ,I shall be able to speak of clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of history , psychiatric discourse”<sup>12</sup>.In other words, the term means a form of dialogue, a network of meanings and a system of written or verbal communication that embodies a set of beliefs which examines the relationships between different groups within a society and contributes to the shaping of their worldview.

Defining and discussing discourse is a crucial part of this study. As noted already, we can talk about different kinds of discourses, that of femininity, of colonialism, of race, of gender ...etc. As literature is a miniature picture of a society and a product of the cultures containing social, political as well as economic elements, it can be regarded also as a type of discourse and a part of it since it reflects the world and it is a project of how events are constructed in different settings. So, novels, as literary genres, have bits of discourses embedded in them. These literary discourses

---

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault , *Archaeology of Knowledge* (UK: Editions Gallimard,1969),p.76

<sup>12</sup> Ibid ,p.121

elaborate a form of ‘discursive system of representations’ of both the subject and the object, or what is called the self and of the other.

In fact, for Foucault, any society produces discourse and it is through it that the relationship between speaker and hearer can be established. Each group has its discourse, history, belief and way of living. In order to survive, it competes with other discourses which have counter ideas. Each group tries to impose its power and force as a discursive strategy to gain a hegemonic domination over the weaker group. More generally, postcolonial theory with its focus on both the hegemonic and Third World literary discourses is mainly preoccupied with the study of the competing discourses in order to reinforce the positions as well as the ideologies that lie inherently in the discourses of texts. The discourse which Conrad and Cary articulate through the use of their protagonists Marlow and Johnson have a political overtone and tendency which is clearly felt throughout the narration. This political overtone is expressed in the Europeans’ will to power in both the Congo and Nigeria. By nature, discourses are marked by a dominant exercise of power that decides what to be told and how to tell it and it is what makes us what we are in reality operating on quite different levels. Using his words “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere”<sup>13</sup>, Foucault shows the role of power in discourses in that its presence and existence defines the link between the subject and the object, signifier and signified which contribute to the formulation of what is known by ‘knowledge’ which seeks to show reality and look for the will to truth. The concept of power is important in the process of building and producing knowledge that reflects its determination of the conditions of representations. To express it differently, Western powers enable the production of a range of knowledges about other cultures which led to the establishment of a set of discourses and modes of representations to refer to them.

It is worth noting that this dichotomy of ‘power and knowledge’ is central to the seminal work of Foucault, who joins them together to make an elaborate idea which emphasizes that “those who have control of what is known and the way it is known,

---

<sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge* (Uk: Penguin Books, 1998), p93.

and those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not”<sup>14</sup> , and this is best illustrated in the relationship that ties together the colonizer and the colonized.

The phenomenon of colonialism and imperial legacy can also be thought to contain another kind of discourse since it reshaped the existing structures of the colonized group, marginalized them and built a Manichean world between the two halves, the ruled and the ruler, that constitute the colonial world. This idea is referred to by Ania Loomba who states that “ colonialism ,according to these ways of reading ,should be analysed as if it were a text, composed of representational as well as material practices and available to us via a range of discourses such as scientific , economic, literary and historical writings”<sup>15</sup>. Within the era of colonialism, the concept of discourse was used in an expanded sense to re-order the study of colonialism and to analyze the historical nature of the colonial powers by bringing together “the visible and the hidden, the dominant and the marginalized , ideas and institutions”<sup>16</sup> especially after its usage in books like those of Edward Said , namely *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and that of V.Y. Mudimbe called *The Invention of Africa*(1988) as well as *The Idea of Africa* (1994) and others as well in which they show that techniques of knowledge and strategies of power claim marginality in the field of postcolonial literary discourse. As a result, we see to what extent the analysis of discourse theory has far reaching effects in the conceptualization of the dominant imperial discourses. It shows how colonialism understands the non- Western world as a series of discourses collected through the means of literature.

The Western imperial ideology is obviously noted in history, science, literature, art and anthropology as a system of representations which are traced back to the early years of contact between people of different origins, cultures and histories. Colonial intentions and attitudes were first shown through traders, travelers, reporters and anthropologists whose first impressions were formed by exaggerated stories and subjective adventures about an unknown place and inhabitants. In general, non-

---

<sup>14</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin , *Post-Colonial Studies: The key concepts* .op.cit, p.72

<sup>15</sup> Loomba Ania. *Colonialism, Post colonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p 82

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p 45.

fictional works of art, history and anthropology about the other world appeared to represent the Eurocentric view of the colonized areas in general and Africa in particular. More importantly, there was a change and a transfer of these discourses on Africa into the literature of that time. A large body of literary works from different genres illustrates the idea of Western colonialist writing such as the texts of Conrad, Cary, Kipling and others that incorporate a colonial discourse and a Western epistemic model. Narratives like Conrad's *Heart of darkness* and Cary's *Mister Johnson* serve as a transmission of the colonizer's knowledge and culture. Thus, they are themselves presented as the result of a masculine exploration of unknown territories. Said has repeatedly asserted the role of the novel in the colonial and imperial enterprise of Western colonialism by saying that "stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world"<sup>17</sup>. It is true that the European novel was given light with the emergence of Europe as a leading power in the globe, it became a dominant form of writing in the nineteenth century and was given much importance in narrating the main concerns at that time and attempts to reflect the reality of the world of imperialism. In the cultural domain, the novel as "an incorporative, quasi-encyclopedic cultural form" and "a cultural artifact of bourgeois society"<sup>18</sup> is important in the elaboration of the British power and the formation the imperial attitudes and experiences. Consequently, their relationship with each other, meaning that of the novel with the British expansion overseas territories, is interesting as well as worth mentioning.

Characteristically, the imperial experience created a "cultural turn"<sup>19</sup>. It was at the beginning political; however, it changed to be also cultural. The ideas of political power were transmitted to culture, which was used as a part and a mode of knowledge as well as a powerful instrument of control and domination without causing a physical violence, but rather a cultural violence. Culture has the power "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

---

<sup>17</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. xiii

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 84

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism* (London: Longman, 2006), p. 116.

domain and beyond it too”<sup>20</sup> . It is through fiction that the European writers create an image – based on an imperial vision and colonial subjectivity that establish racial paradigms through strategies of stereotyping and othering. Some categories of novels render individual experiences into a part of literature. The novelists discussed in this dissertation had visited Africa and their written travel notes and diaries helped them in the portrayal of events in their novels. Both Conrad’s and Cary’s African novels, mainly *Heart of Darkness* and *Mister Johnson*, overwhelmingly are manifestations of cultural imperialism since they are “either the expression of a literary tourist mentality addicted to a nouveaumania whose easily jade sensibilities cry out for new supplies of exotica, or they are underhanded efforts to defend the Western imperialist, probourgeois status quo in the cultural domain”<sup>21</sup>. *Heart of Darkness*, first published in 1902, allowed the Polish –British writer Joseph Conrad to express his subjective experiences in the Belgian Congo River when he traveled there as a Master Mariner in the British Merchant Navy. His sea stories were a rich background to his fiction that influenced the Irish writer Joyce Cary whose literary novels about Africa especially *Mister Johnson* is set up from a male imperialist perspective translating his past days as an officer in the Nigerian Political service (1913-1916) into fiction. Both created a portrait of colonial life in fiction and a deep insight into the heart and mind of the Congolese and Nigerians who were distinguished from others through a series of false binarisms.

In his *Culture and Imperialism*, which was written fifteen years after *Orientalism*, Edward Said draws the link between the system of imperialism and the idea of culture. A link that puts into question the relationship of the metropolitan West and the Peripheral East and explains how the emergence of the literature in English as a cultural aftermath of colonialism led to what is known as ‘the colonization of the mind’. The latter was a process through which the culture and values of the dominant group are maintained upon the dominated who was not affected only physically but also mentally, psychologically and racially oppressed. As Edward Said claims, even if

---

<sup>20</sup> Edward Said , *Secular Criticism :The World, The Text and The Critic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1983),p. 9

<sup>21</sup> Jemie Chinweizu and E. Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (London:Routledge and KPI,1980), p7



the Africans were granted their political independence, Westerners have looked for other ways to invade ‘the Rest’ of the world and it was only through moral as well as intellectual spheres with a close regard to the culture and values.

All through my work, there is an attempt to show that there are authorial intentions in these master narratives which are directed toward European readers and concerned basically with how they think and how their superficial knowledge authorizes them to maintain a Western domination of the world. The use of discourse in those literary productions acts as a way to strengthen the imperialist beliefs about the superiority of the self and the inferiority of the other who is not even allowed to have a discourse of his own. This gives us a straightforward insight into the nature of the white male discourse which is obviously characterized by its controlling as well as delimiting manners that come from the ruling classes and the dominant groups which are represented in the colonial discourse theory by the colonial powers whose use of different discursive strategies cover the justifications of their policies. Using other words, the dominant culture has the power to construct the world in a particular way under the guise of knowing it.

As supporters of colonialism, writers of repute created works in which they try to make the world hear their hegemonic voices. These works form a literary ‘battleground’ that centers on a colonial relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Said notes that “individual novels can animate, articulate, embody the relationship, for instance between England and Africa.”<sup>22</sup> As they revolve around the era of colonialism, novels like those of Conrad and Cary could be said to include a kind of discourse called a ‘colonial discourse’. The latter was one of the most current issues in literary criticism in which a large group of theorists try to look for an appropriate definition of the term as indicating:

....a new way of conceptualizing the interaction of cultural, intellectual, economic or political processes in the formation, perpetuation and dismantling of colonialism. It seeks to widen the scope of studies of colonialism by examining the interaction of ideas and institutions, knowledge and power.....Colonial discourse

---

<sup>22</sup> Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism* .op.cit, p.91

studies, however, seeks to offer in depth analyses of colonial epistemologies, and also connect them to the history of colonial institutions.<sup>23</sup>

To a larger degree, this master discourse is defined as a specific kind of language or a body of observations which focus on historical imperialism that resulted in imposing master –and- subject relationships. Moreover, the dominant discourse brought by the West is an effective way to advance the morality of colonialism because of its focus on the subject races' behavior, gestures and modes of existence which are considered backward and requiring progress and civilization. In this form of studies, scholars explored literary works about the marginalized groups to understand the evolution of the myths of the 'Dark Continent' and the 'African Other'.

This type of theoretical discourse that is based on Eurocentric assumptions written in literature appeared to explore the attitudes of colonial writers who are a product of the colonial age. Their biased and fabricated narratives did not merely reflect what was going on in reality but helped to authorize and motivate the continuity of the empire. It seems appropriate to maintain then that these writers have a tendency to focus our attention as readers on the structure of power and on how the empire has set up a bureaucratic system that relied upon the exercise of power to dehumanize the subject races. This can be observed in Cary's *Mister Johnson*, where Rudbeck personifies the system of bureaucracy put in place by Britain in the colonies, and where the African protagonist's tragic outcome is mostly caused by its misapprehension.

In his study of *Orientalism*, Edward Said who extended Foucault's formulation of discourse theory establishes an important view concerning the project of power and knowledge bearing on the writing about the other and how such writing functions in the colonial literary, historical and anthropological texts. He comes up with a number of observations through which he tries to examine the occidental views imposed upon the Oriental subjugated cultures under the colonial authority and domination. When

---

<sup>23</sup> Ania Loomba. op.cit, p. 50-51

Said was asked in an interview about whether he was influenced by Foucault and what was his book about, Said replies by saying that in his *Orientalism*:

I was trying to look at the way in which a certain view of the Orient was created and accompanied, or perhaps was used to subordinate the Orient during the period of Orientalism beginning with the conquest of Egypt by Napoleon. And that's all I was trying to do I had nothing to say about what the Orient was really like. I said nothing about the possibility of resisting to it.....But in Orientalism, I never talk about discourse the way Foucault does in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, for example, as something that has its own life and can be discussed separately from the realm of the real, or what I would call the historical realm. I think perhaps one of the things of which I am most proud is that I try to make discourse go hand in hand with an account of conquest, the creation of instruments of domination, and techniques of surveillance that were rooted not in theory but in actual territory<sup>24</sup>

The meaning of 'the Orientalizing discourse' is linked with the European writers' intentions to describe the other world or what is called the Orient in terms of stereotypes. This construction in the consciousness of the Western mind shows the importance of knowing what others say about 'us' and how they see 'us'. Consequently, this resulted in the enlargement of the gap that lies between the East and the West and led to the birth of a dialogue between the 'object self' and the 'subject other' manifested in Western canonical works.

### **3- Heart of Darkness and Mister Johnson: Racism and the African Wasteland of Conrad and Cary's imagination.**

The politics of domination through cultural imperialism resulted in racial and hierarchal oppression. The refracted images of the subject races that were produced contributed to the building of racial classifications. The latter issue is the major focus of the hegemonic discourse that is based on the notion of race and colour, and which started to emerge at the very beginning of the European colonization of Africa through the literature with which colonists, writers and historians informed Europe about their cultural other. The racial discourse is constructed as a means of institutionalizing the

---

<sup>24</sup> Gauri Viswanathan , *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said* (UK: Clay Ltd,2004),p. 268 -269

domination of one race or group over another. Bhabha says concerning the issue of race:

Skin, as the key signifier of cultural and racial differences in the stereotype, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as common knowledge in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses and plays a public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies<sup>25</sup>.

Thus, the Eurocentric discourse is distinguished from other discourses by its colonialist nature and a belief in racial as well as cultural superiority, as can be seen in the language of the texts selected for discussion here. These texts contain racist formulas with which to characterize Africa and the Africans.

In the colonial time, race and the observation of other peoples was treated as an important issue and one of the essential norms to define Europe's relationship with the rest of the world. This type of behaviour is Euro-centered, but also geared to induce the belief in the supremacy of Empire. As a result, this idea found its way to all parts of the world and, in particular, to the European countries which 'accepted' the hegemonic role over other territories. The hidden motives behind the spread of the racist theories and ideologies became clear: they were used first to protect the Europeans' political and economic interests in Africa and second to make a distinction between the white and the black, the colonizer and the colonized.

Certainly, the majority of modern writers reproduced attitudes that were based on obvious racial assumptions of the colonial age in the field of literature and literary studies. So, we can say that racism was not only an inherent feature of the colonial social life but also of the cultural life which is manifested in the form of literature in general with all its genres. In fact, writers like Conrad and Cary share an extreme "ism" which is an accurate portrayal of the belief of Europe and the Western world. They were preoccupied with the Orientalist myth of superiority and the idea of racial differences between groups. Jonah Ruskin mentions the important role that racism plays as a major theme in modern English literature stating that "Modern novelists-

---

<sup>25</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p.78

from Conrad to Lawrence, from Kipling to Orwell, from Forster to Cary-have been preoccupied with race, with cultural and national conflicts”<sup>26</sup>.

Much importance was given to the debate concerning Conrad’s and Cary’s racism and their personal prejudices that are propagated in the novels they had written about Africa. Their reputations as supporters of imperialistic intentions have been the object of a vast corpus of study since their works of fiction have provided visible evidence for their racist thoughts. The present study on this issue focuses upon the question of whether these writers (Conrad and Cary) carry a hegemonist discourse and to what extent they convey their own perceptions. To answer these questions, I try to examine Conrad’s and Cary’s novels through their portrait of the African landscape and people of the Congo and Nigeria.

The facts that Conrad and Cary collected were historically distorted, resulting in the creation of stereotypical images through the deployment of derogatory racial terms and racist connotations. They had selected limited concepts, repetitive words and had depended on a distorted, manipulated and falsified language that supports the imperial domination and tradition to justify the European control of Africa, to cover their hegemonic as well as capitalistic intentions and to suit their racially superior attitudes. It is worth noting that the racial discourse felt when analyzing this kind of narratives demonstrates how the language of racism, as a kind of rhetoric, is an instrument through which the colonizer intends to prove his strength and superior status as well as the subordinate status of the colonized. It is also a means through which the colonizer expresses his vision of the world around him as inferior. It is obvious that Conrad and Cary try to implement their ideas as true by envisioning Africa as they imagined it in their Western traditions, not as it resembles the African reality since they neglect “to hint however subtly or tentatively at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the opinions and actions of his characters”<sup>27</sup>. These writers were unable to prove that what they had described was true and real. By making up a link between the

---

<sup>26</sup> Jonah Ruskin , *The Methodology of Imperialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 45

<sup>27</sup> Chinua Achebe , ‘An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart Of Darkness’ in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 9, N°1, *Special Issue on Literary Criticism* (Spring, 1978), 15-04-2012,p. 7. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088351>.

imaginary scenes and the real world through the employment of symbols, these authors contributed to the publication of more symbolical stories rather than realistic ones influencing the readers' way of thinking. This is what Achebe mentions in an essay, stating: "When a writer while pretending to record scenes, incidents, and their impact is in reality engaged in inducing hypnotic stupor in his readers through a bombardment of emotive words and other forms of trickery, much more has to be at stake than stylistic felicity"<sup>28</sup>. In their prejudiced narratives, there is neither accuracy nor truthfulness in reporting details and descriptions. However, the truth in these novels lies in the authors' narrow-minded observations that make known the European mind towards the African world. Both Conrad's and Cary's visits to the Congo and Nigeria were brief and insufficient for them to collect such information about the African land with its customs and practices, as to form an accurate judgment concerning Africans. This limited knowledge led them to depend on the hegemonic myths of empire and the prejudiced opinions in their descriptions of the locations and the people.

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* have been among the widely read English novels that have been considered as racially biased pieces of writing by modern literary critics like Ian Watt, Hunt Hawkins, David Denby, Peter Brooks, Wilson Harris, and Patrick Brantlinger and others. However, among them, the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe is known for being the prime and firm denunciator especially after having delivered an oral lecture at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in February 1975 entitled "An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart Of Darkness" in which his angry, aggressive tone was a response of an African scholar against the contradictions of a literary tradition that places the continent and its people in a negative way. His response expressed an urgency to fight against this racism towards the East and has a great impact in questioning the vision of *Heart of Darkness* and reflects the manner in which he views Conrad and his book.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p 3-4. Besides, other works have noted firmly this idea of representation versus reality. In his *Modernism and colonialism: British and Irish literature*, Michael Valdez Moses shows that some colonial authors "prove unable to capture faithfully the distinctive topographic features and atmospheric conditions that pertain in a non-European environment" (Durham and London: Duke U P, 2007), p.55

Besides, it is rightly noticed in one of his interviews that he was also distressed by Cary's novel *Mister Johnson* in which racist distortion dominates the pages. He said "reading Cary impelled me to show what was false in him"<sup>29</sup>.

Achebe responds to what was written by doubting Conrad's and Cary's narrating and storytelling ability and talent as modern writers. He famously acknowledges their books to be "offensive and totally deplorable" novels that are one example among many that ultimately contributed in one way or another to the Western discrimination against Africa. Adding to this accusation, Achebe labels Conrad as "purveyor of confronting myths"<sup>30</sup>, and a "bloody racist"<sup>31</sup> whose narrative is primarily based on stereotyped images that continue to dominate the western imagination and have an influence on the way readers and others viewed Africa. Moreover, Achebe's attack extended to Cary and his novel *Mister Johnson* that was highly praised in the American Time magazine of October 20<sup>th</sup> 1952 as the best tale ever written about the African continent and its people. The Nigerian author criticizes Cary for his writing under the influence of traditional colonial time full of pride and superior attitudes; however, "a good writer might outgrow these influences, but Cary did not"<sup>32</sup>. One could endorse Achebe's criticism of Conrad and Cary as racists and imperialists<sup>33</sup> since their stories attribute no moral or cultural validity to the people with whom they come into contact.

Readers of the large bulk of Western colonial novels are confronted by the prejudices and racism towards Africa which constituted the core of the myth of 'the Dark Continent'. Taking into consideration these conceptions and systems, we can see how they influenced the description of the African picture that was the subject of

---

<sup>29</sup> Bernth Linfords, *Conversation with Chinua Achebe* (Jackson: Up of Mississippi, 1997), p.8

<sup>30</sup> Achebe Chinua. 'An Image'.op.cit,p.4

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.9

<sup>32</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2000),p38

<sup>33</sup> Using a balanced tone throughout his essay of *Orientalism*, Edward Said makes some interesting remarks about the imperialistic point of view that lies behind Cary's novel. His contextualization of the book touches on the same pattern and subject that Achebe focuses on in his essay of "an Image of Africa". Besides, in his seminal work *Culture and Imperialism*, Said views Conrad as an ignorant racist whose "Western view of the non-Western world is so ingrained as to blind him to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations. All Conrad can see is a world totally dominated by the Atlantic West, in which every opposition to the West only confirms the West's wicked power, that Conrad cannot see is an alternative to this cruel tautology" (1994: p18).

ethnic stereotypes. The latter are the product of colonialism and a construction of the West whose desire to write tales about colonial Africa forms new impressions about it as “the other world, the anti-thesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality”<sup>34</sup>. As pointed out by Said in his *Orientalism*: “the Orient was almost a European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences”<sup>35</sup>. The imposed images and the different number of representations that Conrad and Cary draw in the readers’ minds of the Congo and Nigeria filled the pages of both books. My objective here is to compare the discursive landscape of the two texts, and to show how the treatment of Africa enhances their respective themes. I will examine the extent of each writer’s use of the African stereotype, the symbolism and imagery used to illustrate their ideas and how this stereotype acts to prevent a realistic portrait of Africa emerging. In addition, the gloomy atmosphere in which Africa was symbolized will lead to problematic questions about what this darkness exactly stands for.

In Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the writer focuses his attention on the portrayal of the African landscape during the late 1880s. The Congo River, a Belgian colony and the centre of colonial partition in Africa in 1880, was chosen as the main colonized setting of the novella that started with the construction of a fundamental standard picture of the African continent as a dark continent. Through his traveling, the protagonist Charlie Marlow provides us with a map gradually built upon his own subjective observation till he completes his mapping at the end of his journey which was a trip from one station of the ivory trade company to another in search of Kurtz. This mapping out of the African continent is a way to “possess”, “to tame”, “exclude and erase the ‘inferior’ culture and create landscapes of progress where order replaced chaos”<sup>36</sup>. In other words, mapping a continent and filling its blank space with interesting details brought by civilization demonstrate the European power over other

---

<sup>34</sup> Achebe Chinua. ‘An Image’.op.cit , p.3

<sup>35</sup> Edward Said , *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Group, 1989), p.1

<sup>36</sup> Bush Barbara. op.cit, p. 150



racism, their ambition and their desire for wealth as well as a means of categorizing bodies of knowledge and facts.

From the beginning of the story, the main character recalls his childhood memories when he had a strong desire for exploration shown in his “passion for maps” (HOD: p.11) in which “there was a vast amount of red..., a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch.” (HOD: p.14-5) These different colors on the map correspond to the colonial territories made on African land by the hegemonic European nations. However, Marlow was attracted by the Yellow one, “the biggest, the most blank” (HOD: p.11) which is situated in the centre as a heart of the world with blank spots and areas on it. The writer neglects the continent and abuses it as an “unknown planet”(HOD:p.51), undiscovered new setting, untouched by the means of civilization and technology since it is eliminated from the map of the world .In the eyes of the West, Africa was not something of interest but only an illusion and a claim for penetration and discrimination. They were ignorant of what this ‘strange world’ was. This is the reason why they imagine it as a place of wilderness and “delightful mystery”(HOD:p.12) that must be explored and mapped by travelers, adventurers and colonialists whose primary mission was to fill the vacant spaces by imposing their power and by “grabbing” what they could get. It is true that Conrad gained from the discourse of colonialism an image of the African nature appearing as “a prehistoric” (HOD: p.51) and a forgotten past. This sophisticated vision of the Congo River was undoubtedly referred to by the protagonist when he was narrating the story of his mysterious trip in the river as a journey back in time and this move makes him feel as if he is leaving one world known for its whiteness, technology and enlightenment and entering another different one of blackness, poverty and ignorance. By presenting Africa in this way as a projection of the European self, the author reinforces the Western racist project against the ‘Other’ as a part of what Said calls cultural imperialism and reduced Africa to a backdrop and a background only for Europe’s supremacy.

Admittedly, the novella which was written in a symbolical style presented the African nature in a negative way through the use of a chaotic atmosphere with

grotesque features surrounding the stations. Although the darkness is European since colonialism has left behind it only troubles, the image of blackness is pointed everywhere in the novella as just a stereotyped view from the perspective of the colonizing Europeans towards not only Africa but the East as a whole. The classically Orientalist association of the Congo with a gloomy atmosphere is, in my opinion, done for the purpose of presenting the other as different from the self. The description of Marlow's surroundings with symbols and imagery of negative connotations tends to convey the mystery of a land that becomes spiritually evil rather than physically inhabited. In Conrad's vision, the Belgian Congo was a land deprived of light, devoid of Western enlightened civilization as well as progress and dispossessed of culture, religion and history. Using other words, Africa is synonymous with adventure, death, weakness, darkness, irrationality while European nations are similar to survival, life, light and .This binary opposition rationality led to the establishment of a Manichean relationship between the two societies. This Manichean allegory is shown through the writer's drawing of a parallel at the beginning of the story between the Congo River and the Thames that "has been one of the dark places of the earth" (HOD: p.7) during the days of the Roman conquest till being released from their exploitation. The former setting is seen as bad place of darkness, horror, savagery while the latter is a good location of light, tranquility, civilization and modernity so, they are measured against each other despite the link that ties them together like "an interminable waterway"(HOD:p.5) that facilitates the trading of ivory from the colony to the metropolis. These contrasted representations make us suggest that the prototype of the relation between the colonizer and the colonized has remained unequal.

This mood of darkness continues to grow during the narration as the Nellie moves further up the river from the light into the night till Marlow reaches Kurtz in the Inner station symbolized by "the heart of an immense darkness"(HOD:p.111) to quote from Conrad's last words. Most of Marlow's journey in the novella takes place on the banks of the Congo River, which was described as "a mighty river...resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tale lost in the depth of the land" (HOD: p.12).So, through

Marlow's eyes, this river is compared to a snake which is the traditional symbol of evil, sin and immorality.

Moreover, Conrad goes even further in his description without forgetting to present his readers with the nature of the African jungle whose portrayal evokes a dream-like image. In reality any forest is characterized by its being colorful; however, in the case of *Heart of Darkness*, the writer chooses the African forest as having a dark-green color with "the smell of mud, of primeval mud" (HOD:p.38). In parallel, he adds to this picture an opposite scene which is that of white surf. This description of "unearthly" (HOD:p.51) land becomes progressively more important as a symbol of wilderness and extreme deprivation of Europe's 'Manichean other' which is oppositely regarded in reality and ironically described in the fiction. Throughout the novella, the author writes a story, using what Abdul R. JanMohamad calls a Manichean allegory an "opposition between subject and object, self and other, white and black"<sup>37</sup>. This juxtaposition exemplifies the relationship that brings together Europe and Africa<sup>38</sup>.

Another aspect that attracts postcolonial readers of *Heart of Darkness* is Conrad's contribution to silence the nature of the Congo. He deprived the land of its voice, thus from its meaning and life. In the third part of the story, "a formidable silence hung over the scene". This silence reflects Marlow's pessimism and gives readers an illusion of wilderness. From a larger view, this symbolizes the willing of the superior object to silence the inferior subject or in other words the Western desire to dehumanize the East and to set it as "a foil", to borrow from Achebe's.

More importantly, in Conrad's vision, the story focuses on the theme of Africa as a place of moral influence where the human spirit becomes evil and corrupted like what happens to Kurtz. According to the writer, this savage nature stripped the white man of his civilized manners, replacing them by backward protocols. At the beginning

---

<sup>37</sup> Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, *Manichean aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (New York: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), p. 263

<sup>38</sup> This idea of Africa as a binary to Europe is central in Achebe's essay and also in Said's *Orientalism* which is defined as the construction of the Orient in the Western consciousness. In his study, he voices out that the Orient as a geographical location and the Oriental as a human population is defined in terms of Europe and the West in general who by gaining a political power thought that it is their duty to establish a Western definition of the East. Said goes further in showing that the Orient is a product of both Western imagination and colonialism.

of the tale, Kurtz, a colonial agent, is talked about with a great admiration. His portrait is drawn as “a very remarkable person” (HOD: p. 27) whose objective behind his coming to the Congo River is to enlighten the way of the “brutes”. However, his idealism, his desire and the humanitarian ideals he claims make of him a god on earth, full of pride and will to power and domination. His description turns to be negative as “an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else” (HOD: p. 36). He becomes an exploiter of ivory worshipping it as if it is God and a discriminator of African natives as it appears in the grove of death where human heads surrounded him. Instead of being a protector, he loses his moral stability by going native as an evil spirit whom the wilderness has taken and “sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation”.

These forms of land representation can be found not only in *Heart of Darkness* but also in other texts, particularly those written by colonial authors. After his retirement, Joyce Cary wrote a number of novels set in the African continent: *Aissa Saved* (1931), *The American Visitor* (1932), *The African Witch* (1936), and *Mister Johnson* (1939). The latter is a social romance and a reviving piece of racial stereotypes that captures the atmosphere of British Africa and particularly British Nigeria at a time of settlement, unlike Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* which is set at a time of discoveries. As a white European novelist, Cary gives a picture of how the colonialists, superficially, saw the colonized geographical landscape and atmosphere of “idealistic, paternalistic despotism”<sup>39</sup>. Their feeling towards Africa /Nigeria is marked by a superiority complex in the barbaric land. In accordance with fact, throughout the story, the writer does not glorify the primitive life; instead he depicts the Nigerian society that is symbolized by Fada Station, given stereotypical images of the jungle and the slums. He says:

Fada Station has been on a temporary site for twenty years, because nobody has had time or interest to move it. It stands in the thin scrub which covers two-thirds of the emirate; that is, all but the river valleys and swamps, where high jungle and tsetse fly are still more discouraging to progress of any kind. (M J:p.17)

---

<sup>39</sup> Abdul JanMohamed, *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*. op.cit, p.18

The space occupied in this story is an old poor place with “no bungalows”, “old bush houses” (M J: p.17) with bad conditions of corruptness, ugliness, poverty, ignorance simplicity and lack of civilization. The writer creates an imaginary scene of the station as temporary, covering valleys, swamps and a jungle as if they are the only characteristics of the Dark Continent. We see how his vision of Africa is somehow reductive since he describes all that is African with negative connotations and associates it with primitiveness and chaos which are, in the Western imagination, the conditions that appear in the East only.

In such social romance, Cary truly sees the world that he writes about as another world cut off from the light of civilization, a world whose nature is barbaric, a “place where only restraints exist, a place that has to be given freedom in all its forms because it does not nurture it itself” (M J: p. 87). Places like the station frighten people who try to avoid it since it seems to them a supernatural, strange and dangerous place. The foreign novels about Africa symbolize the continent with physical wilderness in which the myth of supernatural powers and evil spirits is the mode of believing.

In *Mister Johnson*, we are provided with different analyses of the meaning of Africa through native eyes and the colonizer’s eyes. Via Johnson, who had visited parts of Nigeria, the author aims at drawing an unromantic picture of the towns that surrounded the station. When he decides to go for a visit to Bamu’s house situated in ‘Jirige town’, Johnson is faced with “an atmosphere of boredom and disgusted resignation” (MJ: p.29). Surprisingly, he encounters a desert; trees burnt down and rubbish things thrown. All these confronted images of chaos demonstrate the European stereotypes of Africa that were portrayed to the public through the use of literary works. It also charts the misconceptions that surrounded the West which, in reality, had no real insight into the East and any deep knowledge, except for only clichés which strengthen the other and keep authority in the hands of the superior.

Furthermore, Celia, the colonial wife, delivers to the readers a sketchy and artificial picture of Nigeria. Her oppressive gaze is as it was, an “act of epistemic

violence”, using Frantz Fanon’s words in his *Black Skin, White Masks*.<sup>40</sup> Actually, she is a ‘blind’ woman who relies strongly on her imagination and racist observations. This can influence the readers of the book and contributed to a negative shaping of their minds. These obstacles prevent the public from seeing well the truth regarding the description of Africa which is provided to us via subjective and distorted images. While visiting the African landscape and sights with Johnson, Celia ‘enjoyed’ Nigeria and claims to ‘know’ it. For her, this alien continent is “simply a number of disconnected events which have no meaning” (MJ: p.103), it is “simply a native town. It has been labeled for her, in a dozen magazines and snapshots, long before she comes to it” but after spending only seven days she “cannot bear even to look at Fada from the distance....She takes her evening walk into the bush to avoid its smells, and when its drum tunes wake her at night, she swears at them and demands that they shall be stopped” (M J: p. 111). In these descriptive words, we see how her discourse about this continent shifts from a utopian view constructed through her readings to a pragmatic standpoint. The latter emphasizes the fact that this Nigerian setting is created only for inferior races to live in and is restricted only to them and this brings out the inferiority of the other (periphery) in relation to the self (center). Her tourist imagination creates what Kadiatu Kanneh says:

A particularly feminine interpretation of scenes which demand deeper political and sociological knowledge, the kind of knowledge which Celia, as a woman, cannot be expected to possess: ‘Questions like these, about institutions, politics, government, generally have for Celia nothing to do with truth, but only with a set of ideas’ (p. 110).<sup>41</sup>

Celia’s humorous, unsuitable and shallow look is a historical and political attack against the East and an evidence of the author’s lack of grace and his failure to show the true beauty, art, creativity, and values that characterized Nigeria as a part from a vast and rich African continent. Paradoxically, through both characters, Celia and Johnson, who are visiting the village, Joyce Cary delineates the African art and craft through the use of scenes of women making water-pots, weaving cotton, and plaiting

---

<sup>40</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*. Trans :Charles Lam Markmann (UK: Pluto Press,1986 ), p.xxv

<sup>41</sup> Kadiatu Kanneh , *African Identities: Race, Nation and Culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures* (London:Routledge,1998),p.26

mats. All these activities charm and please Rudbeck's wife who wonders, "how charming, how picturesque, how interesting" (M J: p.110), "how marvelous Africa is" (M J: p.102). However, despite such positive scenes, the writer claims the inability of natives to reach a highly developed way for art making that contributed to the beauty of the place. According to him, the natives' ideas regarding art and civilization are neither imaginative nor realized because of the absence of liberty of mind which is guided by colonial ideas as well as claimed values.

Eventually, the representation of the African atmosphere by non African authors led in many ways to the creation of false stereotypes and wrong assumptions. For British writers, the setting of Africa in their 19<sup>th</sup> century novels emerges as a symbol of their racist and arrogant views. All that they pretend to present as real in their texts is only a sum of fallacies to cover their colonial authority. Ann McClintock comments on the idea by saying: "between the text and its historical origins.....there has an area of ideological shadow"<sup>42</sup>.The latter is referred to in order to mean the racist ideologies which prevent the writers from portraying the realities as they are on ground.

#### **4- The colonial situation, experience and organization between irony and ambivalence:**

Nineteenth century English literature about Africa is not only concerned with the African natives but also with the European colonizers. In other words, the colonial experience was not one felt by the ruled; instead it was an important means by which the ruler identity is constructed as well.

This part of the dissertation aims to indicate how imperialism and colonialism, as two major historical contexts of a great value in the postcolonial study, were perceived in the literary discourses written during that period. Throughout my work, the notion of empire is focused upon as a part of cultural representation since the writers discussed are preoccupied with the exercise of power which is included as a kind of myth in their writings. Their focused attentions serve the purpose of self-mirror by making the white colonizers see their self -image.

---

<sup>42</sup> Anne McClintock ' "Unspeakable Secrets":The Ideology of Landscape in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*' , 25/07/2012, [http://www.english.wisc.edu/amclintock/writing/Unspeakable\\_article.pdf](http://www.english.wisc.edu/amclintock/writing/Unspeakable_article.pdf) p1

The starting point that gave birth to the history of colonialism was the Age of Discovery when Europe witnessed a development in the Industrial Capitalism resulting in a need for jobs, markets and raw material extraction. It was a time to turn attention towards lands from Africa, Asia, Australia and other Third World nations. Armed with superior industrial technology, European powers agreed upon sharing the African Continent without their presence in the Berlin Conference and this act of partition marked the beginning of the colonial era in Africa. The outcome was that Britain took hold of some parts of Africa including Nigeria while Belgium occupied The Congo region. Both imperialistic empires represent the European enterprise whose real motives were hidden behind humanitarian ideals and under a web of idealistic terms.

Arguably, at that period of time, it was necessary to bring justifications for their actions, putting forward voluminous studies: political, economic, social and religious. Whereas economic historians saw in the conquest of areas a way to put an end to the economic crisis and depression of the 1880's, politicians saw it as a kind of competition and rivalry between the powers of the world which had a desire to extend and more importantly to remain a source of power and authority and advancement. Interestingly enough were the religious and social reasons presented by missionaries and humanitarians who supported this policy with the pretext of Christianizing, civilizing and educating the inferior races. In their eyes, it was their burden as well as a sacred moral duty to save those 'ignorant millions'. All these kinds of arguments which mask the realities of European expansion overseas arise from the well known evolutionary foundation with its racial basis on the supposedly superior notions of the survival of the fittest. The latter were those capable of ruling and maintaining the world order and achieve the highest level in the pyramid of the evolution of species.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> European imperialists have relied on anthropological and scientific theories in order to justify their enslavement of Africa and then its colonization. Darwinian ideology is one of the major scientific and literary ideologies which rests on the basic belief that the origin of species is traced back to an ordered evolutionary ladder with the European white man at the highest level because of the civilization they encounter to help the primitives (Africans, Asians, Australians, South Americans and others) who are at the lowest stage. This dichotomy between 'superior high' and 'inferior low' races was well ingrained in the mind of the West to whom the writing of Conrad and Cary, for example, meet their Victorian desire and pleasure. It also postulates that the fittest is to rule and the strongest is to dominate the weaker groups.



Behind the realities on ground and the ideals claimed there is a huge gap, a discrepancy between appearance and reality among the white colonialists that shows the ambivalence of the imperial system and the dual face of the colonial enterprise. Paradoxically, the West's attempt to engage Europeans in the process of helping the East, bringing to it light and civilization, turned into a procedure of gaining power and wealth over the Rest of the world.

In order to get a full understanding of this process, one must first consider a short biography of Conrad which might be necessary because Conrad's life experience was equivocal and as literature is about human experiences, Conrad was inspired by what he witnessed as both a formerly colonized subject and a colonizer in his work that both supported and criticized colonialism. The writer was Polish by birth during which Poland was under Russian colonization. Living in a colonized country, the members of his family heavily suffered the yoke of colonialism and were exiled by the Russian authorities because of having a father as a member of the independence movement in Poland. After leaving Poland, Conrad became a British subject, growing within an environment where racist as well as imperialist ideas had profoundly marked his thinking. His "Polishness is the key and the source of better understanding of many aspects of his art, including his African novella. The racial stereotypes in his descriptions of Africans were traditional opinions about Africa that Conrad came across in England"<sup>44</sup>. This shows that all the circumstances that he went through are reflected in his way of writing. Consequently, his colonial stand is a result of his support of the British occupation of Africa whereas his anti-imperial attitude is derived from his background as an oppressed Polish citizen and his personal misery and pain under the Russian occupation.

*Heart of Darkness* functions as a fictional work dramatizing the consequences of the scramble for Africa, and situating the Congo as the centre of the imperial project, characterized by human exploitation and land devastation. The Belgian Congo was under the imperialistic reign of King Leopold II (1878-1908) when the novella was

---

<sup>44</sup> H.S Zins , "Joseph Conrad and British Critics of Colonialism" in *Pula : Botswana Journal of African Studies* , Vol.12 , nos 1 7 2 (Botswana: Department of Political & Administrative Studies,1998) , p.65

published, first in a serial Blackwood Magazine. It is a close examination of the nature of the West itself and an inquiry into the depth of the white administrators whose self – image, that embodies within it superficial ideas of civility, ambivalent meanings and interpretations as well, is also questioned by Conrad.

Through the character of Marlow, a representative of a trading company whose role is to collect ivory and gold, the reader discovers the European experience in the heart of Africa. When he comes to the Congo River to join the trading post, he was unaware of the hidden realities of exploitation and bad treatment of the natives. Driven by his aunt’s ideas that colonialism is only a way of “weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways” (HOD: p. 18), the protagonist thought that his expedition to dark Africa would be a sort of western light that will humanize, improve and instruct the African inhabitants who were out of what is called civilization. His belief that this enterprise is glorious and worthy of praise is exemplified by his position at the beginning of the tale when he mentions the greatness of the company by saying: “It was the biggest thing in the town, and everybody I met was full of it. They were going to run an oversea empire, and make no end of coin by trade” (HOD: p.14). It is through the use of a prejudiced and high pitched tone within his discourse that the narrator illustrates his acceptance of the process of conquering foreign lands as something natural and justifiable. In his own philosophical mind, that reflects Conrad’s , it was an efficient and benevolent plan with a mission to civilize. Limited by his imperial mentality, Marlow adds to his imperialist ideas a racial vocabulary that stresses the dichotomy between the periphery and the center. The latter is deemed rational, civilized while the former is irrational and reinforces to the gloomy aspect of the continent.

However, his discourse starts to be shaken when he puts his first steps in the Congo and changes completely after his visit to the three stations. Characterized by its usefulness, Marlow’s trip gives him more knowledge about the greed, horror, and hypocrisy of the system he takes part in. Furthermore, it enlightens his way and changes his first ideas about the colonial pursuit as a positive ideology free from corruption and wickedness, and now discovers an exploitative system of “robbery with

violence, aggravated murder on a great scale” (HOD: p.10). His series of observations lead him to construct a general definition that makes it apparent that:

The conquest of the earth , which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much (Ibid)

Readers of these words realize the employment of another kind of discourse by Marlow which differs from the previous one in the tone as well as in the content. The moralizing voice towards the audience aboard the Nellie and towards the readers across the world raises the profound doubt and confusion regarding his convictions. He witnesses the waste and cruelty that are caused, and shown in

....the corruption of the Trading Society, the forced labor and the grove of death, the depopulation of the countryside, the indiscriminate murder of the natives, the senseless firing into the bush, the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, the Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, corrupt administrators, and Kurtz himself <sup>45</sup>

Marlow confirms that the system they were serving as active participants in is superficial and masked under names of civilization and modernity. By reducing the European activity to a “sordid farce” (HOD: p.61), a “philanthropic pretence” (HOD: p.78) and “rapacious and pitiless folly” (HOD: p.82), Conrad not only depicts the colonial enterprise in the Congo as evil, but also as having exploitative purposes behind the image of the sword and torch. These motives are well demonstrated in the narrative through the portrayal of a range of European agents who are prototypes of the empire in the colonies where “the profound hypocrisy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes..... goes naked”<sup>46</sup>. There are in the

---

<sup>45</sup> Allen Carey-Webb. ‘ “Heart of Darkness, Tarzan”, and the “Third World”: Canons and Encounters’ in *World Literature, English 109 in College Literature, Vol. 19/20, N°. 3-1, Teaching Postcolonial and Commonwealth Literatures* ,18-04-2012,(College Literature, Oct., 1992 - Feb., 1993),p123. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25111993> .

<sup>46</sup> Karl Marx , *The Future Results of British Rule In India, On Colonialism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers ,1968),p.88.Admittedlly,the true nature of Western society is revealed in the colonies where the colonial agents committed acts of robbery and violence profiting by that from the resources for their commercial gain and exploiting the natives to increase the labor force .Even Jean Paul Sartre refers to the relationship of the colonizer bureaucrats and the colonized in the colonies and states that “In the colonies the truth stood naked”(J.P. Sartre, Preface to Fanon *The Wretched Of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press,1963),p.7

novel ambiguous pilgrims whose strong western subjectivity turns their noble mission of moral values into an urge to gain something for themselves like ivory, gold and fame by “snapping” and grabbing the local wealth with brutal manners. They turn out to be hunters of the natural resources with no moral purpose but only as a way to satisfy their greed for wealth and power. The manager, the accountant, the harlequin are spiritually corrupted Europeans with hollow minds that prove their incompetence, inefficiency, greed and cruelty. Introduced by no proper names but by titles of their occupations, these members of the company officials symbolize the loss of the European individual identity and their moral failure in a world dominated by a hunger for authority to strengthen their dominant position over the subjugated races.

The obscurity of Marlow’s discourse when narrating his story resembles in a way the colonialist change in motives and speculates on Joseph Conrad’s ambivalence in vision<sup>47</sup>. Undeniably, the author maybe is criticizing the colonial rule in general and the Leopoldian system in the Congo in particular presenting its agents as mentally corrupt, portraying its organization, situation and experience as deteriorated by selfish purposes that darkened the colonized instead of civilizing them. At the same time, his piece of literature is embedded completely in contradictory facts about the system presented as useful, humanitarian, superior and therefore efficient. Claiming the superiority of the whites over the blacks has resulted in the use of racist stereotypes concerning the land and its inhabitants. All the arguments that are combined in the tale bring the reader to a debate and reflection over the nature of Conrad’s writing and the ambivalence of his style and tone, which make the story oscillate between drama and comedy.

The ambivalent situation of the colonial experience in *Heart of Darkness* is not only symbolized by Marlow and the agents but Kurtz, the enigmatic leader, is also an embodiment of these contradictions. Born from a half English mother and a half

---

<sup>47</sup> Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* develops in an essay under the title of ‘Two Visions in Heart of Darkness’ a systematic connection between the two kinds of discourses in the novella. The first one affirms the goodness, superiority, rationality and effectiveness of the imperial enterprise; whereas the second claims colonialism as a source of corruption and racial oppression that produces grotesque representations of the African land and inhabitants far from vivid details. This second vision is sympathetic and emotional towards the natives. For further information, see pp. 20-35.

French father, Kurtz is made a representative of Europe with its corruption as well as decadence when it comes to occupying the Congo basin. Through a portrayal of his ambiguous charisma, we realize that he represents the idealism of the West as it discloses its growing desire for wealth and power. In the eyes of Marlow, Kurtz does not succeed in uniting his idealism and principles with his trading goals within an imperialist context. At first, he plans to help bring civilization, modern morals and European enlightenment to the Belgian colony in order to make reforms in it. However, in fact, his moral plan gives way to his thirst for fame, exploitation of the natives and hunger for resources. In other words, his good intentions to offer a better way for the natives are affected by his assertive authority that changed his human goals to selfish purposes. In the stations, he is looked at as an evil man because of his blind worship of ivory and for what he committed in the grove of death, where human heads surround him and where blacks are chained and pushed to work as slaves. At the end of the story, we see how he is characterized by being hollow since he has never been satisfied but always called for more and claimed his possession of everything. He keeps saying “My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas” (HOD: p.98) and this shows his loss of moral stability and his transformation to a state of barbarity.

The confusion in Kurtz’s discourse is shown in the report he has written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs in which he appears as a man with moral codes but when he writes about the superiority of the white race over the native blacks, he somewhat claims his adherence to the European values that led to his destruction and death.

Ironically, Conrad reverses the Manichean dichotomy that stresses the darkness of the African jungle and the evilness of the natives. In contrast, he associates the darkened surroundings of the Congo River with the heart of white colonists and their unethical behavior. Consequently, it is not the Africans that are evil in the eyes of the West but Europeans like Marlow, Kurtz and the other agents who are the evil forces of the colonial world. Instead of spreading light, they are deploying the darkness that invaded the colonies during and after colonialism. Behind his ironical tone, the author

delivers a serious message that stresses the barbarity of the Western civilization that is behind the failure of the white men.

Joyce Cary's novel *Mister Johnson* is also of an equal importance. Compared to Conrad's novella, Cary's novel appears as a 'weaker *Heart of Darkness*'. It is also noted that Conrad has been a negative influence on Cary who seems to have imitated the Conradian way of writing. Although they are not of the same category of narrative, since the latter is an adventure story while the former is a social romance, both novels present similar features concerning the subjectivity of the colonial administration in Africa and its ambivalent attitudes.

Cary's ambivalent visions seem to be an outcome of his Anglo-Irish origins. Despite the fact he felt closely related to the Irish since he was born in Ireland, Cary served the British Empire which was behind the rule of large parts of Ireland in the past history. He joined the colonial administration of Nigeria during the First World War and fought in the ranks of the Nigerian army, supported by the British force, against the Germans. In spite of his Irishness, he remains faithful in his imperial relationship with the former British colonizer of Ireland. This dual relationship of love and hate for Britain gives Irish and English dimensions to his novel *Mister Johnson*.

The novel is set at a time of British indirect rule in West Africa, precisely Nigeria during the 1920's. According to this system, it was the duty of Britain to preserve and also to develop the country through economic strategies by the establishment of roads, bridges and trading posts and also through political plans by relying heavily on the Nigerian co-operation of local chiefs who were used in order to apply the colonial authority. However, this noble mission created a more autocratic system whose greedy and destructive nature deconstructs more than constructs. Here lies the ambivalence of colonial activity which the book describes.

Cary's *Mister Johnson*, as noted earlier, provides an insight into the realities of the British colonial administration in Nigeria and seeks to illustrate the imperial mentality through its juxtaposition of comic and dramatic passages. The writer shows

how colonial agents had pretenses of civilizing the natives and colonizing them for their own benefits, thus, confirming the British self interest and their inadequacy.

One of the fundamental images of the imperial project in Nigeria is that of Britain as a provider of civilization and peace in her colonies. The majority of the administrators, including Cary, believed that on the whole colonialism was good for Africa because it brought the 'light of civilization' to those who seemed blind to see it. Through the character of Jude Harry Rudbeck, a district officer who has lived in England all his life, the reader is introduced to the imperial project as a business venture. His fondness of progress and westernization contributed to making him a lover of road construction illustrating by this the colonial mentality of that time. Thinking of himself as an empire builder, he has a desire to "plan and build a bush house, a bridge, or a market" (MJ: p.64) and inspect the Dorua road, "a good road in Fada, a motor roadway up north" (MJ: p.66), into the wilderness. However, what is ironical about this agent is his inability to think of original ideas himself and instead he relies upon Johnson, the naïve native clerk who discusses matters of finance with him providing him with useful solutions. Symbolically speaking, this character represents the truth regarding the failure of the colonists who are helpless and ignorant of African matters more than the natives themselves. It is true that he seems humane and reasonable but in reality he is greedy, profit seeking, just holding some power to transform the wilderness into modern villages.

Quite suggestive is Rudbeck's contribution to the ambivalence of the novel. In fact, the ambivalence lies in his 'risking' acceptance to bring Johnson again to the station because by doing that he shows his too friendly and emotional side. However, at the same time, his choice builds for the reader an image of his lack of a total consciousness and carefulness to let a native interfere in their affairs, confuse them and divert their projects. The writer indicates clearly that Rudbeck's 'imperial responsibility system' along with his 'political wisdom' are covering his lack of understanding the purpose behind empire. It is noted also that when reading Cary's African novels, the reader falls into an ambiguous space and a complex discourse

which dramatizes the failure and the inability of the British administration to rule, although finding themselves in a position of authority and power.

As an important aspect of the colonial project and an interesting central activity in the novel, road building is a metaphor used in order to explain the contradictory results of bringing civilization. In fact, it raises a debate in the narration because of its dual, crucial and destructive benefits. The novel questions whether the road can be a good developmental means for Fada, and does not create by this a range of different perceptions held by the characters of the book. Undoubtedly, some British officials, like Rudbeck, and other residents like Old Sturdee whose ideas influenced Rudbeck, view it as an instrument of economic development that will bring a dramatic increase in trade and other benefits when connecting villages together. Through the eyes of these characters, the author shows that building a road, “any road anywhere, is the noblest work a man can do” (MJ: p.52) and thus, stands as a symbol of the beneficial side of the colonial project. However, although it brings prosperity to the region, it is behind troubles and harm in Fada. Both Waziri and the Emir refuse the idea of establishing a motor road, since they look at it as a way of bringing confusion, chaos and breakdown. They argue that it brings much more harm than benefits since it will bring strangers to the village and increase crimes. Even Blore, a district officer, considers it “to be a ruin of Africa, bringing swindlers, thieves, and whores, disease, vice, and corruption, and the vulgarities of trade” (MJ: p.51). His complaint about the negative aspects of the road is an indication of the destructive face of the imperial activity and the competing ideas inside the same system. In order to improve it, Johnson suggests the method of embezzlement to gain funds from the treasury and this is the way that changes him from a man of ideas and creativity to a robber and a destroyer. It is true that Johnson commits this kind of crime for the sake of improvement and under the cover of progress but he forgets that the British are only benefiting from his capacities and will never help and tolerate his illegal practices.

Cary makes it clear that the road is an illustration of the artificial figure of colonial ideology since it symbolizes equally the good and evil of the colonial administration in Nigeria. He also through the employment of colonial characters, like



Rudbeck, Blore, Gollup and other natives standing with them like Johnson, highlights the struggle of civilization and the ambivalence of colonial administration behind the standards of power and domination. In the narrative, Cary looks at the Empire

As a system of manners anchored in social/bureaucratic codes coming under increasing stress during the interwar period..... (he) tends to draw our attention as readers to the structure of power, so the focus on the surface of social existence-to the coded nature of English life in the colonies and the consequent failure of British rules to compass adequately the reality of life for Britain's colonized subjects-tends to make the inadequacies of official codes the ironic center of the drama.<sup>48</sup>

He emphasizes the fact that despite the wealth of the British Empire, finances were not sufficient for the continuation of their 'work'. The plight of the administrators and the financial troubles they come across during their mission of improving the Africans are faced by the colonial agents everywhere in the alien world. When facing a shortage in finance, administrators such as Rudbeck become unable to carry out developments to the extent they like and he is obliged "to pay out of my own pocket" (MJ: p.77). Cary, like Conrad, attempts by using on the one hand satire and humor and on the other seriousness to emphasize the real obstacles the West encounter in its mission to civilize the East and more importantly the double standards involved during the process of colonization. In fact, they have ambiguous claims which had left the Third World countries, like Nigeria, underdeveloped.

Due to many problems of communication and finance, some agents ended their time in Nigeria disillusioned, isolated, and highly ambivalent in their views. This is the case of clerk Johnson, an African civil servant who works as an administrative clerk in the lower echelon of a British office, and is meant to symbolize the ambivalent discourse of a mimic person with his reproduction of the colonists' assumptions, habits and values. Thinking of himself as a British member, Johnson seeks to glorify the 'centre', Britain, by saying 'our' standards and 'our' institutions. Although he has never gone to England, and has no intimacy with the governor, he keeps praising England and the king singing in a patriotic tone: "I belong for the King-I'gree for the

---

<sup>48</sup>Daniel Bivona , *The British Empire Literature 1870/1940 and The Administration of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1998) , p. 159

King.....England is my country, dat King of England is my King” (MJ: p.40). However what is ironical is that these songs in favour of England are recited in the West African tradition and with “an impromptu dance....This is as it should be at any native dance” (MJ: p.36). Besides, he gives parties in his house that show his link to the African mode of life. On the other hand, the comic of his attitude lies in following the colonial precepts that reflect their power and prestige. Thus he intends to turn his wife Bamu into a ‘civilized’ lady, as a way to prove his ‘superior’ status in Fada. He says:

Oh, Bamu, you are only a savage girl here-you do not know how happy I will make you. I will teach you to be a civilized and you shall do not work.....Oh, Bamu, you are a foolish girl. You don’t know how a Christian man lives. You don’t know how nice it is to be a government lady (p14)

His promises to provide her with a better life mirror the British colonialist’s fallacious statements that are hidden behind the realities on ground.

All this devotion to England is clearly shown in his reverence to Rudbeck who is ‘a good friend’ and his claim to establish friendship with the other colonial agents. Just like them, the character of Johnson carries with him a colonial discourse which is emphasized in the way he talks about how to improve Fada, and in the way he cooperates with Rudbeck concerning the building of the road. The latter thus is made a symbol of progress and civilization, in part with Johnson’s creative assistance. Cary’s characterization of Johnson is meant to show that this native man shares with the colonizer the same belief in civilization. His gaze towards the people like Waziri and The Emir, who reject the idea of building roads is an ironical gaze which conveys his view of others as “...not civilized.....don’t understand that people must have roads for motors”(MJ: p.95).To him, the colonial system is an economically based system which works straightforwardly without creating troubles but favorable conditions.

Despite these glories that Johnson praises and fondly admires throughout the story, he betrays the British Empire with its superior culture. He is described by the writer as a bribe taker after accepting Waziri’s bribes to keep him instructed with detailed information about Rudbeck’s papers. Actually, Disloyalty to the British is the

obvious source of his contradiction. The latter is the result of “the intermixture of a primitive mind and a progressive European mental attitude” which is “bound to produce an absurdity, whether tragic or comic”<sup>49</sup>. He is stuck in an “in-between space”<sup>50</sup>, between his African native origin and the British new manners. However, in reality he is a stranger to both groups, the Fada people and the colonialists who were responsible for his rise and for his downfall since he is killed by ‘his best friend’ Rudbeck. As readers, we look at him as a perpetuator of the colonial legacy and also a victim of it.

Eventually, like Conrad’s adventure story *Heart of Darkness*, Cary’s social romance *Mister Johnson* is also to be read as an ambivalent novel but through the use of comic not gothic elements. As from the historical scene, the colonial situation is highly ambivalent in its mission and claims, the literary production of *Mister Johnson* seems also reflecting the facts via the characterization of Johnson and the colonial agents whose contradictory behaviours conduct to a more complex discourse resolved only by means of reading and viewpoints.

## **5- Conclusion:**

It seems appropriate therefore to conclude that the process of colonialism affected not only the physical and economical sectors in any colonized country but also the cultural side. The colonization of the mind or what Edward Said named Cultural Imperialism is manifested in the 19<sup>th</sup> century European novel that established a discourse about the ‘Other’ based on their superior ‘power’. The relation that tied these two elements is related to the dichotomy between the colonizer the colonized. In a more elaborate way, the discourse of knowing ‘the other’, ‘the East’, ‘the Orient’ succeeded in producing power over them.

Literary kinds of prose fiction from the metropolitan centre like those of Conrad and Cary construct in the knowledge of readers a colonial discourse that strengthens the political realities and the racist ideologies of the time. Through sets of experiences,

---

<sup>49</sup> Michael Echeruo , *Joyce Cary and the Novel of Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing Company,1973), p. 20-21

<sup>50</sup> Bhabha Homi , op.cit, p.34

Conrad and Cary tell a story from inside the Empire showing the authority of the system and its effects on the 'truth' in their mapping of the self and the other. The latter is described using racially charged elements that put Africa (Nigeria and the Congo River) in the margin of the world with a darkened atmosphere, an ugly, evil and corrupt environment. The former is portrayed with ambivalent attitudes that both celebrate and satirize the colonial situation as well as experience in the colonies. The novelists believed in the Western idealism of the colonial enterprise that brings enlightenment and civilizing ideas which are in reality inefficient and a failure.

This study of the portrayal of Conrad and Cary's experiences from a colonial point of view through their speaking for the White self and Black other creates an unequal power relation that contrasts two opposite worlds under the name of a Manichean division that provide us with fallacious African views and self-righteous colonial values.

# Chapter two

## Europhone Novels Stereotypical Representations And Manichean Oppositions

“Racism often functions as a displaced or surrogate class system, growing more extreme as the domestic class alignments it reflects are threatened or erode. As a rationalization for the domination of “inferior” people, imperialist discourse is inevitably racist; it treats class and race terminology as covertly interchangeable or at least analogous. Both a hierarchy of classes and a hierarchy of races exist; both are the results of evolution or of the laws of nature”

Patrick Brantlinger

## Chapter Two:

### **Europhone Novels: Stereotypical Representations and Manichean Oppositions.**

#### **1- Introduction:**

In this chapter, I shall examine the way in which the Orient /the East /the Africans have been looked at in fiction and how they have been handled by colonial authors such as Conrad and Cary. The aim is to highlight the problematic relationship between the colonizers and the colonized within the colonial context as manifested in both of their canonical works. Racial stereotypes is an important concept in postcolonial theory that refers to “a careless or offhand remark that is deemed offensive or demeaning”<sup>51</sup> based on negative images, generalized views, attitudes and behaviour made by the dominator about the dominated. Colonial narrative texts establish a strict division between the white settlers represented as the self and the black natives seen as the other. These two groups were separated in terms of specific physical and psychological traits making of the other negatively represented while everything associated with the self is positively portrayed.

This investigation of the contemporary British attitudes towards Africa and its inhabitants is well developed through the use of theories that have been applied to understand how the other is constructed, Orientalized, using Said’s words. This tendency to identify the other in demeaning fashion is attributed to the misconceptions that circulated in the colonial age.

Moreover, the discussion is intended to analyze and deconstruct Conrad and Cary’s textual masculinist discourses which reflect the colonial patriarchy and hegemony. It is via a post-colonial feminist reading that Western patriarchal gender roles are exemplified by way of binary opposition between the African Black women and the Western white ones. Readers can observe that the former group of female characters are described with stereotypes, occupy minor roles and are given inferior

---

<sup>51</sup> Hugh Mercer Curtler, ‘Political Correctness and the Attack on Great Literature’ in *Modern Age* (Summer /Fall 2009), p.277.

subordinate status while the latter, on the other side, are a symbol of European power, idealism and knowledge.

## **2- African natives: from a discourse of silence to a discourse of childishness.**

European prejudices in cultural literary production are illustrated by references to the African land as a Dark Continent. However, this popular geographical myth extends to physical and psychological myths in which authors celebrate their superior white nature while they degrade the other - 'inferior' - black race. Using other words, in addition to the stereotypical representations of Africa as a 'heart of darkness', the colonial texts focus on the description of the natives negatively as a way to present the inferior other. Both Conrad and Cary concentrate on a Eurocentric characterization of Africans that serve as a means to confirm their racist stereotypes thus spread the hegemony of the colonial enterprise over the colonized. Arising as a central issue from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *Mister Johnson*, the colonial misrepresentation of the African race is painted to empower the hegemonic European role, knowledge and power, to facilitate their evaluation as superior, and to influence the readers' perceptions since the power of the British Empire is shaped by the belittlement of the colonial other.

As the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe maintains in his famous essay 'An Image of Africa', "the most interesting and revealing passages in *Heart of Darkness* are about the people"<sup>52</sup>. According to him, black characters are visualized as the core of the novella for their importance in the debate of the native representation in post-colonial literature produced by the colonizer even if they are rarely seen but everywhere felt. Achebe refers to Conrad's treatment of the Congolese humanity with a set of analyses regarding famous scenes which point out the proscribing signs of Conrad's racist tale.

---

<sup>52</sup> Chinua Achebe, 'An Image of Africa'. op.cit, p.4. For a better understanding, this idea is also well elaborated in *Conrad's Fiction as Critical Discourse* in which Ambrosini Richard observes the dual function of the narrator in *Heart of Darkness*. According to him, Marlow is on the one hand trying to reflect the land features of the Congo River and at the same time the people's traits and way of behavior. He says: "The frame narrator has a double function in the first pages. His most explicit function includes the describing of the setting (the way he stresses the "bond of the sea" introducing the characters" (Richard Ambrosini, *Conrad's Fiction as Critical Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.88.

## **2 -1 Heart of Darkness: the negation of the Congolese.**

Through his journey in the Congo River, Marlow, the protagonist narrator, expresses racist and prejudiced measures about the black natives whom he confronts from the beginning till the end of the tale. We are introduced to the Congolese black physical features and manners with negative, detailed and stereotypical portraits. He looked down at them with repugnance considering them as “enemies”, “criminals” (HOD: p.22), “creatures” (HOD: p.84) “grotesque masks” (HOD: p.20) and “moribund shapes” (HOD: p.24) that are deprived of proper names and also denied human qualities. As a part of the colonial discourse, this Western novel ‘otherizes’ Africans and imposes on them different kinds of stereotypes that construct them as savage, ignorant, evil, exotic, primitive and barbaric with supernatural powers. When Marlow begins his trip towards Kurtz’s Inner Station, the fear and uneasiness from the other, make him misjudge and distance himself from them. From the coast, he observes “black fellows” with “the white of their eyeballs glistening”, “bone muscle” moving the boat with “a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement” (ibid). These pictures and ideas of Negro Africans are not Marlow’s conceived views but are painted as a product of an accurate record of the past historical colonial period where it is recognized that the inhabitants of the Orient lived in a status of primitive barbarism, savagery and cannibalism. It is behind the beliefs of the time that the protagonist can draw a generalization of the barbarian nature of the colonized using stereotypical descriptions of what he encounters.

Even the portrayals of both the Cannibals and the fireman are distant from the cultural and historical reality since they are used by the writer only to imply the superstitious uncivilized characteristics of the African race. The Cannibals, a stereotypical nickname, are dealt with to depict frightening savages who starve to death without complains but who produce voices that shake the silence of the jungle. However, in general, Conrad makes illusions to cannibals in literature without encountering them personally in his real trip to the Congo and it is here that we see the writer prejudging a race of being cannibal through “greatly exaggerated, if not fabricated outright.....[that was] highly unreliable and seldom [if ever]based on



confirmed evidence”<sup>53</sup> and pre-conceived ideas. The other instance that shows the cultural stereotypes used to reduce the continent into a spiritual and superstitious space that lacks any form of culture and civilization is the fireman. This specimen has great abilities in firing and maintaining the boiler with no human genius but, instead, with superstitious capacities. Marlow claims that this ‘chap’ has been ordered to do this work so as not to get the evil spirits angry and look for a way to revenge.

In most cases, the marginalization of the natives is associated with their skin colour, that is, the blackness that alienated the Africans from other races. Statements which constitute racial words like “black”, “negro” and “nigger” filled the pages of the novella. Marlow sees “dark human shapes” (HOD: p.87), “sulky niggers” (HOD:p.43), and “black shadows of starvation and death” (HOD:p.24). All these instances confirm that “certainly Conrad had a problem with niggers”<sup>54</sup> since he frequently points out this racist kind of name calling throughout his tale. The problematic question is why are they described offensively?

Quite clearly, it is because of race and cultural differences that the European man wants to establish himself as belonging to a different type and this served as a dividing borderline between two separate opposing categories: The European civilized colonizer and the African primitive colonized. This distinguished classification that sharpened the enmity and tension between the metropolitan center and the colonized periphery in the postcolonial era is stressed by Abdul Jan Mohamed. In his work, he exposes a set of relations under what he calls the ‘Manichean Allegory’ in which ,by quoting Elleke Boehmer, “images of the native, alien , or other , reflected by contrast Western conceptions of selfhood –of mastery and control , of rationality and cultural superiority , of energy, thrift, technological skillfulness”<sup>55</sup> . In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad develops a clear dichotomy between the superiority of the object ‘us’ (Marlow, Kurtz and the other white pilgrims abroad the Nellie) and the inferiority of the subject ‘them’ (the natives).While the Europeans are categorized as superior, civilized and

---

<sup>53</sup> Keith Booker, *The African Novel in English: An Introduction* (Oxford: James Currey , 1998), p.12 (emphasis added)

<sup>54</sup> Chinua Achebe, ‘An Image of Africa’. op.cit, p.10

<sup>55</sup> Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p77.

sophisticated, the natives ,on the other hand, are portrayed as savages, barbarians and inhuman. This binary opposition in the novella draws sharp contrasts that empower the discourse of the Occident and the Orient.

Furthermore, the relation between the exploiter and the exploited in an imperialistic world is highly developed in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which is read from the perspective of today's postcolonial period as a novel about the exploitation exercised over the weak colonized. Being certain that there is a camp of natives hidden in the dark, Marlow and the other white pilgrims keep invading mysteriously the jungle till they approached a rocky cliff where a group of black and naked people, are moving and running in the Company station and other six men kept in chains with no resistance under a monopoly surveillance of a white guard carrying a rifle. They

(...) advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps.....each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking. (HOD: p.22)

Witnessing this scene of the inhuman slavery of Africans at the hands of the whites resulted in the beginning of Marlow's discovery of the black reality as suffering victims of the Belgian exploitation. Another example of the evident cruelty against the black race is in 'the grove of death' where the protagonist, by means of his observations, meets Africans working and starving to death, being ill-treated and forced by white agents to do hard labour. He depicts their misery at a time when they were dying slowly

(.....) crouch [ing], lay[ing] , sat[ing] between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinking to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light (....)The work was going on. The work! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die. They were dying slowly-it was very clear(....)Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient ,and were then allowed to crawl away and rest.(HOD: p.24.emph added)

All these instances are best illustrations of what the political theorist Fanon theorizes in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* in which he criticizes the use of the natives as subjects of the brutal white exploitation and challenges the colonial discourses brought

by the incident of colonialism .With references to the colonial French period in Algeria, Fanon generalizes the racist nature of the metropolitan colonizer who functions the role of the 'master' to whom the 'servant' is no more than raw matter subjected to violent practices and harsh exploitation.

However, despite the obviously noted inferiorization of the other/the Orient by the use of strong, erotic, dehumanizing and pejorative language that exposes Marlow's 'objective' descriptions, sympathy is apparent in some passages where the narrator comments about the pitiful state that the blacks are in. The move from the North down to the South permits him to see "the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of a hot desire" with "all the attitudes of pain" (HOD: p.23-4).He suddenly changes his discourse to a less brutal one contradicting the fact that they were criminals as well as enemies and proves that "they were dying slowly-it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now" (HOD: p.24).Consequently, he finds it suitable to give one of them biscuits to eat. Even when he approaches Kurtz's Station, he points out the contrast between his imaginative thinking and his real life observations. He faces men from the prehistoric period "cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us" (HOD: p.51) with "wild and passionate uproar" (ibid). Here we see Marlow as an ironic commentator whose ambiguous representation of the black race reinforces his doubts about their inhumanity. Their cross-cultural contact proves that they do not lose their control even in case of hunger, they do not try to harm the whites or to eat each other but, on the contrary, they show restraint.

Most importantly, Conrad's animal imagery is another highlighted instance of his racism and superior feeling. In order to impose on the dominated inhabitants power and strength, he aims to make them believe that they are inferior because of their less human nature. Even if he acknowledges their humanity in some excerpts, he at the same time compares them to animals such as ants, hens, hyenas, horses, dogs, apes, bees...etc. Through the pages of the novella, the Congolese are not human beings but rather formless shapes and elements with no humanizing traits that make it impossible to distinguish one from the other; for, they are all alike. In his first encounter with

them, Marlow notices that one of the natives went off on all-fours towards the river to drink and then die under the sunlight. This detailed description resembles in a way that of a quadruped more than that of a human. In addition, other similar repeated images of men who have “short ends behind wagged to and fro like tails” (HOD: p.22) and others who “howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces” (HOD: p.51) are drawn in the pages of *Heart of Darkness* in order to convey the animalistic behavior which places the Africans at the low end of the Darwin scale of human evolution.

Through Conrad’s discourse of silencing the other, the native subjects are denied the capability of language producing because of their indigenous individuality. While the Europeans communicate using English syllables, the Congolese have no other means of transmitting their messages except via a loud cry, short phrases, murmurs and violent shouts. This Manichean opposition of the black silence versus the white voice is used by the author as a way of marginalizing the ‘other’ and postulating white superiority. This idea is elaborated by Ivan Kreilkamp who thinks:

For Conrad, the perception of disembodied voice pointed the way to groundbreaking innovations in literary style and form, but it also seemed to represent a grave danger to human agency and authorship. The discourse surrounding the invention of the phonograph claimed that, in seizing a human voice as a thing apart from its origin, one might resist mortality itself. *Heart of Darkness* draws on this celebratory strain in thinking about sound and voice at the end of the century, asserting that the voice without a body might offer access to new philosophical insights, new literary innovations. But this novel also offers a pessimistic vision of the voice without a body as a demonic agency, a sign not of progress but of an altogether new kind of inhuman "horror."<sup>56</sup>

This quotation highlights the importance of words and the discourse of speech in maintaining political power against the marginalized race. According to him, to have a voice inside distorted bodies is a dangerous fact in the vision of the other who becomes a source of horror using Kurtz’s last words.

---

<sup>56</sup> Ivan Kreilkamp, ‘A Voice without a Body: The Phonographic Logic of "Heart of Darkness"’ in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 40, N° 2 (Ohio: Indiana university Press, Winter, 1997), 11-05-2011, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3829202> . p. 213-214.

Besides, this binarism is also an operating device seen in the colonial imperialist novels that were inspired by works of theorists like, for instance, Foucault whose idea of the 'forbidden speech' is implemented and materialized with a careful attention in Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*. When reading the latter work, readers meet with Africans who are ignored, not given a space to exist and to emerge, resulting in the wideness of the gap between the colonized and the colonizer who both find difficulties in mutual comprehension as well as in communication. However, the linguistic competence exists obviously in the dialogue of some natives like the headman whose dialect is no more than some pidgin sentences. Apart from these instances of "incomprehensible frenzy" (HOD: p.51), the general atmosphere is dominated by a frightful silence and repelling voicelessness that reflect the natural landscape especially the qualities of the wilderness and of the dark jungle itself.

Quite often throughout the narrative, they are described in the natural scenery amongst the leaves, near the river, along the shore. In that sense, the contiguity of the natives to nature is simply a relation between the Congolese people and the African land they inhabit. More than that, in order to make of Africa an incomprehensible, inferior and mysterious place, we find images of people degraded and dehumanized. Marlow first senses "the smell of mud, of primeval mud" (HOD: p.38) and sees a group of men "as though they had come up from the ground. They waded waist-deep in the grass" (HOD: p.84-5). Once again, this link of people with their surroundings reduces them to a lower status because they are born out of the earth.

## **2 -2 Mister Johnson: Stereotypes of the Nigerians.**

Similarly to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Cary's *Mister Johnson* is an African based novel and more precisely related to Nigeria in which the revival of racial stereotyping is very clear. In this literary piece of work, fallacious apprehensions and prejudiced images about the other are based on Western colonial subjectivity, Eastern superficiality and British 'superiority'. Cary, like Conrad, tends towards prejudiced descriptions of African people as a declared justification for the British Imperial expansion and aggression; however, there are notable differences between the two authors in their style of representations. The discourse of silencing the Congolese that

Conrad adopts in *Heart of Darkness* becomes in *Mister Johnson* a discourse of ridiculing the Nigerians by their alleged childishness and infantile manners. Through a close reading of Cary's novel, it is noticeable that English novels about Africans evolved gradually, marking changes in the authors' perception of the other race. Whereas Conrad writes about silent primitive Congolese people at a time of discoveries, Cary writes about talkative childish Nigerians at a time of settlement.

More precisely, the book is an understanding of otherness through a negation of their morality, intelligence and creativity. The writer classifies Nigerians in the category of 'them', writing by that a novel which is a manifestation of Orientalism since Edward Said's view of the Oriental people and the racialized other is clearly mentioned in Cary's work. The Palestinian critic famously maintains that the process of colonizing the East resulted in the creation of a constructed zone named the Orient which has always been defined as a group sharing negative features that have never been equal to those of the Occident. He emphasizes the common ground of the colonizers, who despite their different nationalities, orientalize the Orient as "a living tableau of queerness."<sup>57</sup> They consider the Oriental as "the other who is everyone else except me"<sup>58</sup> through an accumulation of both power and "the grid of Western thought and imagination"<sup>59</sup> in order to make of him always a member of an inferior subordinated race.

In his novel, Joyce Cary reflects his tendency to look at Africans as tribal men through the attitude of characters like Rudbeck, Blore and other Europeans whose dual love-hate relationship with the natives is very much like that of a 'god' with natives, boss with servant, superior with inferior. In the procedure of road building, the masters think that the laboring forces are useless savages to be beaten and urged to work at every opportunity. However, unlike the Congolese, the Nigerians are more conscious about the exploitative policies which are hidden behind the veil of development strategies. At the beginning, some naïve villagers voluntarily collaborate

---

<sup>57</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*. op.cit, p.103

<sup>58</sup> V.Y.Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (London: James Currey, 1988), p.12.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

with the whites in the construction of the road but they turn into subverters against the British rule and corrupters of their claimed white angelic ideals. Realizing that their work will come to an end soon, they refused to work seriously again. Some of them come in to clear only a few yards, some to work for days, according to their fancy” (MJ: p.177) while letting only the ‘professional gangs’ toil. This European dependence on the natives makes them dream of taking “the first essential step out of the world of the tribe into the world of men....and come to believe that they are engaged in some important and glorious enterprise” (ibid). Nonetheless, their dreams are far from the reality in which these people are no more than ‘dirty savages’ in the eyes of their masters who do not truly care for them but keep seeing them as inferior and incapable of looking after themselves. All these examples taken from the novel regarding the issue of the native’s exploitation and the settler’s bureaucratic relation are at the core of Césaire’s discourse against the colonial regime that establishes “no human contact “between the colonizer and the colonized” but “a room only for forced labour” which resulted in turning “the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver and the indigenous man into an instrument for production”<sup>60</sup>.

Through a series of distorted, unrealistic images of the Fada people made by Rudbeck , his wife and others, Cary aims to change somehow the picture of Conrad’s slaves , showing a panoramic picture of the natives of Fada who are judged to be barbarians, peasants and “bloody pagans” (MJ: p.170), “who have never been outside the village before....have never seen a motor and think of a road as a foot track.” (MJ: p.177) From a consideration of these various images, it appears that in Cary’s *Mister Johnson* the world described by the writer is full of unreal, flawed pictures that add to the inferiority of the Nigerian inhabitants. The latter are seen “as motionless as lizards” (MJ: p.62), “bush apes” (MJ: p.115), “a hen”, “a scorpion in a crack” with “an insect face” (MJ: p.18) as well as “crab’s eyes” (MJ: p.21) and “naked bodies, the twisted

---

<sup>60</sup> Aimé Césaire , “Discourse on Colonialism” in Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed) , *African Philosophy: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1998), p.226

limbs, the babies with their enormous swollen stomachs and their hernias” (MJ: p.111). In their festivals, their

bodies are playing the same tricks, and while they jerk and leap, they burst out laughing at their strange appearance, their lewd inventions, and their serious greedy faces. They fall into each other’s arms with the same hungry rage and creep away into the dark bush among the rest.....Everyone has sore eyes, sore feet, sore heads....One has a torn ear.....Another has a bite in his cheek.(MJ: p.172)

It is true to say that the abusive language used in the novel is an important element in understanding this kind of description in the Western literary production. All these details taken from the novel convey Cary’s sense of Western superiority and his humorous vision of the other race. As an author from the metropolitan centre, Cary indulges in a kind of symbolic degradation, as a mask preventing the reality of colonialism from being seen and exposed. As it was noted earlier, the images of characters in the novel are used by the writer for the only purpose of analyzing the relationship between the two groups (colonized / colonizer). Therefore, they are not only representations but also a strategy of power that has effects on the domination of one race over another.

The supporting arguments of the racial prejudices found in Cary’s work have been condemned by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe whose critical voice has been widely heard. In his *Home and Exile*, he makes comments about the Nigerian characters in Cary’s work which he thinks is ‘an imperial fire attack on his homeland’. He asks his readers: “Haven’t I encountered this crowd before? Perhaps in *Heart of Darkness*, in the Congo. But Cary is writing about my home, Nigeria isn’t he?”<sup>61</sup> Following this statement, we realize the link between both works. Even if the writers’ purpose are different, the period described are not the same and the colonized subjects differ in identities, the prejudiced tone as well as the racist connotations are similar between Conrad and his unsuccessful imitator Cary.

For his part, the protagonist Johnson is at the heart of the British representation of the colonized. He is depicted not only as a sample of Nigerians, but seems to

---

<sup>61</sup>Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.24.



represent the African people under the yoke of imperialism and colonial racism. His physical portrayal is flawed by a shallow picture of a tall, skinny man with a pith helmet, a white suit and holding an umbrella, a man who has a desire to become a European by imitating the British manners, values and ideas but fails because of his ambition and greediness. In an imperial world dominated by representations, not realities, Johnson finds himself lost between two worlds and unable to mediate between them. Accordingly, his ambivalent attitude towards what is African and what is English results in his confused adaptation of modernity. This becomes a key factor in his ridiculous attitudes, and manifests itself from the opening paragraph of the novel.

In the latter, Johnson's effusive, foolish attitude is noticed when jumping similar to a ballet dancer like a boy with a "delighted expression of a child" (MJ: p.13) running after Bamu to express his love for her while she neglects his attention, treating him as an outcast, a stranger from the South, an outsider with no African name, a figure without anyone to support him. He also behaves like a child in need of his parents' supervision and assistance when he is faced with difficult situations, for instance, when he falls in huge debt that leads him to steal money from the treasury and then kill Gollup, the storekeeper. All these factors and images of failure and victimization associated with the protagonist are one of Cary's drawing pictures of the primitive as an alienated figure, hated by the whites around him who find no other ways to address him except through his derogatory nickname. Celia, Rudbeck's wife, and Sargy Gollup call him various times a "nig", "wog" (MJ: p.141), "Mr. Monkey-brand" (MJ: p.136) or "a ring-tail baboon" (MJ: p.103). In short, all these negative connotations contribute strongly to the cultural colonial subjugation and tyrannical governance that aims to keep all those people "being limited by being African"<sup>62</sup> in a lower inferior scale different from their white subjugator leaders. It is possible to argue that the colonial space with its whole imperial project revolves around this oppositional construction between the inferior and the superior and this is best shown as well as well illustrated in the racial romance like in Cary's *Mister Johnson* which is

---

<sup>62</sup> J.Z. Kronenfeld 'In Search of Mister Johnson: Creation, Politics and Culture in Cary's Africa' in [www.google.fr/#hl=fr&tbo=d&output=search&sclient=psy-ab&q](http://www.google.fr/#hl=fr&tbo=d&output=search&sclient=psy-ab&q), p.79.

a text of binary pairing when read in the light of the post-colonial field. Abdul Jan Mohammed makes it clear that:

In the racial, colonialist version of this genre, the villains are always the dark, evil natives....who are used simultaneously as stereotypes and archetypes....In all cases, however, they pit civilized societies against the barbaric aberrations of an Other, and they always end with the elimination of the threat posed by the Other and the legitimation of the good, civilized society....This genre is not only suited to but is an integral and necessary part of the dominant phase of colonialism. Finally, we must briefly consider the fact that where dominant colonialism and racism still exist today we will find examples of racial romance and allegory.<sup>63</sup>

With implicit ideas, he refers to the contribution played by the racial romance in the formulation of an allegory that places together the assumed superiority, power and dominance of the white Europeans as an incontestable reality beyond the inferiority and weakness of the black Africans.

Interestingly enough, we have the concept of the African characterization in the racial romance of *Mister Johnson* where the tragic ending is expressed using a comic tone. It is through Cary's portrayal of him as a caricature somehow similar to a character in a cartoon that he demonstrates the way in which European writers and audiences are supposed to understand Africans in relation to themselves. In short, Johnson is stereotypically stupid, greedy, arrogant, ignorant, immoral, comic and clownish, with baby-like manners. This reinforces his image as a cartoonish character with "no capacity for growth or self-knowledge"<sup>64</sup>. In some specific situations, the clerk is repeatedly associated with images which are always based on comic and caricature effects that resulted in humorous satirical views of the other race as a model of laughter. In some instances in the novel, he is referred to as "a horse or a rose tree" (MJ: p.103) with "eyes like a hare's" (MJ: p.42). It is in these specific moments of extreme exaggeration that the writer racially distorts the picture of the local man as a child, an animal and thus an inferior.

---

<sup>63</sup> Jan Mohamed Abdul, 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature' (1986), op.cit, p.72

<sup>64</sup> J.Z. Kronenfeld .op.cit, p.76

Considerably, the language spoken by Johnson in his conversations with others throughout the narration makes the Nigerians seem as childish and cartoonish figures. His shift from Standard English to Pidgin language “has been seen as part and parcel of a colonialist strategy aimed at establishing a captious equation between the ‘baby-talk’ of Mister Johnson and his putatively infantile mind”<sup>65</sup>. Thus, it adds to the humor and satire against the natives who lack the capacity to speak proper English because of the diversity in the cultural and the linguistic scale in Nigeria. They are instructed in different kinds of languages in the Hausa speaking Nigeria of the 1930’s like Hausa, Yoruba and English, that none of which they are able to understand. The author makes of the protagonist a good Standard English speaker but “in the clipped accent of one using a foreign tongue” (MJ: p.25) when addressing the local authorities like the District Officers, Waziri and the Emir. Nevertheless, he switches to the indigenous Hausa language when he directs local people who ignore English and Pidgin that is also used by him in some cases. This pairing of languages, the foreign and the indigenous, is another Manichean aesthetic made up by the writer to explore the relation that pits blacks and whites against each other. The use of Standard English denotes the supremacy of the West while the application of native languages and pidgin indicates the submissive position of the East. So, in the case of Cary’s *Mister Johnson*, every single thing is described following the Manichean structure of Frantz Fanon’s colonial city<sup>66</sup>, namely the landscape, the characters, the language and even women.

In the end, I draw attention to the complexity of the novel because of the writer’s ambivalent and contradictory views, or what Abdul JanMohamed refers to as

---

<sup>65</sup>Chantal Zabus, *The African Palimpsest Indigenization of Language In The West African Europhone Novel* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2007), p.64.

<sup>66</sup> In addition to Abdul Jan Mohamed who was the first to initiate the concept of the Manichean Allegory and Aesthetics, Frantz Fanon also writes in *The Wretched of the Earth* about the division and the relationship between the core and the periphery inside the colonial societies that are based on exploitation as well as tyranny. For him, this world which “is divided into compartments” (p.66) is a representation of “a Manichean division along the binary axes of colonizer colonized, good evil, white black, civil savage” (p.32). In the colonial literary discourse, this created tension between the colonizer and the colonized produces the idea of the inferior and superior complex that is a feature of looking at citizens from the Third World and developed one.

“imperialist duplicity.”<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, he relies on racist connotations prevalent during his time in the depiction of the native situation and his personality in contrast with the European one. On the other hand, Cary’s *Mister Johnson*, as in the case of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, shows human sympathy towards the natives in general and Johnson in particular. The latter is shown as an emotional, romantic singer, poet, and writer whose creativity and imagination leads him to “create(s) for himself a glorious destiny” (MJ: p.iii). In his introduction to the book, William Boyd sees Johnson as “the dynamic presence in the novel, an energetic driving force” (MJ: p.3) and then he goes further saying: “Cary’s vivid sympathy” makes of us conscious of the “negative capability at work in the novel to a quite remarkable degree” (MJ: p.2). As readers we can observe that in this social romance, there are moments which are humorous and meant to satirize and to be humoristic while other instances are meant to be seriously looked at and pondered over.

### **3- Discourse on gender: binary relations between African and European women.**

In this dissertation, my discussion is not only focused on white male representation of the other Black male, but also shifts to the white male representation of women as the Other . It is common knowledge that the British society during the 19<sup>th</sup> century maintained a set of social orders that excluded women from the political, social, economic and also religious agenda whereas men hold all the power in all the spheres of society. Because of their powerless gender, they were put on the margin, at the periphery, silenced and oppressed. However, their power emerged from behind the scenes with the emergence of the feminist movement<sup>68</sup>, which includes various

---

<sup>67</sup>Jan Mohamed Abdul, ‘The Economy of Manichean Allegory’. op.cit, p.61. For further readings see also Michael L. Ross ‘Joyce Cary’s Tragic African Clown’ in *Race Riot: Comedy and Ethnicity in Modern British Fiction* (Canada: McGill Queen’s UP, 2006), p.92 /108.

<sup>68</sup> In fact, Feminism is a political as well as an intellectual movement which seeks to free women from all the oppression they face in male dominated societies. Taking into consideration the social position they occupy, the movement started to bring new ideas and beliefs in the 1960’s as a moral obligation to fight sexual harassment and racial assaults. We see that from the birth of this ‘ism’, the main focus is to revise gender relations in order to change power relations, to keep balance between the masculine as well as the feminine categories whose opposition widened the issue of female representation. Thus,

postcolonial feminists like Benita Parry, Gayatri Spivak, Johanna M. Smith, and Barbara Christian who were responsible for raising and addressing important questions about the issue of representation.

These constructions of discourses about females were obviously reflected with the use of gendered terms in the literary texts published at that particular period of time. The colonial discourse embedded in these works of literature is phallogentric, sharing patriarchal as well as imperialist assumptions about women. Approaching the bulk of these patriarchal imperial texts through a deep analysis makes us realize the oppression of women who suffer from isolation and marginalization of a double yoke which defines the limits of womanhood and femininity. Just like the African colonized people who were silenced and 'otherized' by the dominant white colonizer, female characters are constructed as an Other "not just 'a 'fragment , but multiple fragments burdened by a discourse that is disabling in multiple ways"<sup>69</sup>. They were considered as a category different from others, classified as secondary subordinate, and conceptualized as colonial subjects of male objects. It is interesting then to consider the construction of women within a patriarchal discourse and try to deconstruct these images by an understanding of gender relations and to show the role of women in the novels under study.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad exemplifies the western patriarchal and colonial gender roles in which female figures seem to be his creation and invention. Marlow and Kurtz's imaginations are clear representations of his worldview. More precisely, it is through the representation of stereotypical and symbolical portraits that the 'Otherness' of women is depicted. It is important to realize that what they perceive is not the real true women characters but an image of stereotypical female roles based on

---

in colonial as well as postcolonial theories, the issues of gender and sexuality are, of course, of a common and great importance. Both discourses (i.e. the postcolonial discourse and the feminine discourse) "seek to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant" and "invert the structures of domination" (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p.173. More significantly, the postcolonial feminism develops its interest further to the knowledge of Western people about non Western women. (For further information, see also Rosemary Marangoly George. 'Feminists theorize colonial/postcolonial' in Ellen Rooney (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p211 -231.

<sup>69</sup> Juliana Makuchi Nfah- Abbenyi, *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality and Difference* (USA: Library of Congress Cataloging in publication data, 1997) , p.19.

social conventions and their own perceptions. In fact, the book has been criticized because of these stereotypes which strengthen the colonial subjectivity that question not only colour and race but also gender.

In the narrative, Conrad includes few women who have minor roles, as compared to men. Their names are not revealed to the readers but they are known either by their titles (i.e. the intended) or their connection to other people (i.e. Marlow's aunt, Kurtz's mistress). As they have been mentioned briefly, none of them are fully described nor are their personalities fully developed. In general, they are absent from the bulk of the narrative literally and metaphorically and when they do make an appearance they are identified through the narrative point of view of Marlow who constructs them in a gendered picture based on masculine vision of a sailor man who recounts his voyage in a quest for another man, Kurtz. His opinion regarding women is somehow typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which both female and male have totally different ideologies and this is clearly heard and easily recognized in the tale.

The book illustrates different types of women that circulated during the imperialist era in the late 1800's. The picture of the widow mother, who is personified in Marlow's aunt, the lover who is personified in the African woman, and the naïve lady personified by Kurtz's intended. All of them can be considered as case studies since they explore specific questions of gender in relation to the history of empire.<sup>70</sup>

On the one hand, he acknowledges that they create for themselves an idealized world "of their own", a world which is "too beautiful together" (HOD: p.18), while he realizes that the world of men is awful. He tries to present them as helpful, compassionate, soft, delicate and naïve characters, however at the same time, they are cast as ignorant and stupid and lacking realism. He declares: they are "out of it" (HOD: p.69), "out of touch with truth" (HOD: p.18), with reality. Andrew Michael

---

<sup>70</sup> The colonial legacy does not only create race system but constructs also gender system. Both systems have an impact on the inhabitants, men and women who were regarded as a category. As the invasions were done by men, the empire was characterized by its masculinity and male dominance. As a result, it imposed the concept of 'femininity' on the land as well as on European and African women who were constructed socially and historically by references to gender differences.

Roberts suggests that Conrad's work can be explained through the political and social structures of male power and knowledge and female weakness and ignorance. He says:

A discourse of knowledge, truth and ignorance plays a crucial part in the maintenance of these structures, reinforcing both masculine identity and male access to empowering knowledge, while enabling the symbolic, psychic and social exploitation of women. This discourse does not simply attribute knowledge to men and ignorance to women but variably associates women with particular forms of ignorance and knowledge in such a way as to make them available as symbols of a mysterious truth and objects of a secret knowledge while largely depriving them of the role of knowing subject". Like many other discourses, it "evokes 'woman' as an archetype"<sup>71</sup>

In order to illustrate his generalized views, he presents his readers with his aunt, the first woman to appear in the narration thanks to his comments on her, aboard the *Nellie* with the other listeners. He constructs her as the loving mother who does indeed help him to get a job through her firm efforts to make him get what he wants. Being naïve enough and 'ready to do anything' for her nephew in the name of 'civilizing the brutes', the aunt believes him to be an 'emissary of light' and a messenger who will spread truths about the glories of the West and its 'angelic' ideals.

In addition, he goes further in his examples of the angelic, passionate and naïve women when he depicts Kurtz's intended who embodies the characteristics of a Victorian woman who has a contradictory relation with her African counterpart. Her portrait stands for the light of civilization and is connected with the civilized world of ideas and moral respect. In contrast to Kurtz's mistress, she is described as beautiful with a "fair hair, this pale visage, their pure brow" (HOD: p.106) and "a delicate shade of truthfulness" (HOD: p.104). As signified by the name, she is intended for someone else not herself and will remain living with an idealistic image of her husband behind "saving illusion" (HOD: p.108) and lies. This typical image of naivety and innocence about the activities that are really going on in the Congo presents us with women who live in what Marlow considers as an idealized world. Thus, this is why he emphasizes the importance of protecting them and his lie at the end to the intended is the right example.

---

<sup>71</sup>Andrew Michael Roberts, *Conrad and Masculinity* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), p.121.

Interestingly enough, it is through Kurtz's picture of a blindfolded woman standing against a black background and with a lighted torch carried that he further idealized a vision about women. Yet, while the woman in the painting symbolizes Europe, the torch represents European traditions being forced upon the weaker races. Ironically speaking, her blindness symbolizes the blind nature of imperialism whose task was to bring civilization but they stole and grabbed without a realization of the flaws they left behind.

On the other hand, even though these women are idealized, they are also marginalized by the narrator who has chauvinistic, prejudiced views about women. He gives offensive, sexist remarks about them. We might say and conclude that Marlow in the novel is sexist. Nevertheless, the narrator's idealization of this woman is broken by his critical and ironical comments on her as "a dear enthusiastic soul" (HOD: p.12). The latter word appears to be reflecting Marlow's imperialist stereotypical and patriarchal thinking of women.

Actually, even the Intended is reduced to a "mere shade" (HOD: p.110) and a property in the hands of Kurtz who thinks he owns her, as well as the ivory and the station. Her voice cannot be heard till we get to the last pages when Marlow finally gathers courage to visit her and to hand her some letters that Kurtz had left before he died and finds her still mourning him. It is only through her communication in a mourning voice and through her body gestures with her rising arms that she can be heard.

To a larger degree, The African mistress is another character that attracts our attention. With her appearance, the image of Africa as a place of superstition, odd primitiveness and wilderness appear since she reflects the mystery of the jungle, the beauty of nature and represents the whole African community with its heritage. Marlow identifies her as a product of the wilderness: she is "like the wilderness itself", not any wilderness but an "immense wilderness" (HOD: p.87), "wild and gorgeous apparition", "savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent" (HOD: p.87). Besides, she is also described in terms of a part of nature's fertility when referring to her as "fecund and mysterious" (HOD: p.60). The writer and also the narrator do not stop



their prejudiced patriarchal judgments with this set of comparisons but they follow their portrayal of the native woman comparing her to “elephant tusks” (HOD: p.87). This degraded and grotesque picture of the native African woman as an animal stresses no idealization of this category of female being unlike their counterparts who are at least given positive physical portrayals. This kind of writing depicts the African woman as irrational and only guided by a superstitious power that shows the “tragic and fierce aspect” (Ibid) of the Dark Continent, Africa.

Her denial and marginalization by the white European man is also obvious in her silence and lack of speech, that is a way to prove her lack of power and by that her weakness compared to the power of the West and the power of the male sex. In the eyes of the postcolonial feminist theorist Gayatri Spivak, whose concern is to theorize the silence of the doubly oppressed, the Western discourse can be deconstructed only by questioning the representation of the Third World subject and trying to create a voice for the muted subaltern women. As there is no space for this subaltern to articulate and speak, her silent gaze creates an embrace that prevents her message from being sent to Marlow, the listeners and the readers. Unlike the European woman, the African one remains speechless and the main sound heard from her is the shout she gives as Marlow takes Kurtz away on a boat and she is left standing powerfully on the shore communicating with her bared arms like a brilliant goddess that strengthens her Africanist presence in the novella.

We have already noticed Marlow’s binary categorizations of women into separate groups in order to represent two civilizations: Europeans personified by the innocent intended who stands for the intended future and Africans embodied in the wild black lover who stands for the present. They are constructed in juxtaposition as parallels and opposites to highlight the difference in the cultural features between the subjects and objects and reinforce the colonial imperial project concerning the constructions of the self and other. The latter are traditional concepts that do not only serve the purpose to sustain the difference between the colonizers and colonized, more importantly, they reinforce the old traditional discourse on gender which served to keep women in a position of disempowerment and powerlessness. However, despite

the contrasting images of the two categories that embody different opposed concepts there exist notable similarities in their dehumanization by 'double yoke systems'.

Undoubtedly, though there are many differences between Conrad's frightening male adventure story and Cary's comic masculine romance, both of them are similar in their gender discrimination of the oppressed women. In Cary's *Mister Johnson*, the writer looks for a definition of femininity and masculinity which are well developed through his creation of particular women characters who are in a binary way opposed since each one embodies a different symbol and represents different worlds. As a part of the cultural arrogance that is embedded in the majority of the literary colonial discourses about the subaltern, Cary's portrayal of the female gender is biased, degraded and not given a central position especially where native African women are concerned. Such description emphasizes the superiority of the African male traditions and the European culture that "gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self"<sup>72</sup>.

The novel opens with a generalization about the beauty of women in Fada. Bamu, the ferryman's daughter, is among those African women who live in a patriarchal society where women get married according to what the laws of tradition dictate. Actually, she experienced a patriarchal marriage and an 'imperial' as well as 'racist' man with ambivalent attitudes and manners, that of a superior Westerner towards the native Africans on one side and of a traditional man towards women on the other side. The scene that describes the process through which her parents arrange her marriage is a striking instance of the sexist force that marginalizes the native women and puts them 'between the walls'. They are negotiating her bride price and looking at her "watchfully like men selling a horse" (MJ : p.31) until they finally agree about "five pounds now and ten shillings a month" (MJ: p.30), while she is silent as if she is not the one concerned about this affair.

Basically, the author is writing from a prejudiced colonial point of view which looks at the black female as recipient of negative features. They are ignorant, stupid and lack the knowledge and power that are associated with men only. Cary, like

---

<sup>72</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, op.cit, p.3.

Conrad, thinks that “these native bush girls are so ignorant and dirty” (MJ: p.35) savages who have grown up with no access to education. As a result, they have not succeeded in the development of their identities but remain naïve subjects whose role is to keep the household, “beating corn and fetching water” (MJ: p.29) whereas they know that “speech is none of their business” (MJ: p.173), so they are culturally and socially constructed.

Nonetheless, Cary’s portrayal of the English/British woman in the character of Mr.Rudbeck’s wife, Celia shows that he is writing a Manichean allegory based on the comparison between two opposed classes. Similar to her African counterpart, the black savage girl, Bamu, the white civilized woman, Celia, is blind to the realities she faces despite being a product of the English middle-class education that comes to discover Africa thus this cultural distance makes them two separate kinds of women. This is obvious in the middle of the story where Johnson takes Celia to see his household and compound. The meeting scene between Celia and Bamu is ironical and at the same time symbolical. It makes the readers realize the extent to which women’s opposed values lead us to draw a Manichean line between savagery and civilization, ignorance and knowledge.

#### **4 - Conclusion:**

Ultimately, in the literary colonial discourse of Conrad and Cary, the postcolonial reader concludes that the powerful nature of both the masculine imperialist and the patriarchal world manipulates men and women alike by imposing on them their superior authority. Their manipulation goes on different levels as we have analyzed in this chapter.

These African based novels that belong to the literature of the imperial era recall racist stereotypes through racial pairing as a method to show a Eurocentric vision of the African people as inherently inferior to their counterparts. Despite the writers’ ambivalent feelings of sympathy behind their presentations, it is obviously noted that they are rendered as silenced, dehumanized and degraded creatures. These negated

features were meant metaphorically to examine the shaken relationship between the Congolese and Nigerian colonized and the British and Belgian colonizer.

Through a postcolonial feminist analysis of the colonial novels selected, the readers are aware of Conrad's and Cary's racist and sexist attitudes. Both of these writers create a universal stereotypical representation of the female gender with the employment of women characters that are separated in terms of differences into superior whites and inferior blacks. It is the sexual and racial language used to describe them that foreground the dichotomy between women of Europe and of Africa and emphasize them as social self and other. However, despite some social and cultural differences between them, their description is limited to their inferior status in the society under the control of men whose voices identify the females as subalterns and archetypes in all the cases.

All these views have been pointed out in this study in order to make us deconstruct the racist images about the other race and contribute to their revision from an Africanist eye.



# Part Two

## African Awareness and National Consciousness

### Towards an Affirmation of the African Self

# Chapter Three

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*

Revaluing the African Image

“Moments of life, a need to challenge and to overcome those forces that deprive human beings of their right to live, to love and to real freedom.”

Nawal El Saadawi

## Chapter Three:

### **Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*: towards a revaluation of the African image.**

#### **1-Introduction:**

In this chapter, my objective is to observe and investigate Achebe's attempt to create a literature that counters the derogatory representations made by English authors whose denial of the African culture, identity and even humanity is remarkable in their written texts. Both Achebe's novels studied in this dissertation are part of a 'code' that tends to prove wrong the Western stereotypical images of Africa through a reclamation of the authenticity and validity of African customs. They show a sort of balanced picture of tribal rural Nigerian societies named respectively Umuofia and Umuaro prior to and during the arrival of the British.

Keeping very close to the Igbo culture makes of Achebe a culture bound and a culture-oriented novelist who committed himself to 'writing back' to the colonialist discourse. In addition, he creates a contrasted picture of what was previously published by showing the traditional Igbo culture as organized and controlled by sociological symbols that contribute to the reviving of a coherent West African past with social, economic and political bases. The latter were truthful and realistically portrayed, though sometimes ambivalently criticized.

Even the depiction of the figure of women in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* is shaped to contradict the Western writers' portrayal of the African women as 'savage' and 'superb', but lacking values. Thus, Achebe draws a positive picture about women in African societies as valuable but restricted by patriarchal codes. I will also attempt to highlight these contradictions and imbalances in the portrayal of the female personality in relation to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* which detect the origins of gender inequality in the African continent.



## **2- Achebe and the re-enactment of a truthful past:**

Both Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* raise questions about the nature of the reality of the Igbo culture and examine the ways in which that reality can be rendered. Achebe's fiction conveys the dynamic spirit of Nigerian society in a thoroughly realistic way, with an African eye, through "an objective rather than an idealist or subjective manner."<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the author engages his responses in a neutral, direct way and a seemingly objective tone.

More noteworthy is the fact that Chinua Achebe tends to create for the reader an authentic African picture of past experiences that derive from what was happening in the early period of colonization as well as what the writer has experienced personally in order to achieve an accurate image of his society. In this respect, Robert Wren says: "the mind of the artist shapes his experience. True, he cannot write anything that he cannot think or imagine and whatever he thinks or imagines has its origin in experience."<sup>74</sup> Actually, it is Achebe's general cultural background with its historical and social facts which he takes inspiration from in order to justify his preoccupation with realist themes. Thus, his early texts are seen as major documents of the African experience and examples of the representations of their traditional culture at a time of the colonial encounter.

Achebe, similar to other African writers like Ngugi and Armah, has affirmed that narrating the African past is crucial in asserting the African identity and identifying the roots of their civilization. He confirms in a journal interview that "those who say that the past is no longer useful to us are so mistaken. You cannot have a present if you do not have a past. The past is all we have."<sup>75</sup> In his opinion, the nostalgic desire to reflect the past is a desire to transform the present and to form the future for "to have no vision of one's past is to have no vision of a future, ultimately to

---

<sup>73</sup> Abdul JanMohamed, *Manichean aesthetics*. op.cit, p.161.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Wren, *Achebe's World: the Historical and Cultural Context of the Novels of Chinua Achebe* (London: Longman House, 1980), p.76.

<sup>75</sup> Chris Searle, 'Achebe and the Bruised Heart of Africa' in *Wasafiri*, 14 (1991), p.14.

have no identity at all”<sup>76</sup>. As a consequence, his *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* provide a frame for a blending of both the past and present. This mixture makes his literature socially important to deal with the realities as they were then and continue to be now.

In order to reach his central goal of making the Africans knowable and their traditional customs visible, Achebe employs realistic ingredients as one of his technical aspects and modes of constructing his African oppositional discourse. His use of social realism is one of the important traits that “balance the European denigration and romanticization of Africa and to depict the problems inherited from colonialism”<sup>77</sup>, resulting in this way in making his novels successful enough to inspire a revolution against the West’s cultural imperialism. Consequently, he has given a new direction to African literature and begins to evaluate his own continent in a new light. We must stress that Achebe’s cultural spirit of revolt and his social commitment through his call for an objective re-invention of the past is an attempt to correct the mistaken views and to assert the validity of black African values. He takes us back in time in order to rehabilitate the lost dignity of his continent and his people.

This section attempts to show that the function of Achebe's fiction is about the investigation of social conditions and life in African societies in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. This fiction is known not only for its “slice-of-life vividness, its human recognisability”<sup>78</sup> but also for its “complex, questioning depiction of past and present aspects of the African condition”<sup>79</sup> with all its varied colours and textures that highlight the beauty of the community he belongs to.

---

<sup>76</sup> Reed Way Dasenbrock, 'Creating a past. : Achebe, Naipaul, Soyinka, Farah' in *Salmagundi*, N° 68/69, *The Literary Imagination and The Sense of The Past* (Fall 1985-Winter 1986), 20-09-2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40547835> p. 312.

<sup>77</sup> Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, *Manichean aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*. op.cit, p.9.

<sup>78</sup> Annie Gagiano, *Achebe, Head, Marechera, On Power and Change in Africa*.op.cit, p.62.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

### **3-The Igbo heritage: A socio-cultural preservation through an ambivalent nostalgic vision:**

In this section, we shall examine the sociology of Achebe's African novels selected for this discussion, with regard to the manners in which the African writer has been portraying African society and how he is concerned with it.

Achebe's different works invariably lay the stress on tribal life within a particular historical and social background and the important role played by tradition and culture in African communities. In both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the stories are set in tribal rural Igbo locations, named respectively Umuofia and Umuaro where the social life is organized as well as controlled by customs, rules and norms which contribute to the social, political and economic organization. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe represents the African image from an Afro-centric perspective by using a deeper insight into Igbo life. Similarly, *Arrow of God* is consistent in its depiction of Igbo land and draws a vivid and truthful picture of the society during the colonial presence. Concerned with a tribal past at the moment of colonial contact in pre-colonial times and following the white's intrusion, Achebe feels it worth mentioning this past by presenting the protagonists Okonkwo and Ezeulu as traditionalists who help to honor the traditions of their compatriots.

Since Achebe has been attempting to keep the spirit of communalism as a way to keep the people protected, the first images he presents for his audience are those of rural settings. We notice communal groupings of inhabitants not under a central government but in self-governing communities like villages which are the basic unit of social organization. It is within these villages that people are grouped according to families into clans whose central power is in the hands of the elders who gather periodically to discuss matters that affect the whole village. This is like the collected 'nine villages' known as Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart* and 'the six villages' known as Umuaro in *Arrow of God*.

This communal life is characterized by solidarity among the groups who share similar activities and experiences. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the importance of unity is emphasized by the cry, 'Umuofia kwenu!' 'United Umuofia!' at the beginning of meetings where the clan has to deliberate on important issues. Clans also keep

relationships among themselves. However, the description of a festival featuring wrestling matches is contrasted later by the rivalry between Umuofia and Mbaino after. This appears in the accidental killing of a Umuofian by a man from Mbaino. Similarly in *Arrow of God*, the scene of a dispute over a piece of land highlights competition between the members of different clans.

All the same, these descriptions are meant to show the powerful nature of Umuofia and Umuaro over other surrounding villages. As readers, we notice how Achebe aims at denying the idea that power is associated only with the Westerners but stresses its existence also in the African societies. He is a communally-oriented writer since he considers his literature as a cultural art for the communal sake with the objective of expressing a sense of community as well as a sense of identity because a person's identity is tied to the group and his behaviour reflects the whole group.

It is important to underline the fact that the vision of the community is symbolically rooted in the presentation of the kola nut and the ceremony of breaking it. The latter is a principal element used in rituals and ceremonies that "symbolize(s) for the Ibo people the continuity of tribal life"<sup>80</sup> because "he who brings kola brings life." (TFA: p.5) More than that, it is a sign for the African sense of hospitality and an expression of welcome and peace to visitors. During the reception of guests the host "prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and for protection against their enemies" (TFA: *ibid*). They honour the guests by drinking palm wine together with the oldest person taking the first drink after the provider has tasted it. We have the instance of Okonkwo, the protagonist, who visits Nwakibie, and who presents him with kola nut and alligator pepper. During the breaking of the kola nut Okonkwo prayed: "we shall all live we pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me" (TFA: p.14).

Achebe has been able to capture the communal spirit through "semiotic codes"<sup>81</sup> that provide cultural information to the readers who could have been misled by the stereotypes in the colonial discourses. The pages of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and

---

<sup>80</sup> G.D Killam, *The Writings of Chinua Achebe* .op.cit, p.29.

<sup>81</sup> Simon Gikandi, *Reading the African Novel*, op.cit, p.33.

*Arrow of God* are filled with examples of many cultural events that are demonstrated through special ceremonies performed by the Ibo of Umuofia and Umuaro. Much of the writer's description of Igbo society focuses on presenting the crucial role played by communal activities such as the 'Week of Peace', the 'Feast of the New Yam', the 'Feast of the Pumpkin leaves', the worshipping of ancestral elders, the Ilo wrestling match, the pronouncements of the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves, the Ozo dance where a man takes a clan title, the wedding ceremonies and funeral arrangements.

As an elaboration of this idea, we can take the Week of Peace and the Feast of the New Yam as illustrations of the communal celebrations in Umuofia and Umuaro. The former is a sacred week where violence is banned for it aims to honour the Earth Goddess, Ani who is responsible for the success or the failure of the crops since she is the source of fertility. The latter, we are reminded, is an opportunity given to thank Ani, each year before the harvest began marking "the end of the old year and the beginning of the new" (AOG :p. 201), so that the New Year begin with tasty and fresh yams not the crop of the previous year. Hence, the preparations for the Feast including hut-cleaning, decorating, cooking, body painting and head shaving, inviting relatives are taking place. Then, on the second day of the celebration, the great wrestling match is held after the meeting of the entire village in a playground or 'ilo' for the drumming, dancing and wrestling. The festival continues through the night until the final round is won.

In *Arrow of God*, it is an "important ceremony in Umuaro. But it was also the day for all the minor deities." (AOG: p.202) More than that, it is an occasion for every grown man of Umuaro to take a seed Yam to the shrine of Ulu. It is from among these that Ezeulu selects twelve to calculate the New Year. Only when these have been ritually eaten can the festival take place and the harvesting begin. And while the villagers welcome the moon, he selects one of the sacred yams from his barn, roasts and eats it. Finally, he thanks Ulu for allowing him to see another new moon and begs good fortune for the six villages.

Moreover, the Feast of the Pumpkin leaves, in Umuaro, is another ceremonial event which absolves the six villages of their sins before the beginning of the planting season. Achebe lavishly describes people gathering in the meeting place of 'ilo',

women waving pumpkin leaves from side to side across their faces and murmur prayers to Ulu, the god that kills and saves. In the text, we have the narrative voice that constantly seeks to reflect unity and authenticity to the festival through an atmosphere characterized by the cloud of dust, the drums, and the dancing.

Authenticity prevails in such depictions. The ritual activities highlighted convey unity and solidarity in Umuofia and Umuaro whose inhabitants express their birth by the ritual killing of an animal as a sacrifice to the gods. For example, when one of Okonkwo's wives gives birth to a child, the hero offers a domestic animal to the Gods. This is shown by the quotation below: "When she had born her third son in succession, Okonkwo had slaughtered a goat for her, as was a custom." (TFA: p. 57) These rituals symbolized an acknowledgment of the God's presence among people. Unlike Okonkwo, Ezeulu's sacrifice is by means of a ritual dance that is both an embodiment of the "unseen presences around him" and an enactment of "the First Coming of Ulu and how each of the four Days put obstacles in his way." (AOG: p.70). Furthermore, the sacrifice at the crossroads performed by the medicine man and diviner, Amiegboka soon after the marriage feast is elaborately described in *Arrow of God*. The medicine man after putting the sacrificial objects pronounced his pardon, saying: "Any evil which you might have seen with your eyes, or spoken with your mouth, or heard with your ears or trodden with your feet, whatever your father might have brought upon you or your mother brought upon you, I cover them all here". (AOG: p.119)

These different kinds of festivals and sacred duties that Achebe's protagonists perform symbolize the power they extend over their villages. As they are regarded as the principal celebrants who manage the ceremonies, both Okonkwo and Ezeulu work for their people's well-being. They are intermediaries between the gods and their people since they interpret their wills to them, and also perform the most important rituals in the life of the villagers.

Furthermore, marriage ceremonies are described in detail. Through the novel, Achebe provides illustrations of specific descriptions of the traditional Igbo marriage. All the neighbours are invited to celebrate it. We are thus informed of the marriage ceremony of Obierika's daughter preceded by her 'Uri'. On this day the brides' suitor

brings palm-wine, not only for the bride's parents but also for the wider group of kinsmen. The bride and her mother go around in a circle shaking hands with all the guests. The bride's father then presents Kola-nuts to his in-laws.

Besides the bride price ceremony, another ritual Achebe describes is the funeral. In *Things Fall Apart*, Ezeudu, a great man respected in Umuofia, dies and has a great funeral done to honor him. The ancient drums of death beat, guns and cannon were fired, and men dashed about in frenzy, cutting down every tree or animal they saw, jumping over walls and dancing on the roof.

Using the postcolonial theory with its diverse network of ideas and practices that rewrite people's colonial experiences, we consider such elaborate descriptions of the various social customs in Achebe's novels a window through which the reader has a glimpse of the way of life of the Igbos with their natural setting and their world view. Skillfully, the writer captures the tension of communal Igbo rituals and represents gestures with their rhythm of Igbo life. This realistic insight into the Igbo past illustrates successfully Achebe's objective to claim that their past was not characterized by savagery but by glorious days.

The agrarian practices depicted by Achebe are thus elaborated and abundantly illustrated. He draws attention to the positive aspects of the African land as a place of wealth and a source of food that is used for nourishment and used in traditional celebrations. Sometimes there are certain celebrations for each specific kind of food such as the New Yam Festival. In Basil Davidson's *African genius*, which is an anthropological survey of the origins of African civilization, their contributions and way of living, the writer mentions that "every African culture bears profound witness to this dominating 'spirit of the land'"<sup>82</sup>. In addition, Obiechina's *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*, tends to depict the traditional African life and practices with reference to the agrarian nature that "holds the key to survival."<sup>83</sup> Both quotations mentioned above demonstrate the role played by agriculture in maintaining the strength of African society. The importance of the land in the Igbo culture is related

---

<sup>82</sup> Basil Davidson, *The African Genius* (London: Ohio University Press: 1969), p.33.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p.212.

to the production of Yams, the king of crops. The latter often determines a man's reputation since it represents success when these crops are good and stand for failure when they are poor. For example, Okonkwo's father, Unoka, in *Things Fall Apart* was a man presented as lazy and unable to grow good crops of yams. Consequently, he often lived indebted to other Umuofian villagers, and because he could not work the land he died without titles and without honour. Fortunately, Okonkwo's reputation is markedly different from his father's, for "a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father." (TFA: p.6) Achebe fully refers to his successful farming, hard work, discipline and authority. He is a successful man in growing heavy crops and in getting good yams that "stood for manliness, and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed."(TFA: p.24)

Achebe repeatedly writes about the importance of the yam, kola nut, cassava, palm oil and other kinds of food which are used by his community and offered to the gods occasionally. Usually they make an offering by killing an animal to be presented to their God in order to get a good harvest. It is clearly seen in the first pages of *Things Fall Apart* when we are moved back into the past years when Unoka used to sacrifice animals to the earth goddess but to no avail. Moreover, people generally present their offerings of palm oil on the occasion of the New Year to honour their ancestors who are asked for the protection of the self and the whole family, carrying out various rituals in the context of farming and cultivating the land. This examination of the agrarian Igbo societies via the information given to the reader about their cycle of activities involves the logic of personal economic success. And indeed, Okonkwo represents success under the system maintained by the clan with his farming activities.

Achebe wants to mention also that the African people have a well-established, well arranged, and fair judicial system .Their justice mostly relies on decision making that is wielded by the ancestral spirits, the oracle of the Hills and Caves, and the assembly of titled elders as well as priests. For instance, when a man from a neighboring village kills a Umuofian woman, Umuofia calls upon the oracle of the Hills and Caves to seek permission to start the war against it. Achebe implies here that



the problem of a villager is the problem of the whole village. Characterized by having an “Athenian-type”<sup>84</sup> democratic government, the people of Umuofia and Umuaro are ruled neither by a king nor a chief but by a kind of simple democracy in which males and elders gather in order to make decisions by consensus on the basis of reason, wisdom and tradition. On a deeper level, Achebe presents a society of mutual responsibility and respect for elders. In group-oriented cultures like those presented in Achebe’s earlier novels, people are not encouraged to take initiatives and make their own decisions. For instance, when the clan decides that Okonkwo has to leave Umuofia, because of his accidental killing of Ezeudu’s son, the members of the clan are invited to voice their minds and it is after an orator takes the floor to expose the matter that the decision is taken. At the end, Okonkwo submits to their decision without question since disagreeing against that decision would be an act of betrayal. Furthermore, Achebe in *Arrow of God* dramatises a land dispute between Umuaro and Okperi and it is through the gathering between the male elders that the matter is discussed and solved later. We notice that the assembly meeting is a call to solidarity for the management of order and peace keeping.

The Igbo tribe follows laws that are natural and unwritten but understood as parts of the tradition and anyone who comes against these laws has to confront the ‘egwugwu’ whose presence is of a crucial importance , since they are regarded as upholders of the laws of the land and “a measure of social control.”<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, the egwugwus are presented as a body regulating Igbo life. Their assembly takes place in the communal court meeting whose responsibility is to try to settle disputes peacefully, notably to avoid wars with other clans. Achebe draws attention to the fact that the Igbo people depended on their ancestor’s spirits for justice to be served. For instance, we have the situation of one of the inhabitants of the clan whose dispute with his in-laws over wife-beating is dealt with by the ‘egwugwu’. This part of narration is presented by the writer with “tenor and warmth”<sup>86</sup> , thus building an attractive image of a traditional society capable of regulating its social life. Regarding the Igbo institutions,

---

<sup>84</sup> Emmanuel Obiechina, *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel* .op.cit, p.205.

<sup>85</sup> Abiola Irele, *African Imagination. Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora*. op.cit, p.122.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid,p.120

E. Obiechina declares that they “have evolved in such a way that fundamental changes don’t take place”<sup>87</sup> otherwise there would be no security in the village. Achebe’s references to the local law-courts all the time imply the Igbo traditional rules and regulations were sufficient and apt to govern their society.

Achebe’s depiction of this traditional Igbo society also foregrounds the religious beliefs that constitute an essential part of the communal life in pre-colonial Africa and even during colonialism. Religion in Africa is related to nature, to supernatural, personal deities that are responsible for the fortunes or misfortunes of the individual. Achebe’s fictional settings are featured by the people’s devotion to the gods, deities, oracles, spirits who inhabit the forests, the ancestors who are worshipped through sacrifices and religious rites. Apart from these supernatural spirits, they believed in what is called a personal god or ‘chi’ that links a human to his/her ancestors.

In Achebe’s narratives, the names of gods and spirits recur and are linked to various features of the environment: the sky, fire, earth, etc such as Ani, the Earth Goddess in charge of morality and she also controls the fertility of people, animals, and plants, Amadioha , the God of Thunder, or Idemili, the river god as well as the oracle of the Hill and Caves, Agbala who governs Umuofia, and Chukwu, the supreme God who created the universe: heaven and Earth. In *Arrow of God*, we are told of the union between the six villages of Umuaro which constitute a force against potential enemies. As a result, they have installed a new god, Ulu as the guardian deity who is in charge of security in Umuaro against the Abame invaders and which prevails over the deity Idemili. Hence, we have the rivalry between Ezeulu, priest of Ulu, and Ezidemili, priest of Idemili.

Achebe pays particular attention to the chi in his essay ‘chi in Igbo cosmology’, in which he relates the crucial importance of this personal ‘god’. For him, “we may visualize a person’s chi as his other identity in spirit land.”<sup>88</sup> He follows the point by saying: “indeed the human being is only one half of a person. There is a

---

<sup>87</sup> Emmanuel Obiechina, op.cit, p.201-2.

<sup>88</sup> Chinua Achebe, ‘Chi in Igbo Cosmology’ in Chukwudi Eze (ed) *African Philosophy: An Anthology*. (Oxford:Blackwell Publishing Ltd,1998),p.67.

complementary spirit being, chi.”<sup>89</sup> Chidi Amuta adds that there is an “instrumental and symbiotic”<sup>90</sup> relationship between the deities and human beings.

On the one hand, a chi acts as personal ‘guardian-angel’ and is capable of protecting one from perilous situations. In *Things Fall Apart*, for example, it is the Chi that ‘guides’ Okonkwo towards prosperity and brings him material wealth. On the other hand, when the protagonist is cast out of his clan for the ‘female crime’ committed against Ezeudu’s son, it is again the same Chi that is held responsible for the decision taken by the clan: “clearly his personal God or Chi was not made for great things. A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his Chi” (TFA: p.94). We note also that, in the past, his father, Unoka always consulted Agbala the Oracle whose pronouncements, he believes, would make his life better, as an entity that knows the secrets of his life. But Agbala, he is told, cannot help improvident men like him. In all cases, Igbo, as Achebe tells us, needed the gods’ protection and blessings for any enterprises that they would start, and they performed the required rituals accordingly.

For instance, they do not go to war without consulting their gods lest they would be defeated. When a daughter of Umuofia is murdered in Mbaino, they do not just decide to go to war on their own; they consult their gods and they are asked to demand a lad and a virgin from the people of Mbaino to make up for the loss of the maid.

Again, when the Oracle of the Hills and Caves pronounces the killing of Ikemefuna, Okonkwo accepts this decision. However, the hero does not carry out the order to the latter, since he wants to attend the sacrifice, despite Ezeudu’s order to the contrary: “That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death.” (TFA: p.40) Okonkwo’s decision to participate in this ritual killing comes from his inferiority complex of being thought weak, an Agbala like his father.

As Achebe has never distanced himself from Igbo culture, his presentation of a number of Igbo deities is a major element of his narratives. He objectively portrays the people’s belief in the strength of customs to keep chaos, evil and violence away from the towns of Umuofia and Umuaro. As said, Achebe presents an exhaustive description of Igbo traditional religion to make it appear as a coherent and viable

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.68.

<sup>90</sup> Chidi Amuta , *The Theory of African Literature: Implication for Practical Criticism* (London: Zed Books , 1989),p.132.

religious system. This is part of Achebe's anticolonial discourse that is developed as a reaction to the biased European claims that Africans did not have a culture and a religion. Indeed, the writer aims at defending an authentic African world view by erasing the strong impression of the western view and their concept of otherness. Achebe also reminds his own people of their past and invites them to consider it as part and parcel of their identity.

However, he obliquely advances a criticism of his people by pointing at its social weaknesses. What adds to his realism is the fact that his perception of Igbo history is not provoked by a tendency to romanticize, glorify and idealize the past. Instead, he draws our attention to the questionable aspects of Igbo culture. The writer seeks to expose in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* "the imperfections"<sup>91</sup> or the questionable rituals related to Igbo beliefs via the sacrificial killing of Ikemefuna, the forsaking of twins in the Evil Forest, the abandonment of multiple birth babies, the humiliation of the osu etc. It is with these dramatic events that the reader is aware of the violent atmosphere surrounding the settings of Achebe's fiction even before the arrival of the colonial system. Concerning this aspect, he has famously declared: "We have to admit that like other people past ours had its good as well as its bad sides."<sup>92</sup> Generally speaking, Achebe implies that there are cultural weaknesses which need to be looked at so as to be corrected.

As I pointed out earlier, the episode describing the sacrificial killing of Ikemefuna is worth mentioning concerning the social 'imperfections' mentioned by Achebe. The killing of Ikemefuna "elaborates unresolved contradictions between variant masculinities, and between rigid and adaptive approaches to tradition."<sup>93</sup>

He is the boy figure Achebe uses to dramatize aspects of Igbo society that seem harsh, cruel and unjust, based solely on the loyalty to the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, who pronounces the obligatory killing allegedly for the maintenance of peace

---

<sup>91</sup> Chinwe Christiana Okechukwu, *Achebe the Orator. The Art of Persuasion in Chinua Achebe's Novels* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001), p.19.

<sup>92</sup> Chinua Achebe, 'The Role of the Writer in a New Nation' in *African Writers on African Writing*. G. D. Killam (ed) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1975), P.9.

<sup>93</sup> Ball John Clement, *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel. V. S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.85.

and stability within the community. In addition to that, he poses the problem of legitimacy of surrendering to the religious deities.

The image of violence through throwing children and twins is one among many in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It is through the priests that the God's pronouncements are conveyed to the people. In the case of twins: "the Earth had decreed that they were an offence on the land and must be destroyed" (TFA: p.89). Because they have a great fear of twins, they would be left in the forest to die immediately after birth, and the mothers would go through various rituals to try to prevent themselves from having twins again.

Obierika reflects on the painful moments of his own life when he had thrown away his twin children. He asks: "what crime had they committed?"(TFA: *ibid*) Such a question opens a debate since people failed to find an answer but were faced with other great complexities. Another incident occurs when Nneka had left her husband Amadi to join the missionaries. It is shown that she had four previous pregnancies but at each time the born twins had been immediately thrown away. Such examples indicate for the audience that Achebe exposes the popular Igbo myth about twins whose death had an impact upon the whole clan.

Moreover, the ill treatment of 'ogbanje' children whose name is repeated in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* is another concern reflected upon by the writer. As we are explained, they are children who after their death enter their mother's womb to be born again. Consequently, they are mutilated and thrown away in the Evil Forest so that their 'evil' will disappear. This case shows how the Igbo culture condemns some specific aspects as evil. Similar to 'ogbanje' children, the 'osu' are outcasts who could neither marry nor be married, and are forbidden from attending assemblies with others since they are looked at as evil people whose bodies are buried in the evil forest. The latter is a forest "alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness" (TFA: p.107) which contains everything the Umuofia or Umuaro people identify as immoral and wicked.

By emphasizing the cultural practices of Nigerian tribes, the writer shows "both the civilized and the barbaric aspects of the early Ibo community"<sup>94</sup> and that it was

---

<sup>94</sup> Annie Gagiano, *Achebe, Head, Marechera, On Power and Change in Africa*. op.cit, p.66.

these elements that opened the way for the disintegration of the tribe and their falling apart. These very weaknesses were used by European missionaries and colonial administrators to divide Africans. In the end, precisely, these values are used to dramatise the downfall and ruin of Umuofia. To Nwoye's mind they represent the fear and cruelty recurrently revealed through these ritual gestures. Achebe makes him suffer “the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed” (TFA: p. 106). He had doubts about the religions of his ancestors and finds the answers after his first contact with Christianity.

#### **4- The dynamics of reconceptualising gender in Achebe’s world.**

This section focuses on the authentic portrayal of the female identity and experience of African women in postcolonial African male authored prose narrative. I will pay particular attention to the ambivalent portrayal of the female in Achebe’s anti colonial writing. As readers, we query their absence and presence in the narratives by questioning how they are socially as well as culturally constructed and how they are handled. We examine the patriarchal notion that mostly devalues, silences, marginalizes women and, then, we examine their social roles and patterns of behaviours as described and dramatised by Achebe.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Conrad and Cary’s portrayals of women in general and the African women in particular show the effect of double marginalization and colonization. To challenge the colonial view, Achebe has offered counter representations. In this respect, it is interesting to study Achebe’s mode of presentation by offering an alternative to the colonial oppression since it directly affected the lives of the women in their country.

Even more problematic is his position towards the representation of women and the reconstruction of their voices which is characterized by a duality of perception that “allow(s) a man to commit a female crime, and get punished; then he runs to his mother the next minute for shelter and comfort. It is the same duality that makes a wife

powerless in her husband's house, and all powerful in her father's house."<sup>95</sup> Similar to some African male writers, Achebe has brought varied perspectives to the gender question by weaving his novels with a distinction between women as "a covert category" and an "important item"<sup>96</sup> with neither subordinate nor dominant roles. This combination of variety of viewpoints that arises from such representations results in the creation of visions and insights that make us question where we situate Achebe in his texts and how we explain the contradiction in relation to the placement of women and femininity in his novels. An answer is given in the interview published in the pages of a book under the title: *Talking with African writers*, Achebe confirms the contradictory nature of their roles stating:

I have really been worried about the woman's role for sometime (...) There is an ambivalence to women in traditional society. There is a respect, a very deep respect, which is implied in such names as "Mother -is- supreme" (...) So there are these attitudes that suggest that there are two streams in the minds of our people: one in which they are really oppressed and given very low status and one in which they are given very high honour, sometimes even greater honour than men (.....) I think this suggests that in this situation the role of the woman has not yet been fully worked out, that we are still ambivalent about it.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, Achebe is neither feminist nor a male chauvinist; on the other hand, he insists on showing the workings of the patriarchal system in Nigeria. As known, his dealing with women in his fiction has been subject to criticism resulting in making him revise his thoughts and explanations via statements of authorial intention with regard to the role of their central female characters and criticism of patriarchy as a product of colonialism.

When reading the novel as a refutation of Conrad and Cary's feminized portrayal of the African continent and inhabitants, Umuofia and Umuaro appear in the eyes of the readers both with masculine and feminine principles woven together to form an ambivalent traditional society . However, when it is approached from a

---

<sup>95</sup> Phanuel Akubueze Egejuru , Ketu H.Katruk , *Womanbeing and African Literature* ( Asmara: Africa World Press:1997), p.15.

<sup>96</sup> Florence Stratton, *Contemporary African Literature and The politics of Gender* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.170.

<sup>97</sup> Jane Wilkinson, *Talking with African Writers. Interviews with African Poets, Playwrights and Novelists* (Oxford: James Currey ,1992),p.53.

feminist thinking against the patriarchal ideology, the portrayal appears as a means of legitimizing male domination over women.

In order to conduct a feminist analysis of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, it will be useful to look briefly at the place of women in Igbo culture since the novel evolves from specific cultural and historical contexts. It should be noted that *Things fall Apart* was written and published in the years immediately preceding Nigeria's independence in 1960. It was a period when women were excluded from politics and public affairs which were transferred to male elite. In addition, the epoch in which Achebe and other pioneers of African literature, like Ekwensi, Amadi and Soyinka, was marked by a struggle to restore the tenets of the African tradition, the latter having sustained an attack and a denigration from the Empire. African writers were busy fighting cultural imperialism by showing the world that the African past was orderly, dignified and characterized by a complex as well as a worthy heritage. As a result, woman issues were neglected, and were not put in the focus of their novelistic discourse.

Achebe's effective way of challenging the power relation between white colonizer and black colonized is through Achebe's revision of gender roles and his focus on the gendered representation of women in African culture. He tends generally to narrow the concept of gender roles by setting up a dichotomy between aggressive masculinity and submissive femininity as the norms in African patriarchal societies. As a result, he falls on the same binary opposition which characterizes the imperial ideology since their portrayal is one of the Manichean allegories that distinguish between male and female. This is what led Aschcroft and his colleagues to write:

Even Post-independence practices of anti-colonial nationalism are not free from this kind of gender bias, and constructions of the traditional or pre-colonial are often heavily inflected by a contemporary masculinist bias that falsely represents 'native' women as quietist and subordinate.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, we notice that the race allegory of colonizer and colonized in European discourses shifts to the sexual allegory of 'male is good, superior, active and has

---

<sup>98</sup> Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. op.cit, p.104.



power’ whereas ‘female is evil, inferior, irrational, passive and powerless’ in nationalist discourses. In addition, violence is represented as masculine whereas silence is associated with femininity. In the works examined, we have a clear juxtaposition of two different worlds: one is the world of men and the other is the world of women.

Throughout a male dominant approach reflected in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, we observe that Achebe’s writing back to the colonial gendering of the continent and its inhabitants is an attempt to show masculine Igbo characteristics in order to recapture the strength of the African past, hence to draw to reader’s attention to heroism and masculinity. Looking at Nigeria as a “a masculine –based society”<sup>99</sup> that values physical proficiency and places a great deal of importance on individuals’ achievements, the writer engages his readers, right from the beginning of both novels, with masculine chapters through which we are informed about Okonkwo’s and Ezeulu’s personalities, families, wives, children, private huts and compounds as well as their earned titles. It is in the course of the different chapters that these protagonists develop as complex traditional male characters whose manly behaviours, hard work in the crop plantations, wrestling and strength are fundamental in the norms of Igbo society.

Through a deep insight into the world of women from a post-colonial feminist reading of the selected texts, mainly *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the reader is urged to consider closely the ways in which Achebe shows women’s identities as defined in relation to men and how stereotyped notions of what women’s roles are meant to be. These early writings of Chinua Achebe have inspired most critics especially feminists who have objected to the masculine patriarchal principles foregrounded. The majority of feminist critiques, not to say all of them, rest on the voicelessness of women characters, insisting that they have been cast in marginal subordinate roles. Florence Stratton, Rose Mezu, Linda Strong-Leek and other critics address the issue of reading a text from a feminine perspective. They show a deep

---

<sup>99</sup> Rose Ure Mezu, ‘Women in Achebe’s world’ in <http://www.uga.edu/womanist/1995/mezu.html>, 17-08-2011,p1

concern when challenging male reading by bringing into the front female characters; however, it is somehow debatable and

Ironic that the so-called feminist readers of Achebe quickly recognize that Okonkwo beats his wives, but they fail to hear the universal outcry echoed by even the inflexible Ezeulu: “It is not bravery for a man to beat his wife” (Achebe1969: p.65)<sup>100</sup>

In order to represent the cultural aspects of Umuofian and Umuaro society, Achebe selects and constructs moments from the lives of women within patriarchal society where men dominate and women act as subjects. In both novels, some of the depictions of the African women are reductive, perpetuating the myths of female subjugation and devaluation which they bear like a heavy burden. In this respect, Achebe’s early women have been victimized, neglected, and at times ignored. One critic, Rose Ure Mezu, states “for centuries, African women languished on the fringe of their universe-neglected, exploited, degenerated and indeed made to feel like outsiders.”<sup>101</sup> . With these words, she lends voice to the deplorable condition of African women. In the same vein, Florence Stratton has negative interpretations since she accuses Achebe of denying African women “dignity and self-respect.”<sup>102</sup>

The male characters in Achebe’s works are patriarchal figures that project male chauvinism in various events. Both of them are living in a world “in which patriarchy intrudes oppressively upon every sphere of existence. It is an androcentric world where the man is everything and the woman nothing.”<sup>103</sup> As a case in point, Okonkwo, in *Things Fall Apart*, displays an attitude of male chauvinism in various incidents. Like him, Ezeulu, in *Arrow of God*, is not free from these abusive patriarchal attitudes. Both of them hold the notion that women should serve the man and help him by keeping all their opinions regardless of what their opinion of any matter would be. In fact, women were made peripheral in both novels because of their otherness. This gender differentiation often creates women’s marginalization without giving them a valuable insight into their thoughts and feelings.

---

<sup>100</sup> Chimalum Nwankwo ‘Historicity and the Un-Eve-ing of the African Woman: Achebe’s Novels’ in Dubem Okafor (ed) *Meditation On African Literature* (London: Greenwood Press: 2001), p.87.

<sup>101</sup> Rose Ure Mezu, op.cit, p.2.

<sup>102</sup> Florence Stratton, op.cit, p.31.

<sup>103</sup> Rose Ure Mezu, op.cit, p.2.

All these women are not able to find a safe place for protection. As Nnaemeka Obioma declares, in Achebe's novels women are "being scolded and beaten before they disappear behind the huts of the compounds"<sup>104</sup>. Reading such a statement, the reader understands that in such patriarchal African communities, women are restricted and put aside since they are made powerless. When examining the novels, we notice that in *Things Fall Apart* the female characters are nameless till the beginning of the fourth chapter where we are told about Nowye's mother's name. Similarly in *Arrow of God*, the writer tells a story that "has only three female characters, two of whom are quarrelling wives and the third, a daughter, who is a battered wife."<sup>105</sup>

More broadly, family violence in the compounds is illustrated with Okonkwo's troubles with his wives who suffer the pain of their husband's violent temper and maltreatments. His beating of his second wife Ekwefi occurs during the Feast of the New Yam for destroying his valuable banana tree after cutting off a few leaves, even if he knows that this beating is an act of violence and a crime against Ani. After a while, Okonkwo decides to go hunting and asks for his gun and he has just received murmurs from her about "guns that never shot" (TFA: p.28). Okonkwo runs madly into his room and comes out with the gun and shoots at her while she jumps over the wall and falls down. All the women believe that their co-wife has been shot but couldn't interfere in the event. Furthermore, the abuse suffered by Okonkwo's wives is endless since there are other instances in which he beats his youngest wife Ojiugo who "went to plait her hair at her friend's house" (TFA: p.21), forgetting to cook the afternoon meal.

In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu is an authoritarian man who "expected everyone –his wives, his kinsmen, his children, his friends and even his enemies-to think and act like himself" (AOG: p.92). In addition, we remember that vivid encounter between Obika's sister, Ojiugo and her husband who was listening to her abuse that makes him nervous and "gave her thunder on the face." (AOG: p.127) Furthermore, Akueke's case is no

---

<sup>104</sup> Juliet Okonkwo, 'The Talented Woman in African Literature' in *Africa Quarterly* 15 (1975), p.36. Also found in, Nnaemeka Obioma, 'Relation and Critical Meditation: From *Things Fall Apart* to *Anthills Of The Savannah*' in Leonard A.Podis and Yakubu Saaka (eds) *Challenging Hierarchies. Issues and Themes in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), p.143.

<sup>105</sup> Nasser Merun , 'Achebe and His Women: A Social Science Perspective' in *Africa Today*, Vol. 27, N°3, *African Literature and Literature about Africa* (3rd Qtr.,1980),15-05-2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4185940> ,p.22

less better since she is also ill treated by her husband who beats her till he makes “her face all swollen.”(AOG:p.11)

In any case, the female characters are “the sites of debates in which they had little voice or representation.”<sup>106</sup> Their discourses are constructed with voices that remain muted and silenced. This silencing of women from Umuofia and Umuaro resulted in their exclusion from public affairs of the patriarchal community whether economic, political or sometimes social gatherings. In fact, they are kept out of ritual ceremonies like the ‘*egwugwu*’ in *Things Fall Apart* and despite having ceremonies designed for them like marriage meetings, these women are present only for domestic chores. Similarly, women in *Arrow of God* remain silent during debates over family problems. For example, Ezeulu’s wife receives endless blames for being late to bring him the supper meal in time but she keeps her comments and excuses away. This is also illustrated when Ezeulu blames his wife for questioning his sending of Oduche to study the Whiteman’s religion as if she has no concern with what he wants to do with his son. Such examples show the male’s impatience with his wives and his refusal to take their points of view into consideration.

Interestingly enough, the marital institutions are based on traditional polygamous marriages whose frequency is dominant in the sociology of African life. This issue of marriage is evoked by the novelist in order to emphasise the fact that the Igbo considered it valuable for the wealth of the community, although women are subjected to the insecurity of prearranged marriages. Achebe’s female characters are depicted in situations in which the elders choose the man whom the girl would marry. This is the case of Ogbuefi Udo, whose wife has been killed and the new one has been appointed to replace his murdered wife. In such patriarchal societies, women belong to their fathers, until they would be of an age where they could be ‘sold’ to a male who would bring a bride price. In chapter eight of *Things Fall Apart*, the negotiation between the bride’s and groom’s family concerning the dowry shows that the elders of the family “haggle and bargain as if they were buying a goat or a cow in the market.”(TFA: p.52). Similar is the situation in the pages of *Arrow of God* in which it

---

<sup>106</sup> Ato Quayson, *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* Op.cit, p.116.

is narrated that Obika's bride's family carry behind her small loads of the bride's dowry. Thus, they are considered by men as mere property, commodities or objects with the norm given that "no matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children (and especially his women) he was not really a man." (TFA: p.37)

Achebe depicts the patriarchal ideology with its authoritative ground. His knowledge of circumstances pushes him to choose portraits of female distortion and the inequality of sexes in both of his novels under study. However, the examples presented do not mean that he belittles the existence of women. He instead resents such practices and he is calling the nationalists to abandon their male chauvinism and open a door to female characters to highlight their active participation in activities for the political, social and economic prosperity in new Nigeria.

Although the writer fails in making himself free from using women in the same stereotypical roles used in the European male writing, he has succeeded in creating female figures that are capable of being positive members of the community and are actively behind the reorganization of the country away from the patriarchal oppression. He seems to reject the idea of marginalizing the position of women and thus feels responsible to resist the repression exerted on them and work to liberate them from patriarchal power. So, in his novels, he highlights the pain of these women but also their importance as individuals within their community.

Even though it is the man that rules, and masculinity is held in great esteem, the Ibos have a place for their women. In texts such as *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the ideal female characters created by Achebe are representatives of Igbo womanhood. They often act within the framework of their traditional roles as daughters, wives and mothers. The African writer Achebe shows a positive picture of women in Ibo society, given their link and allegiance to the African customs. Commenting on the status of women, Lyn Innes concludes that "Achebe brings those

marginalized characters to the foreground”<sup>107</sup> to show their real status in Africa not only as parts of the community but also have power over it.

Women in Achebe’s works are idealized, respected and shown as objects of admiration and a source of life. This new vision of female characters under the notion of “mother is supreme” is shown when Okonkwo’s marital uncle Uchendu, the eldest of his mother’s clan where Okonkwo had fled, asks “why it is that one of the commonest names we give to our children is Nneka, or mother is supreme?”(TFA: p.97) and he follows answering himself by saying:

It is true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother's hut. 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. (TFA: p.96-97)

For him, when anyone’s situation suddenly worsens, his refuge is to the motherland because “your mother is there to protect you, she is buried there” (TFA: p.97) .These are memorable quotations that emphasize the position of women in *Things Fall Apart* and can be interpreted as associating the image of women with love and affection and this is why it can be seen as a place of refuge, security and protection. In such case, women are greater than the religious chi they worship since the latter can abandon the individual in moments of difficulties. Although Okonkwo’s chi abandoned him, his mother’s clan accepts him for seven years. Furthermore, when a woman died in such villages, she was taken home to be buried with her own kinsmen and not with their husbands so she is not a property restricted to their husbands but are also attached to their families.

Through the narrative, there are many examples wherein the author refers to the signifying role played by women to keep the family in a good status and thus prevent the society from falling apart. The writer expresses clearly in *Things Fall Apart* more than in *Arrow of God* the women’s occupation. With regard to the social position of women, they play an active role in everyday life as “moral guardians, nurturers and

---

<sup>107</sup> C.L Innes , *Chinua Achebe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1990) , p.133.

child bearers”<sup>108</sup>. This is the case of the senior wife, Nwoye’s mother, who takes care of the junior wife Ojiugo’s children. They are celebrated as community builders and primary educators since they produce children, educate them, show them social values and entertain them as a way to understand human conditions through the storytelling and other forms of discourse. In fact, the society places a great weight on a woman’s capacity to give birth to sons and after bearing a third son in succession a woman’s husband “slaughtered a goat for her, as was the custom”(TFA: p.57).

In spite of the fact that women in traditional African societies are excluded from political affairs, Achebe makes them traditionally visible and increasingly perceived as vital agents of progress and are fully capable of performing many duties. Their feminine tasks are not restricted to the home but extend behind the walls of their compounds and huts to the farms where they accompany their husbands and collaborate with them in their farming activities. Naemeka Obioma argues that “through the pages of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, women come and go with mounds of foo-foo , pots of water, market baskets; fetching kola .”<sup>109</sup> Thus, we realize Achebe’s valorisation of the Igbo women and their contribution demonstrates the importance of African females whose involvement is not only a part of the social life that adds to the prosperity of the family but also a part of the economic pillar that adds to the wealth of the tribe and the country.

Regarded as being active individuals who work to increase the prosperity of their families and clan, these women celebrate the wedding ceremonies with great perfection. In both novels, the group of women go to cook for the neighbour’s wedding feast. We notice in *Things Fall Apart* “Some of the women cooked the yams and the cassava, and others prepared the vegetable soup.” (TFA: p.81) Even in *Arrow of God*, we encounter “women from Elumelu and Abame who made the best pots in all the surrounding country.” (AOG: p.19)

No less important is the fact that this group, despite being made subaltern, earns respect and love which any woman can receive. In *Things Fall Apart*, Uzowulu asked

---

<sup>108</sup> Lokangaka, Lasambe, op.cit, p.53.

<sup>109</sup> Juliet Okonkwo , op.cit.p143

to beg his wife's forgiveness after bringing her to the 'egwugwu' court for trial and when Udo abuses his wife; her brothers come to take her away. So, despite having male characters like those in both of Achebe's novels, Achebe insists on the rights to respect and deference that women could secure under the Igbo customary laws.

Furthermore, Achebe also displays female warmth and deep emotion like those felt between the mothers and their children as is the case of Ezinma and Ekwefi in *Things Fall Apart*, or Akuata who fears for her husband, Ezeulu's son.

Thus, Chinua Achebe convincingly highlights the roles played by Igbo women. His commitment is to initiate changes in the minds of the African people as well as the Europeans, for whom he attempts to restore women's self dignity and images as daughters, mothers and wives, not only lovers and mistresses as in Cary's and Conrad's novels which rely on stereotypes.

## **5-Conclusion:**

From this chapter about the authenticity of African experiences in Achebe's novels, we conclude that through this writer's sense of realism, a realistic face of Africa and its people is revealed to the audience whose reading of the stereotyped portraits of Africans in novels mislead them about the realities of the continent. Consequently, the question of African realism is important in the definition of postcolonial African fiction. Achebe, among various African novelists, has been successful in representing realistically an African environment by focusing on both its historical and traditional contents.

Throughout the first section of the chapter, we have tried to indicate Achebe's balanced portrayal of traditional Igbo region of Nigeria. Besides, an overview of some of the most important cultural themes and elements within Achebe's classic novel are presented in order to paint for the reader a broad picture of Igbo life. The reader finds strength and dignity in Achebe's depictions and in his detailed enunciation of customs based on social structures and rituals. However, he does not hesitate to indicate the failures and shortcomings of such indigenous culture.



In the second section, we have addressed the problematic representation and misrepresentation of women. It has been an investigation that enables us to understand more closely the identities and experiences of African women whose images are developed in different ways in Achebe's novels. The latter stresses a distinction between the idealization of motherhood as well as an affirmation of their status in the Igbo world and the subordinate role of women and their inferior position.

Finally, we can argue that Achebe's novels are extremely complex works containing to a certain extent ambiguous and ambivalent representations of the traditional practices and women's situations. It is due to these ambivalences that the narratives draw their powerful discourse. We conclude that Achebe does not seek to present an idyllic and romantic picture of his society, even though he foregrounds the validity of its precepts and customs. On the other hand, he does point at the imperfect and questionable aspects of his people's culture.

# Chapter Four

The Anglophone Nigerian Novel:

An Afro-centric Vision

Of the

Achebean Model

“Until the lions produce their own historians, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter”

Chinua Achebe

## **Chapter Four:**

### **The Anglophone Nigerian Novel: An Afro-centric vision of the Achebean model.**

#### **1-Introduction:**

This chapter examines post-colonial African literature as a counter discourse. The main concern is to approach Achebe's first and third novels namely *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* from a post-colonial view and in particular from the perspective of an anti-colonial discourse. The latter concept can be defined as a resistant discourse that is opposed to the dominant power of the colonial dialogue and has been used and adopted by postcolonial studies in order to challenge the discourse of the centre whose power was faced by a resistance of the periphery. As there was a need to write a new kind of literature free from the colonial hegemony, African writers aim at "mapping the dominant discourse....reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions"<sup>110</sup> in order to create an "independent local identity"<sup>111</sup>

The aim of the chapter is to study how the counter discourse challenges that of the West. It investigates the role of these African writers who want to gain control over the power of the colonial discourse and create an oppositional discourse to their bourgeois ideology that misrepresents the realities in Africa. In such discourse, the colonized is represented not only as the 'other' but as a difference, a difference in various aspects such as the color, the culture and the language. African writers like Chinua Achebe see it important to give another voice to the Africans and give them a right to express their ideas through the use of a literature that mirrors Africa and Africans as they were in the past and as they are in the present. It is, therefore, true to say that one of the major concerns of most of the postcolonial African novelists is to salvage the history of their people that was looked down upon by the West.

As a way to show his anti-colonial attitude that opposes the colonial discourse used by writers in English literature and in order to reinforce the idea of the African

---

<sup>110</sup> Bill Aschcroft , Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin , *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.98.

<sup>111</sup> Bill Aschcroft , Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin , *Post-Colonial Studies :The Key Concepts* ,op.cit, p. 95.

discourse, Achebe uses a number of techniques and methods. Although his novels are written in English, he engages in translating some African words, idioms and proverbs from English into the Igbo language. On the other hand, some Igbo words appear as original and not translated in his texts.

The concept of resistance in postcolonial literature reinforces the meaning of the oppositional discourse since it carries with it ideas about the meaning of freedom, democracy and nationalism. Through the presentation of the heroes of his novels, Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart* and Ezeulu of *Arrow of God*, the writer delineates attitudes that are characterized by anti-colonial words and actions.

## **2-African anticolonial discourse: A redirection of Western knowledge and power.**

Prior to starting this discussion, it would be appropriate and important to place the term postcolonial into some historical and intellectual contexts. When trying to theorize and designate the field of postcolonialism geographically, theorists like Bill Ashcroft, Edward Said, Anne McClintock, Vijay Mishra<sup>112</sup>, Bob Hodge and others were faced with the problem of positioning this field, and their different approaches have been severely criticized for representing vague and diverse definitions.<sup>113</sup>

From the historical marker, postcolonial theory can be described as a rich theory or as a strong discourse that is historically associated with the movement of global decolonization following the collapse of British, French and Portugal empires after the Second World War. It typically emerged in the fifties and sixties as a product of the cultural and historical conditions and experience of the decade of exploitation shared by many African societies and has principally answered all these kinds of victimization. In fact, although the historical process of colonialism is over, the

---

<sup>112</sup> Vijay Mishra, Bob Hodge, 'What is Post (-) colonialism?' in Patrick Williams, Laura Chrisman (ed), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader* (Malaysia: Longman, 1993), p. 276.

<sup>113</sup> The debate started with the problem of the geographical location, then the critics move to the problematic issue within this theory that revolves around the debatable use of the prefix 'post' in the definitions of the word postcolonialism. In addition, the postcolonial literary theory was also faced with another kind of problems which is that of the word combination with and without the use of the hyphen.

concept determined the realities of the peoples experienced within the new nation-states.

It is true that the postcolonial project throughout Africa started earlier in 1930's with the liberationist outlook that took the form of an armed struggle. While acting during the time of the predominance of colonization, the native indigenous movements formed a theory of resistance and nationalism to incite loyalty to the nation. They focused on the political, social objectives which are the liberation of colonized people and the achievement of political independence. Nationalism, which is a kind of resistance to all kinds of discrimination regarding the colour or the race, contributed successfully to fight colonial power by uniting people under the name of one nation and resolving all divisions within the tribes, languages and differences. The political movements, anticolonial struggles and revolutionary wars that witnessed the liberation of Africa, India, and South East Asia from French, British and Dutch imperialism constituted the political background of that anti-colonial literary discourse which is the main part of the postcolonial studies.

This universal quest for national liberation strongly inspired Achebe who paved the way for the evolution of the African arts and the establishment of committed literatures as a tool of nationalism attacking the excesses of colonialism in Africa as a whole as well as a veritable weapon of cultural resistance used to arouse the political consciousness of the people. In order to show that domination is identified not only politically but rather culturally, the struggle extends beyond politics to all aspects of culture and society calling for a need for nationalist literature which has been seen not only as totally inseparable from the movement towards African struggle for independence but more importantly went along with the growth of cultural resistance in the continent<sup>114</sup>. Thus, one of the greatest intellectual aims of postcolonial African

---

<sup>114</sup> Movements of political nationalism and resistance such as Negritude, Pan Africanism and Black Arts movement were introduced by African Black intellectuals such as Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas and others living inside and outside Africa. These founders led to a philosophical, literary and cultural artistic decolonization for they attacked European theories by reacting to what the West initiated and attempted to valorize Africa, preserve African identity, help to regain people's beliefs and return to African roots through putting away the complexes of the years of physical denigration and cultural superiority.

studies since the 1950's has been the nationalist search for the African cultural, literary, social and political emancipation and self recognition. More precisely, texts operated with great success along with the physical resistance against the colonizer's gun.

The blending of postcolonial studies with the novelistic discourse gave birth to the Postcolonial African literature and novel. The African novel occupies a central position in the criticism of colonial portrayal of the African continent and its people and grew, in part, from a history of active resistance to the colonial encounter. As a result, African novels as a medium resulted in challenging, changing people's ideas as well as viewpoints and redirect their contemporary thinking about the practice of colonialism in Africa and reshape "the meaning of home"<sup>115</sup>.

In general, modern African literature and particularly Nigerian literature began effectively with the publication of Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard* (1952) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). This emergence of Nigerian national novels of the 50's and the 60's marks the beginning of African writing in English, and starts "a mode of transposition"<sup>116</sup> of colonial literature by being more nationalistic and expressing Africanness as a way to quell the inferiority complex imposed on the Africans.

Critics were looking for a definition of the specific nature and also the distinctive features of the term African literature which is looked at as a confusing term since it is attached to a diversity of political, historical, geographical and ideological connotations and thus is defined by various critics. For his part, Chinua Achebe claims that:

there was something that we tried to do and failed to define 'African literature' satisfactorily. Was it a literature produced in Africa, or about Africa? Could African lit be on any subject, or must it have an African theme? Should it embrace the whole continent, or south of the Sahara, or just black Africa? And then the question of language. Should it be in indigenous African languages or should it include

---

<sup>115</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.291.

<sup>116</sup> Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination. Literature in Africa and The Black Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p 62.

Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Afrikaans, and so on....I do not see African literature as one unit but as a group of associated units?<sup>117</sup>

All these problematic questions that Achebe asks require our attention; but the salient fact is that African writers want to render their realities and their conditions from their own viewpoint. They “wish to speak for themselves, to tell their own stories, including the story of the colonial encounter and its consequences”<sup>118</sup>. Although the definitions of black writing in the modern time in European languages vary<sup>119</sup>, the aims are similar.

All in all, the postcolonial African literature which is produced by writers from the former colonies of Europe is associated with the cultural production which displays oppositional attitudes towards the hegemonic discourse of colonialism and is to a greater degree anti-colonial in orientation. In fact, African literature is to be considered as a form of anti-colonial discourse whose force and power derive from Africa. This writing is set to resist the colonial perspective as a liberating act for those from the former colonies. These literatures were actively engaged in the act of “decolonizing the mind”.

The majority of theorists, along with Bill Ashcroft, view “the written word become crucial features of the process of self-assertion and of the ability to reconstruct the world as an unfolding historical process”<sup>120</sup>. In fact, it is through writing that an African can establish his identity, explore his roots as an exercise of self-discovery. For him, the African novel is a veritable tool for cultural education and helps in the

---

<sup>117</sup> Chinua Achebe, ‘English and the African writer’ in *Transition*, N° 75-76, (New York: Indiana University Press, 1997), 15-04-2012, p.342/343, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2935429>

<sup>118</sup> Catherine .L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2007), p 4-5.

<sup>119</sup> While Abiola Irele claims that African literature is divided into modern literature growing out of the colonial experience and traditional literature related to traditions and written in the indigenous languages, Ato Quayson divided postcolonial African writing into two categories: the texts from the interstitial or liminal postcolonial view and the texts written from a normativity and proleptic designation and others like Innes who looks at it as national literature written in national languages and also ethnic literature available only in one ethnic group within the nation and written in Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba. See: Abiola Irele, *African experience in literature* (Ohio: Indiana University Press, 1990), p.10-42. Ato Quayson, *Postcolonialism : Theory, Practice or Process?* (London: Polity Press, 2000), p.77-78. Catherine .L. Innes, op.cit, p3-5.

<sup>120</sup> Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*. op. cit, p81.

propagation of African socio cultural preservation. So, it is a literary medium which serves a double purpose: one of social protest and the other of political reassertion.

This kind of cultural nationalism which is a phase of resistance with a diverse network of ideas and practices evolved from reading the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century European novels and seeks to evaluate, interrogate, criticize, challenge the cultural hierarchies imposed by decades of Western political and cultural hegemony through re-reading the master canonical English narratives and rewrites people's colonial experience questioning the colonialist assumptions and bring new interpretations that remove the white binaries of power. The process of writing back is an important aspect in the postcolonial theory and the anti colonial discourse. It is a process in which the marginalized subject rewrites the 'claimed realities' imposed by the Eurocentric historians, anthropologists and writers and thus reshapes the system of power and inverted the Manichean relationship of servant/master. Thus, many postcolonial texts engage with writing back to the colonial novel resulting in the production of new types of books to counter ideals that have been imposed upon them by the colonizer.

It is therefore true to say that the nation had produced nationalist post-colonial African writers whose primary concern was to address the discursive violence of colonization with its discriminating binary constructions, interrogate the European version of African past history of land and people, and seek to efface the perverted colonial narratives by rewriting their past and present social conditions as a way to salvage the history of their people. In this chapter I propose to examine how post-colonial African novelists like Achebe use their novels to fight hegemonic rigidities which previously had mapped out the literary canonical texts about Africa and her people.

Achebe is universally recognized as one of the founding fathers of modern African literature, who has gained an international fame and achieved a universal reputation. In point of fact, there is a fairly extensive amount of useful critical scholarship on him, and his works attract a number of African and foreign scholars, particularly students of literature.



Broadly, he has been described differently as a “de-colonized writer”<sup>121</sup>, a “master storyteller”<sup>122</sup>, a “cultural insider”<sup>123</sup>, a “moderate”<sup>124</sup> and “traditional storyteller” as well as a “dispassionate observer of history”<sup>125</sup>. All these praise names show Achebe’s diverse responsibilities behind being an African writer who at the same time develops a philosophy of combining the African and Nigerian writer’s role. In many of his essays and interviews, Achebe highlights the function of the creative writer in society. When answering a question about the writer’s engagement in public issues, Achebe said that “writers are not only writers. They are also citizens” who are “to help, to serve, humanity”<sup>126</sup>. He regards the role of the writer as that of the teacher, educator, moralist and revolutionary, whose prophetic voices of change are listened to not only by African readers but Europeans as well.

In the field of literary studies and research, Achebe’s imaginative and ideological challenge that led to the emergence of modern African literature is guided by commitment. This concept is defined as a kind of liberationist message that differentiates the African writers from European ones. Achebe recognizes his obligation towards his society and strives to participate in the reconstructive task of re-generation of an Igbo past that has been sometimes fallaciously presented by colonial historians, anthropologists and writers.

In this section, it is important to shed light on the concept of Achebe’s social and political commitment, as well as his cultural and literary mission by using an Afro-centric discourse characterized by techniques oriented towards the African will to fight for freedom. Achebe aims for the preservation and protection of the socio-cultural heritage within his literary works for the purpose of the restoration of African dignity and pride, as he has said repeatedly. Being socially committed, Achebe carries with him the responsibility to offer a realistic vision of a society which has experienced the

---

<sup>121</sup> G. D.Killam , *The Writings of Chinua Achebe* (London:Heinemann,1969),p.14.

<sup>122</sup> Keith Booker. *The African Novel in English: An Introduction* (Oxford: James Currey, 1998), p.70.

<sup>15</sup> Chinwe Christiana Okechukwu , *Achebe the Orator. The Art of Persuasion in Chinua Achebe’s Novels* (London : Greenwood Press,2001),p.13.

<sup>124</sup> John Clement Ball , *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel. V. S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie* (London: Routledge , 2003) , p.82.

<sup>125</sup> Abiola Irele , *The African imagination. Literature in Africa and The Black Diaspora*, op.cit , p.119.

<sup>126</sup> *The Paris Review, The Art of Fiction N°139*, 2007, p.14.

ordeal of colonial occupation. According to him, the African writer must be involved in the task of decolonizing the minds in the struggle against colonialism and “ should be both a cultural nationalist, explaining the traditions of his people to a largely hostile world , and a teacher, instilling dignity into his own people....the writer’s duty is more fundamental than that of the journalist”<sup>127</sup> .

It is well known that Achebe started to write fiction in response to the novel *Mister Johnson* written by the Anglo-Irish writer Joyce Cary. He was critical of the western stereotypes of Africa in the novel *Heart of Darkness* written by the Polish born novelist Joseph Conrad. He was appalled by Cary’s and Conrad’s negative depictions of his homeland and its people. Thus, after realizing that his own humanity was called into question by these stereotyped images ‘othering’ his people and their culture, which were typical tropes of colonial literature, and that he acknowledged as particularly dangerous, Achebe moved to the stage of countering them aiming by that at reinforcing the African self-affirmation. In both his novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the writer challenges the Western representations of Africa and clarifies its picture in order to “counter the colonial mythology that Africans did not have a culture before Colonialism.”<sup>128</sup> His works were written as a response to “the usual villains...Joyce Cary and his infamous *Mister Johnson*; Joseph Conrad and his accursed *Heart of Darkness*”<sup>129</sup> that push him to claim that “*Mister Johnson* did not turn me into a writer. I was born that way. But it did open my eyes to the fact that my home was under attack”<sup>130</sup> . Here Achebe believed that his readings of *Mister Johnson* and *Heart of Darkness* were factors that played an influential role in the eventual composition of *Things fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. The latter studied texts in this

---

<sup>127</sup> Kolawole Ogungbesan , ‘Politics and the African writer’ in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 17, N°. 1 (African Studies Association ,1974),18-04-2012,p.44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/523576>

<sup>128</sup> Simon Gikandi, *Encyclopedia of African Literature* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.10.

<sup>129</sup> Adebayo Williams, ‘The Autumn of The Literary Patriarch: Chinua Achebe and The Politics of Remembering’ in *Research in African literature Vol 32, N° 3*, (New York: Indiana University Press: 2001), p.11.

<sup>130</sup> David Chioni Moore, Analee Heath, Chinua Achebe, ‘A Conversation With Chinua Achebe’ in *Transition* (New York :Indiana University Press , 2008),15-04-2012,p.47-48, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20542537>

dissertation seem deeply interwoven with each other since they are concerned with similar issues but looked at from different angles.

In their 'writing back' to the English canonical texts, that have tarnished the image of Africa and made of it mostly a place of savagery and cannibalism, many black African writers like the Nigerian Chinua Achebe, and the Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong'o have tried to create a literature highlighting their African identity through different ways. This is indeed a "literary revolution"<sup>131</sup> where we can note an African discourse which is against the imperial legacy and presence in Africa since the writers reveal the inhuman workings of the colonial administration in the African land.

As Foucault states, where there is power functioning as discourse, there is resistance playing the role of counter discourses that come in parallel with the dominant hegemonic projects. Foucault's theory of discourse strategies of power has been employed by postcolonial critics like Said, Bhabha, Spivak and Abdul JanMohamed in studying colonialism as a discourse. It has been projected also in the re-reading of the colonial discourse which has silenced, marginalized and oppressed the colonial subject. This anti-colonial stance is to prove that it is only through a discourse that counters the claims of African inferiority that the image of Africa could be properly restored.

What differentiates the discourse theory of the black man from forms of white colonial analysis is that it offers an alternative fund of knowledge about the postcolonial self and other. It strives to make visible what was hidden, to enable the subaltern to be heard, the silent to be voiced and strives to create a place for these categories. Defined differently from western modes of representation, the protocols of representation in African literature show that the anti-colonial discourse is "a significant centre for the creation, maintenance, and /or challenge of unequal power relations" and is "produced by Africans in the impulse of self-apprehension"<sup>132</sup>. The

---

<sup>131</sup> Bill Aschcroft , Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin , *Post-Colonial Studies :The Key Concepts*. op.cit, p97.

<sup>132</sup>Ato Quayson, 'Protocols of Representation and the Problems of Constituting an African 'Gnosis': Achebe and Okri' in *The Yearbook of English Studies, The Politics of Postcolonial Criticism*

anti colonialist projection strives for cultural Africanist nationalist consciousness and aims at the creation of a code for Africanity and blackness to reinforce the Africanist episteme, gnosis, and the African cultural interpretation that moves away from the derogatory gaze of the metropole.

The term has been central in many of the works that shape the intellectual foundations of Postcolonial theory, like Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (1956), Bill Ashcroft's *The Empire Writes Back* and also in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* in which the writer employed the same Western discourse of psychoanalysis to help in the process of decolonization, and to set down the cure for the oppressed peoples and groups in an attempt to eliminate the oppressor or the colonizer out of their psyche. Fanon points out that at the critical stages of decolonization the native intellectual directs his speech to his people and also to the other. Besides, he makes a notable and remarkable analysis of national culture and indicates that national consciousness was important in African countries that have suffered colonial subjugation and humiliation.

### **3-Achebe's decolonizing project through the use of 'African English' oral aesthetics: proverbs, storytelling and songs:**

Any writer's style contributes to the identification of anticolonial Nigerian writing. In this part of the chapter, we will study how Achebe has been using the English language and consider the different purposes behind his deployment of narrative skills in the language of the colonizer despite being literate and fluent in his mother tongue. As a result, it is hotly debated whether Achebe is a victim of cultural imperialism or a betrayer of African heritage and identity.

As a product of Western Christian education, and as a part of new African bourgeoisie, intelligentsia and elite, Achebe was armed with a linguistic tool so as to write literary plays, novels, stories and poetry in English. The significance lies in the fact that he finds himself obliged to use a new tongue in order to record his fiction. In fact, He could have written it in Igbo but as he is capable of mastering the imperial

---

Vol.27(Modern Humanities Research Association, 1997), 16-06-2013, p.140, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3509138>.

language because of his education and learning, it seems to him natural to produce an African novel in English. He declares:

there seems to me to be a genuine need for African writers to pause – momentarily and consider whether anything in traditional African aesthetics will fit their contemporary condition.<sup>133</sup>

In his eyes, language choice is not an important matter; the main objective is the purpose and the message achieved behind this use. Despite his adoption of the Western norms, he acknowledges his “antagonistic attitude”<sup>134</sup> towards colonialism and its literature which

required a new language to describe the world it had created and the people it had subjugated. Not surprisingly, this new language did not celebrate these subject peoples nor toast them as heroes. Rather it paints them in the most lurid colors.<sup>135</sup>

For his part, this new kind of literature that is named postcolonial is a means for the old and the new styles and devices to meet without either of them being neglected. The writer’s goal is to show the cultural richness of Africa; however, his aim cannot be realized by a return to pre-colonial African times except by writing in the English literary expression for a better recognition by local and international audiences.

In a particular case, in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the language of the colonizer becomes an undeniable medium of the colonized whose sentiments are marked; experiences are revealed adequately in a literature of their own. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon argues “At the very moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language that are borrowed from the stranger in his country”<sup>136</sup>. Fanon claims that the colonized is destined to be a mere reflection of his master but the

---

<sup>133</sup> Chinua Achebe, ‘Africa and Her Writers’ in *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 14, N° 3 (Summer, 1973), 20-06-2013, p.619-620, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088351>.

<sup>134</sup> Abdul R. JanMohamed, *Manichean aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*. op.cit, p 8.

<sup>135</sup> Chinua Achebe, ‘Africa is People’ in *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 40, N° 3 (Autumn, 1999), 20-06-2013, p. 316, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25091546> .

<sup>136</sup> Frantz Fanon , *The Wretched of The Earth* .op.cit,p.223.

colonized never “produces an exact replica”<sup>137</sup>. For him, this use of language is only to write about their own history, their own myth and their own legacy not only

to secure publication, but to further their social prestige through international recognition, to obtain a wider reading audience and a release from the perceived social stigma of ethnic or regional provincialism.... (and) provide a common ground for the various ethnic groups<sup>138</sup>

This is aimed to unite them as a whole body whose message is to fight the injustice of the West throughout textual violence and to shape their political consciousness in achieving their desire for freedom through the English medium so as to be universally understood. However, despite being a source for expressing cultural values and an instrumental medium that fulfils important cultural functions, the English language becomes a problem that seeks to question the nature of postcolonial African literature and the issue of the colonized reclaimed identity in a non African genre.

Although African literature written in English was subject to questioning whether it could be called African, African writers, who were following a logic of subversion not of rejection<sup>139</sup> of the English language, use what may be termed ‘African English’ or ‘New English’ which is an English blended with local languages and aesthetics that made African literature unique in its presentation of a genuine image of Africa. Chinua Achebe applies a sense of novelty when writing a “new” kind of African fiction in English by transforming the raw materials into finished products of art. Actually, he believes that an African can produce many shapes of one language such as African English. Thus, he accepts the usage of the imperial language but attempts to indigenize and Africanize it by means of specific Igbo concepts taken from the African environment such as the names of gods, characters and places to suit his

---

<sup>137</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. op.cit, p.86.

<sup>138</sup> Joanna Sullivan, ‘The Question of a National Literature for Nigeria’ in *Research in African literature* Vol.32, N<sup>o</sup>.3, Fall 2001, p.76-77.

<sup>139</sup> I find it worth to put forward the root of the problem concerning the ongoing debate over the language choice in Anglophone African writing in which African writers including Achebe have gone through two different ways in their writing back to decolonize the African literature: rejection and subversion while Achebe subverts, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o rejects. See: Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.283.

creative ideas, his own objective and, of course, to suit the context as well as the society he writes about.

### **3-1 Oral literature in order to restore the culture:**

In order to counter the European viewpoint in writing and of thinking, and reverse the power relations, postcolonial African writers, who originated from societies where oral art and performances are still central to social and self expression, have attempted to convey this oral lore using written literature. Creatively, Chinua Achebe revealed his indigenous culture by foregrounding African oral traditions. As already observed he attaches great importance to the role of African oral traditions and has used them extensively. This incorporation of oral and written materials from African oral culture into their written texts and plot structures is what JanMohamed calls a “syncretic”<sup>140</sup> combination that resulted in the birth of the ‘written oral’ literature. This method was, indeed, a strategy used to falsify Conrad’s depiction of Africans as savage creatures that utter nonsensical words that reflect their lack of culture in *Heart of Darkness*. This attempt to make the novel a speaking element and to create a ‘voice-centred’ aesthetics was not new but Achebe made it a central element of his narrative.

In a broader sense, traditional African oral literature is the basis of Nigerian fiction since it represents the unwritten forms of any culture in native societies which are generally oral in nature. Some studies have asserted the oral origin of written Nigerian literature and show that the non literate societies of pre-colonial Nigeria operated on oral literary culture that consisted of poetry, songs, and tales.

We have to recognize that oral literature forms an important sector of oral history because of its significance and capability of storing the people’s way of living and belief system as well as their historical experiences from which the Nigerian orature is richly drawn from. The community is characterized by a respect for the

---

<sup>140</sup> Abdul R. JanMohamed, ‘The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature’ in *Critical Inquiry Vol. 12, N°1*.op.cit, p 84. In fact, syncretic combination is the process through which the Postcolonial writers attempt to combine two different cultures (written and oral, English and indigenous) in the same narrative.

spoken word. In the novel the narrator informs us that “utterance had power to change fear into a living truth” (AOG: p.90). Achebe stresses that a person is respected for the oral use.

One has to recognize that the Nigerian literature owes a lot to the orator which is seen as the voice of the people whose practice of public speaking is transmitted through the art of conversation. The latter is discussed by Emmanuel Obiechina and Abiola Irele in their critical works relating to how orature is employed in such novels as *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Both of them point out the power of oration and oratory which are looked at by Achebe as “a valid expressive medium”<sup>141</sup> that “stands as the fundamental reference of discourse and of the imaginative mode in Africa”<sup>142</sup> and “functions as the matrix of an African mode of discourse”<sup>143</sup>.

Through an oratorical analysis of Achebe’s novels which were written as “very literary commemoration of an oral culture”<sup>144</sup> on the basis of the style, I aim at analysing examples from *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* which give a good picture of the means of communication in a pre-modern traditional oral culture.

In both novels, the writer makes use of conversations and public oratory. In the opening paragraph of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, we hear the voice of an oral historian. Then, we are introduced to the characters participating in dialogue and conversational scenes. In *Things Fall Apart*, the first dialogue that takes place between the two old men Unoka and Okoye who started with the salutatory phrase “I have kola”. The bringing of kola serves the same purpose as the formulaic announcement at the beginning of an oral narrative performance. Gradually in chapter two, Ogbuefi Ezeugo the man who speaks to Umuofia during that deliberation on the murder of an Umuofia woman (TFA: p.8) .He has a booming voice; he rouses his audience by his gestures, tone pointing out the victim of injustice who lost his wife. He is the orator on that specific occasion when a daughter of Umuofia was killed an orator

---

<sup>141</sup> Abiola Irele, *The African imagination. Literature in Africa and The Black Diaspora* . op.cit, p. xvii.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Catherine .L. Innes, *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* .op.cit, p.46.



normally speaks to the people on such occasions (TFA: p.8). Other illustrations are Obierika's speech, a great man and an orator begins to speak "we who are here.....out too in the meeting". (TFA: p.144)

In *Arrow of God*, people are also deeply versed in elocution and in the art of speaking. Achebe shows that the practice among traditional Igbos is to summon villagers orally through the town crier when problems arise. In this way, orators express their ideas in turn until a consensus is reached about the problem concerned. Also, the meeting between Umuofia and Mbaino in *Things Fall Apart* is to avert war after the killing of a man and a woman. In *Arrow of God*, Umuaro male elders organize a meeting to debate a land dispute between Umuaro and Okperi, and to question whether to go to war with the people of Okperi or not.

Achebe goes back to the pre colonial literary forms and aesthetics in response to the European critics who think that the oral form is inferior to the written one and who regard the African narrative forms as primitive. Thus, "the African writer's resourcefulness in this regard is seen as part of the efforts to claim African literature for Africans" and "re-developed a way of knowing the African self."<sup>145</sup> In fact, all these oral forms make us realize that Africans didn't hear of the novel from Europe but all the genres were manifested in the African orature. Being a product of his environment, the African writer Chinua Achebe reflects the value of the oral culture of his own people within his literary production for different purposes. He believes that this oral literature is not merely a form of entertainment but a medium for cultural education, value assertion and national liberation that are achieved by restoring the truth about the black people, reminding the Nigerians of their past and exhibiting the cultural wealth of the continent.

Like written literature, oral literature has several genres that are manifested in various forms like storytelling, proverb, legend, myth, songs, dialogue and conversations that stress the validity of the African ethical ways and the importance of

---

<sup>145</sup> Anthonia Kalu, 'African Literature and the Traditional Arts: Speaking Art, Molding Theory' in *Research in African Literatures, Poetics of African Art* Vol. 31, N°4 (New York: Indiana University, 2000) , 20-06-2013, p.50, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3821077>

these cultural signifiers in postcolonial writings. By using effectively these indigenous oral techniques, African writers ,among them Achebe, succeeded in presenting an elevated diction used in the dialogues between the characters, resulting by that in turning the folk discourse into a formal literary device.<sup>146</sup>

### **3-1-1 Proverbs and sayings: wisdom to achieve freedom.**

In this sub-section, I aim to examine some of the Igbo proverbs employed by Achebe in his novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, while paying attention to their placement and function in the stories. Like other modern West African writers such as Amos Tutuola , Achebe effectively intertwines the oral tradition of proverbs with his novels especially in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* and in a lesser degree in *No longer at Ease* and *A Man of People*. The frequent use of proverbial forms by African writers gives a distinctive cultural identity and a unique flavor to modern African literature and writings. In addition, they reinforce realism and truthfulness in the emergence of Nigerian literature with their embodiment of “truth ascertained through experience.”<sup>147</sup>

Initially, in the African traditional societies and among many tribes in Nigeria, like the Igbo, proverbs are valuable means of expression in the art of conversation and have an interesting place in their cultural environment. They are “miniature tales”<sup>148</sup> and “kernels which contain the wisdom of traditional people”<sup>149</sup> and their native life. It is also stated that the proverbial materials used in the novels play prominent roles in communication since they “question the wisdom of the ancestors or truisms about human behaviour”<sup>150</sup> and enable the transmission of people’s dialogues indirectly. Generally, proverbs are cited from the mouth of orators who borrowed them from the

---

<sup>146</sup> In this section, I was motivated by M’hamed Bensemmane’s article ‘Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*’ in *Al Adab Wa Lughat (Letters and Languages)*N°3 (Algiers:University of Algiers,2008)

<sup>147</sup> Charles Nnolim, ‘The Form and Function of the Folk Tradition in Achebe’s Novels’, 10-02-2013, <http://ariel.synergiesprairies.ca/ariel/index.php/ariel/article/viewFile/1670/1629> ,p2.

<sup>148</sup> Charles H.Rowell, ‘An Interview with Chinua Achebe’ in *Callaloo, Vol.13, N°1*(The Johns Hopkins University Press,1990),p.98,<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2931612>.Accessed:15-04-2012.

<sup>149</sup> Emmanuel Obiechina, *Culture, Tradition and Society in The West African Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.156.

<sup>150</sup> Simon Gikandi, *Reading the African Novel* (New York: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1987), p. 160.

indigenous literary tradition to show their authority over other members of the clan. Their usage in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* is seen as an important aspect and mode of the African anticolonial discourse because it is “a potent weapon in a tradition of writing”<sup>151</sup> and can underpin the process of nationalism and resistance.

Early in *Things Fall Apart*, for example, Achebe says: “proverbs are the palm – oil with which words are eaten” (TFA: p.5). Likewise, The title of *Arrow of God* comes from an Igbo proverb in which a person is said to represent the will of God and in the cultural clash between African traditions against the Western ones, Ezeulu standing against the latter for the good of his people shows that he is like an Arrow of his God, i.e. acting on their behalf.

To make facts clear, in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo’s clan employs indirect communication using proverbs. When Okonkwo visits Nwakibie, a wealthy man of the village to seek his help, he expresses it with proverbs “I have come to you for help.....The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did.” (TFA: p. 16) The man understands him perfectly and makes his decision immediately to help Okonkwo with a loan of seed yams to start his farming.

Besides, *Arrow of God*, which is written in a poetic as well as a proverbial style, contains several strong sayings such as those used by Ezeulu and other priests in their struggle over the authority of tradition citing the wisdom of the ancestors. Whenever Ezeulu’s sons try to question his decisions, he replies by using final words of wisdom to silence them (AOG: p.13), since “the proverb for Ezeulu is a judicious weapon which is used not only to arbitrate, but also to pacify”<sup>152</sup>. From his side, Nwaka is the orator who employs proverbs abundantly in his speech. He starts his discourse with a proverb: “wisdom is like a goatskin bag, every man carries his own” (AOG: p.16) to give the reader another story opposed to that of Ezeulu.

---

<sup>151</sup> Ode S. Ogede, ‘Achebe and Armah: A Unity of Shaping Visions’ in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 27, N<sup>o</sup>2 (New York: Indiana University Press, 1996), 15-06-2012, p.115, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820165> .

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

The highlighted importance of proverbs within the narrative is based on every aspect of societal life. *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are unique literary efforts from Achebe to preserve and disseminate the socio-cultural heritage of Africans. Both novels contain numerous proverbs and sayings that were introduced to indicate different issues. They picture and reflect practically all the situations, experiences, values and habits of everyday life. By foregrounding the social instruction, moral behavior and wisdom of the oral culture of the tribe, they contribute to providing a rich source of imagery and “an artistic device for giving complexity to the narrative, unity to form, coherence and pattern to action and direction to moral and social insight.”<sup>153</sup>

As readers, we have observed that these sets of interesting and meaningful proverbs which are derived from the mythic stream of folklore, value associations and perceptions about god and natural phenomenon say the opposite of what Europeans claim in their novels, in which they see the other race as voiceless and cultureless, providing evidence that they have knowledge and highly respected morals as marks of their civility. For example, proverbs like “when a man says yes, his chi says yes also” (TFA: p. 19) and “no matter how strong or great a man was he should never challenge his chi” (AOG: p. 27), which have the meaning of a man is subject to his *Chi* whom he should obey and keep under its dominance, help in informing the reader about the values and shape his understanding of the religious and cultural side of the African people who believe in cosmology and who have a strong religion and culture. They also help in the understanding of the protagonists and even accompany their tragic process and provide a sign to the upcoming disaster awaiting both the chief priest Ezeulu and the village leader Okonkwo.

Other stated kinds of proverbs are considered as a powerful cultural factor which succeeded positively in re-instating the place of national culture and are served as a means to raise the people’s consciousness and put forward the need for Africans in general to overcome all kinds of divisions in the face of colonialism. Achebe uses various oratory formulas to awaken the people’s consciousness about their identity. An example of such formula can be found in the elders’ saying: “if a child washed his

---

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, p.157.

hands, he could eat with kings” (TFA: p. 6) referring to Okonkwo who rises to fame because he earns the consideration of elders. Similarly to Ezeulu’s use of oral sayings, such as the proverbial expression “when two brothers fight a stranger reaps the harvest” (AOG: p.131). These studied instances taken from Achebe’s novels illustrate the necessary call for an Igbo awareness of the need to unite against any external enemy.

### **3-1-2 Storytelling: a cultural weapon behind political fighting.**

Storytelling and traditional folktales also have a significant role and authority in showing the oppositional discourse in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Unlike the colonial stories that become a colonizing genre which exercise power, the anticolonial stories, as a kind of discourse, have an absolute power to narrate and somehow are able to decolonize what has been colonized before. These elements constitute the African oral culture that is valuable among the people who make use of it from one generation to another. One interesting thing about tales is that they are “popular tale (s) handed down by oral tradition from a more or less remote antiquity and usually told either about animals or the common folk”<sup>154</sup>. Actually, these stories about animals personified as human beings, carrying with them certain human attributes and qualities, are cited within Achebe’s narratives in order to play out political, sociological and cultural roles in a community. Stories, whether told by wise women or by men, were addressing young and adult audiences so as to serve important social and ethical purposes. In addition to being a medium of communication, this kind of discourse which is a basic tenet of the culture is also a means of entertainment conveying the cultural inheritance of the people who transmit knowledge and wisdom from one generation to another.

In the same way African writers are “inseparable from the tale-telling occupation”<sup>155</sup>, Achebe enriches his novels with a wealth of tales which he provides from Igbo history, culture and belief systems. His interest in the incorporation of

---

<sup>154</sup> Charles Nnolim, op.cit, p.2.

<sup>155</sup> Alain Severac, ‘Chinua Achebe, History Teller’ in *Commonwealth Vol 2 1, N°1* (Dijon, France: 1998), p.19.

stories in his fictional work shows his love of traditional patterns of speech and fondness of the tribal way of life.

In both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, children gather round the village elders and sages who narrate folk and heroic tales which trace the origins of the people, tell stories of the invasion of white strangers and the triumphs of natives over them. All these stories function as an “allegory of mental liberation leading through language to armed struggle, and makes the point that such interpolated folktales challenge the received conventions of the European realistic novel”<sup>156</sup>. Thus, reading Achebe’s novels means receiving active, militant information about the history of people, the land and the culture, aiming by that at the continuity of life in such kinds of communities.

In both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the stories are told by a third person ,an omniscient narrator who tells the story in a manner that he is a storyteller talking to us directly and this makes us close to him and to the characters. The opening paragraphs were devoted to Okonkwo’s wrestling match with Amalinze the cat and Ezeulu’s observation of the moon.

In Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist’s knowledge of the story of his country was through tales narrated by his uncle Uchendu who helps him learn part of the Igbo history and makes him return to the glorious past and good days. Consequently, Okonkwo learns a discourse about the unity of his community and their gnosis before the coming of the whites. In addition, he remembers in detail the tales his mother had told him and states that “it was as silly as all women’s stories” (TFA: p.54) such as the humorous tale offered about the Mosquito and Ear who refused to marry him. This kind is unlike the masculine stories which are based on war, wrestling matches, “violence and bloodshed” (TFA: p.37). Indeed, Okonkwo encourages Nwoye and Ikemefuna “to sit with him in his obi, and he told them stories of the land, masculine stories of violence and bloodshed” (TFA: p.37).

---

<sup>156</sup> Charlie Sugnet , ‘Things Fall Apart : Problems in Constructing an Alternative Ethnography’ in Dubem Okafor , *Meditations on African Literature* (London : Greenwood Press,2001), p. 74.

Other women's stories which Nwoye's mother narrates to her young children, while sitting at her feet listening to oral tales, are richly woven in Achebe's work. Ezinma narrates memorable folktales like that of the Tortoise who accompanied the birds to a great feast in the sky (TFA: p.69), the Tortoise and Cat who went to wrestle against Yams (TFA: p.71). A few pages later Obierika, who comes to visit Okonkwo in exile, informed him "that Abame is no more" (TFA: p.99). He narrates the Abame story and the coming of the white men "who made the powerful guns and the strong drinks and took slaves away across the sea, but no one thought the stories were true" (TFA: p.101). In order to illustrate this point, Uchendu tells the story of Mother Kite and her little daughter who was sent to bring food. This is to symbolize the struggle of the people for freedom and to call for resistance not silence since the colonized is afraid of those who resist, thus who have power, not those who keep silent as a symbol of being powerless.

These tales that belong to West African culture are defending the communal interests of Umuofia as a fictional community and Africa as a continent with a genuine history. They are a paradigmatic of a social order since they symbolize Okonkwo's rise and fall, and the people's fate. They also imply that there are sound possibilities for adaptation and change in the course of events.

Even in *Arrow of God*, Achebe has an endless number of tales. The writer starts his work by telling a story from the past when Ezeulu and Nwaka struggled over a land dispute. Ezeulu recounts the story that his father told him as a child about how the six tribes had come together to collectively create the god Ulu. His father had told him that the disputed land had always belonged to Okperi. Despite Ezeulu giving historical interpretation and evidence, Nwaka opposes his story and recounts another one that Okperi people couldn't have owned the land, then while Umuaro could, since historically they were driven away from Umuofia then from Abame and subsequently from Aninta.

There are also other stories told by Ugoye, the youngest of Ezeulu's wives, about the jealousy of two wives and "to alleviate her own anxiety over her relationship with

the senior wife”<sup>157</sup> as a symbol of the tensions and rivalries. It is through these stories that she “entertains her children, instructing them as Ibo tales are said to do about proper behavior, in this case warning them against envy”<sup>158</sup>.

The tales imply more than limited interpretations but are foregrounded to draw attention to people’s plight and to deconstruct the reductive portrayals of African society, of its history and culture. Didactic morals and values are described through these seemingly simple stories. They serve a multiple purpose of revealing, transmitting and teaching clear universal moralities and wisdom as well as correcting one’s approach to life, “to let the younger generation develop a propensity for poetry and folklores so they grow up in wisdom possessing original ideas and a love for their own culture”<sup>159</sup>. By doing that, he shows firmly that the richness of African culture and traditions is unique and special.

### **3-1-3 Singing and reciting: going back to the origin.**

Sometimes, the use of proverbs and tales is accompanied with songs and drums. The latter, it appears, play a role in the language and style of Achebe who uses them rhetorically to communicate political messages during religious rituals and communal gatherings and ceremonies in which the leader or priest might accompany ritual poetry, chants, and songs with dances. At the same time, he might teach his audience who are members of the clan about the founding of the village and the values of the ancestors. During the course of events in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, we hear the drum beating at wrestling matches and at “the unmistakable wrestling dance-quick, light and gay...beating , persistent and unchanging” (TFA: p.30-1) giving the listener a spiritual contact with the cosmos.

---

<sup>157</sup> Charles Nnolim, op.cit, p.6.

<sup>158</sup> Charles Nnolim, *Approaches to the African Novel Analysis* (Lagos: African Books Collective Ltd, 1992), p.4.

<sup>159</sup> Obi Nwakanma, ‘Metonymic Eruptions: Igbo Novelists, the Narrative of the Nation, and New Developments in the Contemporary Nigerian Novel’ in *Research in African Literatures, Nigeria's Third-Generation Novel: Preliminary Theoretical Engagements Vol. 39, N°.2* (New York: Indiana University Press, 2008), 18-04-2012, p.197, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20109575> .



Furthermore, a large number of songs are woven into the pages of both narratives in which Achebe has pioneered their skilful use. Love songs, marriage songs, work songs and war songs and other kinds were used with a tone, and a rhythm.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Uchendu cites a song sung after a woman's death. For his part, Ikemefuna when walking to his death, thinking of himself going home, starts singing his favourite piece of music. Other instances of children singing when it rains, musicians with metal instruments and young men singing when working are injected into the narrative.

Within *Arrow of God*, Ofoedu and Obika hearing sounds similar to a funeral song, youths of Umuaro gave an ancient python song when building a new road to facilitate the exploitation of the land "a new and irreverent twist and changed it into a half familiar, half strange and hilarious work-song" (AOG: p.81) women presented by food in a marriage ceremony raised songs for thanks, singers in Ezeulu's compound, Obiageli singing to help the child sleep and children naked sent into the rain singing.

One can observe from the above extracts that they are tools for oral narration and heard as a part of the language that supports Achebe's response to Conrad. By this Achebe may be reminding us that traditional Igbo culture is not frozen but evolutionary and shaped by current events.

In addition to the elements mentioned above, readers have the opportunity to gain a deeper level of understanding of the Igbo words and some native African words which are included in Achebe's novels like Ekwe, Udu, Ogene (musical instrument), names associated with the ancestors, ancestral spirits and personal gods like Chi, Agbala, Chukwu, Egwugwu, names of characters like Okonkwo, Ezeulu with mythic associations related to the deity Ulu. These elements are highlighted in italics and briefly explained in a glossary at the end of the novel, after being translated into English, as an act of revealing a reconnection to African roots. They are to remind the reader of the Igbo societal traditions, artistic values and their mythical, cosmological as well as religious beliefs. Thus, by borrowing intentionally these elements from the Igbo language the writer challenges the form as well as the context of the colonialist

narrative, that considered African languages like barbaric and brutal sounds similar to those of cannibals as well as animals, and produces counter discursive novels from an Afro-centric perspective so as to “reinvest his culture with a presence and place it on equal terms with the dominant one”<sup>160</sup> , reinforce the African identity , trace the cultural milieu of postcolonial African conditions and examine these aspects realistically and objectively.

### **3-2 Forms of resistance: A means for self and collective defence:**

At the heart of postcolonial writings, we find the project of decolonization through ideas of resistance which involve the task of dispelling the prejudiced western assumptions and restoring the dignity and individuality of the natives. The concept of resistance in postcolonial literature reinforces the meaning of the oppositional discourse. It carries with it ideas about the meaning of freedom and nationalism. Through the presentation of the heroes of his novels, Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart* and Ezeulu of *Arrow of God*, the writer sets out to show their attitudes towards the effects of colonialism on their country. Both protagonists are characterized by an anti-colonial discourse and attitude that can be detected from their words and actions.

According to Foucault’s concept of power, dominance inevitably meets resistance. When conceptualizing his ideas within the oppositional discourse of anti colonialism, we realize that power, as far as the Igbos are concerned, is never centralized in the hands of a single person. It rather circulates through a collection of actions that prevent the domination of individuals over the group.

The presentation of the Igbo’s resistance starts with the description of the protagonist, whose qualities are not to be connected to those found in the Western protagonists. The strategies of resistance which Achebe deploys in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are both illustrations of the revolutionary nature of Achebe’s texts. Hence, the idea of resistance in both novels mentioned does not mean failure but denote the black spirit of struggle and courage.

---

<sup>160</sup> Isidore Okpewho, ‘On the Concept: “Commonwealth Literature” in *Meditations on African literature*. Op.cit, p .38.

In presenting Okonkwo's and Ezeulu's epic stories, since they are dealing with their heroism and their eventual destruction, Achebe offers a powerful counter statement to the idea of the dark continent of Africa. He is able to project and preserve the socio cultural heritage of the African continent as a place populated by heroes. The presentation of characters like Okonkwo and Ezeulu despite their shortcomings, are meant to represent exemplary figures of courage and determination, hence resistance.

Right from the beginning of *Things Fall Apart*, the writer presents his readers with the full portrait of the protagonist Okonkwo who is an influential leader, a well-respected man in his own Igbo community of Umuofia, and an epic "heroic resistance fighter."<sup>161</sup> The latter qualified him to be the true representative of the Igbo culture and the spokesman of the Umuofians who struggle to achieve self determination.

Through a close reading of the book, we see that Okonkwo is among the few people who perceive the white men as invaders who hide pernicious intentions behind the humanitarian ideals they claim to hold. Realizing the changes in the tribe's ways and the destruction brought by the missionaries, Okonkwo's friend Obierika deplors that the white man "has won our brothers and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (TFA: p.160). In fact, he opposes strongly colonialism with its new ideas, new customs, new religions and also the new invading culture that poses a threat to traditional Igbo culture and thus causes its division. It is true that Okonkwo refuses the British influence and complexity; however, more importantly he does not accept the people's compromise with colonialism. For him, Umuofia needs no change except to remain as it is with its age-long customs and laws.

Quite clearly, his reaction seems more clairvoyant in responding to the new challenges. His refusal of change is a symbolic form of resistance of Africa to the ways of the white man. Unlike his son, the protagonist has prepared himself to resist the colonizer by thinking of ideas to keep the coherence of the clan and its values. As he cannot cope with those actual circumstances, he reacts with hostility and uses "the

---

<sup>161</sup> Annie Gagiano, *Achebe, Head, Marechera, On Power and Change in Africa* (New York: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p.74.

fight against Christians to regain his lost place in the village”<sup>162</sup> by first burning down the church and then killing the messenger that came to stop a meeting in Umoufia. This violent opponent of colonialism and the urgent actions he takes against the church and the messenger reflect his refusal to accept change and his determination to meet new challenges. After believing in his power to change the people’s mentality and to make them agree with him, he mostly finds himself a lonely figure in striving to defend the rigidity of traditionalism against the European invaders.

In the end, we are informed that he commits suicide. This is thought a positive act of “willful resistance”<sup>163</sup> rather than being an act of failure and shame since it inspires resistance against the colonial. Alan R Friesen writes that “Okonkwo’s suicide is seen as an affirmative act ...a conscious decision...instead of an act of failure...Okonkwo’s suicide can be seen as his last attempt to remind the Igbo people of their culture and values.”<sup>164</sup> In fact, it is a kind of violent resistance against what is seen as an invasion. In Okonkwo’s eyes, suicide is inevitable after realizing that his society is on the brink of change, and therefore the beliefs and customs that have guided his life are being forfeited. On the other hand, his community maintains an ambivalent attitude since it believes that his suicide is an abomination against the earth Goddess and Igbo customs.

In *Arrow of God*, the character Ezeulu, the chief priest of the village God Ulu, is another representative of resistance by adopting “a moderate position.”<sup>165</sup> Ezeulu’s position is of great importance since he stands at the very center of the life of his community. In addition to the immense influence and supreme power he symbolizes over this people, he is “a keeper of collective security”<sup>166</sup> as well as a ritual and religious leader who not only regulates their activities such as harvesting and planting

---

50 Abiola Irele, ‘The Tragic Conflict in the Novels of Chinua Achebe’ in Ulli Beiri (ed) *Introduction to African Literature* (London: Lowe and Brydone Printers Ltd, 1967), p.180.

<sup>163</sup> Alan R Friesen, ‘Okonkwo’s Suicide as an Affirmative Act: Do Things Really Fall Apart?’ in *Postcolonial Text*, Vol 2, N°4 (University of Regina), 02-07 2011, <http://docs.google.com/viewer?a:vol.p.10>

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>165</sup> Chidi Amuta, *The Theory of African Literature: Implication for Practical Criticism* (London: Zed Books, 1989), p.135.

<sup>166</sup> Emmanuel Obiechina, *opcit*, p. 234.

but also strengthens their solidarity in the clan. For example, he is named to protect the land, guard the community and to name the feasts.

In a time when Nigeria was being occupied by the British, he recognizes the hegemonic goals of the colonizer and “he alone in Umuaro understands the nature of the dilemma posed by the presence of the white man”<sup>167</sup>. Unlike most of his clansmen, he knows that the British administration has come not as a visitor but with the intention to stay and select among the Igbo people warrant chiefs who “by appointment were to serve as committees of judges in matters of civil conflict ...and as administrators in seeing to the demands of government for work crews and the like”<sup>168</sup>. He realizes that despite the inside division in the clan, the colonizer is the common enemy that came slowly and insidiously without being noticed by the people of Umuaro. Thus, he committed himself to the defense of his culture and way of life against the colonial administration and at the same time to preserve his unique position of priest of Ulu, the most powerful of the village deities.

Ezeulu’s behavior concerning his resistance is ambiguous, ambivalent and complex because of his position in-between modernization and tradition. Indeed, he is a symbol of resistance to the colonial authority but at the same time “an instrument for subversion of the traditional system”<sup>169</sup>.

On one hand, from his visit to Okperi where he comes in further contact with the British and their powers, the chief priest learns that an African man can gain power by learning the use of the white man’s instrument, especially the language. He believes the white man’s tongue is a tool of progress and power to learn their secrets, so they can gain an edge over their peers in order to join the civilized world. He explains to his son Oduche that he must learn “these new things” (AOG: p.189). As a result, he resists first by making a sacrifice for the benefit of his clan when he decided to send

---

<sup>167</sup> Abiola Irele, *op.cit*, p.185.

<sup>168</sup> Robert Wren, *Achebe’s World: the Historical and Cultural Context of the Novels of Chinua Achebe* (London: Longman House, 1980), p. 87. These collaborators are called by Barbara Bush “semi-autonomous agents” who help to sustain the colonial state. See: Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism* (London: Longman, 2006), p.124.

<sup>169</sup> Emmanuel Obiechina, *op.cit*, p.239.

his son Oduche to the white Christian colonial school, which he believes gives power to the enemy. He wants his son to act as his spy in the colonial world and to be his “eye and ear among these people” (AOG: p.221) in order to learn their ways, language and knowledge and thus save Umuaro and strengthen his power in the location. In order to explain to his son the reason why he is being sent to the missionary school Achebe uses the simile of ‘a mask dancing’. He makes his protagonist saying: “the world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well you don’t stand in one place” (AOG: p.46) with the meaning that as the world is changing, man is able to change in order to understand perfectly this changing world. However despite making his son the object of a concession to the white man to keep the village together, rumors begin to question Ezeulu’s intentions.

On the other hand, when Winterbottom sends for Ezeulu to come to government Hill to be installed in his new position, he gets the firm answer that Ezeulu does not leave his hut. The writer makes him refuse to be titled a warrant chief and by that oppose the colonial administration in the person of Wintertbottom, even if he seems to be supporting the British over the Okperi land issue. This form of resistance shows “an important element of his heroism”<sup>170</sup>. He says to the interpreter who brought the white man’s request to be served by him: “tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody’s chief except Ulu” (AOG: p.175). As a consequence, Winterbottom looked at the action as an insult for which he is imprisoned and humiliated. Achebe stresses Ezeulu’s rejection of the indirect rule in his refusal of chieftaincy to make us sympathize with his courage in standing up against the British administration. However this resistance has been shaken because of Ezeulu’s thinking of revenge against his people who have dissociated themselves from his conflict with Winterbottom. This revenge against his own people instead of being a ‘resistance’ actually is the agent that breaks the unity and cohesion of the village.

Finding himself struggling alone and receiving no help, no support and no direct solidarity when he stays in Winterbottom’s guard room, the protagonist refuses to

---

<sup>170</sup> Lokangaka Lasambe , *An Introduction to The African Prose Narrative* (Pretoria: Kagiso Tertiary Edition,2004) , p.77.

adjust to the agricultural calendar that is used to declare the New Yam Festival and permit the harvest ritual. This action leaves the village in total disarray, facing an immediate famine, thus, division for the Christians missionaries and Igbo converts start to call people to harvest their crops in order to feed their families without godly punishment. Here, the writer demonstrates that Ezeulu's way of punishment is not effective but acknowledges the power and presence of the new order that finds an easy way to dig inside African society.

Achebe presents the ambivalence of resistance which might sound paradoxical since he shows a character with an ambivalent position and holding two contradictory discourses. At the beginning he focuses his attention on the discourse of resistance demonstrating the protagonist's ideas of liberation, defense of the god, the self and the clan. However, this strong and committed reaction against colonialism causes him to commit errors of judgment. In the end, the discourse of resistance and anti colonialism gives way to another discourse, that of change and adaptation to the new situation. This position is underlined by the tragedy of Okonkwo's death and Ezeulu's madness.

#### **4-Conclusion:**

To sum up, the chapter has attempted a discussion of the African writer's vision, aesthetics and the African's role of safeguarding the cultural traditions. The narrative techniques as well as the style underline an anticolonial discourse based on a deep knowledge of the African way of uttering words, communicating language and resisting oppression.

Achebe produces a literature which helps in the reconstruction of the distorted image of the African identity, past and history through a realistic discourse. Both his novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are pioneering books to tell the story of European colonization faced with African resistance from an African perspective. They are part of a youthful literature evolving as a direct response to the West's arguments which call African humanity into question especially the provocative fictional works of Joyce Cary and Joseph Conrad.

The writer's committed role and talented way of redirecting the Nigerian people towards reflecting on the beauty of the original Africa is achieved by using a blending of the colonizer's language, English and the colonized aesthetics of storytelling, proverb saying and chants singing, translated sometimes into the Igbo language. This revival of African aesthetics and blending of English language gives the reader a substantial knowledge of African words and Western worlds.



# Conclusion

## General Conclusion

---

This cross-cultural comparative study has been designed to analyze the Western fiction of Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary and the African literary response of Chinua Achebe. The four novels discussed here are eloquent illustrations of the colonial and anticolonial attitudes whose established connection rests on binary divisions. Our references to both adventure story and romance permit us to bring to light the three author's conception of the African image that dominates the Western mind/imagination via a stereotyped European angle of observation and an ambivalent African eye. Generally speaking, it is a study of relationships and contradictions which foregrounds the prejudices of the colonial people and the ambivalences of the colonized. We have thus dealt with their thematic preoccupations, intentions and discourses that reflect their concern about the importance of cultural identity in literature.

As we have argued, the cultural connection between the West and the East, particularly between Africa and the European world deserves attention since it has raised passionate debates and led to polemical oppositions. This research work has been preoccupied with showing the link between the political imperialism of Western countries and the moral imperialism of the minds that induces our questioning of the process of cultural imperialism which is exemplified by the two specific kinds of texts that we have approached. These texts, indeed, deal with the power relations as well as textual expressions reflecting divergent discourses. Through this dialogue between the cultures, readers will have noticed a certain parallel between the colonial and the African authors who, despite their different geographical situations, were affected by similar circumstances, which they describe in their texts. In doing so, they use different degrees of knowledge and representations that justify the dominant imperial power, while Achebe's texts display mechanisms of resistance to imperialism.

Taking into consideration the issue of the foundations of discourse about Africa, the first part of our work has been an elaboration of the problematic of Western knowledge concerning the Orient and the power-biased partition over it. We have tried

to show that the Western writers' claims of a firm knowledge of Africa are in reality fallacious postures sought to justify their power, control and thus oppression and enslavement of others. In their eyes, it was considered to be the right and the duty of those who are 'white' and 'civilised' to bring their civilisation and enlightenment to those who were 'black' and 'primitive'. As a result, an unequal power relation is established by the portrayal of the subject positions. This inequality is known as Manichean opposition and binary construction that contrasts two seemingly opposite parts and creates two worlds amounting to self and other, centre and periphery, civilized and primitive, colonized and colonizer, white and black. Through this textual pairing and Manichean reading, Conrad and Cary's novels display their limitations, for they preserve the superiority/inferiority paradigm of black /white relation. As colonial writers, they associate the qualities with the whites whereas the defects are connected with blacks.

What may be deduced from the first part of this dissertation, which is an investigation in the racist and stereotypical English texts, is that Conrad and Cary's allegories indicate the racial hierarchy on which imperialism is based. The race classifications used in their narrations towards Africa and Africans is an act of subordinating of Africa to the West, by showing the differences that constitute grounds for the European colonial project. In their building of a cultural empire, Conrad's and Cary's desires to write about Africa express doubts whether Africa has a history, a past or a literature. Both of them attempt an erasure of the continent from the map of the world by denying its history and its culture. These discursive features that characterize the colonial literature make us conclude that the willingness to identify the other is possible only through a gaze of negation and distortion.

In its study of examples of prose fiction related to the colonial domination of the British and the Belgians, this dissertation contains insights into the Carian and Conradian colonial mode of writings based on stereotypes and misconceptions, which are derived from Western people's thinking during colonial times. Actually when these writers depicted the interior of Africa as dark and savage, they were just projecting falsified perceptions of exotica, since the Congolese and Nigerian images representing the whole African continent couldn't bear much resemblance to the mode of existence

of the local people. This is why Achebe accuses such writers of being racist by constructing information that is not historically valid. In fact, all the misjudgements that constitute the core of the colonial discourse are employed, on the one hand, to observe the colonial practices and, on the other hand, to reveal ironically the evil nature and the exploitative logic of colonization. To some extent, Achebe's fiction is bent on restoring a valid and realistic portrait of Africa.

The dissertation then moves to an examination of the African postcolonial literature with its nationalist discourse that is distinguished by its duality in the perception of the African life. We have questioned the purpose of the need of the African continent to write back to the 'centre' under the name of decolonizing fiction. Unlike the colonialist literature of Conrad and Cary, the postcolonial literature of Achebe has opened new areas of investigation helping by that the rethinking of the colonial discursive dimensions, in the rebuilding of a new image by reaffirming the national identity as well as the complexities of African society and its indigenous customs, values and behaviours. We have also used the postcolonial theory, as it challenges the Western attitudes resulting in subverting all the tropes and stereotypes, and given expression to what has been hidden or distorted.

In order to clarify the African writer's resistance discourse against the false stereotypes and colonialist ideas of supremacy, Achebe was motivated to 'write back' through different literary strategies that make the national identity clearly voiced in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. In the second part of the dissertation, we have considered Achebe's assumption about the necessity to go back to the past historical events via a realist discourse that makes his position clear, direct and visible. Since he has been strongly attached to the African lore and customs, his narration reflects the real socio-cultural events that are more elaborately examined and realistically rendered than a surface reading can reveal. Therefore, Achebe sought to reveal through his writings the Nigerian experience and to reconstruct the identity of the colonized in order to re-establish a distorted African image.

We have argued on the fact that Achebe's commitment makes him appear as a history recorder, a sociologist and a protest writer who uses literature as a historical

and sociological document where he records authentic customs, and experiences of his society. Achebe's greatest self-appointed duty has always been to teach his own people as well as his foreign readers facts about his local cultural heritage. His main concern is that his people regain belief in themselves as true Africans. By doing so, he hopes to restore their honour and dignity and to make their voices heard and he views the novel as an adequate means to achieve this goal. Admittedly, he has managed to paint a balanced and harmonious portrait of Nigerian society by emphasizing its strengths and in the same breath revealing its dubious practices.

Therefore, Achebe presents not only a different writing style from Conrad and Cary but also sets a standard for postcolonial literature. His technical approach is to select appropriate linguistic structures and 'nativised' English to challenge Western myths and defend his culture. In this dissertation, we have attempted to show the role played by Achebe's dual style that consists of authentic African aesthetics and hybrid Western modes of writing. As already observed, Achebe makes a frequent projection of African culture through the deployment of oral traditions woven into his novels. These are proverbs, sayings, tales and songs. The writer also deals with the different acts that show the protagonists' national resistance. All these forms point to the project of restoring the socio-cultural heritage which started to wane with the disintegration of the society witnessed after its contact with the colonizer's culture.

Furthermore, our work has turned to an examination of women's experiences as reflected in the novels discussed. We have been trying to question images of women written by men. Thus, some sections are devoted to gender issues and roles of women in the light of colonial theory and anticolonial discourse. I have included studies in similarities and differences among the female characters of *Heart of Darkness*, *Mister Johnson*, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. Through postcolonial and feminist readings, it is concluded that all these narratives appear to follow masculine patriarchal patterns towards the second sex whose discrimination and segregation is a product of both the powerful forces of Western imperialism and African patriarchy. We have noticed that both cultures interlink in the marginalization of this category showing racist and sexist ideas of otherness.

To conclude, this study has attempted an in-depth examination of the racial and gender allegories where inequality is perpetuated between the two races, white and blacks and the two sexes, men and women.

What can be drawn from our analysis of the stereotypical and realist texts is that the gap between the Colonial and the African values is observable, notably in literature: while Conrad and Cary write narratives reflecting the imperialist mode of thought to conquer the mind, Achebe writes texts with nationalist discourses to liberate Africans from Western cultural and ideological fetters.

# Bibliography

## **Bibliography**

### **1-Primary Sources:**

#### **1-1 African novels:**

- Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *Arrow of God*. Oxford: Heinemann, 1964.

#### **1-2 English novels:**

- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1902.
- Cary, Joyce. *Mister Johnson*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1939.

### **2-Secondary Sources:**

#### **2-1 Criticism and Theoretical Interpretations:**

##### **a- Books of theory and criticism:**

- Achebe, Chinua. *Home and Exile* .Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Ambrosini, Richard. *Conrad's Fiction as Critical Discourse* .Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Amuta, Chidi. *The Theory of African Literature: Implication for Practical Criticism*. London: Zed Books, 1989.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths Gareth and Tiffin Helen. *Post-Colonial Studies: The key concepts*. London: Routledge, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *Post-Colonial Studies: Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_ .*The Empire Writes Back*. London: Routledge, 1989.



- Ball, John Clement. *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel. V. S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Bhabha , Homi. *The Location of Culture* .New York: Routledge, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge , 1990.
- Bivona, Daniel. *The British Empire Literature 1870/1940 and the administration of Empire* .Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* .Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Booker, Keith. *The African Novel in English: An Introduction*. Oxford: James Currey, 1998.
- Bush, Barbara. *Imperialism and Postcolonialism* .London: Longman, 2006.
- Chinweizu,Jemie and Madubuike,E. *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*. London: Routledge and KPI, 1980.
- Davidson, Basil. *The African Genius*. London: Ohio University Press: 1969.
- Dentith, Simon. *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Echeruo, Michael. *Joyce Cary and The Novel of Africa*. New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1973.
- Egejuru, Phaniel Akubueze and Katrak , Ketu H. *Womanbeing and African Literature* Asmara: Africa World Press:1997.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin White Masks* .Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Wretched of The Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.trans Constance Farrington.
- Foucault, Michel. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Editions Gallimard, 1969.trans A. M. Sheridan Smith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Will to Knowledge*. London: Penguin Books, 1998.

- Gagliano, Annie. *Achebe, Head, Marechera, On Power and Change in Africa* .New York: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000.
- Gikandi, Simon. *Encyclopedia of African Literature*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *Reading the African Novel*. New York: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1987.
- Hegel, G .W. F. *The Philosophy of History*. London: The Colonial Press, 1899.
- Innes, Catherine .L. *Chinua Achebe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_ . *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2007.
- Irele, Abiola. *The African Imagination. Literature in Africa and The Black Diaspora*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- JanMohamed, Abdul. *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* .New York: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983.
- Kanneh, Kadiatu. *African Identities: Race, Nation and Culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures* .London: Routledge, 1998.
- Killam, G. D. *The Writings of Chinua Achebe* .London: Heinemann, 1969.
- Lasambe, Lokangaka. *An Introduction to The African Prose Narrative*. Pretoria: Kagiso Tertiary Edition, 2004.
- Loomba, Annia. *Colonialism, Post colonialism*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Lukacs, George. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historic-philosophical Essay on The Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Trans by Ann Bostock. London: Merlin Press, 1971.
- Marx, Karl .*The Future Results of British Rule in India, On Colonialism* .Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968.
- Moses, Michael Valdez. *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish literature*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Mudimbe, V.Y. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. London: James Currey, 1988.

- Nfah- Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi. *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality and Difference*. New York: Library of Congress Cataloging in publication data, 1997.
- Nnolim, Charles. *Approaches to The African Novel Analysis*. Lagos: African Books Collective Ltd, 1992.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. *Culture, Tradition and Society in The West African Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Okechukwu, Chinwe Christiana. *Achebe the Orator. The Art of Persuasion in Chinua Achebe's Novels*. London: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Quayson, Ato. *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.
- Roberts, Michael Andrew. *Conrad and Masculinity*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000.
- Ruskin, Jonah. *The Methodology of Imperialism* .New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Group, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_.*Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_.*Secular Criticism: The World, The Text and The Critic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Stratton, Florence. *Contemporary African Literature and The politics of Gender*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Wren, Robert. *Achebe's World: The Historical and Cultural Context of the Novels of Chinua Achebe*. London: Longman House, 1980.
- Zabus, Chantal. *The African Palimpsest Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel* .Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2007.

**b- Articles:**

**b-1 Articles collected in books :**

- Achebe, Chinua. 'The Role of the Writer in a New Nation' (1973) in *African Writers on African Writing*. Killam, G. D (ed) Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1975, pp.7-13.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Chi in Igbo Cosmology' in Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi (ed). *African Philosophy: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1998,pp.67-72.
- Cesairé, Aimé. "Discourse on Colonialism" in Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi (ed) *African Philosophy: An Anthology* .Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 1998, pp.222-227.
- George, Rosemary Marangoly. 'Feminists Theorize Colonial/Postcolonial' in Rooney, Ellen (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory* .Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006,pp.211-231.
- Irele, Abiola.'The Tragic Conflict in the Novels of Chinua Achebe' in Beier (ed) *Introduction to African Literature* .London: Lowe and Brydone Printers Ltd, 1967,pp.177-188.
- Mishra, Vijay and Hodge, Bob. 'What is Post (-) colonialism?' in Williams, Patrick and Chrisman, Laura (ed). *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*. Malaysia: Longman, 1993, pp.276-290.
- Nnaemeka, Obioma. 'Relation and Critical Meditation: From *Things Fall Apart* to *Anthills of The Savannah*' in Podis, Leonard A. and Saaka, Yakubu (eds) *Challenging Hierarchies. Issues and Themes in Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* .New York: Peter Lang, 1998, pp.137-160.
- Nwankwo , Chimalum .'"Historicity and the Un-Eve-ing of the African woman: Achebe's Novels"' in Okafor , Dubem (ed) *Meditation On African Literature*. London: Greenwood Press: 2001, pp.79-88.
- Okonkwo, Juliet. 'The Talented Woman in African Literature' in *Africa Quarterly 15* (1975), pp.35- 47.
- Okpewho , Isidore. 'On the Concept: "Commonwealth Literature"' in *Meditations on African literature*. London: Greenwood Press: 2001, pp.35-43.
- Ross, Michael L. 'Joyce Cary's Tragic African Clown' in *Race Riot: Comedy and Ethnicity in Modern British Fiction* .Canada: McGill Queen's UP, 2006.pp.92-108.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. Preface to Fanon, Frantz (ed) *The Wretched Of the Earth* .New York: Grove Press, 1963, pp.7-26.

- Sugnet, Charlie. 'Things Fall Apart: Problems in Constructing an Alternative Ethnography' in Okafor, Dubem (ed) *Meditations on African Literature*. London: Greenwood Press, 2001, pp.71-77.

### **b-2 Articles taken from periodical, journals and magazines:**

- Bensemmane, M'hamed 'Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*' in *Al Adab Wa Llughat (Letters and Languages)*N°3 . Algiers: University of Algiers, 2008, pp.77-89.
- Curtler, Hugh Mercer. 'Political Correctness and the Attack on Great Literature' in *Modern Age* (Summer /Fall 2009), pp.272-279.
- Friesen, Alan R . 'Okonkwo's Suicide as An Affirmative Act: Do Things Really Fall Apart?' in *Postcolonial Text, Vol 2, N°4* .University of Regina, pp.1-10, <http://docs.google.com/viewer?a:vol>.
- Severac, Alain. 'Chinua Achebe, History Teller' in *Commonwealth Vol 2 1, N°1*. Dijon , France:1998,pp.12-16.
- Sullivan , Joanna. 'The Question of a National Literature for Nigeria' in *Research in African literature Vol.32, N°3*, (Fall 2001), p71-83.
- Williams, Adebayo.'The Autumn of The Literary Patriarch: Chinua Achebe and The Politics Of Remembering' in *Research in African literature Vol 32, N°3*.New York: Indiana University Press, 2001,pp.8-21.
- Zins, H.S. "Joseph Conrad and British Critics of Colonialism" in *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies, Vol. 12, nos 1 7 2*. Botswana: Department of Political & Administrative Studies, 1998, pp.58-68.

### **b-3 Jstor Articles:**

- Achebe, Chinua. 'Africa and Her Writers' in *The Massachusetts Review, Vol. 14, N°3* (Summer, 1973), pp.617-629, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088351>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 'Africa is People' in *The Massachusetts Review, Vol. 40, N°3* (Autumn, 1999), pp.313-321,<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25091546> .

- \_\_\_\_\_ . 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart Of Darkness' in *Research in African Literatures, Vol. 9, N°1, Special Issue on Literary Criticism* (Spring, 1978)pp.1-15, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3818468> .
- \_\_\_\_\_ . 'English and the African Writer' in *Transition, N° 75/76*.New York: Indiana University Press, 1997, pp.342-349, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2935429>.
- Carey-Webb, Allen. "Heart of Darkness, Tarzan", and the "Third World": Canons and Encounters in World Literature, English 109 in *College Literature, Vol. 19/20, N° 3/1, Teaching Postcolonial and Commonwealth Literatures* .College Literature, Oct, 1992 - Feb, 1993, pp.121-141, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25111993> .
- Dasenbrock, Reed Way. 'Creating a Past. : Achebe, Naipaul, Soyinka, Farah' in *Salmagundi, N° 68/69, The Literary Imagination and the Sense of the Past* (Fall 1985-Winter 1986), pp. 312-332,<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40547835> .
- JanMohamed, Abdul. 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature' in *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 12, N°1 .Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1985, pp.59-87, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343462>.
- Kalu, Anthonia. 'African Literature and the Traditional Arts: Speaking Art, Molding Theory' in *Research in African Literatures, Poetics of African Art Vol. 31, N°4*. New York: Indiana University, 2000, pp.48-62, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3821077>.
- Kreilkamp, Ivan. 'A Voice Without a Body: The Phonographic Logic of "Heart of Darkness"' in *Victorian Studies, Vol. 40, N° 2* .Ohio: Indiana University Press, 1997. pp. 211- 244,<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3829202> .
- Nasser, Merun . 'Achebe and His Women: A Social Science Perspective' in *Africa Today, Vol. 27, N° 3, African Literature and Literature about Africa (3rd Qtr, 1980)*, pp.21-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4185940>.
- Nwakanma, Obi. 'Metonymic Eruptions: Igbo Novelists, the Narrative of the Nation, and New Developments in the Contemporary Nigerian Novel' in *Research in African Literatures, Nigeria's Third-Generation Novel: Preliminary Theoretical Engagements* Vol. 39, N°2. New York: Indiana University Press, 2008,pp.1-14,<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20109575> .
- Ogede, Ode S. 'Achebe and Armah: A Unity of Shaping Visions' in *Research in African Literatures, Vol. 27, N°2*.New York: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp.112-127, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820165> .

- Ogunbesan , Kolawole. 'Politics and the African writer' in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 17, N°1. African Studies Association, 1974, pp.43-53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/523576> .
- Quayson, Ato. 'Protocols of Representation and the Problems of Constituting an African 'Gnosis': Achebe and Okri' in *The Yearbook of English Studies, The Politics of Postcolonial Criticism* Vol.27. Modern Humanities Research Association, 1997, pp.173-149, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3509138>.

#### **b-4 Web Articles:**

- Kronenfeld, J.Z. 'In Search of Mister Johnson: Creation, Politics and Culture in Cary's Africa', pp.69-97, <http://www.google.fr/#hl=fr&tbo=d&output=search&client=psy-ab&q>.
- McClintock, Anne. "Unspeakable Secrets": The Ideology of Landscape in Conrad's Heart of Darkness", pp.38-53, [http://www.english.wisc.edu/amcclintock/writing/Unspeakable\\_article.pdf](http://www.english.wisc.edu/amcclintock/writing/Unspeakable_article.pdf).
- Mezu, Rose Ure. 'Women in Achebe's World', pp.1-7 in <http://www.uga.edu/womanist/1995/mezu.html>.
- Nnolim, Charles. 'The Form and Function of the Folk Tradition in Achebe's Novels'. pp.35-47, <http://ariel.synergiesprairies.ca/ariel/index.php/ariel/article/viewFile/1670/1629>

#### **2-2 Interviews and Conversations:**

##### **a-Magazine and Journal Interviews :**

- Charles, H. Rowell. 'An Interview with Chinua Achebe' in *Callaloo*, Vol. 13, N°1. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2931612> .
- Searle, Chris. 'Achebe and The Bruised Heart of Africa' in *Wasafiri* .1991.
- Moore, David Chioni, Heath, Analee and Achebe, Chinua. 'A Conversation With Chinua Achebe' in *Transition*. New York: Indiana University Press, 2008. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20542537>.

- *The Paris Review, The Art of Fiction* N°139, 2007.

### **2-3 Books of Interviews:**

- Viswanathan, Gauri. *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said* London: Clay Ltd, 2004.
- Linfords, Bernth. *Conversation with Chinua Achebe*. Jackson: Up of Mississippi, 1997.
- Wilkinson, Jane. *Talking with African writers. Interviews with African Poets, Playwrights and Novelists* .Oxford: James Currey, 1992.

### **2-5 Unpublished works:**

- Rebai Maamri, Malika. *Cross-Cultural and Ideological Perceptions of The Other In W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Chinua Achebe and Assia Djebar*. Doctora Thesis. Department of English, University of Algiers.(2009)
- Easto, Jeffrey M. *The Function of Custom and Tradition in Establishing Cultural Identity in Chinua Achebe's Fiction*. Master Thesis. Department of English, University of Texas.(1996)



هذه الدراسة المقارنة تدرس العلاقة بين نوعين للأدب عن أفريقيا وهي الأدب الإنجليزي والأدب الأفريقي. كل هذه النصوص الأدبية قيد النظر سواء من العالم الغربي كما هو الحال في رواية جوزيف كونراد قلب من الظلام 1902 و رواية جويس كاري مستر جونسن 1939 أو من العالم الإفريقي كما هو الحال بالنسبة في روايتي شينو أشيبي أشياء تتلاشي 1958 و سهم الله 1964 وفرت درجات متفاوتة من المعارضات في التمثيل تحت اسم النظرية المانكية . هدفنا هو التركيز على النصوص الأدبية التي تعكس تاريخها المختلف كونه مرتبط بتجارب هذه الشعوب بفترة الاستعمار و ما بعده . هذه العلاقات تم بنائها على تصورات غريبة منحطة و حقائق افريقية صادقة. نتيجة لذلك نركز علي دور الثقافة بين التفرقة الاستعمارية و حركات التحرر الوطني كما هي بادية في الأدب.

بناء على تعريفات المختلفة لكل من الاستعمار والإمبريالية كسياسات أو ممارسات التي كانت تعتبر ضرورة مطلقة وحاجة ملحة لإنشاء النظام العالمي في جميع أنحاء العالم، نرى بوضوح أن هذه العمليات الاستغلالية غير عادلة أخذ الغرب من خلالها عقد من أفريقيا متسببا في آثار بعيدة المدى على الشعب المستعمر والأرض التي تركت في حالة ذهول و متاعب دائمة. في سياق هذه الدراسة، حالة أفريقيا هي مماثلة لتلك التي في الهند، منطقة البحر الكاريبي والدول الآسيوية وغيرها التي تدرج ضمن مفهوم الشرق أو المشرق. ومع أن حدود هذه الفترة التاريخية راجعة إلى قرون، فإن الحقائق في أفريقيا كانت صعبة التحمل وهذا اثر على تطوير الحضارة التي شهدت "جريمة ضد الإنسان الأوروبي".

مجموعة من المعتقدات الدينية و العرقية أساسا وثقت أيديولوجية تطور الغرب و بررت أفكارهم الخاصة بالاحتلال و الحكم. في نظرهم، فكرة نشر الدين المسيحي و الهوية الغربية لا يمكنها أن تتجسد في إطار برنامج "المهمة الحضارية" لجلب الضوء و التقدم للعالم إلا من خلال امتلاك أراض أجنبية و التجريد الشعب الأصلي من إنسانيته. وعلاوة على ذلك ، كانت الأعداء العنصرية القائمة على لون البشرة و الصفات المادية الأخرى أقوى في تدخل الغرب في شؤون الشرق . وفقا لها، كان الهيمنة الإمبراطورية تمثل " ترتيب الأمور

" كون الأفارقة و غيرهم من الشعوب المتخلفة غير قادرين على تطوير بلدانهم، لذلك كان من واجب أوروبا تنفيذ هذا " العبء " بالنسبة لهم. أدت هذه الفكرة القائمة على الاختلاف العنصري إلى تصنيف الناس إلى أجناس منفصلة و مختلفة هذا ما نتج عنه بناء التسلسل الهرمي العنصري الظالم الذي وضع الثقافة الإفريقية في أسفل و الثقافة الغربية في الجزء العلوي من النطاق . في الواقع ، هذه التحيزات العنصرية التفريق بين الذات و الأجناس المتعارضة الأخرى التي كانت تلقب عنصري باسم أجناس " دونية " ، " وحشية "، و " بربرية " في حين أن الذات الأوروبية كان يمثل "التفوق" ، "النور" و " الحضارة " . كما أشار فرانتز فانون ، الذي أسس نظرية العرق و الاستعمار التي أكدت أن وصول المستعمر خلق مواضيع جديدة تتحدث عن المستعمر أو ما سماه إدوارد سعيد " المشرق " . أدت هذه المواقف التي تركز على التفوق العنصري إلى خلق مفهوم الخصائص المانكية التي برزت بوصفها جانبا من جوانب الخيال الاستعماري . وقد تم اشتقاق هذه كلمة من الناقد التاريخي فانون الذي أشار إلى أن هذا المصطلح يشير إلى النظام الإمبراطوري في المجتمعات الاستعمارية التي تم تعريفها بأنها " عالم منقسم إلى أقسام..... قطع اثنان .... يسكنها مختلف الأنواع " . و هذه النظرية أيضا أصلها راجع إلى عبدول يان محمد الذي يشير إلى أن هذا الانقسام الضدي طغى على المجتمعات الاستعمارية و هيكله العلاقة بين فئتين : ' أبيض و أسود ' ، ' السيد والعبد ' ، ' الذات و الآخر ' ، ' المركز والأطراف ' .

كعلامة تاريخية تميز العلاقات العالمية، الاستعمار لم يكن فقط مجرد "وسيلة للحفاظ على العلاقة التي تربط الدول الغير المتكافئة اقتصاديا وسياسيا" التي خلقت الافتراضات العنصرية والانقسامات المانكية في الواقع، بل كان أيضا عملية استعمار ثقافي من خلال الأعمال الأدبية التي توفر موقع مفتوحا لإجراء فحص دقيق للعلاقة بين الغرب والشرق. على الرغم من أن الفترة الاستعمارية في أفريقيا قد انتهت بفضل الحركات الثورية السياسية التي توجت في نهاية المطاف بالاستقلال، رفض الغرب فكرة فقدان المعركة. ونتيجة لذلك، فقد واصلو مشروعهم من أجل الهيمنة باستخدام الثقافة باعتبارها إستراتيجية أخرى بديلة لكنها تخدم نفس الأغراض في الحفاظ على السلطة ضد المستعمر وتعزيز شعورهم بالنقص و من خلال جعل الحكم الاستعماري مشروع، والأفكار العنصرية قانونية و صحيحة وكم طبيعة الإدارة الاستعمارية الاستغلالية.

ويعرف هذا النوع من ممارسة السلطة باسم "الإمبريالية الثقافية"، وهو الوضع الذي برز وبدا في الانتشار سريعا بمساعدة الرواية الأدبية للقرن التاسع عشر. مثل الاستعمار السياسي و الاقتصادي، خلق المظهر الثقافي للاستعمار القهر العنصري والمشاكل المتمثلة في عقدة نقص 'الأخر'. ويمثل هذا النوع من 'استعمار العقول' واضح جليا و بوضوح تام في عدد من الأعمال الغربية البريطانية مثل رواية ويليام شكسبير العاصفة، قصة جوزيف كونراد قلب من الظلام، جويس كاري وروايته مستر جونسون، و رواية فور ستر عبور إلى الهند والقائمة طويلة. وتستخدم جميع هذه المجموعة الواسعة من النصوص الأدبية كمصدر لفهم ومعالجة ديناميكيات الإمبريالية والاستعمار التي أدت إلى إنشاء الخطاب الاستعماري في الواقع وكذلك في الخيال.

هذه المناقشة، درست المواقف الإنجليزية المؤقتة حول أفريقيا و السخرية من سكانها الذي يعتبر وصفهم السمة البارزة التي يمكن أن تجعلنا قادرين على التمييز بين الخطاب الاستعماري و غيره من الخطابات الأخرى. عموما ، الخطاب الاستعماري هو المفهوم الذي قد جذب انتباه العديد من الكتاب و النقاد الأدبيين ، وقد تم نشر مفهومه من قبل الناقد ما بعد الاستعمار إدوارد سعيد ، و تم أيضا تحديد مفهومه من قبل مختلف النقاد مثل بيل أشكروفت ، جاريت جريفيث و هيلين تيفن كأداة للسلطة ونظام جمع في داخله مجموعة من الممارسات الاستعمارية . عادة ، في الأدب ، وهذا النوع من الخطاب يشير إلى كتابات التي تنشأ منذ بداية توسع الاستعمار و يعزز الافتراضات حول المستعمر . لأنه يمكن القراءة من معرفة تفكير الغرب حول العالم الشرقي ، و يبحث في الدور الذي يلعبه التمثيل الأدبي ، هذا الخطاب يؤيد قرن من الاستعمار و يظهره على أنه أجهزة السلطة و أدوات عملية فعالة و قوية لتطوير أساليبهم لمعرفة الآخر.

كون الروايات التي سيتم دراستها مهمة أساسا بقضية و الحكم الاستعماري البريطاني و البلجيكي في الأراضي الأفريقية الكونغو ونيجيريا ، فان قلب من الظلام لجوزيف كونراد و مستر جونسون لجويس كاري يعتبران مثالين لخطاب الهيمنة من الغرب. كلا الروايتين تنتميان إلى مجموعة نصوص السرد الكولونيالي الغربي التي تحاول مواصلة التقليد الأصلي للأصول الاستعمارية . رواية كونراد ، والمستمدة من تجربته في بحر الجنوب، و وسط أفريقيا، و آسيا ، و رواية كاري التي تتمركز على العلاقات الاستعمارية بين المواطنين

والمستوطنين لا نقل أهمية و شانا عن أفكارهم الأوروبية ، والرؤى و الميولات الاستعمارية من جهة أخرى ، حول السود و بناء خيالي لأراضيهم الإفريقية كمكان أسطوريي يتمتع بظلام مخيف.

بناء على قراءة المستشرق لروايات مثل قلب من الظلام و مستر جونسون التي تظهر فيها المفاهيم النظرية مثل الغيرية وتكوين آراء منقفة ، التي كانت مركزية في دراسة الآداب ما بعد الاستعمار أساسا أدب المستعمر ، و يتم التعامل معها من قبل كونراد و كاري يبين بوضوح أن كلا الكتاب قاما بتوظيف نوع من الاستراتيجيات الخطابية في الروايات الخاصة بهم كجزء من ' المعرفة ' عن المستعمر . في الواقع ، في كل من الروايات المختارة في هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين المستعمر و المستعمر مرتبط أساسا بآراء منقفة نمطية و عنصرية التي تظهر السلالة الأخرى مجردة من الهوية الإنسانية، صامتة و كذلك غير مرئية في حين تمجد صورة الذات ، التي يسمع لها صوت ويرى لها قوام و شخصية واضحة. هذه الصور السلبية النمطية والآراء المعممة أكدت المواقف التي أدلى بها الغرب من خلال التدابير العنصرية و الأحكام المسبقة . الخيال الاستعماري في الروايات مثل قلب من الظلام و مستر جونسون خلق صورة مبالغ فيها ومشوهة عن أفريقيا وسكانها. الصور المنحوتة للأسف هي صور في المخيلة العامة الغربية حول أفريقيا بأنها " أرض يلفها ظلام الليل " . في رواية كونراد ، يشار إلى الكونغو من قبل مارلو كما أنها مكان غامض مظلم يخيم عليه جو كئيب . على وتيرة المساواة نفس الصورة هي صورة نيجيريا في عيون كاري الذي يظهرها في روايته المنسوبة إلى الرومانسية الاجتماعية مكان غير حضاري و قبلة فاسدة للغربيين ليستقروا فيها. وركزنا أيضا على الصورة المتدهورة التي وصفت المواطنين من قبل هؤلاء الكتاب والذين ركزوا في كتاباتهم على صور الأفارقة كما أنها مخلوقات شريرة ، أقل شأنًا في كل الشروط البيولوجية و الفكرية . الكتاب الاستعماري استخدام صورًا من من أجل التأكيد على الانتقام العرقي تجاه الجنس الأسود وإظهار العلاقة التي ساقط بعضهم البعض.

وراء هذه المعرفة الملقفة عن الآخر، تمارس السلطة في أوروبا كذلك من خلال إسكات السكان الأصليين من أجل توسيع نطاق هيمنتها وتوسيع أراضيها. هذه الفكرة تميل و ترصد من خلال فكرة المعرفة والسلطة إلى إظهار أن الاستعمار بكل أشكاله و جميع دلالاته سلبي، وبالتالي هذه البنية الاستعمارية لها وظائف الخطاب و

لها دورها الفعال في إنتاج الخطابات المهيمنة التي تعنى العلاقة بين الأجناس التي تعرضت تحت ضوء الفترة الاستعمارية. وعلاوة على ذلك هذه المعرفة ، من خلال تمثيل الإنسان المشرقي و الأرض المشرقية، ساهمت في رأي الناقد الفلسطيني المعروف ادوارد سعيد بالعديد من الطرق في إنشاء مجموعة من المعارضات الثنائية معروفة من قبل عبدول يان محمد بأنها " رموز مانكية " التي تعمل ليس فقط لتشويه سمعة الأرض الأم ولكن أيضا تمكن الأوروبيين من زيادة استيعابهم لفكرة تفوقهم الأخلاقي ، بل تسمح لهم أيضا من تجميع فائض أخلاقي يميزهم عن باقي السلالات البشرية . بكلمة أخرى ، ضبط الإنتاج الأوروبي الحديث الذي يصف الآخر الذي هو بالنسبة لهم نقيض الذات أدى إلى انقسام داخل نفس العالم ما نتج عنه هيمنتهم مؤكدا بذلك الحق للقوى الاستعمارية في السيطرة و الحكم . كل من المعرفة عن الآخر والسلطة عليها ترتبط ارتباطا وثيقا، في الأساس ، وذلك لأن هذه المعرفة حول 'هم' ، الأعراق المنحطة و المتخلفة ، تسعى إلى إقامة سلطة استعمارية ، التي كانت وفقا للغرب ، ضرورة تاريخية بحيث يمكن أن يستمر الاستغلال تحت ستار لجلب الضوء ومكافحة الجهل كجزء من " المهمة الحضارية " . في ضل الروايات الاستعمارية الأوروبية مثل قلب من الظلام ، نرى بوضوح أن المؤلفين الذين لديهم هذه القوة الثقافية الآتية من المجتمعات الغربية التي تتمتع بسلطة سياسية وما شابه ذلك من صلاتهم بمصالح الاستعمارية هي نتيجة لحقيقة أن مجتمعاتهم لديها نظام قسري و اكرهي لا يسمح لهم بالتحدث عن الثقافات والمجتمعات الشرقية.

و قد شاركت القارة الأفريقية في عملية طويلة من النضال لمقاومة القوى الاستعمارية، التي أثرت تأثير عميق من الناحية الاجتماعية والثقافية. و مع ذلك، حتى بعد أن منحت استقلالها السياسي، دخل الأفارقة في كفاح مرير لتسجيل هويتهم، لتحديد شخصيتهم وإثراء ثقافتهم. و نتيجة لذلك، جنبا إلى جنب مع تطور الأدب، تميز النصف الثاني من القرن العشرين بتطوير البحوث و الفحوص الدقيقة في مجال الدراسات الأفريقية، لاسيما من قبل العلماء الأفارقة. وقد برز مفهوم ما بعد الاستعمار الذي يشير إلى دراسة التفاعل بين المستعمر و المستعمر منذ دخول المستعمر مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار الوضع الأخير في ضوء الفكر الاستعماري و فترة ما بعد الاستقلال . بالإضافة إلى ذلك تطورت هذه النظرية من قراءة الروايات الأدبية للقرن التاسع عشر وأوائل القرن

العشرين. و على ما يبدو نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار تشير إلى تركيزها على الثقافات الوطنية بعد رحيل القوة الاستعمارية. رواد الأدب و النقد مثل فرانترز فانون و نجوجي في وقت لاحق وإدوارد سعيد كانوا معنيين بمثل هذه المواضيع ووضعوا مفاهيم أخرى للتعامل مع المعارضة الثقافية والتصدي للخلافات بسبب وعيهم بفشل النظريات الأوروبية في التعامل مع الطبيعة المعقدة للثقافات في كتابات ما بعد الاستعمار.

يعتبر الأدب الأفريقي المعاصر منشغل " بمراجعة " الأعمال الأدبية الاستعمارية الغربية. من أجل تصحيح الأفكار المسبقة ، مالت اعترافات الكتاب الأفارقة الإبداعية مثل أشيبي الى صورة مختلفة عن التي لاحظناها من قبل. من خلال استخدام الأقلام الخاصة بهم، فإنهم قد ساهموا في كتابة الأدب ملتزمين بفكرة الدفاع عن العرق و ثقافتهم. مذكراتهم الأفريقية في الأدب تنطوي على حاجة ملحة لإظهار واقع أفريقيا بشكل جدي و واقعي، كما أنها، من أجل وضع القيم الأفريقية على قدم المساواة مع تلك الثقافات الأخرى. استجابة أشيبي إلى السخرية من مجتمعه تتمثل في التركيز على الموضوعات المستخدمة في النصوص الاستعمارية لتبرز الثقافة الأفريقية وإعادة الكتابة لهم بطريقة لمراجعة التاريخ الاستعماري. لذلك، من خلال أدب ما بعد الاستعمار كوسيلة تعبر عن إحساس بالثورة و الاحتجاج. الكاتب النيجيري ناضل لمواجهة الصور السلبية التي أنشأها بعض الكتاب الأوروبيين مثل جوزيف كونراد و جويس كاري . وقال انه يهدف إلى " إنهاء الاستعمار "من خلال وضع حد للخطاب الاستعماري و إنشاء خطاب معاكس باعتباره وسيلة لاستعادة "الحقيقة" عن ثقافته و تطويره. و يعرف هذا الخطاب في الأدب بوصفه الخطاب المقاوم الذي تم اعتماده من قبل دراسات ما بعد الاستعمار من أجل الطعن في الخطاب المركزي الذي واجه مقاومة من هامش السلطة. كما أن هناك حاجة لكتابة نوع جديد من الأدب خال من الهيمنة الاستعمارية، ويهدف أشيبي إلى خلق " هوية محلية مستقلة". لهذا السبب ينظر إلى أن كتابات ما بعد الاستعمار معادية مع الكتابات الاستعمارية و تمثيلاتها النمطية.

شينوا أشيبي مثل كل الكتاب الأفارقة يرى أنه من المهم إعطاء صوت آخر للأفارقة ومنحهم الحق في التعبير عن أفكارهم من خلال استخدام الأدب الذي يعكس أفريقيا والأفارقة كما كانت في الماضي، و كما هي الحال في الوقت الحاضر. في كل انتاجاته الأدبية و النقدية ، قال انه يشير إلى أن هذا الوضع من اجل معرفة

جديدة لأفريقيا واضح من منظور واقعي أفريقي من أجل مساعدة مجتمعه في الظهور مما يمكن المجتمعات الأفريقية من معرفة عاداتهم التقليدية . نيته هي إنقاذ تاريخ شعبه والهجوم المضاد للتمثيل المهين الذي أدلى به الأدب الإنجليزي الذي نفى الثقافة الأفريقية والهوية و حتى إنسانية الشعب . محاولة أشيبي لخلق أدب خاص بالمواطن الإفريقي، هي محاولة مستقلة عن الأدب الغربي من خلال استخدام نفس اللغة المتمثلة في اللغة الإنجليزية يجعل منه ليس فقط كاتب محترف ولكن أيضا معلم، و خطيب، و مؤرخ و سياسي.

طوال صفحات هذه الأطروحة ، ركزنا بشكل رئيسي في التزام أشيبي إلى "الكتابة ضد" النصوص الإنجليزية الكولونيالية . في كل رواياته التي منها أشياء تتلاشى و السهم الله، أعلن الكاتب "ثورة أدبية" و تحدى التصورات الغربية لأفريقيا و وضح صورته. كانت كتاباته و أعماله كرد على رواية كونراد و رومانسية كاري وقد دافع و ادعى صدقا أن الشعب الأفريقي كان له فلسفة سمحت لهم بإنشاء ثقافة خاصة بهم تتميز بالتشديد على جمال و كرامة الأوطان و الشعوب الإفريقية . من أجل الوصول إلى هدفه، ويعتمد أشيبي على ' الخطاب الواقعي ' بأسلوب أفريقي لإعطاء إحساس واضح ومباشر عن حياة الشعوب و سلوكها. من خلال إحساسه الواقعي، يرى القارئ الذي ضلته الروايات النمطية عن الحقائق الوجه الحقيقي لأفريقيا وشعبها. أعمال الكاتب النيجيري أشيبي تركز أكثر على الحياة القبلية والدور الهام الذي تمثله التقاليد والثقافة في المجتمع الأفريقي. باستخدام عناصر تراثية مثل الأمثال الشعبية، الحكايات الشعبية التقليدية، ورواية القصص و التقاليد الشفوية في الأدب، و إلى جانب ذلك، اظهر المواقف الثورية التي برهنت مقاومة أبطال كلا الروايتين تجاه الاستعمار. كل هذا جعل رواياته تحمل معها أفكار حول معنى الحرية، والحرية والقومية.

أصبحت قضايا المساواة بين الجنسين الأهم حتى في القرن العشرين نظرا لأنها تثير تساؤلات أساسية و وضعت مجموعة من المناقشات الهامة الجارية لأن هذه القضايا تتعامل أيضا مع مفهوم السلطة و المعرفة في مجال الأدب. هذه الدراسة تكمن أيضا في الخطاب من حيث مواضيع تهم الجنسين و وضعية المرأة الأم في كل الآداب سواء كتابات المستعمر او المستعمر . في الواقع ، نظرية الخطاب النسوي تحلل تجريد المرأة من الإنسانية و تمثيلها ' الثانوي ' من قبل كل من الخطابات الإمبريالية أو الأفريقية . و وفقا لهم، تأثرت نساء العالم

الثالث، مثل الرجال، بمجىء القوى الاستعمارية الذين برروا مهمتهم من خلال إنقاذ النساء من الاضطهاد الأبوي . ومع ذلك، بدلا من تخفيف مواقفهم، كانت النساء موضوع القمع المزوج كونهم يعانون من نير الاستعمار والنظام الأبوي . جوهر الخطاب الاستعماري هو التحقيق في مسألة تمثيل الإناث من قبل العديد من النقاد مثل سببفاك التي كتبت عن مفهوم النساء المهمشين . على هذا النحو أكد العديد على سعي بعض الكتاب إلى التأكيد على نفي صوت النساء السود ، و تجريدهم من الإنسانية هذا من اجل إسكات هذه الفئة. من خلال قراءة نسوية ما بعد استعمارية لكل من قصة كونراد و عمل كاري ، يمكن للقارئ أن يرى بوضوح تام أنه تم وصف الشخصيات النسائية من خلال صور نمطية و شروط عنصرية . هذه الروايات الاستعمارية الغربية تجسد أدوار جنس الأنثى في مركز ضعف . وعلاوة على ذلك ، فإن موقف " الجنس الثاني " في آخر الكتابات الأفريقية ما بعد الاستعمارية يتجاهل ما وصفه الغرب . من خلال نظرة عميقة إلى عالم النساء و من خلال قراءة نسوية ما بعد استعمارية ، نلاحظ بأن تصوير النساء في الروايات الأفريقية هو تصوير متنوع يظهر الشخصيات النسائية كما تعيش في مجتمع أبوي حيث أن الرجال يكونون الغالبية العظمى و تعتبر المرأة صامتة و غائبة . من ناحية أخرى ، يتم عرضها من قبل الكتاب كشخصيات كريمة وجهات فاعلة ذات قيمة في المجتمع لتحقيق التقدم والرفاه.

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الأطروحة هو التركيز بشكل رئيسي على إشكالية العلاقة بين كتابات الأفريقية و السرد الخطابي الغربي . عرضنا هذه العلاقة على أنها علاقة بين الشرق والغرب، المستعمر و المستعمر و البيض والسود ، وتهدف المناقشة أيضا إلى معرفة الأشكال الثقافية في اللفظ و كيف الثقافية. و هذه الدراسة المقارنة التي جمعت الخطابات الاستعمارية و المعادية للاستعمار تأمل في محاولة لدراسة رواية كونراد و رواية كاري على نطاق واحد ، و كذا أشيبي من الناحية الأخرى . لذلك، هذا التحقيق يرمي إلى الخوض في حوار بين أربعة نصوص مع التركيز الرئيسي على تصوير المستعمر و المستعمر . أسئلة حول الطرق التي استعملت في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار الذي يمكن اعتباره وسيلة لإظهار صورة معارضة من أفريقيا والأفارقة للأدب الغربي والأسئلة لماذا تحتاج الإمبراطورية الإفريقية إلى " الكتابة مرة أخرى إلى المركز " لها أهمية حاسمة في هذه



الدراسة. وسوف نظهر كيف أن الخطاب الاستعماري وضع من وجهة نظر المستعمر الذي يدرس تمثيل الآخر في الأدب الاستعماري و صورتهم السلبية من أفريقيا بشكل خاص و الشرق بشكل عام. و التزمنا أيضا بالتحقيق في الطريقة التي يحاول فيها أدب ما بعد الاستعمار تحدي تلك التأكيدات و يحاول إعادة كتابة قصة أفريقيا من نقطة محورها أفريقي. بشكل ملحوظ ، الخطاب الذي أسسه أشيبي أقترح لإظهار الحقائق الأفريقية على أرض الواقع وتبيين تناقض الأسس الغربية و أيضا إنهاء الاستعمار و الخطاب الاستعماري كوسيلة لإسكات هذه المواضيع الاستعمارية . كما يسعى خطابه للنظر في كيفية كتابة الأدب الأفريقي ما بعد الاستعمار الذي يعكس واقعية الممارسات الأفريقية و طريقتهم في الحياة و جلب إلى حيز الوجود صورة صادقة للواقع.

وهذه المناقشة هي دراسة تفصيلية لبعض الكلمات الرئيسية التي كانت محورا هاما في نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار مثل العنصرية ، والواقعية ، الغيرية ، و نوع الجنس ، و المقاومة و الخطاب الكولونيالي ، الخطاب المضاد ، التقاليد. هذه الكلمات هي المفاتيح المستخدمة فيما يتعلق بالنقاش الدائر . لهذا الغرض ، تحدثنا عن النظريات الأدبية و الفلسفية التي تداخلت مع بعضها البعض ، مثل نظريات إدوارد سعيد للاستشراق وكذلك الثقافة و الإمبريالية ، نظرية الخطاب لميشيل فوكو ، مفهوم فرانتز فانون القومية ، نظرية غاياتري سبيفاك التهميش المزدوج للمرأة ، نظرية التناقض لبهايا ، و الروموز المانكية لعبدول يان محمد . وردت هذه المفاهيم مرارا وتكرارا لأهميتها في بناء طبيعة النصوص الأدبية المذكورة أعلاه. في نفس الوقت ، و جب التركيز على الدراسات النصية و المقارنة في نطاق كل هذه الأساليب التي يمكن أن تؤدي إلى إجراء تحليل من المعارضة القائمة بين النصوص الأفريقية و الانجليزية . و تنقل أيضا جوانب من الحقائق وتظهر الانسجام و جمال الأرض الأفريقية و شعبها .

العمل المتوقع يحتوي على قسمين رئيسيين ينقسمان إلى أربعة فصول . الجزء الأول يعالج مسألة الخطاب الاستعماري في الأدب الإنجليزي ، وبخاصة في رواية كونراد قلب من الظلام و كاري مستر جونسون. و الفصل الأول يحمل في طياته مفهوم الخطاب عند فوكو مع الإشارة إلى مسألة السلطة والمعرفة و كيفية تطبيق هذه المفاهيم في الخطاب الاستعماري الموجود بالأعمال الأدبية المختارة . وعلاوة على ذلك، فإن الموقف من هذا

الموضوع هو جدير بالذكر مع تصوير الحالة الاستعمارية والخبرة و التنظيم و التحيز العنصري في الخيال الاستعماري .

كما يمثل الفصل الثاني تحقيق في موضوع التمثيل النمطي الذي يرسمه الكتاب في النصوص الغربية مثل كونراد و كاري . ويشمل أيضا هذا الفصل دراسة الشخصيات النسائية الصامتة والمجردة من إنسانيتهم من قبل السلطة الإمبريالية .

في الجزء الثاني من هذه الأطروحة انشغالنا كان مع الخطاب المعادي للاستعمار في الأدب الأفريقي الذي شهد ميلاده مع نشر أشيبي لكتابه أشياء تتلاشى. و الفصل الثالث كان عبارة عن تحليل للخطاب المعارض كما رأينا في أعمال شينوا أشيبي الأشياء تتلاشى و السهم /الله الذين يمثلون موقفا ضد الاستعمار من خلال استخدام الكاتب للغة والثقافة الشفوية الإنجليزية في الأمثال ، ورواية القصص والأغاني و تركيزه على المقاومة من أطراف النزاع الذين يكافحون للحفاظ على تقاليدهم في فترة الانتقال والغزو الغربي.

يذهب الفصل الأخير عميقا في قلب روايات أشيبي و يركز على مسألة الواقعية، و رد فعل الكاتب على التحريفات مع الإشارة إلى نقاط القوة والضعف في الحياة القبلية التقليدية في نيجيريا قبل وأثناء الوجود الاستعماري. إلى جانب ذلك، فإن هذا الفصل اخذ بعين الاعتبار دراسة دور النساء في عالم أشيبي باعتباره جزء من الخطاب على الجنسين الذي تحترم فيه النساء على الرغم من المعاناة من نيران الاضطهاد الاستعماري و التهميش الأبوي .